Space and Identity in Resistance against Neoliberal Urban Planning in Turkey

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Abstract
This article highlights the role of collective identity and space in the emergence of social resistance within a neoliberal context. It argues that the attempted eviction of residents from their established neighbourhoods through public planning projects generates resistance against the reappropriation of these spaces and has encouraged new forms of resistance among inhabitants in several neighbourhoods. I particularly emphasize that planning projects often displace particular populations by force, principally minority communities, in order to confine them to new resettlement areas far from their customary living places, which has a socioeconomic impact on people’s identity, everyday life and social solidarity. The article is based on empirical research in two neighbourhoods in Istanbul — 1 Mayıs and Sulukule — to analyse practices of resistance of inhabitants in everyday life and examine how this resistance shapes their identity and daily life.

Introduction
The concept of ‘new urbanism’ dominates current research in urban sociology. 1 According to this approach, cities are conceived as well-organized, clean, green and useful areas without transport, environmental or security problems. In accordance with this logic, many countries, including Turkey, are keen to reconfigure the spatial organization of their cities in order to facilitate the exploitation of profitable resources by creating for-profit housing and reallocating the city centre to high-income social groups (Kibaroğlu et al., 2009). However, the social and cultural impacts of these planning projects, including forced displacements, uprooting and assimilation, are often ignored.

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1 The new urbanism approach defends the creation of city spaces that are planned for the wellbeing of people, such as pedestrian-friendly and green areas. New urbanism has been criticized for being a form of centrally planned, large-scale development ‘instead of allowing the initiative for construction to be taken by the final users themselves’ (Salingaros and Mena-Quintero, 2010). It has also been criticized for asserting universal principles of design instead of attending to local conditions and for resulting in the creation of gated communities and the intensification of gentrification. For further information, see Grant (2006).
Over the past 20 years, the influence of Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974) has led a number of social-science researchers to consider the meaning, appropriation and division of space (Harvey, 1996; Brenner, 2004; Massey, 2005; Elden, 2007). Lefebvre was one of the first to emphasize the capitalist production of urban space and to propose an alternative urban planning based on the right to the city and the usage value of the city for its inhabitants (Lefebvre, 1968). Based on the legacy of Lefebvre, authors such as Harvey (2005) and Soja (2010) focused on the link between space and neoliberalism, considering current urban policies as the spatialization of neoliberalism and the reproduction of social and spatial injustice. In this article, I define as neoliberal all policies seeking to entrench market forms of relations in everyday practices. Neoliberal policies lead to the predominance of competition as a way of managing urban and rural spaces, in contrast to principles of redistribution that were upheld in earlier eras, resulting in the transfer of many functions that were previously in the hands of the state to non-state and quasi-state bodies such as corporations and non-governmental organizations to respond to the needs of the *citadins* (Bayat, 2009; Fawaz, 2009).²

In this sense, neoliberal restructuring of urban space raises some questions about the meaning, production and appropriation of space by those who structure it and those who live in it. Lefebvre argues that the production of space not only manifests itself in various forms of injustice but also produces and reproduces them, thereby maintaining established relations of domination and oppression (Lefebvre, 1974: 41).

In this article I analyse urban planning in Turkey as one of the examples of such neoliberal restructuring, according to which the city is being shaped more by the logic of the market than the needs of its inhabitants (Balaban, 2010; Enlil, 2011). According to Bayat, this restructuring is characterized by greater privatization, deregulation and commodification (Bayat, 2009). This new order requires that cities be reorganized in order to make them more attractive to potential investors. Low-income social groups occupying old and unhealthy neighbourhoods and the inner-city *gecekondu* are now considered undesirable.³ Current urban renewal projects displace these communities in order to confine them to new resettlement areas far away from their previous neighbourhoods.⁴ Importantly, most of these populations are composed of ethnic, religious or political minorities whose identity Turkish public institutions ignore culturally and politically (Kirisci, 2000; Icduygu and Keyman, 2005). The neoliberal character of urban planning increases the inability of these low-income dwellers to participate in the production of space, reflecting the rise of social and spatial injustice. However, my purpose here is not to show that neoliberalism has the same characteristics everywhere and produces the same effects. Rather, it appears in different forms and adapts to the politico-economic conditions and systems of each country. The case studies in this article will show that neoliberal restructuring is never pre-determined; its implementation and outcomes depend on local dynamics and power constellations (Kuyucu and Unsal, 2010: 1481). The resistance in some neighbourhoods captures the contested and contingent nature of this process.

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² Henri Lefebvre used the word *citadins* to define people living in the city.

³ Originally a technical term, *gecekondu* is slang for a specific form of self-service urbanization that occurred during Turkey’s industrialization and the associated rural migration that took place between 1945 and 1985. *Gece* means ‘the night’ and *kondu* ‘landed’, hence *gecekondu* translates as ‘landed at night’. The term has evolved to encompass a variety of informal settlements and building types, and its usage denotes bottom-up, spontaneous action, which was especially prevalent during the first wave of mass migration.

⁴ In this article, I will use the terms ‘renewal’ and ‘transformation’ interchangeably in order to explain the same kind of urban projects resulting in the destruction of whole neighbourhoods, and the eviction and forced displacement of inhabitants.
In an urban space conceived in a neoliberal logic based on market value of place and without a participative process taking into account the needs and desires of inhabitants, neighbourhood becomes the place where many social groups (minorities, political and/or religious groups, and so on) create enclaves within which their identity is recognized without repression, and these environments enhance the development of a relatively shared identity, connected to the neighbourhood, within the community. Many inhabitants, especially in informal neighbourhoods threatened by several planning projects, try to organize resistance even though such resistance is sometimes weak and not a general reaction. These communities have in some instances organized themselves into independent structures and have developed their own local protest that is not specifically expressed through street demonstrations. Their protest campaigns and their daily, unspectacular survival strategies challenge the connection between urbanization and civilization as claimed in neoliberal ‘development’ concepts (Mayer, 2012: 79); in other words, the state’s desire to renew these areas constitutes a direct threat to the community’s shared identity, thus triggering resistance to protect the areas which could also be analysed as a response to the agonistic and alienating practices and discourse of Turkish citizenship.\(^5\) Resistance here is understood as passive and sometimes invisible actions, strategies and tactics inhabitants use individually or collectively in everyday life in order to protect their way of life and the social and cultural specificities of their community that broadly shape their neighbourhood, reaching beyond their ethnic identity. In this article, this type of resistance is analysed in relation to the concept of ‘right to the city’ that Lefebvre developed in order to explain the right of all people living in the city to participate in decision making that concerns their everyday life and their right to exist in the city with their own lifestyle, identity and cultural habits. The right to the city is considered as a resistance to the standardization of city life. Michel de Certeau (1980) analyses this as a tactic used by the ‘weak’, involving everyday spatial hegemonies to be covertly transgressed, and identity to be projected through claims to a particular space of power that is neighbourhood.

I have selected two cases from Turkey in order to discuss this relationship between neoliberal city and right to the city as a result of the intensive neoliberal urbanization undertaken by the AKP government and because this process has dramatically affected the living environments of these two different communities.\(^6\) The case studies examine two neighbourhoods — 1 Mayıs and Sulukule — located in Istanbul. A comparison of examples of resistance to urban planning leads to the identification of some ways in which identity and space are addressed by these protests. This article also outlines several instances of this type of resistance that is directed towards more self-determined living conditions, highlighting the role of identity and space in the emergence of the resistance.

