

Emergent Local Initiative and the City: The Case of Neighbourhood Associations of the Better-off Classes in Post-1990 Urban Turkey

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Summary. This article investigates the voluntary local organisations of the better-off classes in the Turkish urban context. Based on empirical research conducted with four neighbourhood associations (NAs), information is provided regarding their process of establishment, leadership, autonomy, goals and projects, resources and obstacles, which points to the significance of context. The research demonstrates that Turkish NAs differ from those in the West in terms of their commitment to ideological as much as pragmatic issues. In their response to the ‘Islamist’ versus ‘secularist’ polarisation in society, they seek to create their own localities as the places of secular and cosmopolitan people; and in their response to the increasingly unregulated and poorly serviced city, they struggle to create orderly localities protected from unlawful rent-seeking practices and equipped with adequate amenities. The NAs may be regarded as civic initiatives that empower the locality. Yet, by doing so, they may cause uneven development in urban space.

1. Introduction

This article investigates voluntary local organisations in the Turkish urban context and asks the question of whether and in what direction the neighbourhood associations (NAs)¹ of higher-income groups, which are a quite recent phenomenon in urban Turkey, affect the city at local and supralocal levels. It aims to understand the reasons that have made them appear in the Turkish context, their outcomes in terms of their influence over their localities and cities, and what these outcomes mean in the context of civil society in Turkey on the one hand, and the making of urban space on the other. It seeks to answer in what ways, if any, they differ from those in the West. In the belief that NAs can be best understood by understanding

the context in which they have been founded, we locate the NAs in the broader context of changes in cities in the neo-liberal era and in the social and political context of Turkey. Specifically, we address the following questions. What goal(s) do these associations set for themselves? What resources do they use to achieve their goal(s)? What are the major problems, if any, that hinder them from achieving their goal(s)? What activities and projects do they carry out? Do they largely remain local or go beyond the neighbourhood in their activities and projects and, in particular, do they have international connections and/or connections with other NAs? To what degree do they have influence over their localities and the city at large (both

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transformative and preservative) and in what direction do they tend to change them? As civil society organisations, to what extent and in what ways do they maintain their autonomy both from capital and state?

We have chosen two cities—namely, Ankara and Istanbul—and two NAs in each city, one of them set up in a residential area and the other in an area of mixed use.² These are Kavaklıdere (KAM; mixed use) and Çiğdemim (CIM; residential) in Ankara and Beyoğlu (BEY; mixed use) and Cihangir (CHG; residential) in Istanbul. The two cities have very different histories and urban characteristics. Whereas Ankara's development is relatively recent (it started flourishing in the 1920s when it became the capital of the Turkish Republic; it was built as the modern planned city of modern Turkey) and largely preserves its bureaucratic character, Istanbul has had a rich history during which it has housed diverse ethnic and religious populations and has acted as the capital of various states, including the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires. Today, it is the largest metropolis of the country where big capital, the cultural industry and national and multinational service sectors are located.

The four NAs chosen for the field study are the earlier ones that have remained active since their establishment in the past decade. They are established in localities with different urban characteristics exemplifying the recent trends in big cities—namely, regeneration, gentrification, the exodus from inner-city neighbourhoods and the formation of satellite towns. In choosing these localities, our aim is to inform the readers about what kind of changes are taking place in the big cities of Turkey today and how NAs make sense of and respond to these changes. Furthermore, we look at the relationship of the NAs with each other and with other civil society organisations, as well as with the local government and business, to find out if an autonomous civil society is emerging in the Turkish context.

We conducted in-depth interviews with the presidents of the four associations. The interviews lasted between one and a half and

three hours. We attended the meetings of the board of directors of KAM and CIM. We collected information on the associations from their brochures, newsletters and websites. We participated in two conferences ('Civil Initiative for a Livable City' and 'Civil Ankara is Talking: Neighbourhood Associations'). In the former, KAM, CHG and the Heidelberg Association from Germany made presentations, and, in the latter, KAM and CIM. In addition, we visited each site, making observations and talking to local people.

In the sections that follow, we first provide brief information about the general tendencies that shape the production of urban space in the neo-liberal era and cover the literature on local civic participation and the potential roles of neighbourhood associations. Next, we inform the readers about civil society in Turkey. We then proceed to describe each NA chosen for the field study, addressing the specific questions we have asked earlier, concerning their process of establishment, leadership, resources, obstacles and autonomy. We contextualise each NA in its locality; this is important since there is the assumption that NAs are established in and for the locality. We provide detailed information on their actions and interactions to enable the readers to understand them as agents dealing with the complexities and tensions of their roles in their localities and in the society at large.

2. The Production of Urban Space in the Neo-liberal Era and Local Civil Society Organisations

We may identify two major trends that affect the production of urban space in the neo-liberal era. First, there is the increasing intervention by capital that leads to urban 'regeneration' (Smith, 2002) and to the production of spaces of consumption (Zukin, 1998). Secondly, there is the decentralisation of urban governance. These trends, which are strongly felt in the capitalist West, are nonetheless present in countries with moderate economies. In the literature, they emerge as largely shaping the roles taken on by neighbourhood associations.

In this context, the global city literature (deriving from Sassen, 1991) has flourished with a focus on the capital side, studying both economic production and the cultural consumption practices that are transforming city spaces. In so doing, it largely missed other factors, such as social movements, urban politics and civil society in the production of city space (Davis, 2005).

Despite the limited literature on the civil society side of global urban restructuring, there is renewed interest in organised civil society in the post-Cold-War era. In the Western context, citizen participation in urban governance is regarded positively both by the left and the right as the welfare state becomes less important and decentralisation proceeds (Docherty *et al.*, 2001). For the right, it is local communities taking accountability for their localities as they get involved in local action and decision-making and, for the left, it is local people's influence in local governance, that is good about citizen participation at the local level. In this framework, neighbourhood organisations are regarded as mechanisms for bringing political power to local people and allowing them to affect policy issues (Lance, 2004; Matejczyk, 2001). They are framed in terms of citizenship, place and democracy (Şenol, 2004). The importance given to citizen participation in urban governance has led to empirical studies, although limited in number, that have investigated, for example, whether the civic culture in the neighbourhood has affected local political participation (Docherty *et al.*, 2001) and what factors have influenced the type and amount of political activity in neighbourhood associations (Lenk *et al.*, 2002). In addition, community can be envisioned as a mobilising force built upon collective grievances, producing citizen- or constituency-based identities that are different from class-based movements (Kling and Posner, 1990); local collective action can be mobilised against the intervention of capital or state (Oakley and Verity, 2003). In this framework, especially in inner-city communities that face regeneration (Fischer, 1984; Foley and Martin, 2000), in minority communities (Portney, 1997) and in those inner-city

neighbourhoods where crime rates are high (Sampson *et al.*, 1997; Donnelly and Majka, 1998), attention is paid to the conditions that would create collective action and local participation. The outcomes of participation in locally based organisations for youth (Quane and Rankin, 2006) and Blacks (Martineau, 1976), as well as how this participation affected residents' perceptions regarding their ability to improve the neighbourhood (Ohmer and Beck, 2006) have also been investigated. Neighbourhood organisations have been analysed with respect to the discourses used to empower community activism (Martin, 2003).

