



## The Transformation of Space and Social Class: The Past and Present of Çukurambar

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the relation between physical space and social space by focusing on the recent transformation of Çukurambar, an old gecekondu neighborhood in Ankara. Applying to Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual tools, this paper interrogates the social implications of spatial transformation. Based on the data that was acquired from an ethnographic research, the study first explicates the spatial trajectory of Çukurambar. The trajectory of the neighborhood goes in parallel with the general transformation of urban space in Turkey. Being a village until 1950s, Çukurambar transformed into being a gecekondu neighborhood as a result of the internal migration waves. The social destiny of the neighborhood changed sharply again as a result of the neoliberal urban transformation projects. The paper underlines two dynamics that fastened the spatial transformation in Çukurambar: the intensification of political capital and economic capital. The product of the fast spatial transformation is the formation of an upper-middle class neighborhood. The partnership of politicians, local governments and urban transformation industry ended up with the making of the upper-middle class neighborhood.*

**Keywords:** Urban transformation, middle class, Çukurambar, gecekondu, neoliberalism.



## Mekânın ve Sosyal Sınıfın Dönüşümü: Çukurambar'ın Dünü ve Bugünü

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### Öz

*Bu çalışma Ankara'nın eski bir gecekondu mahallesi olan Çukurambar'ın yakın bir geçmişte geçirmiş olduğu dönüşüm üzerinden fiziksel uzam ve toplumsal uzam arasındaki ilişkiyi inceliyor. Pierre Bourdieu'nün geliştirdiği kavramsal araçlara başvuran çalışma, mekânsal dönüşümün toplumsal sonuçlarını sorguluyor. Etnografik bir araştırmadan elde edilen verilere dayanan çalışma ilk olarak Çukurambar'ın mekânsal dönüşümünün izini sürüyor. Mahalledeki sosyo-mekânsal dönüşüm Türkiye'deki genel kentsel dönüşümün güzergâhıyla paralellik gösterir. 1950'lere kadar bir köy olan Çukurambar, iç göç dalgalarının etkisiyle hızla bir gecekondu mahallesine dönüştü. Tıpkı iç göçün etkileri gibi, yükselen siyasi muhafazakârlık ve güçlenen neoliberal ekonomi politikaları Çukurambar'daki kentsel dönüşüm projelerine büyük oranda genel biçimini verdi. Mahallenin sosyal kaderini ikinci kez keskin bir şekilde değiştiren neoliberal kentsel dönüşüm projeleri oldu. Bu çalışma, Çukurambar'daki orta sınıflaşmayı tetikleyen iki dinamiğe dikkat çekiyor, siyasi sermayenin ve ekonomik sermayenin yoğunlaşması. Mekânsal dönüşümün ürünü, eski bir gecekondu mahallesinden yeni bir üst-orta sınıf mahallesinin doğmasıdır. Siyasetçilerin, yerel yönetimlerin ve kentsel dönüşüm endüstrisinin ortaklığı, Çukurambar'da bir üst-orta sınıf mahallesinin teşkiliyle sonuçlanır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kentsel dönüşüm, orta sınıf, Çukurambar, gecekondu, neoliberalizm.

## Introduction

Physical space has been one of the earliest curiosities of sociologists. That is one of the reasons of why the first official sociology department of the world, Chicago School, is famous with being pioneer in urban sociology. What came out of the early studies of Chicago School is an attempt to produce an ideal typical definition of the city by delving into the social morphology (such as population density) which structures the form that physical space gains (Savage and Warde, 1993). From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, physical space became a new field of study within Marxism. It was especially Henri Lefebvre who opened a new path within Marxism by examining the physical space in relation with the capitalist mode of production. What was new in Henri Lefebvre, compared to Chicago School, was the focus on the production of space rather than taking it for granted. Lefebvre's studies elucidated the function of physical space in the system of social reproduction (Katznelson, 1992).