The article begins with an outline of the methodology and data-collection processes used, as well as a presentation of case studies regarding the general evolution of urban transformation in Turkey. The article first examines the historical transformation of urban planning in Turkey and the political context and measures that have led to its neoliberalization. Then show by which means the neoliberal transformation of the city leads to new forms of resistance and mobilization. Finally, I focus on the case studies in order to demonstrate how identity and space shape these acts of resistance. I also argue

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5 As it is not the main purpose of this article, I will not engage in further discussion about citizenship, particularly the socio-historical bases of Turkish citizenship and its effects on the identification of minorities by the Turkish state. This subject is discussed in depth in another of my articles, which could be regarded as complementary to this article (see Lelandais, 2013).

6 The AKP or Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) is led by R.T. Erdoğan, the current prime minister of Turkey. The AKP is a moderate Islamist party, founded in 2001 after the disbanding of the Virtue Party. It started its third term of government in June 2011.
that resistance contributes to the discourses and practices of city life, and therefore constructs a ‘sense of place’ (Bieri, 2002), which in turn reinforces identification with the neighbourhood.

Methodology, data and presentation of case studies

The two locations that I investigated were chosen because they are both the subject of a controversial urban transformation project, directly or indirectly, generating protest and public criticism. My choice was also motivated by the fact that these neighbourhoods are known for their ethnic characteristics and have been the object of stigma concerning inhabitants’ lifestyles, political orientations and ethnic origins. They are also examples of how minority communities create new ways of expression and possibility in order to protect and live out their identity-based specificities. These informal settlements are partly self-constructed and became legally recognized during a process of construction and restructuring. However, their inhabitants have produced this space as part of an ongoing symbolic and physical struggle against different state agencies, during which their living space was repeatedly threatened by destruction. By building their houses and neighbourhood, these semi-informal settlement dwellers produced spaces that have alternative forms to those dictated by the market and state codes (Fawaz, 2009: 836).

The reasons why inhabitants wanted to live in these locations are manifold: the majority of inhabitants of 1 Mayıs were rural economic migrants who came from Anatolia in the 1970s and have ethnic and religious identities that are contested by the state, while the Roma have always considered Sulukule to be their ancient homeland. However, in both cases, residents were persecuted, stigmatized and marginalized; state institutions regarded them as a problem because of their ethnic identities and/or political affiliations. For this reason, these groups created a protected world inside their neighbourhood, with its own rules and symbols, in which their way of life was not contested, the neighbourhood thus offering some security against the permanent threat of destruction and displacement. While 1 Mayıs has a strong political identity and collective mobilization history, Sulukule has never been a politicized neighbourhood, but is well known for its culture.

Therefore, it could be argued that identification and resistance are linked with lived local histories of persecution in those places that precede the current issue of neoliberal dispossession, and with the fact that there is already quite a coherent ethnic or political community in those places. The resistance in the cases studied thus emanates from a pre-existing strong attachment to the neighbourhood, which could be considered a rich place of already existing arrays of social relations forged over time through shared ethnic and cultural practices and identity in the case of Sulukule residents, and also through the migration and common foundation experience of the neighbourhood for those living in 1 Mayıs. What this means is that neoliberal urban transformation does not involve systematic resistance nor systematic identification with a place every time and under all conditions in different places. This is related to the fact that civil participation has generally been weak in Turkey since the coup d’etat of 1980, despite the huge number of civil-society organizations (Şimşek, 2004). Although this situation started to change after the earthquake of 1999 and civil-society activities spread in terms of quality, people still remain distrustful and are not ready to accept the consequences of such engagement.7

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7 The military coup d’etat of 1980 had serious consequences for society and its political and civic engagement. To give some examples: 650,000 people were placed in custody; 230,000 people were tried in 210,000 lawsuits; 517 people were sentenced to death; 98,404 people were charged with being a member of a terrorist organization; 30,000 were fired; 30,000 went abroad as asylum seekers and 23,677 associations were forbidden (Lelandais, 2008).
Characteristics of 1 Mayıs and Sulukule

1 Mayıs can be characterized as a poor working-class neighbourhood situated on a hill in the Ümraniye district of Istanbul (see Figure 1). It is therefore located close to two of the city’s main motorways and the new location of the National Bank of Turkey, and only fifteen minutes away from the Bosphorus by car, making it an extremely desirable location for the private construction industry (Gülhan, 2011). It is situated on the Asian side of the city, growing cumulatively in the 1970s via the gecekondus that economic migrants from rural Anatolia built. Initially the building plots were sold by the land mafia, but from 1976, left-wing socialist organizations started to settle in the neighbourhood. During the second half of the 1970s, control of the neighbourhood passed to these political organizations, resulting in land distribution that favoured dissenting families, particularly the Alevi people from the Kurdish cities of Tunceli, Kahramanmaraş and Sivas. The Alevi are one of the main religious minorities in Turkey and they interpret Islam in a secular way; their religious rituals are dramatically different from Sunnite interpretations and they are often politically close to the Kemalist left in Turkey (Massicard, 2012).

8 The name of the district commemorates events that occurred during the demonstrations of 1 May 1977 in Taksim, a day known as ‘Bloody Sunday’. On this day demonstrators were attacked by extreme right-wing militants and the police, leaving 34 dead and 126 injured.

9 The CEO of Varyap Meridian, one of the most opulent construction projects in Istanbul, declared in an interview that ‘after this construction, we will go to the other side’ (Varyap is opposite the 1 Mayıs neighbourhood). When the researcher reminded him that it was impossible to enter 1 Mayıs, he replied: ‘It won’t be us; it will be TOKI who enter there. We, then, will watch it . . .’ (Gülhan, 2011: 33).
In 1 Mayis, various services and institutions were gradually established across the **gecekondu**, all designed and managed by the residents, including popular committees, community centres, clinics, schools and cooperatives for purchasing food, fuel and construction materials. The district earned a reputation for political dissidence by repelling the **gecekondu** demolition teams three times in the 1970s, making it a site of resistance in the public imagination.\(^{10}\) After the military **coup d’État** of 1980, in 1983, the neighbourhood was ‘legalized’ by the military regime, which took over its control. A *muhtar* (neighbourhood headman) was elected and the neighbourhood was renamed **Mustafa Kemal**, which remains its official name today.\(^{11}\) In 2008 the neighbourhood was divided and each portion attached to a different district, so that the historic 1 Mayis neighbourhood now composes parts of the **Aşıkgazi** and **Mustafa Kemal** neighbourhoods, which are part of the Ataşehir district. Even so, kinship networks between people from the same Anatolian towns are still important, with many hometown associations still operating in the area (Toumarkine and Hersant, 2005). The current population is now approximately 15,000 (TURKSTAT, 2010), but today the neighbourhood is threatened by a wide range of urban transformation projects.