Complementing the view of neighbourhood associations as the bases of political power of poor and minority communities, there is the view that regards them as instruments used by neighbourhood residents of all socio-economic groups to achieve concrete goals regarding the quality of services in the neighbourhood (Rich, 1980). As the idea of decentralisation of urban service delivery systems has come on the agenda, the questions of whether this will lead to unequal access to resources between higher- and lower-income-groups, as well as the ability of neighbourhood organisations to represent the community, have received attention (Swindell, 2000). All in all, neighbourhood associations, defined as

grassroots mediators between citizens and the state, and help to increase citizens' capacities for gaining access to decision-making processes related to local urban services and goods, and to self-governance (Şenol, 2004, p. 17)

have gained significance and the institutionalisation of their role in urban governance is debated in the Western context (Rich, 1980). In this perspective, the focus is not on the mobilisation of people to challenge and change the *status quo*, but on citizens working within the system to improve it.

In brief, in the literature, neighbourhood associations are framed as having potential for community activism on the one hand, and as local participation in quality-of-life issues and local governance on the other. This view may be restrictive in terms of

pointing to the diverse roles that neighbourhood associations may play in different contexts. This article, by investigating neighbourhood associations in the Turkish context, aims to broaden this perspective. Furthermore, although residential community associations set up by profit concerns, including homeowners' associations—which, by “increasing property values, and maintaining an aesthetically pleasing setting” (Smith, 2006, p. 13), cater for the interests of the better-off classes—have been the subject of several studies (Smith, 2006; Chen and Webster, 2005; Langbein, 2004; Yip and Forrest, 2002), the focus in the literature on neighbourhood associations has been more on disadvantaged communities that are expected to gain some power and control over their localities through local organisations. This article takes a different turn and focuses on better-off NAs to see the dynamics behind their formation and actions.

Despite the literature on local civil society regarding urban governance and community activism, studies that investigate neighbourhood associations with respect to their influence on the city are limited. However, today, cities are remade under the economic regime of neo-liberalism and city spaces are increasingly contested. Hence it is important to understand what kind of changes neighbourhood associations can make on urban space, especially those of the better-off classes who may have the resources and connections to achieve changes. To study neighbourhood associations in relation to the city and urban space is also important because, as the state withdraws from its regulatory role, it is through local civil society organisations that people may control their localities, which may mean different outcomes for different classes. In the context of Turkey particularly, where the social structure is very dynamic, the political system is in the process of consolidation, urban infrastructure and services are inadequate and decentralisation is required by accession to the European Union (EU), the subject of neighbourhood associations as mechanisms of local control and regulation, and the question of what functions are taken

on by local organisations of the better-off classes, are worth exploring. In the following section, the Turkish context is explored in relation to civil society and the city.

3. Civil Society, Neighbourhood Associations and Urban Transformation in Turkey in the 1990s

Turkey has experienced a rapid increase in the number of civil society organisations (CSOs) since the 1980s, especially during the 1990s. Although this may be regarded as civil society's increasing involvement in politics, and hence the democratisation of society, some scholars caution us, arguing that quantity does not necessarily mean quality—that is, that the impact of CSOs on political life is trivial despite their large number (Şimşek, 2004); and that the relationship of civil society and democracy with Islam is quite complicated, and civil society's involvement does not automatically ensure democratisation (Kadioğlu, 2005). The EU plays a significant role in the development of CSOs that promote democratic participation. However, Turkish civil society remains fragmented and, like the economic sector (Vorhoff, 2000), it is divided along cultural and ideological lines (Şimşek, 2004). Since the 1980s, Islamic CSOs have increased in number (Kadioğlu, 2005) following the adoption of the Turkish–Islamic Synthesis in the aftermath of the military coup of 12 September 1980. Its aim was to create a new national identity that would put an end to the ‘separatist’ mobilisation of the 1970s; and, in the 1990s, when Islamist groups increased their power and visibility in politics and society, “the conflict over secularism was probably one of the most central issues that shaped public life in Turkey” (Navaro-Yashin, 2002, p. 6). As a result, in the tug-of-war between the two ideological positions, CSOs supporting the Turkish Republic's founding premise of secularism were set up (‘secularists’).³ The victory of the Islamist party in the 1994 municipal elections, which was regarded as the ‘conquest of the city’ in the case of Istanbul (Bartu, 2001), increased the tension between secularist and Islamist

groups, as the Islamist city administration took control over city space (Çınar, 1997).

Policies that targeted the liberalisation of economy were introduced into society in the 1980s and the economic model of import-substitution industrialisation was replaced by a model based on export, which opened the protected domestic market to international competition. As a result, the private sector shifted its attention from manufacturing to housing and land markets, which had been largely left to small contractors in the pre-1980 period (Keyder, 1999; Öncü, 1988). Cities began to change under these new conditions. Istanbul in particular experienced major interventions, transforming its urban form (Aksoy and Robins, 1994). Renewal projects were carried out to attract global capital. New building types (such as shopping malls, department stores and chain-store hypermarkets) emerged, along with the high towers of big capital and the office buildings of the new service sector; multinational companies began to open their branches in Istanbul (Erkip, 2000). Furthermore, satellite towns and gated communities began to appear on the peripheries of big cities.

Informality, which has been dominating Turkish cities as squatter communities multiplied following major migration to cities, is not limited to peripheral neighbourhoods; it takes place in established neighbourhoods as violations of building codes and regulations. The situation has deteriorated as liberalisation has put its stamp on city space (Keyder, 2000).

Following the end of military rule (1980–82), the first NA founded by the better-off classes was BEY in Beyoğlu, Istanbul. This was followed by the one set up in Nişantaşı, an exclusive area of the wealthy, again in Istanbul. In contrast to the two NAs that represent the interests of big capital, several NAs were formed initially as civil initiatives (platforms)⁴ to resist a specific project in their localities—for example, Ayaspaşa, to stop the construction of the Park Hotel, a huge structure criticised for violating Istanbul's historical cityscape; Arnavutköy, to struggle against the construction of the third Bosphorus Bridge, one of whose footings

would be built in the district; Kadıköy, to stop the pier project of the municipality; and Moda, to stop the highway planned to pass through the district. In brief, the NAs that were formed as the extension of big capital were pioneers, ironically paving the way for civil initiatives organised to protect their localities against the intervention of capital and state.