The debate of social reproduction evolved into new research programs in the studies of neo-Marxist researchers, such as David Harvey and early Manuel Castells, who were influenced highly by Lefebvre. Focusing on the process of capital accumulation, Harvey uncovered the role of the land economy as the second circuit of capital accumulation while Castells shed light on the dimension of the space as the unit of collective consumption (Katznelson, 1992). Though the Marxist researchers opened a new path in urban sociology, their contribution remained restricted to the examination of physical space in relation with the capitalist economy and thus failed to examine it in relation with broader power struggles.

Applying the conceptual repertoire of Bourdieu's topological sociology, Wacquant (2014; 2017) aims to open a new path within urban sociology, which takes the plural power struggles into account while examining the physical space. According to him, physical space is the incorporated form of the struggles in the social space and symbolic space. In this perspective, city is the homologous triadic space within which forms of capital accumulate, concentrate, and differentiate. In other words, the struggles in the social space among different forms of capital to determine the relative value of each form of capital incorporate in the built environment. It is such perspective that provides the necessary conceptual tools to illuminate the function of *the intensification of economic capital and political capital* in the socio-spatial transformation of Çukurambar. Based on an ethnographic study that was conducted in Çukurambar between November 2012 – June 2013, this paper

aims to explain how resident profile of an old *gecekondu* neighborhood changed in parallel with the transformation of the physical space.

In the following pages, I begin the examination by contextualizing Çukurambar within the neoliberal transformations that changed the socio-spatial landscape of Ankara in the last three decades. Then, I shed light on the transformation of Çukurambar from a *gecekondu* neighborhood to a luxurious and popular upper-middle class neighborhood. Lastly, I explore in detail the factors that impact on the making of physical space middle class. I underline the role of the intensification of political capital, symbolic capital, and economic capital in this process of transformation.

### **Contextualizing Çukurambar: The Neoliberalization of Physical Space in Ankara**

Being a modest town of petty trade and agricultural production in the Central Anatolia, the destiny of Ankara changed sharply after being the center of national liberation movement in 1920. Following the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Ankara became the capital of Turkey. For the founding cadre, Ankara was more than a capital city; it was rather ‘the fitting room of the new regime’ (Cantek, 2006) or the ‘cradle of Turkish modernism’ (Erman, 2001). Thus, the building of Ankara symbolized the building of a modern nation for the new regime. Such symbolic significance required the strong control and planning of the state in the production of the physical space. Having lasted until 1980s, the period of planned urban development generated two main forms of socio-spatial organization: “the construction of apartments by the small contractors [for urban middle classes] and the self-help *gecekondu*s of the squatters dominated the urbanization process in Turkish cities up until 1980s” (Batuman, 2013a, s. 586). These two main methods of socio-spatial organization went through a crisis starting from 1970s. First of all, the accelerating flow of migrants from rural areas generated pressure over the urban land. The estimated number of *gecekondu* houses in Ankara rose from 70.000 in 1960 to 240.000 in 1980 (Batuman, 2013a, s. 586). Second, the small contractor-based housing sector collapsed following the rising inflation and the shortage of available land in the city center and its immediate surroundings. As a result, the socio-spatial organization which accommodated the urban landscape with apartments and *gecekondu*s weakened.

Like the rest of the big cities of Turkey, a new period of socio-spatial organization has started in Ankara from 1980s on. In the new period, the form of the socio-spatial organization in Ankara was shaped especially by the rising two forces of urban politics: neoliberalism and Islamist conservatism.

As a sociological concept, neoliberalism is a market-conforming state crafting (Wacquant, 2012). It rests on the “articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third” (Wacquant, 2012, s. 71). In other words, neoliberalism does not imply the retrenchment of the state in favor of the market but rather entails the reengineering of the state in the form of ‘Centaur-state’.