The second case-study neighbourhood, Sulukule, is located along the historical city walls in the Fatih municipality of Istanbul and is thought to be the oldest known settlement of Roma people in the city (see Figure 1). The neighbourhood is on the historical peninsula, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988, and is therefore close to the cultural and tourist attractions of Istanbul. According to some historians, the Romani community of Sulukule settled in its current location in the eleventh century, when Istanbul was the Byzantine capital (Kolukırık, 2009). While there are other neighbourhoods in Istanbul with Romani inhabitants, Sulukule’s historical heritage made it the most famous. Before its destruction, the majority of the Romani population were employed as musicians, dancers, mediums, peddlers or sieve-makers.\(^{12}\)

The Sulukule Roma are well known throughout Turkey for their lively music and dancing, and for their involvement in the entertainment professions. However, from the 1980s, Sulukule gained a reputation for crime and prostitution because of the Romani house-taverns and their female dancers. In the past, the community had run several entertainment houses that were the backbone of the area’s economy; however, in 1991, these houses were shut down by the police. Since then, the economic conditions of the community have worsened, with many residents relying on the support of their neighbours for survival. The district underwent several cycles of demolition, forced displacement and police intervention, all of which reinforced its negative image, while its inhabitants suffered high levels of social and economic instablity.\(^ {13}\)

The stigmatization of this district arises from the contempt of Romani culture in Turkey, which is officially identified as the source of these problems and which has served to justify the regeneration project. All agencies involved in the neighbourhood’s transformation agreed that its environmental degradation and earthquake risks created an

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10 During my fieldwork, when I asked bus and taxi drivers how to reach 1 Mayis, I was warned that it was a dangerous neighbourhood with a high level of crime, and that it was unwise to go there alone.

11 A local official administrator elected by inhabitants in each neighbourhood, the muhtar is the state representative at the first level from local to national. In Turkey, cities are composed of districts and each district is constituted of neighbourhoods for administrative purposes. Each neighbourhood has a muhtar, who is elected by the residents. Muhtars coordinate relations between the state and the citizens. They register the residents of the neighbourhood, provide official copies of ID cards and residence certificates, and announce the lists of voters in the neighbourhood. Villages are also managed by muhtars. Urban muhtars have fewer tasks than village muhtars.

12 It should be noted that most Roma in Turkey and all Roma in Istanbul are sedentary.

13 For a wide range of information about Sulukule, see the website created by associations and inhabitants inside the neighbourhood during the demolition process: http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.fr/.
urgent need for renewal.14 However, advocacy organizations and the inhabitants of Sulukule themselves demanded that these agencies take into account the needs and wishes of the neighbourhood’s residents, and that the project be realized without evictions.

Evidence for this article was drawn from in-depth semi-structured interviews with dwellers, developers and associations present in both case-study areas in order to propose alternative projects or to protest against existing ones, as well as public officials who had been involved in planning projects. Official documents such as public reports, advisory reports (plans and reports on transformation projects taken from the website of each municipality) and letters from international organizations (the UN, the European Commission, the Helsinki Citizen Assembly and American Congress), brochures, alternative project descriptions and presentations from associations were collected too. Archival searches of daily journal records were also conducted (Radikal; Hürriyet; Milliyet) to follow the chronological development of the topic of community resistance. Fieldwork was undertaken in two phases. The first phase took place between March and May 2011 in Istanbul to achieve first contact with inhabitants, civil-society representatives and activists in Sulukule and 1 Mayis. The aim of this phase was to observe acts of resistance in everyday life in order to analyse how the inhabitants perceived their living environment and what this space meant in the construction of identity and protest. Inhabitants (seven people in each case) affected by urban transformation projects, 20 activists in total who were fighting against the destruction of the neighbourhoods, and associations or platforms working to organize resistance were asked a range of questions during in-depth interviews. Research also included participatory observations, informal discussions and participation in meetings, seminars and association activities. Members of the Association of Sulukule Volunteers, Solidarity Studio, Planners without Borders and Movement for an Urbanism for Society in the case of Sulukule and Association of 2 September, Association of Tunceli, Socialist Party for Oppressed People and the Association for Rights and Liberties (Revolutionary Popular Front) in the case of 1 Mayis were the main interviewees. In the second phase of the fieldwork, between December 2011 and June 2012, I concentrated on focus-group interviews, mostly with activists (Sulukule Volunteers and Association of 2 September) and officials (muhtars, civil servants of the Planning Ministry and representatives of municipalities). During this phase, I aimed to fill in missing information about the field and to collect details relating to the history and transformation of the neighbourhoods.

In the section that follows I present the theoretical framework that guided this research and introduce a debate on the articulation of identity, space and resistance. Through observation of the effects of neoliberal urbanization on different areas in Turkey, this article aims to explain how these effects influence inhabitants’ way of being, as individuals with their own ethnic and cultural lifestyle, and how this prompts them to invent alternative ways of resistance against these effects.

**Urban planning and changing perception of the city**

Urbanization in Turkey is characterized by the absence of public policy on housing. A set of housing policy guidelines was never entirely inscribed in the political agenda of changing governments, and for a long time housing problems were resolved through

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14 This degradation is largely related to the behaviour of the local and national public agencies. The municipality never provided the necessary public services in the district, under the pretext of its supposed criminality; state agencies also had not regularized the professional activities of the Roma, something which would have enabled them to raise their living standards and repair their houses. In addition, by classifying the neighbourhood as part of the historical peninsula of Istanbul, they prevented any construction or improvement schemes unless residents had official authorization from the council to renovate buildings of cultural or historical heritage.
individual initiatives such as *gecekondu* (Türkün, 2011). This urbanization may be explained in accordance with three historical phases: the period before 1980, the period between 1980 and 2001, and the period after 2001. The first phase corresponds with the beginning of urbanization in the 1950s and is clearly related to the high rate of rural migration at the time (Öncü, 1988). In the absence of a formal social-housing policy, the informal market became the only mechanism through which to cater for growing urban populations (Erman, 2001). This particular solution to the ‘housing problem’ was implemented extensively in Istanbul; here, housing provision for low-income groups relied on legalizing unauthorized land appropriations and inner-city squatting (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010: 1483), resulting in the expansion of inner-city *gecekondu* areas. In Istanbul, this act of land taking was by no means legal, but nonetheless sanctioned, as it allowed the government to transfer the costs and the political consequences of urbanization to the migrants themselves. As a result, employers such as factory owners were able to disregard housing expenses when calculating labour costs, and politicians could tie votes to the provision of land alone. This arrangement was accepted as long as these newcomers provided for themselves and their needs, for example, by growing food in their own courtyards and walking to their jobs at nearby industrial factories (Şenyapılı, 1982). They were therefore able to reduce the costs of urban living. During the 1980s and 1990s, *gecekondu* living started to change; owners of *gecekondu* land sold the land they owned to a builder in return for one or two apartments in the building to be built, enabling initial dwellers to increase their standard of living. This gradual commercialization led to the solidification of a lucrative yet hierarchical market structure, with those who had economic and/or social capital enjoying the benefits of populist mechanisms while the majority was left unprotected in a quasi-legal market (İşık and Pınarçöglü, 2002).

During the period from 1980 to 2001, economic development dominated Turkey’s public policy, leading to the emergence of large-scale development projects such as the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), involving the construction of 20 dams and irrigation channels (Çarkoğlu and Eder, 2005). This era was also associated with the development of building cooperatives and the entry of larger building contractors into the housing market. During this period real-estate investment trusts were beginning to influence the housing market, and they identified inner-city *gecekondu* areas as potentially profitable sites. Governments preceding the AKP had not attempted to regenerate *gecekondu* areas, fearing a backlash from voters and subsequent electoral defeat.15 This view was changed only after two major crises in Turkey, the first being the major earthquake of 1999 in the Marmara Sea close to Istanbul, which caused the deaths of 16,000 people and the destruction of 20,000 buildings. This was closely followed by the 2001 financial crisis, which provoked considerable political and economic change, leading to the establishment of the AKP.