Other NAs followed the earlier ones in the 1990s. They were set up in well-known districts of historical Istanbul, such as Cihangir, Fener, Galata, Balat, Kuzguncuk, Rumelihisarı, Bebek and Balat, and in the Prince Islands (Ada Dostları Derneği), which were once home to non-Muslim minorities. As in the case of the Kuzguncuk neighbourhood Association, these NAs tend to “locate nostalgia for the lost *Istanbul*, the Greeks, Jews and Armenians”; they are engaged in the reproduction of “a social memory of a past cosmopolitanism” based on “nostalgic narratives of multicultural tolerance in the past”, as well as a well-connected community based on a romanticised image of the *mahalle* (neighbourhood) life of the past (Mills, 2006). A recent book written by a resident, *The District where Three Religions and Famous People Meet* (Ebcim, 2005), is a good example. NAs gained momentum in the 1990s when the conflict over secularism intensified. Some other NAs, such as Çağdaş Leventliler Derneği (Association of Contemporary/Modern People of Levent) (1996), were formed to fight against illicit physical developments in their neighbourhoods.

Compared with Istanbul, Ankara is limited in terms of its active NAs. In addition to those established in Kavaklıdere (KAM) and Çiğdem (CIM), which we have investigated in our field research, there are a few NAs founded in established districts—for example, Bahçelievler, which was set up to prevent the spatial expansion of a private hospital in the district, and Esat, to prevent the bus route from passing through the district which would bring heavy traffic. They are not active any more. On the other hand, there is a recent trend to establish NAs in developing suburbs of the city (for example,

Çayyolu Platform), to seek visibility and control over their residential environment. In the following section, the four NAs in the field study are described.

4. The Beyoğlu Beautification Association (BEY) in Istanbul: Big Capital in Action

4.1 The Locality and BEY's Process of Establishment and Leadership

BEY was set up in 1985 in Beyoğlu, a major district of Istanbul, under the leadership of an up-market clothing store owner, in close connection with the municipality. Because of the increasing importance of space in the global integration of Istanbul, especially in the case of Beyoğlu, the liberalist municipality allied with big capital to regenerate the district, which led to the establishment of the first NA in the Turkish context. Its goal was to fight against the district's downgrading as it was increasingly accommodating the poor and 'social misfits', including prostitutes, and to bring back old Beyoğlu, which was the centre of vitality in the 19th century when the non-Muslim Ottoman bourgeoisie dominated the district (it was then called Pera). Under the prevailing liberal ideology of the 1980s, the municipality, together with the association, initiated attempts for its revitalisation, emphasising its historical heritage to market it in international tourism. In the process, its main street, İstiklal Caddesi (Independence Avenue), was converted into a pedestrian alley in the belief that it would attract upper-class shoppers and foreign tourists. Meanwhile the 'enterprising' mayor, in his 'global city' project, was transforming the wider district, during which many historical buildings were demolished while constructing a highway. Today, Beyoğlu has become the centre of cultural activities and entertainment, as well as shopping and business. It accommodates the offices of civil society and political organisations, and now and then becomes the site of anti-establishment demonstrations. Poverty and run-down buildings are still present in its backstreets; they are the other face of Beyoğlu. The only exceptions are a couple of backstreets recreated as 'islands of

culture and luxury' for entertainment; their invaluable old historical buildings have been renovated to create some sort of a theme-park (for example, the French Street designed by a member of BEY, which has been criticised for being *kitsch*).

BEY's current president runs a company that offers vocational training programmes in the trendy tourism sector. He was invited by BEY's board of directors to become a member when he chose an old historical building in Beyoğlu for his headquarters and renovated it. He is 35, whereas the average age of the members is 60.

4.2 Goals, Projects, Activities

BEY's recent project, which is supported by the municipality, is the 'Street Children Project'. As Beyoğlu increased its popularity and began to attract people from different social strata for many different activities, the number of its users increased, today reaching 2 million at weekends. In the context of increasing urban poverty, it also attracts street children, a quite recent phenomenon in Turkish cities. BEY's president came up with a project: in a co-ordinated action with the Governor, a rehabilitation centre would be built outside Beyoğlu, somewhere on the city's periphery, and, as one of its activities, it would train male street children (some were in their 20s) as local security guards. The project benefits BEY in more than one way: by making the district safer, it promotes shopping and other profit-making activities; and with its humanitarian content, it has the potential to restore BEY's image of being the association of high society.

The president has another project, the 'Beyoğlu Enterprise Project', in which his goal is to market the local historical commercial enterprises as brand names in national and international markets. In another project, he aims to present Beyoğlu as Istanbul's Old Town, marketing this image in international tourism. Furthermore, he wants to open the main street to motor traffic, which is a very controversial issue.⁵ This, he says, will bring back 'A-class consumers' (the rich, the educated, the cultured, those who go shopping

in their cars), as well as those who would emulate them in their desire for social mobility. The president claims that, because of BEY's access to financial resources, it is not a problem to improve its physical structure—i.e. to renovate the historical buildings in the district (we doubt it)—what is really important is to improve its human quality. And physical renovation is usually accompanied by 'social cleaning'—i.e. those who inhabit old buildings illegally or by paying low rents are dislocated.

BEY, under the new presidency, targets, in the president's terminology, 'tailor-made' projects that aim to raise BEY's profile, such as the Classic Automobile Fair project during which 50 expensive cars will be exhibited and the Longest Runway project during which 90 fashion models will walk along Istiklal Caddesi for the benefit of street children. These events are out of context and do not fit in with the social characteristics of the district.

4.3 Resources and Obstacles

Big capital has vested interests in Beyoğlu and many business people, who have their enterprises in the district, have become BEY's members to increase their local influence (many do not reside in Beyoğlu; they mostly live in gated communities on the outskirts of the city). As the president says, the association is called 'little TUSIAD' (the Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen [*sic*]) by some, implying its business-like orientation. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. BEY can achieve its projects by using the networks within the top echelons of society. On the other hand, there are strong criticisms directed against BEY because of its interest in profit-making and its sterilising attempts, trying to take away the cultural colourfulness and social diversity of the district, which is the essence of Beyoğlu (Selek, 2001, p. 130). Thus, BEY faces the problem of the legitimisation of its actions. Another obstacle for BEY is the nature of the locality: Beyoğlu, as the site of commerce and popular entertainment, of historical heritage and diverse cultures, and of poverty and prostitution, as well as the

action space of civil society organisations, is rather uncontrollable; it embodies wealth and poverty, establishment and resistance at the same time,⁶ making intervention difficult. In brief, despite its potential economic power and political connections, BEY's transformative capacity is limited.

4.4 Autonomy and Relationships with Other Actors⁷

In the process of establishing itself, BEY's strategy was one of collaboration with those in high places, including politicians and high-level bureaucrats. Membership of BEY is based upon invitation and those whom it is believed will contribute to the association are invited by the board of directors to join it. In this way, the former governor of Istanbul became a member and served as BEY's president for two consecutive terms.

