Privatization of Public Spaces and the Right to the City in the United States

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Abstract

Privatization of urban public spaces leads to two conflicting positions regarding the private or public rights over a place. This article discusses the problems of urban areas with regard to the privatization of public spaces and the consequent reaction of the citizens to claim their right to the city in various forms of social mobilization. This contestation between citizen and business claims over urban places is analyzed through a historical perspective that traces the development of business role in public policy making, the ways in which business influences policy making process, and their outcomes. We, then, identify three barriers that we regard the strongest in overcoming these problems: (1) lack of inclusive mechanisms, (2) misunderstanding of the right to the city, and (3) privatization of public spaces with neoliberal influences. Lastly, we discuss the role of different stakeholders, such as academics, policy makers, and citizens. The conclusion provides our assessment of this conflict and preference of urban theory schools to strengthen citizen control over urban areas.

Keywords: Urbanization, Privatization, Public Spaces, The Right to the City.

Article Type: Research Article

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde Kamusal Alanların Özelleştirilmesi ve Şehir Hakkı

Öz

Kentsel kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi, bu alanlar üzerindeki özel veya kamusal olmak üzere iki farklı hak iddiasına yol açmaktadır. Bu makale, kentlerdeki kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi ile ilgili ortaya çıkan sorunları ve bunun sonucunda vatandaşların çeşitli toplumsal hareket yöntemleriyle şehir haklarını talep etme konusundaki tepkilerini tartışmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, vatandaş ve özel sektörün kentsel alanlar üzerindeki iddiaları arasındaki çekişme, kamu politikası yapımında özel sektörün rolünün gelişimini, sermayenin politika oluşturma sürecini etkileme yollarını ve bunların sonuçlarını izleyen tarihsel bir perspektif aracılığıyla analiz edilmektedir. Bu makale, bu sorunların aşılmasının önündeki en belirgin bu üç engelin (1) kapsayıcı mekanizmaların olmaması, (2) şehir hakkının yanlış anlaşılması ve (3) neoliberal etkilerle kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Ek olarak, bu sorunların giderilmesi konusunda, akademisyenler, politika yapıcılar ve vatandaşlar gibi farklı paydaşların rolü tartışılmıştır. Bu çatışmaya ilişkin değerlendirme sonucunda, kentsel alanlar üzerindeki vatandaş kontrolünü güçlendirmek için kent kuramları üzerine çalışan ekollerin tercihlerine önem verilmesine ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimler: Kentleşme, Özelleştirme, Kamusal Alan, Şehir Hakkı.

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, in downtown Philadelphia, two young African American men in their twenties were asked to leave the coffee shop because they had not bought anything at a Starbucks shop. When the two men refused to leave, the store manager called the Philadelphia police officers, who arrested both men and led them out of the store in handcuffs (Madej, 2018). After the case became prominent on the news and social media, both Starbucks and the city government of Philadelphia accepted responsibility and requested forgiveness for their improper behavior. Nevertheless, this incident triggered subsequent conversations around the rights of people to use urban public spaces and the concept of the "right to the city".

This Starbucks incident in Philadelphia reveals the problematic aspects of United States (US) cities and the problematic understanding of privately owned public spaces. It demonstrates the confrontation of two positions on the rights over the public place. The citizens, on the one hand, rightly claim their right to use public space, and the business, on the other hand, sees the right to manage the public place that it owns according to its will. To understand what this issue originated from, one needs to understand how urban areas, cities, and communities are developed in the US in relation to global patterns of political economy ideologies. To do so, in this article, we discuss the problems of urban areas with regard to the privatization of public spaces, the consequent reaction of the citizens to claim their right to the city in various forms of social mobilization, the barriers to resolving these problems, and the responsible stakeholders to address those problems, in this order. In terms of its methods, the article uses secondary source data and relevant literature to process trace the historical developments and changes in the privatization of the cities and public claims for the right to the city in the US.

Firstly, we start with reviewing the scholarly discussion on concepts of urban, communities, and their historical development in the US. Secondly, privatization in urban areas is discussed to provide a background on the two conflicting positions regarding public or private rights over a place. We also include the historical development of businesses' role in public policy making, the ways in which the private sector influences policy making process, and their outcomes. Thirdly, the responses from citizens, are analyzed with the conceptual background of the right to the city. Although citizens have found ways to raise their voices over the place in which they live, there are still barriers to accomplish fostering and governing just and democratic urban areas with inclusive communities. In the fourth section, we identify three barriers that we regard as the most influential: (1) lack of inclusive mechanisms, (2) misunderstanding of the right to the city, and (3) privatization of public spaces with neoliberal influences. Lastly, we discuss the role of different stakeholders, such as academics, policy makers, and citizens. The conclusion provides our assessment of this conflict and preference of urban theory schools to strengthen citizen control over urban areas.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING THE URBAN, URBAN PUBLIC SPACES, AND COMMUNITY DYNAMİCS