...that acts very differently at the two ends of the class structure and puts its considerable disciplinary capacity on the social, penal, and cultural front at the service of commodification. The state practices laissez-faire at the top, at the level of the circulation of capital and the production of inequality, but it turns interventionist and intrusive when it comes to managing the consequences of inequality at the bottom, for the life spaces and life chances of precarious fractions of the postindustrial working class (Wacquant, 2013, s. 9).

The construction of market-conforming state generates impacts over urban politics. As Erman (2016) notes, neoliberalism re-structures the urban space by mainly reorganizing the institutional core, tasks and functions of local governments in such a way to stimulate capital accumulation through partnerships with private sector. The partnership of public and private sectors takes the form of the coalition of urban bureaucracy with developers, land owners, advisors, professionals, and media in order to create economic growth through the uses of the urban space (Güzey, 2014). In the case of Ankara, the neoliberalization of urban policies led to transformation basically in four spheres: the increasing power and control of greater municipality over the urban space, the increasing role of large development firms in the production of urban space, the accelerating speed of suburbanization, and marketization of real estate sector.

As Geniş (2007) notes, the period of planned urban development ended but state’s involvement into urban land market did not decrease. Rather, its mode of intervention has changed. The financial budget and authority regarding the urban policy were transferred in a great extent to the metropolitan municipalities following the administrative and legal reforms in the early 1980s (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008). All of these neoliberal reforms “granted the municipalities the power to undertake major urban projects overriding the existing checks, controls, and regulations in the legal system” (Candan and Kolluoğlu, 2008, s. 14). In addition to the rising power and authority of municipalities, TOKI, the Housing Development Administration, emerged as another strong agent of urban policies especially following

the rule of AKP. In the first period of AKP rule, TOKI was assigned with the authority to “freely expropriate, plan, and redevelop areas” (Batuman, 2013a, s. 587) free from the control of bureaucratic institutions. Between 2003 and 2010, TOKI built more than 61.000 housing units in Ankara (Batuman, 2013a, s. 587).

The rising power of municipalities and TOKI was accompanied with the increasing role of large scale development firms in the production of urban space as the role of small contractors diminished. The collaboration of bureaucracy and developers incorporated in three-tiered urban regeneration projects: “the development of the hitherto undeveloped land on the fringes ..., the renewal of the public spaces and historic sites in the urban core ..., [and] the evacuation and redevelopment of squatter areas” (Batuman, 2013a, s. 588). The urban regeneration process accelerated the suburbanization tendency with the mushrooming gated communities and luxury sites in the south-west axes of Ankara (Güzey, 2014). The new socio-spatial organization promised its upper and middle class residents the joys of a commodified heaven. The renewal of public spaces and historic sites, on the other hand, constituted one of the major instruments for the conservative municipality to reconstruct the collective identity in a conservative manner with the help of the built environment. While the redevelopment of squatter areas has generated new zones of urban rent for the developers, it has also uprooted gecekondu residents from their neighborhoods where they used to live. Briefly, the urban regeneration period in the last three decades of Ankara inscribed the logic of neoliberalism into the production of physical space: while the urban regeneration projects provided new sources of investment for upper classes, and spatial possibilities for the making of middle class distinction, it led working classes and precariats to face the disciplinary hand of the urban bureaucracy when they resisted against the urban transformation projects.

The neoliberalization in Ankara, as it was in the whole country, went hand in hand with the rising political power of Islamist conservatism. The 1994 local elections was a significant corner stone in the rise of Islamist conservatism as Welfare Party (RP) won elections in some of the big cities including Ankara (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current president of Turkey, became the mayor of İstanbul in the same year from RP). The experience in the local governments paved the way later for the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP). The election success of RP had rested on its opposition against the established order. Including an anti-capitalist discourse, Islamist opposition gained recognition among the gecekondu residents, the absolute losers of the neoliberal transformation.