Despite BEY's close contacts with those in power, its relationship with other NAs is weak. The president says that he wanted to establish a platform that would bring together the local associations in the region (including CHG), but he could not find the energy he expected ("They failed to be up to my standards") and cut off his relations with them. Furthermore, BEY is not interested in international funding (for example, from the EU). BEY was able to collect 1 million dollars from its members to light the district's main street in an attractive manner and Siemens, although not a registered member, even brought an engineer from Germany to design the project.

The president states that BEY does not experience any conflict with the local government.⁸ He acts pragmatically, giving priority to those projects that will receive the municipality's support.

5. The Cihangir Beautification Association (CHG) in Istanbul: Gentrification and Historical Heritage on the Scene

5.1 The Locality and CHG's Process of Establishment and Leadership

Cihangir is a residential district close to Beyoğlu that has a rich history dating from

Ottoman times and it is in the process of gentrification. In the past, many non-Muslim families (mostly Greeks, Jews and Armenians, who constituted the bourgeoisie of the time) resided there, whose numbers decreased over the years as they immigrated out of Turkey. Their residences were occupied by those migrants from rural areas. Because of the deterioration in the district, some families who had been living in Cihangir for generations moved out. In the 1980s, as the larger area began to be upgraded, and especially when Beyoğlu turned into a popular area for shopping and entertainment, the demand for Cihangir increased and its 'high ceiling' stone houses built by Italian and French craftsmen over a century ago, became the centre of attraction. "Special people, conscious people", as CHG's president put it, came back, including former residents, artists, intellectuals and foreigners (Europeans and Americans, who used to live in Cihangir when they worked in the city as journalists, academics and foreign representatives). They renovated the houses, improving their quality, which led to the rocketing of prices. Thus, gentrification became the order of the day.

CHG was set up in 1995. A specific event triggered it. Following the 1994 municipal elections, which ended with the victory of the Islamist Welfare Party,⁹ the municipality began to paint sidewalk border stones in green (the 'colour of Islam') "in order to put its stamp on the city", as CHG's president put it. When municipality workers entered a street in Cihangir to paint its border stones, local people reacted to it: "Is this place a mosque? We won't let our street be painted in green". They then decided to set up an organisation, saying, "The Islamists came to power. We are losing control over our neighbourhood. Let us organise ourselves".

Today, CHG is run by two women: while the president, an economist, did not have any experience in civil society organisations before CHG and learned everything by trial-and-error, the vice president, who had moved back from Germany 10 years earlier,

was a member of the teachers' union in Germany. She says

The '68 generation wanted to change the world but failed. Now it is time to think globally and act locally. Each NA is a building stone of a better society at the global level.

5.2 Goals, Projects, Activities

CHG's first project was to rebuild the deserted park owned by the municipality. The architects in the district prepared the project and the municipality chose to co-operate, providing materials and labour with which to build it. The project won the 'Best Urban Practice' prize for being a good example of co-operation between civil society and local government. Meanwhile, the park was cleansed of 'street bums and drug users' and around it iron fences were built with an iron door locked at nights. Recently the 'Young Mothers' Committee' has been formed to build a playground in the park that has special toys (they will be designed by the artists in the district); and it has appeared in the media under the heading 'We Make Our Own Park'.

CHG's main goal is the conservation of the old historical buildings in the district and it limits its attention to their physical condition. The renovation of buildings, some of which was carried out by UNESCO, has given CHG a positive image. CHG wants old buildings to be bought by the 'right people' so that their 'right' restoration is possible; it is open to the idea of historical buildings being used as company headquarters if that means well-restored physical structures. CHG is not against gentrification. On the other hand, CHG promotes the discourse of a locality where the educated and the wealthy (gentrifiers) are friends with local people.

Since CHG's main commitment is to preserve the physical character of the neighbourhood, it often has to fight against building code violations (such as adding attics, extending entrances, making additions), which occasionally sours its relationship with local merchants. It has a long history of lawsuits;

and its victories, owing to its lawyer members, as stated by the president, have given CHG a good reputation and some power. Today, CHG is known for its actions against unlawful rent-seeking attempts. It uses its quarterly newsletter to announce unauthorised developments and puts pressure on the municipality to take actions to stop them. However, despite CHG's many complaints filed to the municipality, building code violations continue.

CHG's second goal is to make Cihangir a green environment. In one project, they planted trees along one of its streets; and in another project, for which they applied to the EU for funds, they aimed to protect the only green area in the district (the Roman Garden; notice the international character of the name).¹⁰ CHG has had some success in protecting the local environment: they succeeded in moving the base station out of their neighbourhood; also, they took action against the petrol station and moved it outside the neighbourhood.

CHG does not carry out projects that target social problems; instead, it directs people, as put by the president, "to professional groups in the city". Furthermore, CHG does not organise trips or visits to museums, theatres and the like. It aims to create a sense of community through its newsletter, informing local people about neighbourhood events and people. CHG organises a festival every year, which is a colourful event. The festival's success lies in the many artists, musicians and intellectuals who live and/or have their studios and art galleries in the district.

CHG, in the words of the president, is against "sterile neighbourhoods" and emphasises its "mosaic character" built upon its cosmopolitan past, non-Muslims living together with Muslims. Today, Cihangir attracts people who enjoy a cosmopolitan way of life (Ilkuçan, 2004). Ironically, Cihangir was in the media about the attempts of local people to 'clean their street' from transvestites (who mostly worked in the entertainment sector in Beyoğlu). The president rejects any connection with this event, saying that the street is outside Cihangir's borders. Furthermore, as

Cihangir is gentrified, homeless people living in old buildings have become more visible. While a few young intellectuals argue for tolerance, saying that they should learn to accept the homeless into their lives, others define 'street people' as a serious problem.

5.3 Resources and Obstacles

The historical heritage and cosmopolitan character of the neighbourhood have the power to mobilise people, including those who are not CHG members ('Cihangir lovers'). Intellectuals (architects, academics, journalists, writers, directors)—"Cihangir's brain power", in the president's terminology—may contribute; and non-Muslims, who were once its inhabitants, want to keep their connections through offering their help. Despite this mobilising force arising from the historical identity of Cihangir, CHG has the problem of a lack of permanent participation. It has more than 300 registered members, yet the president and vice president, both retired women, mainly shoulder the association's load and direct its activities.

CHG has limited financial resources. It does not have an office space of its own. It has moved several times, sometimes using as its office the workplaces of its members. Before the 2003 national elections, the social democratic Minister of Culture promised to restore an old historical building owned by the state: it would function as an Art Centre and part of it would accommodate CHG. However, when the Islamist Party won the elections, this promise was forgotten. Today, to buy an office is out of the question because, as the president put it, "This district has become very expensive".