From 2001, a new age of urban planning began. The AKP decided to restructure the governance of Turkish real-estate markets and urban planning through the implementation of a number of legal and institutional reforms, with significant consequences for the socioeconomic geography of cities and the rural environment. The first stage of this restructuring was the expansion of the competencies of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKI) in 2003 through Law No. 4966, which permitted the transfer of all treasury lands for the use of TOKI with the permission of the Prime Minister in order to create land for housing. Between 2004 and 2008 several laws were passed by parliament in order to establish government policy guidelines for land and housing. Law No. 5162, enacted in May 2004, allowed TOKI to expropriate land in urban renewal areas, to establish partnerships with private firms and financial trusts and to develop transformation projects in *gecekondu* areas. Law No. 5216, enacted in July 2004, extended the rights of municipalities to make decisions about urban transformation projects.

15 In the 1990s, *gecekondus* made up 30% of the total number of buildings in Istanbul, housing almost half of the population.
projects and areas. Another important law granted municipalities and TOKI the right to carry out urban regeneration projects not only in zones considered to be decayed and unhealthy, but also in historical districts, ostensibly to renew and reuse them (Law No. 366, 5/2005). In 2007, Law No. 5609 made TOKI the sole authority to determine zones for construction and sale of public lands. Finally, in 2012, through a final law on reinforcement of buildings against earthquakes, government was given a free hand to undertake renewal projects everywhere in Turkey under the auspices of TOKI. As the central agency for all housing decisions, TOKI now plays an undeniable role in shaping current urban policies. Previously a non-profit public institution for social housing, TOKI today has the authority to undertake for-profit housing projects on state land, either through its subsidiary firms or through public-private partnerships, all to raise funds for the construction of so-called public housing (see Table 1). These changes to legislation have led to the neoliberalization of the land and housing regime in Turkey.

In order to legitimate these transformation projects and execute them with ease, the government chose a security-based discourse as a strategy to discredit opposition to urban transformation projects. In this context, the former president of the TOKI made this statement at a conference:

Today, urban transformation ranks among Turkey’s most important problems. But Turkey cannot address development without solving the problem of the shanty towns. It is well-known that the source of the health issues, illiteracy, drug use, terrorism and disloyalty towards the state lies in gecekondu areas. Turkey must get rid of these illegal and earthquake-susceptible buildings at all costs.

This view led to gecekondu neighbourhoods in Istanbul becoming the first targets of TOKI, which intended to replace them with new housing communities, thus reflecting the deep correlation of urban neoliberalism with imposing a certain social landscape on the city. This type of policy involves new and aggressive strategies of policing and surveillance aimed at particular groups and spaces, the criminalization of poverty and the

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**Table 1** Housing projects undertaken by TOKI-private partnerships in Istanbul (2004-12)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>% of Total Housing</th>
<th>% Social Housing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural-disaster housing</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-income housing</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>6.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing for poorer classes</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban-renewal housing</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For-profit housing</td>
<td>75.25</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public-administration housing</td>
<td>18.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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16 This law requires the parties to come to an agreement within one month. If there is no agreement from two-thirds of the owners of a building, the state may decide to apply for urgent expropriation based on a land value as determined by TOKI.
17 Since 2003, 65,808,239 square metres of land have been transferred to TOKI ownership at no cost (Radikal, 27 May 2008). Between 2003 and 2008, TOKI constructed approximately 340,000 housing units (50,000 of which are in Istanbul), 317 trade centres and 30 hospitals, in addition to numerous other buildings (see www.toki.gov.tr).
19 From a speech by the former president of TOKI, Erdogan Bayraktar, during the opening of a conference co-organized with the Urban Land Institute, 13 November 2007.
increased use of the penal system (Dikeç, 2009). The passing of the new Criminal Code in 2004 (Law No. 5237) for the first time made gecekondu construction a criminal offence, punishable by 5 years in prison. It clearly shows government’s ‘zero-tolerance’ approach on this issue. Gecekondu demolitions, which had previously been rare in Istanbul, increased dramatically; between 2004 and 2008, 11,543 units in Istanbul were demolished, a record high for any period (Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010: 1484).

Under this new urban regime, it became possible for TOKI to undertake planning and renewal projects anywhere in Turkey, regardless of the intended outcome. Moreover, the new laws gave public institutions wider powers to carry out such projects, including urgent expropriation, thereby weakening concerned inhabitants’ capacity for resistance and negotiation.

Identity, space and resistance in the neoliberal city

There has been a great deal of research on the evolution and remaking of urban and planning policies in Turkey (Buğra, 1998; Keyder, 2005; Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010; Özdemir, 2011). The majority of these underline the dramatic transformation of urban and planning policies in a neoliberal sense (Kibaroğlu et al., 2009; Balaban, 2010; Kuyucu and Ünsal, 2010; İşeri, 2011), and this change can particularly be observed from 2000 onwards after the accession of the AKP to political power.

Nevertheless, this tendency is not specific to Turkey. A great deal of research has emphasized the neoliberal character of the restructuring of cities in countries of the Middle East such as Lebanon and Egypt (Deboulet and Berry-Chikhaoui, 2002; Fawaz, 2009). Fawaz (2009: 840), for example, points out that public authorities in the post civil-war era proceeded to restructure Beirut by facilitating the establishment of gated communities and upmarket entertainment areas for the rich, and the proliferation of new forms of private policing and security systems all within a neoliberal urban governance. It could therefore be argued that urban policies in cities of this region are shaped in accordance with a neoliberal order in which the role of public planning has shifted towards entrepreneurialism and has been mobilized to boost large cities such as Istanbul, Cairo and Beirut as competitive regional centres in order to attract global and regional finance and service industries.20

Previously, the configuration of cities, particularly in terms of housing policies and the organization of space, emphasized social care, providing social housing and opportunities for lower-middle-class homeownership. However, in the past two decades, cities in Turkey have become central to the reproduction and continual development of neoliberalism itself, constituting increasingly important geographical targets and laboratories for a variety of neoliberal policy experiments, all aimed at increasing the value of the land. These include the creation of financial centres, the building of shopping malls and tourist attractions, and the construction of protected luxury accommodation (Pérouse, 2007). In Istanbul, several projects, such as the creation of Galataport (an entertainment centre next to the historical Galata Bridge), the transformation of the old Haydarpaşa railway station into residences and a shopping mall, investments for the Olympic Games, the Taksim Project (which led to the protests around Gezi Park in June 2013), the construction of a Formula 1 track, as well as the construction of the third Bosphorus bridge and airport and a project to create a financial pool by establishing the National Bank of Turkey near 1 Mayis neighbourhood, constitute examples of city branding.21

Global, regional and local capital has transformed Istanbul in ways that suggest that Istanbul has become a hub in global city networks, many of its features corresponding to

20 For an analytical interrogation of the neoliberalization of urban space, see Brenner and Theodore (2002) and Brenner et al. (2012).
21 Photos of all these project sites can be found on my research website, http://www.villeenturquie.wordpress.com.
the archetypal industries and production modes of the neoliberal era of the 1990s and 2000s: polarized labour markets, housing and construction booms, culture and tourism, deregulated entrepreneurship, specialized manufacturing and export, and aggressive regional control over energy and natural resources. Turkish businesses, large and small, have grown dramatically, extending their operations across a territorial area that is in some cases very large. At the same time, planning authorities at both the local and national levels prioritize concerns and issues such as neighbourhood security and inner-city cleanliness. Within this new configuration of the city, many historic neighbourhoods and low-income, marginalized or stigmatized communities are perceived as undesirable since their existence may affect the real-estate value of newly created city spaces. The increasing numbers of gated communities in Istanbul, for example, are evidence of the security intentions of the public authorities, related to the growing fear of crime that İşın (2004) defines as the result of ‘neurotic citizens’.