In contrast to RP experience, AKP emerged not as an opposition against the established order but rather as the demand of reform within the existing order. The shift of political axis was felt most concretely in the economic vision of the new party. The Islamist anti-capitalist opposition was replaced with the promise of capitalist development in the program of AKP. In the discourse of the new party, “the traditional Islamic teachings [functioned no more] as an anti-capitalist praise to poverty [but rather] turned into means of producing consent to the existing economic order” (Batuman 2013b, s. 4). Following the rule of AKP in 2002, neoliberal transformation gained momentum in Turkey and like many other big cities, Ankara turned into being a huge site of construction. As Çavuşoğlu and Strutz (2014) note, urban transformation projects have been the major source for the political and economic strategy of AKP to remain in power. As an old *gecekondu* neighborhood, Çukurambar underwent a great transformation in this period: an upper-middle class neighborhood emerged as old *gecekondus* were replaced by high-rise luxury buildings. Moreover, among the new residents of Çukurambar were conservative politicians, bureaucrats, and developers who played a significant role in the transformation of the neighborhood in which they lived.

### **Transformation of Çukurambar: From Village to Gecekondu Neighborhood and Further**

On the road to Sufiyane, a center for Islamic fine-arts and culture in Çukurambar, where Mesnevi Talks are held regularly on every Saturday morning, I ran into İbrahim who is the most regular and thus most respected participant of the talks. He is a retired high bureaucrat in his late fifties. İbrahim was born and raised in Çukurambar while it was still a *gecekondu* neighborhood. As we were heading toward Sufiyane, I pointed out him with admiration the blossoming pink branches of cherry trees that leaned out of the high fences of a lonely *gecekondu* house which was squeezed within the jam of luxury high residences. He said:

At this time of the year while I was a kid, Çukurambar was used to be like a field of spring flowers. I am not exaggerating when I say field. There were really fields in the place of the buildings that we see now, and we and our neighbors were used to plant wheat. It may sound like a tale for you but in the place of the road we walk now there was used to be a path and it was not surprising to see cows, sheep, or donkeys walking slowly to the meadow where they were used to be out at grass.

When İbrahim was a kid, Çukurambar was composed of gecekondular houses built by the former generation of migrant families from the villages of the cities in central Anatolia and Black Sea regions. İbrahim's parents were used to living in the villages of a central Anatolian city. In the mid of 1960s, agricultural economy was in a crisis which endangered the reproduction of rural social relations in Turkey. In the same period, the collective quest for an alternative social existence commenced among peasants to overcome the crisis. There were two common paths for a better future dream of Anatolian peasants: migration to Germany or the big cities of Turkey. In the case of İbrahim's family, most of the men from the village migrated to Germany to save their lives by working in the factories as a worker. İbrahim's father, Ahmet, was an exception. He stayed in the village since the familial division of labor required him as the youngest son to look after his old parents. During his stay in the village, his parents arranged a marriage for him with a distant relative from the neighboring village. Upon their village burnt up in the late 1960s, he had to leave the village with his wife and parents.

He did not hesitate to determine the route when they had to leave the village. He came directly to Çukurambar where his relatives and fellow villagers had settled earlier. The second day they arrived to Çukurambar, they bought a small piece of land from the resident peasants and built their gecekondular just as their fellow villagers did when they migrated. When they completed the construction of their house at the end of the third day, it was a single-storey, separate house that composed of two rooms and a toilet in the front-garden. Like all gecekondular, the construction of the house has never ended; whenever they succeeded to save money they fortified their house and added a new room or rarely a new storey especially in the case of having many children. The process of adaptation to the new environment was not too difficult as the organization of the physical space, and structure and tempo of the social life made them feel like they are not too far from their village. Actually, their feeling of 'living in the borders of the familiar world' had concrete foundations. On the city plan of Ankara municipality in 1960s, Çukurambar was seen as a village on the verge of Balgat neighborhood which had been the field for Daniel Lerner's (1958) Turkey case in his examination of modernization process in the Middle East.