5.4 Autonomy and Relationships with Other Actors

CHG's president emphasises that it is very important to maintain the association's autonomy *vis-a-vis* both the state and business. CHG seeks to have working relations with authorities, including the (Islamist)

municipality.¹¹ It aims to keep an equal distance from all political parties and to form “warm relations”, as put by the president, with those in office, regardless of their political affiliations. Meanwhile CHG and the municipality keep their differences, both political and taste-related.¹²

CHG does not have established relations with other NAs. As the result of increased sensitivity to a potential earthquake in Istanbul, which developed after the 17 August 1999 earthquake during which 15 000 people died, some NAs started to meet regularly, but this was short-lived. A detailed traffic map of the area, which would be critical during an earthquake, was the product of these meetings. CHG avoids any contacts with BEY because “BEY caters for the economic interests of its members”.

6. The Kavaklıderem Association (KAM) in Ankara: The Republic’s Modern Urbanites Seeking Visibility and Action

6.1 The Locality and KAM’s Process of Establishment and Leadership

This is a prestigious district of modern people of the Republic (meaning secular and Westernised in the Turkish context). Despite the fact that it was completely residential in the early years of its development, commercial places have started dominating the district, accompanied by residents’ exodus to satellite towns. Its main street Tunalı Hilmi has boutiques and various other stores. In 1991, a big luxurious shopping mall (Karum) was built in the district. Kavaklıderem (KAM) was set up in 1996 by a leather-shop owner, who mobilised local store owners to compete with this new development by making Tunalı Hilmi an attractive street in which to shop. He was impressed by Nişantaşı, an elite Istanbul district where a NA was established earlier; by setting up a NA himself, he hoped to improve his district. Yet, as he told us, this did not mean “going élitist”. On the contrary, he built his vision of the city on social democratic premises: for him, a city should have squares for people to gather,

where “we share our sorrow and our joy; squares are the cradles of democracy”. He believes that a truly urban life requires a civic ethic in which people are aware that they live as a collectivity, solve their problems collectively and pay respect to each other. He says, “I belong to the ‘68 generation. I believe in organised society”. He was politically active in the leftist mobilisation of the 1970s, which was suppressed by a military coup in 1980. In the 1990s, he wanted to be active again. However, this time, he changed his target: “Since I could not do politics, I wanted to do something for my neighbourhood”. After two years of preparation because of long bureaucratic procedures, he set up KAM in 1996 with six others (all university graduates). They called the association *Kavaklıderem*, adding an ‘m’ to their title (‘my Kavaklıdere’). They were inspired by *Nişantaşım*, and, in their title, they wanted to express the sense of belonging and civic responsibility they felt for their neighbourhood.

What made the association publicly visible was a crisis situation when the municipality wanted to build a traffic road that would pass through the district’s famous Kuğulu Park (‘Park with Swans’), which had become the symbol of the district. This threat to the park, which was perceived by the residents as the ‘Islamist’ mayor’s attempt to hurt ‘secular people of the Republic’, created a big mobilising energy. KAM started a campaign against the project. In the end, the park was saved when KAM persuaded authorities to define it as a natural protection site because of its trees.

6.2 Goals, Projects, Activities

Following its success in preserving the park, KAM increased its activities directed to the physical environment: it placed benches, flower pots and garbage bins along the main street; repaired sidewalks; organised seminars for apartment caretakers to teach them about recycling. This dynamism directed to the district’s physical structure has lost its impetus today. On the other hand, the Kuğulu Park

Festival has become an annual event. KAM started publishing a quarterly newsletter. To increase the quality of life in the district, it organised a campaign against blowing horns. However, the district continues to be polluted by the noise made by vehicles.

KAM defines as its broader goal the creation of a livable city through civic participation and in its specific goals it seeks to encourage local residents to take initiatives to improve their neighbourhood and to put pressure on the municipality to receive adequate services.

Today, KAM has small projects that aim to increase the quality of life (for example, KAM plans to make a street accessible to 'physically challenged people' as it says in the English version of its brochure) and to create a sense of community in the district (it has formed a drama group and a band to attract the youth; it organises trips to different parts of Turkey). Also, KAM is involved in supralocal activities (KAM supported the Arnavutköy Civil Initiative in Istanbul in its struggle against the third Bosphorus Bridge project; it participated in the protest against increasing bus fares and against the Mayor's attempt to close the city's central square (Kızılay), once the heart of modern Ankara, to pedestrians).

In brief, KAM has defined its goals as it moved on. As its founding leader, who is committed to making a change in society, says, "In the beginning, we did not know exactly what we would do. In the process, as we met other civil society groups, we found our direction". Ironically, this move of KAM towards 'humanitarian' projects on the one hand and towards 'entertainment' activities on the other (plays, concerts, trips), has caused local store owners, the initial actors in KAM's establishment, to complain about KAM, saying that local problems (such as the garbage left in front of stores and street vendors blocking stores' entrances) are left unsolved.

6.3 Resources and Obstacles

KAM's active members represent Ankara's educated élite, who form a relatively small group with multiple connections to each

other. KAM utilises its network to carry out its activities and this brings KAM a sense of informality. However, today there is an attempt to make KAM an autonomous organisation that operates on a formal basis (holding regular meetings, keeping official records). Despite KAM's social capital, general participation in the association is low: the association has 360 members and only about 10 members are active. This is the major complaint of the president. He says

I don't understand why only a few people attend our meetings, while the meetings of the Lions or the Rotary Club are so well-attended. Probably this is because the association lacks the prestige to attract people.

Today, the district does not have a life-threatening problem and hence it lacks the mobilising force to increase local participation, although the continuous threat by the mayor to Kuğulu Park creates a potential for mobilisation.

KAM has recently gained some visibility. In Turkey's accession to the EU, civil society organisations have become active and KAM is invited to their conferences and its guidance is asked. This opens up new possibilities for KAM.

As the second problem KAM faces, the president points to the conflict with the metropolitan municipality run by an Islamist mayor. For example, during the New Year celebrations, when KAM decorated the main street with the sponsorship of brand chain stores in the district and the donations received from local store owners, the metropolitan municipality, which regulates the city's main streets, charged a fine. On the other hand, the social democratic district municipality supports KAM's actions. KAM's nightmare would be to lose the district municipality to the Islamist Party, which might continuously create obstacles for its projects.

6.4 Autonomy and Relationships with Other Actors

To maintain its autonomy, KAM tries to keep its distance from rent-seeking actors.

Resisting new developments in the district becomes as important as putting new projects into practice since commercial rent is increasing in the district as it has been increasingly used for entertainment purposes. Today, KAM has some legitimate power to be able to act against the interests of those who seek rent: KAM was able to prevent the conversion of a park into a parking lot to serve the customers of the cafés in the burgeoning *chic* part of the district when the social democratic district municipality, in its concern to present a democratic image, refused the project, saying that KAM was against it.¹³ KAM is open to co-operation with other NAs.