This neoliberal restructuring of cities has an authoritarian character, since it ignores the demands and desires of the majority of citadins, especially those who belong to the low-income working classes, some of which comprise minority groups. Consequently, alternative lifestyles, different political ideologies and various traditions of socio-political resistance flourish in the city, with the aim of resisting this evolution. In Turkey, such struggles and resistance tend to emerge in neighbourhoods and cities with a particularly strong group identity, which is often related to ethnic and/or political status and closely associated with the neighbourhood itself. Resistance is therefore connected to identification with a space, but also plays a crucial role in reinforcing this identification.

Early work on resistance, which focused on large-scale protest movements and revolutions in which members confronted their targets directly and openly, took for granted that resistance is visible and easily recognized as such (Tilly, 1978). However, the resistance I studied in these neighbourhoods does not necessarily refer to social movements or ‘contentious politics’ (McAdam et al., 2001). Bayat (2010) analyses less recognizable and less visible forms of resistance as social ‘nonmovements’. This broadly refers to the collective action of dispersed and unorganized actors, including nonmovements of the poor — namely the urban subaltern — to claim rights to urban space and amenities; that is, to live out their desired way of life, usually through an unarticulated strategy to avoid the cost of mobilization under repressive conditions. According to Scott (1985), this type of resistance also refers to the everyday ordinary practices of people. Scott emphasized that powerless people rarely have the resources or opportunity to resist their superordinates openly, and thus massive protest movements are ‘flashes in the pan’ (ibid.: xvi). Therefore I argue that ‘everyday’ acts still qualify as resistance, to the extent that they deny or mitigate claims made by the appropriating classes (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004).

While this article does not present an exhaustive analysis of the notion of resistance and space, it would relate them to Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city. Lefebvre’s work has played a major role in shaping contemporary thinking about space and proposing an alternative to capitalist urbanization.

Based on this research, it could be argued that as a social construction, space is produced through social relationships, and in turn constitutes those very relationships (Dikeç, 2007: 95). Space is never fixed in relation to identity; rather, it is always under construction, so in a city, identity and space interact continuously. If the city is defined as the space of these interactions, then identity constitutes a means of expression within this space. The city may also be the space where the citizen conducts him- or herself in public as a political agent with rights and liberties. Therefore, when the inhabitants of a city decide to defend their specific group rights, they are ‘being political’ (İşın, 2002) in order to reclaim their right to the city. In some neighbourhoods under transformation, such as Sulukule and 1 Mayis, but also Gülşuyu-Gülen-su, Başıbüyük or Ayazma — the other ‘renewed’ neighbourhoods — there is popular demand for urban life based on grassroots democratic participation and social needs being met instead of the imperatives
of private profit, a viewpoint Lefebvre famously referred to as the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1968).

For Lefebvre, the right to the city signifies in ‘the most positive of terms the right of citizens and city dwellers, and of groups they (on the basis of social relations) constitute, to appear on all networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange’ (Lefebvre, 1996: 194–5). In other words, Lefebvre (1968) explained the right to the city not as a simple right as we may understand it, but rather as a mode of being for all city residents. According to Lefebvre, the core elements of the right to the city are defined as the promotion of equal access for all to the potential benefits of the city, the opportunity for all inhabitants to participate in democratic decision-making processes, and the realization of inhabitants’ fundamental rights and liberties. Kofman and Lebas, in their foreword to Lefebvre (1996) state that in terms of Lefebvre’s approach, we must reformulate the framework of citizenship so that the right to the city unites the urban dweller and the citizen (Lefebvre, 1996: 34). Then it provides the possibility of participating directly in the conception of urban space and therefore encourages the equal and fair sharing thereof. The right to the city thereby expands into a broader right to space in and beyond the urban scale. The right to the city privileges therefore the perceived space of inhabitants over the conceived space of developers and planners.

In terms of neoliberal understanding, urban space is imagined as owned property, its role being to generate economic productivity. The right to the city destabilizes this viewpoint and offers a distinctly new vision of what the city is for (Purcell, 2008). In this ideology, the city comes to be seen as a collective, creative work by and for the residents, who may struggle to keep their perceived space as a site of resistance. In contrast to conceived space, which routinely ignores the complexities of daily inhabitancy, the right to the city underlines the needs of citizens as urban dwellers and is reflected by these particular forms of resistance.

In the case of Turkey, some neighbourhoods are clearly defined by people with particular ethnic, political or religious identities, such as the Kurds, Romani or Alevi who, in addition to being mainly low-income groups, also disturb political decision-makers’ sense of conceived space (Lefebvre, 1974). For Lefebvre, conceived space involves abstract constructions and technical space that is often associated with business and developers’ plans and projects. By contrast, the well-defined dissident neighbourhoods and cities of these groups are an example of a perceived space, based on the everyday perception of space by those who inhabit it (ibid.). Indeed, the city space conceived by public planning inevitably represents a segmented city with invisible borders that have a direct impact on its accessibility and habitability. Soja (2010) explains that this segmented city reduces the possibility of establishing a spatial justice inside the city that could be considered key in enabling us to understand the social and political conflicts occurring within it. Soja (ibid.: 5) argues that the spatiality of ‘(in)justice affects society and social life just as much as social processes shape the spatiality or specific geography of (in)justice’. In the case of Turkey, the question of spatial justice is dismissed by the neoliberal order in policymaking, particularly when launching urban transformation projects inside the abovementioned neighbourhoods. This political choice produces two results: it creates a segmented and unjust system in which a substantial proportion of the population is unable to live in the city centre; this in turn encourages the progressive marginalization and stigmatization of those displaced communities.

Currently, more than 40 neighbourhoods in Istanbul are under threat of forced displacement from the inner city to collective housing areas on the outskirts.22 Some of these communities are seeking, in their own way, to resist this process. While the new owners of the city are attempting to shape it in their own image, those who live in spaces

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22 By late 2007, 48 areas in Istanbul had been identified as future regeneration sites, a scheme involving the demolition of 1 million buildings and the renovation of a further 200,000 (Yalçintan, 2012).
under threat of transformation or destruction are inventing new languages and becoming involved in the counter-hegemonic practices of insurgence, refusal and resistance (İşin and Wood, 1999: 102). This struggle to define and appropriate space is based on reclaiming the right to the city regardless of a community’s cultural, social or political identity, even if politicians consider that identity to be marginal, outlawed or deviant.