When Lerner conducted the first five interviews of his study in the summer of 1950, just on the eve of transition into multi-party democracy in Turkey, Balgat was still a village composed of fifty houses. His interviewer Tosun B. described Balgat as a 'gray barren' that does not resemble to any other villages he saw all around the country. Despite it is just eight kilometers away from the city



center, Ulus, Balgat seemed isolated from the capital since there was no direct transportation just because there was no road. Balgati peasants were living on by farming and could not imagine any other way of life. Their only link with the outside world was the only radio of the village in the house of the chief who collected the villagers at his home in the evenings to listen to the news and to share his views about what he has just heard. The chief whose views easily transformed into the collective view of the village without questioning was like the embodied state in the village. He was an ex-soldier and strong admirer of Atatürk, who placed 'duty to the nation' at the center of his life. In contrast to the chief, the only grocer of Balgat was seduced by the shining city life and was even ready to live in the US by leaving the village if he had a chance. In 1950, the grocer was a heretical figure in the village.

When Lerner revisited Balgat in 1954, he found a completely different settlement. Actually, whole country had changed as the single-party regime ended in 1950 and after Democrat Party came to power. The number of houses in Balgat reached to five hundred and it transformed into being a neighborhood of the greater Ankara municipality. Balgatis had a road that connects them to the city and regular bus service to the city center three times a day. They also had a school and a health-care center in their neighborhood. The pure water and electricity were about to arrive. Moreover, many of the households had their own radio. Social life has also changed as most of the ex-peasants sold their lands and became worker in the factories or bureaucratic institutions of the city. All these developments were enough for Balgatis, including the chief, to support DP. Everybody seemed content about the change in their lives but still the chief complained from the indifference of younger generations about duty to the nation and their never ending interest in new consumption patterns. The heretical grocer of Balgat had passed away without seeing the great transformation of his village but he reincarnated in the younger generations including the grandchildren of the chief.

The pace of development in Çukurambar was not as rapid as Balgat. Different than many other cases, gecekondu were built on private land rather than public land but they were still unauthorized. It was the main reason why they had to struggle for public facilities. For this reason they established a neighborhood association in the early 1960s and put pressure over the bureaucracy for the demands of pure water, sewage system and electricity. Another product of the neighborhood association was the opening of a primary school and a health center in the late 1960s. The infrastructure of Çukurambar was completed in 1987 with the coming of the sewage system. Until the introduction of public facilities, gecekondu residents walked in the

muddy roads of the village, carried water from the common fountain of the village to their houses, lighted their rooms in evenings with gas lamps, heated their houses in the winter by lighting coal in stoves and breathed the coal smoke coming out of the chimneys.

These difficult conditions of existence forced gecekondu dwellers to use their houses multi-functional, which required the heavy labor to transform the order of the house in different times of the day or the season. The division of familial labor rested on the division of sexes which was homologous with the spatial division between public and private. The anonymous world outside the neighborhood was the world of work and thus of men while the familiar world of the neighborhood was an extension of house which was a perfect product of women labor. Men left the house and neighborhood early in the morning to go to their work in the city. They were workers in the bureaucracy, factories, or in the streets as vendors. Women woke up even earlier to prepare breakfast for their nuclear or extended family. The labor of the women was not restricted to the chores of the house. Each chore required the transformation of the house homologous with the logic of the chore. Most of the time, the living room functioned as kitchen, bedroom of children and bathroom (in the winter). While looking after children and elderly, doing the house chores, working in the fields and neighboring with the fellow villagers women labor did not only function in the reproduction of the manly labor but also in the fabrication of solidarity ties among the neighbors, which created a safe social life within the gecekondu neighborhood.



**Illustration 1.** New buildings and the remaining gecekondu of Çukurambar

The period between 1967 and 1974 was the most intensive period of migration waves, which led to the growth of population and enlargement of the city. As a result of this process, Çukurambar was swallowed by the growing city and became a neighborhood of Çankaya district in 1972 (Koroğlu and Ercoşkun, 2006). In this period, Çukurambar was no more a village but the city seemed still far from the neighborhood as the pace of the transformation was still slow. İbrahim maintains that:

When I was a kid, I and my friends from the neighborhood were used to counting the number of the cars passing from the Eskişehir Highway by sitting at the top of a high hill. At the end of the three hours, the total number of the cars was most of the times less than fifty.