With the industrial age, people moved from rural areas to towns that rapidly transformed into complex urban areas. Over time, towns expanded into cities, and cities into metropolitan areas with high density in terms of people, culture, architecture, and infrastructure (Porter, 1997). In addition to these, the population of the US has been constantly increasing. For instance, the population, according to the US Census Bureau (2023), is around 335 million in 2023 while it was approximately 5.5 million in the early 1800s. Most of those people are living in cities and metropolitan areas. These places are called urban areas. As a result of the industrial revolution and rapid urbanization, larger and physically, politically, economically, socially, culturally, spatially, and infrastructurally more complicated places –

urban areas– have emerged (Jayne and Ward, 2017). Within urban areas, urban public spaces "where we all come together, remain public in the sense of providing a place for everyone to relax, learn and recreate" fulfill a significant need for open and inclusive areas (Low, 2006: 47). Through urban public places, we can have interpersonal and intergroup interaction and cooperation, and resolve conflicts in a safe and public forum.

The significant question that comes to mind is what the 'urban' is. Unpacking this concept is fundamental to both deeply understanding contemporary urban issues and discussing the rights of people to use public spaces. There is no standard definition as the scholars use different criteria to define a place as an urban area. Those criteria are generally population size, population density, type of economic activity, physical characteristics, level of infrastructure, and social relations. United States Census Bureau identifies urban areas based on population size. The Census Bureau describes urban areas as places with at least 2,000 housing units or 5,000 people (US Census Bureau, 2020). While the Census Bureau makes a rational and positivist classification to define urban areas, some academics propound more comprehensive definitions. For instance, Saltzstein (2003:4) defines urban areas as "regions of a significant population in high concentration, including both central city and suburb". He also refers to cultural, social, architectural, and economic criteria that characterize an urban area, such as skyscrapers, sports complexes, business centers, investment companies, and art centers.

The 'urban' concept defines a region that includes various dynamic networks. Those places are more than their physical forms. Urban areas are hubs of political, environmental, social, racial, cultural, physical, technological, and economic connections and community relations. Urban areas tend to receive domestic and international migration because of all the contemporary opportunities they provide. For example, they have more job opportunities, better infrastructure, and educational and cultural facilities. For these reasons, urban areas can turn into attraction centers for capital accumulation. Because urban areas bring all these networks together in a place and connect them to one another, urban is relevant. In other words, they are more than simply bounded physical spaces. All these socio-economic factors that make a place urban area also create a different way of life and social relations than rural areas. Today, metropolitans and cities are considered major urban areas by many scholars (Saltzstein, 2003).

Because urban areas include different communities, we need to understand what the role of community is in the use of public spaces. Communities have come into prominence with the increasing density of people, culture, architecture, infrastructure, and so on in urban areas. Scholars have discussed what community means in terms of urban affairs. According to Deborah Martin (2017), the 'community' is a concept that captures the idea of social interaction, engagement, and mutual reliance among a group of people. It might be constituted based on sociological and geographical relations. Norton Long (1958:251) also states that a local community can be seen "as a policy, an economy, or a society present itself as an order in which expectations are met and functions performed" . Academic discussions show that communities may be based on socio-economic relations, cultural values, political interests, occupations, and beliefs, as well as physical propinquities (Long, 1958; Martin, 2017; Pusey and Chatterton, 2017; Putnam, 1995).

The rapid change of cities from the industrial revolution to today has caused a differentiation in communities. Social relations, economic processes, and shared values have been changed because cities have rapidly grown up in terms of population, environment, and culture. However, as Putnam (1995) claims, communities are getting less connectedness whereas they are getting larger in terms of culture, population, and economic features. Putnam's claim supports the argument that "urban residents were very much interconnected in communities, and that there was an organizational logic to urban

communities" (Martin, 2017: 75). As Putnam argues, this connectedness within communities declined because of the structural transformation of cities.

Urban public spaces and communities' access to them are essential to understand the emerging conflict between communities and the private sector as well as the urban policy makers who privilege the private sector. Declining connectedness within communities and between communities both create a challenge for urban residents to collectively claim their rights to the city. Becoming an urban society without achieving to be an urban civilization (Dahl, 1967) is one of the reasons of the absence of connectedness. Moreover, privileging the private sector has led to the privatization of urban spaces which has contributed to the lack of connectedness. In the next part, we will discuss the privatization of cities.