**Neighbourhood as a resource for identity**

A closer examination of the socioeconomic and physical geography of 1 Mayıs and Sulukule reveals the neighbourhoods’ potential for rent generation, but also the high level of poverty and economic precariousness. Both neighbourhoods are close to the cultural, financial and historical centres in Istanbul, but in addition to being considered poor and socially stigmatized areas, they are also home to ethnic or religious minority communities whose rights have been undermined since the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923. Turkish citizenship, defined as a duty-based, passive identity that is state-determined rather than self-constructed, is conceived against imagined internal and external enemies, resulting in the spatial-temporal conditioning of state and society against the outside world and the ‘other’ (Lelandais, 2013). This perception has dominated Turkish state tradition until recently, meaning that these ‘other’ ethnic communities have become increasingly concentrated around certain districts, where they have constructed neighbourhoods that reflect their way of life, enabling them to escape the social stigma of their identity and symbolic repression by the state.

In this context, the neighbourhood plays an important role in determining the identity, the way of being and the position of individuals vis-à-vis the external world. Mills (2005: 443), for example, explains that ‘landscapes are powerful materializations of collective memory, because particular forms in the landscape both come from and reproduce this memory by serving as symbols that remind us of the past’. Both in 1 Mayıs and Sulukule, the collective memory created inside the neighbourhood permits people to maintain an identity and to resist losing it. Moreover, the spatial roots and ties developed within these neighbourhoods help individuals and groups to maintain a consistent identity, and this relationship with the neighbourhood also encourages the inhabitants to resist the spatio-temporal divisions imposed by neoliberal policies. Inhabitants represent and project themselves in their daily environment, which is made up of both the neighbourhood and the city; in return, their living space confers significance to their behaviour, the city assigning identity by locating the individual socially, economically and culturally. For example, one of the founders of 1 Mayıs who still lives there defines the neighbourhood as follows:

> I think we should keep alive our neighbourhood because we earned it by the blood of our comrades. There are resistance memories in every corner of it. This neighbourhood marks our social memory. It always provides a place for revolutionary activities and leads to the production of progressive ideas. Despite all problems and political measures targeting the neighbourhood, it is still a revolutionary and red neighbourhood (Hüseyin, age 60, founder resident of 1 Mayıs).23

In addition, the social networks constructed in the neighbourhood are instruments for preserving identification with the neighbourhood, giving residents the ability to resist in order to protect this space of identity. Therefore, in addition to these minority groups being forced, for a long time, to fit into a fixed Turkish identity, the neoliberal top-down character of urban policies constitutes a new type of oppression for these groups by denying their right to physically exist within the city (Parla, 2011). Neighbourhood

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23 All interviews were conducted in Turkish; all extracts in this article were translated by the author.
cements a shared identity related to place among residents, not only in relation to the specific codes and practices associated with ethnicity. This identity is enriched by traditional customs, social networks, rituals, symbols, collective memories and mechanisms of mutual assistance that exist only within the physical living environment of that community.

The spaces studied in this article are characterized by relative social and ethnic homogeneity (although this homogeneity is not observable in the way resistance takes place), which leads to strong identification with a small territory in which the majority of dwellers’ socialization takes place, while the dense kinship connections in a local space establish effective mutual assistance networks. As an inhabitant from Sulukule emphasizes:

We were able to buy a little bit of food with the little money we earned each day. The grocer registered it in his notebook and we paid it when we had money. If we were having difficulties, the owner of our apartment told us to pay whenever it was possible. We didn’t need much money to live in Sulukule (Türkan, age 39, resident of Sulukule since birth).

The inhabitants of Sulukule and some inhabitants of 1 Mayıs were born there or, once settled in the neighbourhood, never moved. They did not leave their neighbourhood frequently. Some of Sulukule’s Roma are employed in the restaurants and bars of the Beyoğlu district, but in both case studies it was found that the inhabitants of these areas spent most of their time within their neighbourhood.

Identity, in so far as it relates to belonging to a space, was also mentioned several times by the interviewees as an important aspect of individuals and as a source of pride. In Sulukule, resistance by community organizations also focused on the issue of identity. Several aspects of Romani culture, in particular their music, the festive character of their gatherings and their gaiety, contradict the character of delinquency that the public authorities attribute to this neighbourhood. In both instances, identity is specifically related to the neighbourhood or city, with inhabitants in both places underlining its importance to their sense of self:

You have seen the Byzantine castle walls around our neighbourhood. They might appear to you like ordinary stones but, actually, they were our shelter. It was a shelter that covered our poverty, our quarrels, and our honour. The district was our house. It was regarded in this way. There was neither murder nor child kidnapping. We were a merry neighbourhood from which music was heard all the time and our evening — you know the Carnival of Rio? — it was like that, but every evening. Our celebrations, our joys, our sadness, our burials . . . we were sharing everything together. It was the place that made us what we are. When they destroyed our neighbourhood, we suffered like a mother separated from her child. It was everything for us (Şakir, age 43, resident-activist in Sulukule).

1 Mayıs is a place where there is no oppression and where everybody can find their place and live. It’s a left-wing neighbourhood. The human being is central to the vision of people here. I understand the value of 1 Mayıs when I’m outside. Other neighbourhoods are stand-offish, conservative. Individual rights are limited. When I come back here, I relax. In 1 Mayıs, there are opportunities for people to develop themselves. They [state institutions] tried to destroy it but they didn’t succeed (Kamil, age 41, resident of 1 Mayıs).

It is interesting that in spite of a general sense of stigma and the negative image these settlement areas have, the inhabitants themselves generally have a positive image of their living environment, and define it as the only place where they feel free. Inhabitants’ lifestyle and origin, and their collective memory of the past, all contribute to the formation of an identity based on this sense of belonging.

In 1 Mayıs, identification as defined by residents is nourished by a shared memory of past struggles and is closely related to the neighbourhood itself. 1 Mayıs provides significant resources for individual inhabitants to build their own identity, and this identity, in turn, helps to maintain collective action to protect the neighbourhood.
This neighbourhood represents, in fact, the struggles of the 1970s. Even at the beginning, the goal was not that 1 Mayıs become a symbol of that period, of political solidarity and revolution. It is a place where revolutionaries showed what they were capable of, a place that kept alive the memory of the 1 Mayıs incidents in Taksim. It is the symbol of our political ideals (İsmet, age 52, resident of 1 Mayıs for 30 years).

This processing of shared memory is reinforced by certain symbolic events and acts. For example, one community organization aiming to educate the young people of 1 Mayıs was named 2 September to highlight one of the milestones of the neighbourhood resistance movement. Also, every year all the local political and associative organizations hold a cultural festival (1 Mayıs Mahallesi Festivali) in the neighbourhood where, since 2009, urban policies and regeneration have become the main topic of debate. The Alevi also demonstrate their traditional dancing and music, making the festival an important opportunity for community solidarity. The festival therefore acts as a place for manufacturing modes of identification, categorical attributions, symbolic borders, signals and devices of difference (Dorier-Apprill and Gervais-Lambony, 2007: 176.). The individual is engaged there in both body and spirit, joining the collective action to maintain strong social links, make ethnic identity visible and assert a neighbourhood identity. This festival works against the atomizing or individualizing effect of urban life, restoring people’s appreciation of self, the other and the world as intrinsically collective (Marchal and Stébé, 2011: 91).