The first time that İbrahim realized their neighborhood is getting closer to the city was upon the rumors that the leaders of two right wing parties bought land from Balgat. The rumors turned out to be real in time as Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Islamist National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*, MGH), built a house in Balgat and Alparslan Türkeş, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party, bought a land to build the headquarter of the party in Balgat. These developments led Çukurambar to transform into being the stronghold of the 'nationalist front' during the political polarization of 1970s. The older generations tended to support Süleyman Demirel's Justice Party or Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party while younger generations, like İbrahim, supported Alparslan Türkeş' Nationalist Movement Party.

In this way, as the city absorbed the physical space of Çukurambar, the content of political relations transformed from being functional to ethical. For a long time, politics was a pragmatic tool for gecekondü residents to bring the public facilities to the neighborhood and prevent any possible punitive regulation of state about their unauthorized houses. After getting closer to the city, politics implied an ethical preference about the clash between left and right. For İbrahim, it was not surprising that the residents of the neighborhood tended to support the right-wing parties since the (Sunni) 'Muslim' of Islamists and 'Türk' of nationalists sounded more familiar than the 'comrade' of communists.

When our parents (the older generations) first settled to Çukurambar, the first thing they did together was to repair the existing mosque of the village. I remember that mosque very well; it was a mosque in the gecekondü style. I remember that Erba-

kan and other political figures from right-wing parties came and prayed in that mosque with us.

İbrahim thought that right-wing parties represented the authentic (yerli) politics for the Turkish nation and thus most of the neighbors felt the right-wing party discourse closer to their own thinking.

The critical point in the transformation of the physical space of Çukurambar was the state's perception of gecekondü neighborhoods. From 1948 onwards, the state saw gecekondü neighborhoods as a non-urban form of settlement that needs to be improved and transformed. As the wave of migration fastened, the number of migrants increased, and the borders of gecekondü neighborhoods expanded, gecekondü neighborhoods transformed into being a potential source of political capital. It impacted on the softening of the official strategy against gecekondü neighborhoods: local governments were put in charge to provide infrastructure services to gecekondü neighborhoods in 1963, and amnesty laws turned out to be the general principle for the authorization of non-authorized houses. Until 1980, the official vision in gecekondü improvement plans implied the betterment of the living conditions of gecekondü residents as well as the improvement in the housing conditions. In the post-1980 period which was shaped by liberal economy politics, improvement plans were replaced by transformation projects which have focused on the rent and neglected the social dimension of gecekondü neighborhoods. As a result, the rent-based transformation of gecekondü neighborhoods led gecekondü residents to be the voluntary migrants from the transformed neighborhood as they could afford to buy two or more houses in the peripheral gecekondü neighborhoods of the city with their share in the transformation project. It was the case of Çukurambar in the post-1980 period.

The Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara prepared a new city plan in 1982, which projected the decentralization of urban population into the west axes where Çukurambar located. Following that an improvement plan was prepared for Çukurambar in 1984, which projected lower population density for the neighborhood with 1/1000 scale. However, Çukurambar improvement plan was revised in 1993 with 1/5000 scale, which attracted the attention of urban transformation industry (Köroğlu and Ercoşkun, 2006). In the following period, the transformation process accelerated. The demolished one-story gecekondü houses were replaced with multi-story apartment blocks and the profile of the neighborhood residents changed as the new apartments attracted to the middle classes while gecekondü residents moved to the peripheral districts such as Sincan.