7. The Çiğdemim Association (CIM) in Ankara: Quest for a Community and Civic Engagement in a Developing Satellite Neighbourhood

7.1 The Locality and CIM's Process of Establishment and Leadership

This neighbourhood, which is developing into a satellite town, is a quite recent residential area whose development began 15 years ago on the city's periphery; it is still under formation. It is mainly residential and many students and academic personnel from the universities in the vicinity live there. The neighbourhood still has some shanty-like squatter houses (about 250 houses) built in the steep valley where construction is not suitable and this creates a sharp contrast with the high-rise apartment complexes built for middle-income-groups (*site* in Turkish).

CIM was set up in 1996 in close collaboration with the *muhtar* (the elected local head) under the name 'Çiğdem Education, Environment and Solidarity Association'. Later on, inspired by KAM, an 'm' was added to the title, showing the association's strong sense of ownership of the locality. CIM cut off its relations with the *muhtar* when he was perceived as an obstacle to the association's autonomy. Today, CIM is run by a small group of residents (mostly middle-level bureaucrats and teachers) under the leadership of the current president, a

university graduate in his early 40s. He is a social democrat and a member of several civil society organisations known for their secular stance and their commitment to environmental preservation. He is the engine of CIM and the board of directors (mostly retired people) acknowledge his role in the association.

7.2 Goals, Projects, Activities

One of CIM's goals is to create a sense of community in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is a new one without a past and hence it lacks social and physical structures (established social networks, local stores, cafés and the like) that create opportunities for local people to meet in their daily lives. Furthermore, a life shaped by living in high-rise apartment buildings and moving around in cars is typical in the neighbourhood. Thus, CIM people want to create the neighbourly relations of old times which, they say, are lost today. One of CIM's projects is to celebrate the 'Neighbours' Day' every May. In their aim to create a sense of community, they have formed a drama club, a Turkish classical music chorus and a drawing group; and they offer guitar, chess and English courses. One of the rooms of CIM's prefabricated building is used as the local library, carrying over 3000 books donated by residents, and CIM is proud of it. CIM fosters participation in cultural events and rents buses to go to concerts, plays, operas and museums in groups. It organises trips to other cities. It also organises weekly talks and various festivals (such as a kite festival) and contests (such as a bicycle race, a chess tournament). Furthermore, a website has been created for residents to discuss neighbourhood problems and CIM's activities and achievements are announced there; a monthly newsletter is published, which is financed by advertisements.

Another of CIM's goals is to increase the quality of life in the neighbourhood. This is especially important in this neighbourhood which is still being created. The construction of apartment blocks continues in the middle section which, with its unpaved roads

without sidewalks, looks like a construction site. CIM tries to put pressure on the municipality to improve infrastructure and to build new roads and sidewalks. Furthermore, CIM people seek to create a green and clean environment. In the past three years, they have organised the students of the local school and have planted 3000 trees. Last Environment Day, they walked with the slogan 'For a Clean Neighbourhood', picking up litter in the streets. They collected signatures against the base station in the neighbourhood's shopping centre (which created tension with local shopkeepers). They acted collectively against the open car sale market set up at weekends, and succeeded. CIM is environmentally conscious: they started a campaign for collecting used batteries, although there is (yet) no arrangement set up in Ankara to destroy them. Thus, CIM people, like KAM, have developed projects as they noticed them in their daily lives.

CIM seeks to create a cosmopolitan local identity despite Ankara's limitations compared with Istanbul: on its website, it has displayed the news about the opening of a Protestant church within the neighbourhood's territory, following an Orthodox church that opened three years before.

CIM regards the squatter houses in the valley as a problem (both a physical and a cultural problem) and they want immediate action to 'regenerate' the valley. However, the municipality avoids the problem. In the meantime, CIM takes on civic responsibility and, in co-operation with a foundation, it tries to contribute to the local squatter people by offering literacy courses for adults and after-school drama and music courses for the youth. CIM has a hidden agenda in doing so: CIM people want squatter residents ('the lower class') to internalise their middle-class values and way of life. In these courses, along with the course material, CIM aims to teach the squatter youth 'appropriate behaviour'—for example, waiting in line to get drinks, cleaning shoes before entering the class—so that 'they can adapt to society'. In their belief in civic duty, they are planning

to provide sports opportunities to the squatter youth, who today pose a problem by their idle presence in groups. The president is willing to take to a play 'those students who behave themselves', accompanied, when possible, by their parents so that they, too, can learn about 'urban culture'. CIM, with its belief in civic duty, goes beyond the local: CIM people collect used clothing and used books, and send them to other civil society organisations to be distributed to the poor. This is different from CHG in Istanbul, which leaves such activities to specialised groups.

CIM defines the ideal neighbourhood as self-sufficient with its shopping, cultural, educational and entertainment facilities so that residents would not have to go to the city, which fits the recent trend in Ankara. And they believe that conscious citizens should not expect every service from the government, and this again fits the recent trend of decentralisation. To this end, they have taken an initiative and started collecting solid waste from residents, selling it to a company.

7.3 Resources and Obstacles

CIM's president complains about limited participation in CIM despite the large number of university people living in the neighbourhood. He says that the number of active members is at most 25, despite the fact that the number of members has reached 144; members would usually identify problems without taking an active role in solving them.

The other obstacle CIM faces is its limited financial resources. It uses a small prefabricated structure of two rooms as its office building, handed over by a construction firm. The board of directors meet in one of its small rooms, discussing the agenda while the majority sit on stools. There is no paid employee working for CIM. In brief, CIM largely remains as the organisation of a small group of people interested in improving their locality through their own means and efforts.

7.4 *Autonomy and Relationships with Other Actors*

CIM wants to maintain its autonomy by remaining outside politics, which is regarded as corrupt. It had frustrating experiences in its past, first with the *muhtar*, who tried to use the association for his political gains, and then with the social democratic district mayor, who did not keep his promise.¹⁴ In the city, the 'Ankaram Platform'¹⁵ has recently been set up to fight against the activities of the Islamist metropolitan mayor, who opposes both ideologically and practically the values of the social democratic secular community. Joining the Platform has some potential to carry CIM beyond the local level.

8. Discussion: NAs as Civil Initiatives for Local Control, Collective Local Identity and Urban Change?

These four local associations founded by the better-off classes share some similarities, yet they have their differences. What they have in common is local people's staking a claim to their neighbourhood and their attempt to have influence over their locality. While local collective action generally develops against urban entrepreneurialism in the capitalist West (Oakley and Verity, 2003; Martin, 2003), in the Turkish case collective action usually takes place against intervention grounded in ideological politicisation. Thus, we make as our first point that the NAs in the Turkish context differ from those in the West in their emphasis on political-ideological orientations; they are more interested in political-ideological than material gains. As much as the quality-of-life issues, which are among the major concerns of the NAs in the West, the 'dominant-way-of-life' issues become salient for the Turkish NAs, as 'Islamist' and 'secularist' lifestyles and values are contested in the public realm. The NAs may be founded initially with specific goals directed to the local context but, in the course of time, under the influence of the broader political context, they become oriented to larger political issues. In the

Western context, NAs tend to develop based on residents' perceptions of neighbourhood problems (Şenol, 2004); but, in the Turkish context, people set up NAs when they come to believe that society has gone out of their control (ideologically), which makes them strive to create their own territories protected from the politically induced changes in the city, which they perceive as undesirable. The emphasis placed on 'my neighbourhood' in the titles of the two NAs in the study can be understood in this context.