This maintaining of identity in 1 Mayıs is also apparent in the names chosen for parks and communal areas such as health centres, or from the slogans that are visible on walls in the neighbourhood. For example, every school or health centre has both a legal name and an everyday one that is used by inhabitants, which often refers to the social history and revolutionary heritage of the neighbourhood. The first public park of the neighbourhood was inaugurated by the municipality as Park of Mustafa Kemal Mahallesi, but inhabitants close to radical left groups renamed it Şükrü Sarıtaş Park (see Figure 2) to commemorate a young boy who was killed during a rally in the neighbourhood. 3001st Street is informally named Avenue of 18 May to commemorate the assassination of İbrahim Kaypakkaya, one of the young leaders of the 1970s socialist movement in Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Paşa Health Centre is named after another revolutionary ‘martyr’, Hasan Kızılkaya. This symbolic act of naming clearly demonstrates people’s determination to dissociate themselves from the dominant political system, and to represent themselves on their own terms. The collective memory of the district thus keeps alive this historical resistance and the ‘martyrs’ whose photographs are publicly displayed, as shown in Figure 2.

These examples show that the spatial identification process intensifies when inhabitants share a common memory, and that this sharing is threatened by the attempt of external agencies to reconfigure their living space. According to James Scott (2009: 150), the development of these self-determined communities supports the emergence of a distinct and unified subculture; their members establish their own codes, myths, heroes and social norms. In a similar way, the isolated, homogenous conditions and dependence experienced by the dominated promote the development of such a subculture. When this

24 2 September 1977 was a turning point in the history of 1 Mayıs. On this day, inhabitants’ resistance to an attempted demolition resulted in the death of six people. On the same day in 1995, after a violent riot in another district of Istanbul that caused the death of 17 people, a solidarity demonstration was organized in 1 Mayıs, and inhabitants took part en masse. This demonstration also ended in a riot, and five people were killed during confrontations with the police.


26 On 29 October 2000, Şükrü Sarıtaş, a 15-year-old sympathizer of the DHKP-C (Revolutionary Popular Front) was shot dead in the neighbourhood of 1 Mayıs by members of the extreme-right party MHP.
occurs, the subculture itself becomes a powerful force of social unity, encouraging a common way of seeing the world (Scott, 2009: 151). This social unity eventually becomes an instrument designed to preserve collective identity, giving residents the ability to mobilize and resist in order to protect the space of identification.

The conversion of space into a resource for resistance

During the fieldwork for this research, undertaken during 2011, one surprising common view was held by all people from the neighbourhoods affected by planning projects: without exception they said that it would be unimaginable or impossible to live in any other place, and that this was one of the main reasons for their resistance. They could not understand why they did not deserve their city and why they were not wanted there.

This feeling of injustice led to protests and acts of resistance within the locations under investigation; for the inhabitants, this injustice was obviously connected to certain characteristics of their neighbourhood. They were seen to be undesirable because of their ethnic and political affiliations; they had become stigmatized by the public authorities who portrayed their living spaces as criminalized, dangerous and run-down zones dominated by widespread opposition to the state. In Sulukule, a native inhabitant explains:

They say that we have robberies, prostitution and battles in the street here and that the Romani culture is like that. It is criminal by nature. This statement is a lie. There are sometimes incidents, but there are also people with a really good heart here. Them, they prefer to present our neighbourhood like a nest of crime. Like that, it is easier to destroy it. Nobody opposes that (Şakir, age 43, resident of Sulukule for 43 years).

Therefore, when organizing resistance, the privileged place of action is the neighbourhood, via the practices and customs of everyday life. In this way, space and identity become deeply connected, and resistance becomes a way for residents to reclaim the right to have a place in the city and to preserve their life space, which is the source
of their raison d’être. Space creates shared identity, and this has the effect of consolidating the symbolic place of ‘space’ in the shared memory of inhabitants. Therefore, the destruction of this space, or the obligation to leave this space, means the end of that identification and memory.

In both neighbourhoods, people’s fear of loss is strongly associated with neighbourhood, which is considered as the place that creates their identity. In Sulukule, even external organizations such as the Platform of Sulukule have focused on the micro-culture of Sulukule and have not sought to link their aims to the recognition of Romani identity at a national level. The Romani perceive the transformation project as an uprooting, a rupture in their collective history. It has encouraged them to resist and participate in each stage of the regeneration process. Although acts of resistance were not observed at Sulukule until the start of this regeneration project, the reason for this was because Sulukule constituted the Romani’s ancient stronghold, which had remained intact despite all attempts to destroy it. In other words, for them, Sulukule represented a refuge and place of protection in which they were not stigmatized, excluded or abused. It was a place of serenity and stability where they could live and assert their identity to the full. The destruction of Sulukule would spell the end of their collective history, and thus generated great anxiety about their future identity. They understood that once this regeneration project was completed, the very space that had shaped their identity would no longer be accessible to them. One inhabitant said:

Before the transformation project, there was no spirit of resistance in the neighbourhood. People were not organized. We learned to resist with this project. Myself, I’ve only got a primary school diploma. After the project, I became urban expert, planner and lawyer. I experienced them in protest, in real life. I learned to go and talk at the European Parliament, on panels in Greece. We would like to show that Sulukule is a democratic place and its people resist in a legal way. Our protest was our music, dance, colourful costumes and our culture. We are very happy to do this. We represented Sulukule at a global level and in a democratic way (Şakir, age 43, resident-activist in Sulukule).

However, action and resistance was neither a common decision nor easy to organize. From the beginning, inhabitants could not agree on common action. Some did accept the municipality’s proposition and put pressure on others. Therefore, opponents and supporters constituted two rival associations (called the Association for Romani Culture and the Association of the Inhabitants of Sulukule, respectively).

In 1 Mayıs, inhabitants argued that state agencies were seeking to pervert the revolutionary character of their neighbourhood by encouraging criminal activity. They believed that this was a government strategy for stigmatizing 1 Mayıs in order to legitimize the urban transformation project; their action was therefore focused on this issue. A neighbourhood website was created with the title ‘Against degeneration, defend your neighbourhood’ (this site no longer exists). Regular meetings are held by the two main political organizations, the Socialist Party of Oppressed People and the Revolutionary Popular Front. The cultural association 2 September organizes cultural events, dramas, study programmes and an annual festival in order to preserve the neighbourhood’s collective identity. In the case of 1 Mayıs, collective action appears to be in keeping with a highly charged and constantly reiterated local history, allowing the district to remain in a state of a permanent memorial mobilization. Resistance is framed and organized by one or two political organizations that control access to the neighbourhood, both physically and in relation to land and property ownership, so protest is not generated externally. As a result of this localized form of resistance, the structuring of neighbourhood awareness takes place in a defensive, cumulative way, with certain elements of the extreme left acting as a catalyst (Pérouse, 2005: 143). There are often confrontations between the police and young activists, mainly members of the Revolutionary Popular Front, some of whose members are currently in custody.

Another important point is that the resistance does not necessarily represent an organized social movement with its own leaders, ideologies or strategies. Resistance is,
in fact, observable through the everyday individual and/or collective practices of inhabitants. The main purpose of such resistance is to maintain inhabitants’ mode of being, which is closely intertwined with the identity created inside the neighbourhood and city. Resistance is expressed through different ways of challenging social and cultural domination, but ultimately it is a way of reclaiming the right to the city.