## Making Çukurambar Middle Class

Niyazi is a retired academician and an ex-member of the parliament in his mid-60s. He was born and raised in a peasant family in a village of an Eastern Anatolian city. He was the only kid who continued to education further than primary school in the village. He left his village in an early age to go to the İmam Hatip School in the city. He further continued to his education in the Theology Faculty of a university in Istanbul. As he worked as a preacher in the mosques of İstanbul, he has also completed his PhD on theology. In 1990s he was an active member of rising Welfare Party and he was elected as a member of parliament in 1995 elections. In this period of his life he saw Çukurambar for the first time. The representatives of the party had established a cooperative association under the leadership of a representative who was used to work as a contractor. When his friends took him to Çukurambar where the site of the cooperative would be built he saw a gecekondü neighborhood.

There were a few apartment blocks around but it was dominantly a gecekondü neighborhood which has not had a road yet. The paths that the residents were used to walk were muddy in the winter and dusty in the summer. If you had seen this neighborhood in 1997 with me, you would never imagine the present state that it reached in a decade.

When Niyazi first saw the neighborhood in 1997, the transformation of Çukurambar had already commenced but its population was still less than five thousand. The cooperative houses were completed in 2001 and a significant number of high level party members had house in Çukurambar. Many of them saw the cooperative as an instrument of investment and did not think to live in the neighborhood at the beginning. However, the destiny of Çukurambar changed sharply after AKP came into power in 2002. Until then, members of parliament were used to living in the parliament housing located in Oran. Before the elections, AKP had promised to start a new period in which the national will would be at the center of the politics rather than the arbitrary decisions of the alienated political nobility. To symbolize the beginning of the new period, AKP government decided to leave the parliament housing arguing that the representatives of the nation should live within the nation. Following that, Çukurambar has been the new destination for some of the AKP members who already had a house in the neighborhood. The existence of a group of parliamentary representative transformed the neighborhood into a center of attraction for the others who were looking for a new house. In a short time, the number of the members of parliament

(including the politicians from the parties other than AKP) increased in a significant extent.

What made Çukurambar attractive was not only a group of resident parliamentary representatives. Once being a village and later a gecekondu neighborhood in the periphery of the city, Çukurambar gained a central location as the city grew more and more. Being an intersection point of the main arterial roads such as Konya Highway and Eskişehir Highway, Çukurambar is just five kilometers away from the city center (Kızılay) and the parliament. However, still the residence of parliamentary representatives played a functional role in the rapid transformation of the neighborhood. The Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara worked to improve the conditions of the neighborhood more than ever before. In addition to that, municipality increased the limit of maximum floors in the buildings of the neighborhood which further attracted the attention of contractors and paved the way for increasing population density as the limit of floor for the new high-rise buildings was twenty nine. Compared to the first apartment blocks of the neighborhood which had maximum ten floors, the new high-rise buildings led to an enormous population density. As of 2016, the population of the neighborhood reached to 17.500 and it is expected to further increase as there are still buildings under construction (Gülbudak, 2016).



**Illustration 2:** The new silhouette of Çukurambar (Resource: <http://www.panoramio.com>)

The impact of contractors was not only restricted to the rising density of population, they also impacted on the determination of the profile of the

new comers. The new high-rise blocks had some structural elements which attracted only middle and upper classes. The new sites were designed luxuriously reminding of hotels. The entrance was controlled by security guards; once one passed the security check as the recognized resident or guest of the site, she parked her car to the multi-story parking garage at the basement of each block. Once one steps in the building, she is welcomed in the lobby. The interior design of the common areas makes one feel like that the building has no function but an aesthetical reason to exist: obsessive care of cleanness and radius lightening system makes one inevitably think that she lives a good life. One may feel like that the new high-rise blocks were designed to make their residences to feel like they are great. That is why the smallest apartment included four rooms (4+1) while most of the houses had five or more rooms.