Furthermore, as nationalist and Islamist identities are increasingly fostered in society, the NAs attempt to construct a local cosmopolitan identity. In this way, they compete for the construction of the cultural identity of the city. This is in line with Mills' (2006) findings. The emphasis on cosmopolitanism may be affected as much by political and cultural tensions in the city, as by the EU accession process in which the claim of being European gains significance.

As another major goal, the NAs want to have some control over their localities to make sure that rules and regulations are observed, as the city is left unregulated. This is usually as the result of local governments' ineffective presence or their abstaining from their regulatory role, usually because of their clientelistic relationships (Danielson and Keleş, 1985), and under liberalisation since the 1990s, because of the intervention of 'organised capital' (Keyder, 2000). Furthermore, the NAs want to provide their localities with adequate amenities (parks, libraries, a community centre) as the city is increasingly poorly serviced. As their cities change out of their control (physically), they seek control over their localities. Thus, as our second point, we state that, in addition to their commitment to create a society and a city that they envision in their political imagination, through civic participation they strive to create an orderly and livable neighbourhood, although in some cases the first objective may overshadow it. They also want to create a sense of community and collective identity built upon the nostalgia of the past when available. BEY, on the other hand, aims to create

an élite environment of the urban upper classes and carries rent-seeking concerns.

They are successful to varying degrees, and the third point we make is about the obstacles and the sources of success. The goal of the NAs to keep their locality properly regulated, in general, is bound to fail under present conditions. Rent-seeking activities in the localities, as well as political conflicts with local governments act as macro-level barriers for the NAs, hindering their accomplishments. On the other hand, although quite modest, NAs may produce some positive changes in their localities. Their success lies largely in their potential to mobilise local, and in some instances, international resources (for example, former non-Muslim residents living abroad). This may be economic capital (big business) as in the case of BEY, or cultural capital (historical heritage) as in the case of CHG, both established in Istanbul; and it may be social capital (the network of the educated élite) as in the case of KAM in Ankara. Istanbul has advantages in mobilising people because of its historical heritage and cosmopolitan past, and the increasing number of NAs in Istanbul compared with Ankara is a clear sign of this. On the other hand, in Ankara, which was built by the founders of the Republic as the new capital city, mobilising people to protect the city's historically created modern identity is relatively easy (for example, the Ankaram Platform), especially when there is a perceived threat from the Islamist mayor to the Republic's capital and its places that symbolise its Republican, and hence secular, history and values. Furthermore, in Istanbul civil society is more organised and specialised, and NAs tend to define their goals more specifically, whereas in Ankara NAs tend to take on several different roles.

Leadership is a factor affecting an organisation's success and, when we look at leadership in the field study, we see that all four NAs are run by highly motivated leaders, who usually have previous experience in civil society organisations, and by the few people around the leader, who are usually retired and hence have free time. Not having

members who are committed to working in the association on a long-term basis is a common complaint (one reason may be that NA membership does not bring much prestige), except for BEY which does not need volunteer work. Wider participation is possible through mobilising people around specific issues. When such a mobilising force is absent, the NAs tend to function like a school club, organising various festivities (plays, festivals, trips).

The specific goals of the NAs differ and cover a wide range. The goal may be to develop the locality physically, as in the case of the satellite neighbourhood in formation (CIM), to preserve the locality's historical architectural heritage, as in the case of the district whose history goes back several centuries and has an international significance (CHG), or to transform the district for economic gains, as in the case of the historical district in which big capital is interested (BEY). Or, the NA's goals may shift in the course of time, as in the case of KAM.

With the exception of BEY, the NAs try to retain their autonomy from capital and state, keeping their distance from rent-seeking agents (both economic and political rent), so that they can act as a pressure group. On the other hand, BEY acts as a means of legitimising the wealthy business community's goal of creating a sanitary environment of up-market consumption. Both CHG and BEY in Istanbul, where the forces of capitalism are felt more than in Ankara, prefer a working relationship with the state authorities despite their political differences. Under neo-liberal policies, some sort of reconciliation seems to exist between the big capital and the local state in the case of BEY, albeit full of potential conflicts. Interestingly, CHG also favours a 'supra-ideological' relationship with authorities—that is, one built outside any ideology and based mainly on pragmatic concerns. However, in reality, with the Islamist mayor in power, this position is hard to maintain. On the other hand, KAM in Ankara openly conflicts with the metropolitan mayor as a result of ideological differences (i.e. secularist vs Islamist). And CIM in Ankara tends to be

inward-oriented, keeping its relations with political authorities at a minimum. There is no formal framework to include NAs within urban governance, although the EU encourages citizen representation on city councils. Mayors, in their attempt to present a democratic image, may meet with NA leaders to take their opinions on specific issues. Yet this 'informal local participatory democracy' usually fails to go beyond show-case practices. Such a dialogue is out of the question when there is an open ideological confrontation between the NA and the mayor. And in terms of leadership and political orientation, while BEY's president is interested in organising the capital side of civil society, KAM's president, who was active in the 1970s' workers' movement, holds the mission of transforming society into a better (i.e. more just) one. CHG's president, on the other hand, does not have a broader ideological framework to guide her in her activities, while the vice president believes in making a change in the locality to be able to make a change globally. CIM's president, too, holds social democratic values of change for a better society.

In brief, differences exist between the NAs in terms of their specific goals, activities, resources, mobilisation capacities and their relationship with capital and state, depending upon the context and the association's leadership (big business, leftist activists of the past, social democrats of the upper and middle classes). Thus, we make as our fourth point that, in the Turkish context, it is wrong to think of NAs as a distinctive category that has a homogeneous content; the contested nature of the political system and civil rights in Turkey may be the reason. Context matters in the formation and actions of NAs. We may identify three contexts which have affected the NAs in the field study—namely, local context (historic district, gentrifying neighbourhood, district of the modern elite, satellite town); city context (Istanbul vs Ankara); broader political and cultural context (Islamist vs secularist polarisation).

When we consider the relationship of the NAs with each other and with other NGOs,

we see a picture of fragmentation and haphazardness, partly because of its unstructured quality. Although there are some possibilities of solidarity to fight against a common threat (such as protesting against a specific urban project), they remain short-lived, lacking an organised structure to maintain their sustainability. The EU accession process has created some dynamism, bringing in funding and providing opportunities for co-operation with international civil society organisations. However, it may be conjectural and may not last long. This information on the NAs supports the literature that describes Turkish CSOs as fragmented and limited in action, which is our fifth point.