In these examples, resistance opposes both the discrimination that is apparent in the spatial organization of the city and the rules of institutional citizenship that regulates space by means of fixed power relations. The inhabitants of these two threatened neighbourhoods organize resistance through what Michel de Certeau defines as the ‘tactics’ of making do (de Certeau, 1990: xl). Interviewees from both 1 Mayıs and Sulukule emphasized the particular character of their neighbourhood, and the strong solidarity of residents. In this discourse, they used their living space to construct and reflect a vision of their neighbourhood that is far removed from its widespread reputation as an undesirable area. Through everyday rituals, by maintaining their customary habits and by creating alternative lifestyles, they assert their right to exist in the city. Sulukule inhabitants continue to celebrate their feasts — such as circumcision of young boys, and weddings — among their destroyed houses. The majority of the 700 families who were displaced to Taşoluk left their new houses to reinstall themselves near Sulukule, and reproduced the daily life they had in Sulukule before the destruction. They created music groups to perform concerts and to valorize Romani music. Inhabitants of 1 Mayıs try to keep a specific identity inside the neighbourhood, and to resist the social and political assimilation perpetrated by the state, via festivals, political parties and associations, and especially the Cemevis (Alevi places of worship), which represent Alevi culture and serve as a place of socialization.

In this framework, identity can be seen as a strategic move that stakes a claim to space (neighbourhood) by asserting unity and power over and through that space against an exteriority (Secor, 2004: 360). As de Certeau (1980: 7) explains, what is specific to such strategies is their production of territory, of a spatial ‘property’ that enables the projection and assemblage of ‘totalizing systems and types of discourse’.

The examples of Sulukule and 1 Mayıs demonstrate that the neighbourhood and the city constitute a ‘social site’ where such spatial identity-based resistance emerges. In this particular case, resistance corresponds to what James Scott (2009) defines as ‘infra-politics’, namely the circumspect daily struggle carried out by subaltern groups beyond the demonstrations and noisy rebellions. Scott states that subaltern groups can use these infra-politics to create a ‘hidden transcript’ that corresponds to a mode of being and acting that identifies an individual as a member of a specific group. The place where this hidden transcript is created — in reality, the neighbourhood — is a privileged ‘space of dissident, subversive, anti-hegemonic and oppositional discourse’ (ibid.: 39).

This alternative type of resistance can be observed in both neighbourhoods in different ways. Initially, resistance in Sulukule was organized with the help of organizations such as the Union of Architects and Engineers, Solidarity Studio, Urban Planners Without Borders and the Movement of Urbanization for People, whose members are external researchers, architects, planners and students. Although the mobilization in Sulukule was initially instigated by these organizations, some inhabitants became increasingly involved in the action, albeit with training and guidance from these external associations. They founded Sulukule Platformu (Platform of Sulukule) in 2006, which gave residents an insight into activism. Resistance was organized around two connected topics: first, mobilization activities were aimed at drawing attention to the inhuman character of AKP’s urban projects, whose objective was maximum profitability rather than the construction of a socially equitable city-space. Sulukule Platformu sought to show that regeneration projects systematically targeted disadvantaged neighbourhoods to exclude low-income social classes by effectively expelling them from the city centre. The right to live in the city and the right to a comfortable living environment thus became central concerns for the movement. Secondly, resistance activities were connected to the cultural identity of Romani. The discourse of residents and activists relied on the Romani’s
historical occupation of Sulukule to demonstrate that the Romani are the ‘real inhabitants’ and ‘real owners’ of Istanbul, and that they, too, have the right to invest the city with their identities, traditions and practices.

However, after the destruction of Sulukule, its inhabitants understood that their collective action had failed. They had lost their homes and the social ties of their neighbourhood. From then onwards, their resistance changed, becoming connected to their daily behaviour and practices. First, the Romani did not easily accept their resettlement to Taşoluk, which did not consider their way of life. They regarded Taşoluk as a ghetto, as it was almost completely cut off from the downtown area of the city, making it impossible for them to maintain their traditional profession as musicians.

They proposed to install us in an area 30 km away from here where there is nothing that looks like a city. To take a bus, to see a doctor, it is necessary to walk kilometres. All these things could be managed in some way but we are musicians, we earn our living like that. Tell me, who will travel 30 km to listen to us? Who will come to our houses? Our music is our life. We cannot live without it, but they tell us to find other jobs even though we cannot do anything else. They should give us the freedom to exercise our talent here in Sulukule (Şakir, age 43, resident-activist in Sulukule).

As a result, the majority of the Roma returned to the district of Fatih, to neighbourhoods near Sulukule. As Sulukule was demolished, they rented apartments or moved in with close relatives, especially in Karagümrük, where another important Romani community is situated. In this way, they reproduced the daily structure of Sulukule society, including the same social unity and similar street arrangements, in particular that of the male society meeting in the Turkish cafés. The precarious social status of the Roma has worsened, but they have succeeded in creating a new enclave, albeit with stricter rules of entry for strangers. The previously extrovert nature of Romani culture has been replaced by a more introverted attitude, the community having become suspicious of the outside world and its incursions into their neighbourhood.

Conclusion: new forms of citizenship?

This study shows the role of neighbourhood in forming a spatial protest identity. It also opens a new debate about new forms of citizenship based on claims to the right to the city. In the two case studies, inhabitants developed a type of local citizenship related to their sense of belonging to their spaces, based on their lifestyles and ethnic origins as well as a collective memory of the past (Lelandais, 2013). These communities’ attachment and loyalty to the political system is determined by the level of respect that the political system accords their way of life. In the absence of such respect, their citizenship is transformed by acts of resistance against the system, and actions that challenge the legitimacy of public agencies. The destruction of a neighbourhood creates a rupture in the social contract that binds its residents to the state. Therefore, by claiming their right to the city, the inhabitants of Sulukule and 1 Mayıs legitimate their refusal to be moved away from the centre of the city by a discriminatory, segregated system of spatial organization.

The case studies outlined in this research also show the importance of space and its appropriation through acts of everyday resistance. This means that even the

27 When I came to Sulukule for the first time, I was introduced by an activist who was well-known to the people of Sulukule, therefore I was welcomed and could discuss the association of Sulukule and the Roma with the representatives of the community. When I went back to the neighbourhood for the second time alone, to observe everyday life in the streets, I was not welcome and the neighbourhood children did not permit me to go into some streets.
neoliberalization of public planning has led to the radical reorganization of the supra-urban scalar hierarchies in which cities are embedded; cities thus remain strategic arenas for socio-political struggles (Purcell, 2008). Recent protests organized against proposed urban development plans for Gezi Park in Taksim Square in Istanbul during May and June 2013 showed the importance of symbolic spaces (neighbourhoods, squares, parks, and so on) in the emergence of resistance, as *citadins* would not allow *top-down* public decisions about their living spaces, which are considered to be part of their identity and represent landmarks in their everyday life.\(^28\) The acts of resistance described in this article also show that the appropriation of space is a more complex process than is usually acknowledged. Despite all the tools of physical and symbolic domination that state institutions wield, social activism and resistance within the city strive to transform the socio-territorial organization of capitalism itself at multiple geographical scales (Purcell, 2008).

However, these findings do not suggest that when facing the same type of threat, such areas always create practices of resistance. Instead, the nature of the projects in their neighbourhood and the geography of the space in which people are living play a key role. Moreover, inhabitants’ resistance does not always reflect classical means of protest such as meetings, strikes, rallies, petitions or street demonstrations. Rather, my research shows that inhabitants’ resistance is apparent in their everyday life, some symbols and rituals being specific to their collective identity and memory.

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\(^{28}\) For a detailed analysis of Gezi protests, see my research website, [http://villeenturquie.wordpress.com](http://villeenturquie.wordpress.com).