The greatness that the houses make their residents feel springs not only from the covered physical space and the number of rooms but also from the budget that the residents can afford for a house. While the cheapest house in the old buildings of the neighborhood is around 180.000\$, the most expensive apartment in the new high-rise buildings is approximately 450.000\$ which is extraordinarily high compared to the average price for an apartment with similar qualities in other middle class neighborhoods of the city. As a result, except the members of the parliament, the new comers of the neighborhood were high bureaucrats, high executives of the big companies, high earner professionals (such as doctors and lawyers), and company owners. Alongside being a residential unit, Çukurambar is also on the verge of becoming a central business district. As may be predicted, the lionizing sector in the neighborhood is the construction sector. They did not only build the high-rise luxurious buildings in the neighborhood but they also moved their offices and houses to the buildings they built. The interest of the constructors to the neighborhood was not a coincidence since Çukurambar enabled them to acquire the social capital which can easily be translated into bureaucratic and economic capital.

Adem is a young contractor in his forties, who lives and works in Çukurambar similar to many of his colleagues do. He was born and raised in a notable family of a Central Anatolian city. After completing his university education, he started to work as a contractor in his hometown just like his grandfather and father. Adem moved to Ankara just after AKP came into power.

My father was an effective member of the party in my hometown at that time. We thought that it could be the right time to drum up business. We thought we could increase the turnover if we succeed to win public tenders. So I moved to Ankara and opened an office here.

Adem's expectations turned out to be real as he succeeded to win a couple of public tenders. He was used to building apartment blocks which brought him lots of money while he lived in his hometown but now he builds dams and tunnels in various regions of the country, which bring him much more money. After having the experience of managing big projects, Adem focused his all energy on public tenders.

For now I quit building apartment blocks. Actually, the construction of an apartment or a dam makes no difference for a contractor. However, once you are interested in tenders you have to spend most of your energy in running after the bureaucrats, which you do not need in the construction of a simple apartment block. Honestly speaking, to win a tender is not only about the technical and economic qualification of a company; you need strong political support, as well. The political support does not make you the winner of a tender but it may open the gates when you are confronted with obstacles.

Especially after the head-quarter of AKP moved to Söğütözü, a district just one kilometer away from Çukurambar, in 2007 the political significance of the neighborhood further increased. From that time onwards, it has been more likely to meet the high bureaucrats and significant politicians of AKP in the ordinary interactions of daily life. It was in this period when Adem decided to move his office and later his house to the neighborhood. Now his next-door neighbor is a member of parliament from 'his party'. He goes to Friday prayer in one of the mosques of the neighborhood where he gets the chance of meeting the politicians, and has lunch or coffee in the favorite restaurants or cafes of the conservative politicians. The making of Çukurambar is the product of the wedding of conservative political capital and contractors' quest for rent, which is crystallized in the spatial intersection of the social trajectories of Niyazi and Adem. Just as the allocation of the public land to the poor impacted on the Islamization of the physical space in the case of Sultanbeyli (Tuğal, 2009), the patronage relations between conserva-



tive local and central government and contractors during the urban transformation projects paved the way for the construction of high-rise luxurious buildings in Çukurambar. This functioned as a mechanism of exclusion for gecekondü residents and of invitation for middle classes.

## Conclusion

The trajectory of Çukurambar was similar to many of gecekondü neighborhoods which were constructed by the migrants from the villages and towns of provincial cities in the periphery of the big cities. However, the destiny of Çukurambar changed sharply after the conservative AKP came into rule. The previously built cooperative houses by the politicians of the ex-Islamist party transformed the neighborhood into a center of attraction for the members of parliament who had to look for a new house since the ruling AKP closed the housing campus of the parliament. The intensification of the political capital in the neighborhood impacted first on the quality of the service that municipality provides. Moreover, the municipality revised the plan of the neighborhood in a more profitable way. This move transformed the neighborhood into source of profit in the eye of the contractors. In sum, the wedding of conservative political capital and contractors' quest for profit transformed Çukurambar into a middle class neighborhood.

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**Kaynaka Bilgisi / Citation Information**

Akaođlu, A. (2018). The Transformation of Space and Social Class: The Past and Present of Çukurambar. *İDEALKENT – Kent AraŖtırmaları Dergisi*, 25, 782-799.