In order to understand how the NAs of the better-off classes might affect the city, we now consider the characteristics of the NAs' leading members. They are democratic people. They envision a society, and a city, where people from different cultures and religions live side-by-side in tolerance and harmony. In some 'élite' districts, the identity of the locality is constructed as the place of cultured and civilised urbanites, positioned against rural migrants who, in their discourse, are invading the city and destroying its urban character and modern way of life (Mağgönül, 2005). Such a view of the locality did not emerge in the field study, although there were some concerns expressed about squatter people (i.e. rural migrants) (CIM), street vendors (again, rural migrants) (KAM) and the rural characteristics of merchants in other districts but not in their own (CHG). BEY's president, on the other hand, used élitist discourse.

They are globally integrated and well aware of the ideas and discourses that run globally, and they try to take the 'right' position (they support the idea of a physical environment that can be used by the disabled; they are environmentalists: they recycle, plant trees and take action against base stations). They want to create neighbourhoods where the physical environment (both built and natural) is protected and services are maintained, and where local people are connected, share concerns about their locality

and carry democratic civic initiative. They promote an urban identity based on civic responsibility, historical awareness and environmental consciousness. As a result, they may be agents of positive development in the urban scene.

On the other hand, in their relationship with the Other(s) in their locality, the NAs often experience dilemmas. While improving the quality of life of their locality,¹⁶ they prefer the locality to be free from the ‘undesirable’, both social and physical. On the other hand, the commitment to social democratic and Republican values in the case of CIM brings its members civic duty and social responsibility, and they ‘train’ squatter people, trying to co-opt them by socialising them into their urban middle-class values and way of life. In the case of CHG, its celebration of diversity discourse prevents it from taking an open fight against local ‘social misfits’. On the other hand, although BEY has recently shown interest in solving the ‘problem of street children’, this interest stems from pragmatic concerns—i.e. to change the image of the district, as well as BEY’s own image. In the case of removing the physically undesirable, consensus is easily reached—for example, to move base stations out of their neighbourhoods—with the exception of weak resistance from the few local storekeepers in the case of CIM.

When we look at the larger picture, the question of where ‘undesirable’ persons and objects would go becomes critical. In their attempt to keep their locality ‘clean’, will the NAs of the better-off classes end up disposing of their ‘trash’ in other localities that lack the power to resist? As the state retreats from its redistributive and planning role, and as decentralisation gains momentum, inequality and uneven development in city space accelerate. And the NAs of the better-off classes could easily contribute to uneven development. When problems are solved locally, those localities whose residents lack power become disadvantaged. Given the suppression of the lower classes by the 1980 military intervention following their leftist radicalisation in the 1970s, this could easily

be the case in the Turkish context; and that is our sixth and final point.

Notes

1. In urban Turkey, the smallest administrative unit is the neighbourhood (*mahalle*) and each neighbourhood has an elected head, called *muhtar*. Neighbourhoods are combined to form districts/counties (*ilçe*), each of which has a municipality and is run by an elected mayor. Since the mid 1980s, a two-tier municipal system has been adopted in big cities—namely, a metropolitan municipality (*Büyükşehir Belediyesi*) and several district municipalities (*İlçe Belediyesi*), forming the quite complicated administrative system of the city. In everyday language, the term ‘neighbourhood’ (*mahalle*) denotes to a smaller area, whereas the term ‘district’ (*semt*) denotes to a larger geographical area that contains several neighbourhoods. Among local civil society organisations, those that represent a neighbourhood call themselves a ‘neighbourhood association’, whereas those that represent several neighbourhoods call themselves a ‘district association’. However, in everyday usage ‘neighbourhood association’ and ‘district association’ are used interchangeably and, in their organisational structure and functioning, they are the same. In this article, we use the term ‘neighbourhood association’ (NA) to refer to both neighbourhood and district associations; district associations themselves use ‘neighbourhood association’ in their English translation.
2. We use the term ‘mixed use’ when the area contains both residential and commercial activities (shopping, entertainment).
3. To use the terms ‘Islamist’ vs ‘secularist’ to refer to the ideological positions that characterise Turkish society today does not do justice to their dynamic and complex nature. However, in this article, which is not a political science article, we will use them for the sake of not unnecessarily complicating our main argument.
4. In the field research, we did not include platforms since, although they are important civil initiatives, they do not aim for an active long-term presence in their localities.
5. He argues as follows: BEY supported the project of the street’s closure to traffic because it would increase upper-class shopping. However, the reverse became true: rich people stopped coming since they used to come by car. Instead, those who would

spend the whole day wandering about, spending their money just to buy a bagel, began to come in large numbers. The increase in the number of users attracted criminals to the area. He asks, "Who would want to walk in the crowd with an expensive store's shopping bag in their hands, making themselves a target of attack?"

6. Istiklal Street may be considered a 'third space', where contradictions open up new ways of seeing (Kocabiçak, 2003).
7. The actors involved in the production of urban space are broadly categorised as the state, local government, entrepreneurs and civil society organisations.
8. We doubt this and expect conflict to rise if the mayor starts taking actions based on strict Islamic principles, such as prohibiting the sales and use of alcohol in the locality. For example, following the 1994 municipal elections in which the Islamist party won a big victory, a platform was formed ('Platform for Beyoğlu'), "organising against possible disruptions of their businesses—and, as they put it, their 'life styles'" (Bartu, 2001, p. 145).
9. Of this event, the president said, "Our municipality had always been governed by social democrat (hence secular) parties, and it was the first time that an Islamist party had come to power".
10. However, there is much controversy over the Roman Garden. There is even the possibility of building another mosque, despite the many mosques in the district. When the municipality cut down some of the trees on that piece of land (it was stopped by CHG), CHG mobilised local people to plant new trees under the slogan 'Don't touch my Cihangir'. During the event, a man associated with the Islamist party attacked some CHG members. Recently CHG, through an Italian resident, has contacted the Municipality of Rome to support its project.
11. However, this is not so easy. The new mayor sent a letter, asking CHG to meet him at the morning prayer in the local mosque, despite the fact that CHG's president is a woman who believes in secular society.
12. For example, while CHG, because of its environmental and aesthetic concerns, wants to preserve some streets paved with cobble-stones, the municipality insists on asphaltting them.
13. Today, this part of the district is in the process of establishing its own NA to fight KAM's power.
14. He constructed a mini soccer field on the empty lot opposite CIM's office and rented

it for profit, despite his promise that a free multipurpose community centre would be built; this was the choice of residents that came up in the questionnaires conducted jointly by CIM and the municipality.

15. The Ankaram Platform, in its self-criticism, identifies as a problem its image of 'a movement of intellectuals' (*aydın hareketi*) that lacks connections with ordinary citizens (*halk kesimleri*) and tries to develop discourses that would be meaningful to them so that they could be mobilised in local elections.
16. See Ferrell (2001) for a critical approach to the relationship between quality of life and cultural sanitisation.

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