3. PRIVATIZATION OF URBAN SPACES AND THE DOMINANCE OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR

Without a doubt, the private sector has a significant impact on urban governance and policy in the United States. The role of business in the policy making process is one of the most important factors in having a better understanding of the development of urban spaces like cities. Designing public policies according to the needs of business interest groups is a product of the concept of privatism (Warner, 1987). Privatism is a general idea that citizens should live in a setting that provides economic opportunities to prosper through a business-friendly atmosphere. According to Barnekov, Boyle and Rich (1989:2), in the US, "privatism has stimulated the growth of cities and shaped their physical forms, their politics, and their economic and social structures". In many places, the private sector has more influence than other interest groups on the local policy making process. Scholars have discussed the privileged role of business in the policy making process and privatization of urban places for many years.

Some urban scholars argue that US cities have always been private cities and that private institutions and business leaders have largely determined the patterns of urban development throughout US history. They claim that the private sector has always been the central force in urban change. They see privatism as the dominant cultural tradition affecting urban policy. It encourages reliance on the private sector as the principal agent of urban change (Barnekov ,Boyle and Rich, 1989; DiGaetano and Strom, 2003; Warner, 1987). Others claim that the private sector has emerged as more than just another interest group and that promoting private business interests has become the dominant goal of local policy making later on (Lindblom, 1977). Although they differ on when the interests of the private sector became culturally dominant in the US, both groups of these scholars agree on the current privilege of the business sector.

This cultural tradition of privatism needs to be discussed intensely to have a better understanding of the conflict between urban communities. DiGaetano and Strom (2003) state, "the political tradition of privatism has reinforced this institutional development by making government-business cooperation an acceptable feature of American urban politics." In other words, interest groups, especially business interest groups, have always had significant influence over policy making processes at both federal and local levels. Even some of the founding fathers of the US, most notably James Madison, strongly advocated for a democracy that consisted of interest groups. Through time, privatism evolved into an organic relationship between business interest groups and the government. In other words, the public and private sectors became intertwined and the compromise between them is perceived as natural. Lindblom (1977) problematizes precisely this intertwined relationship, which is problematic for democracy.

The tradition of privatism is affecting urban policy as well as many other significant factors in the US. This cultural tradition created private US cities where privatism is the prevalent community standard (Barnekov , Boyle and Rich, 1989). This historical background of the US caused a smoother ideational transition to neoliberalism in the 1970s-1980s, as it became the dominant ideology. Since then, neoliberalism has shaped economic policies as well as the relations between the public and private sectors.

3.1. Historical Development of Privatization of Cities

The privatization of cities has intensified with neoliberalism, which maximizes "entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007: 145). Neoliberalism was set as a global rule and caused a wave of institutional reforms worldwide in the 1980s. In Harvey's terms, the neoliberal revolution was destructive not only of institutional frameworks but also of social relations, ways of life, ways of thought, and so on. The Fordist-Keynesian mode of production lost its power with this new capitalist movement. The economic recession of the 1970s, with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the oil crisis, created a space for a new economic ideology, which was filled with neoliberalism. It has become hegemonic within capitalist societies. In the following decade, a way opened for the triumph of neoliberalism in the alleged absence of viable alternatives with the destruction of the Soviet Union. Neoliberalism became a dominant ideology between the 1970s and the 1980s because of economic and geopolitical turmoil and changes. After then, the real impact of neoliberalism has expanded in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The neoliberal project has spread to different geographies with the help of rapid globalization, and it also restructured the socio-economic relations as well as institutional configurations in capitalist societies (Rossi, 2017). It has not only affected and restructured the socio-economic relations and institutions at the global and national level but also played a significant role in cities and public spaces worldwide, which can be called a local effect of neoliberalism.

Because of the entrepreneurship-friendly culture, the increasing influence of the private sector in urban governance didn't encounter major societal opposition. Although it can be perceived as natural, this evolution of the role of the private sector has not happened by itself. The state and administrative reforms played a significant role in the dramatic increase of business role in public policies. Barnekov Rich and Warren (1981) argue that the New Federalism and the New Privatism have put the cities under the larger business influence. In fact, the New Federalism was supposed to strengthen the local and state governments through administrative changes towards decentralization and give back the power of local governments. However, this didn't empower city governance. In practice, business interest groups became increasingly able to influence public policy making, which diminished the local self-governance of cities and challenged the significance of cities as social and economic collectivities. The New Privatism, which is the idea that any community can be justified by serving the business needs in the competitive national market, causing a stronger public-private partnership. The period of the Reagan administration was also associated with neoliberal politics. Some scholars argue that cities became laboratories for neoliberalism when the idea of entrepreneurship came to the cities (Davidson, 2017; Rossi, 2017). For instance, the financialization of the housing market and massive expansion of consumerism promoted new entrepreneurship, which changed the socio-economic relations in the city. The privileging of business interest was ensured through mayors and local governance, a shift from the entrepreneurial era of the 1980s and 1990s, when the attempt to enhance the business interest was at the state level. Wilson (2017) calls this new era as hyper-entrepreneurism. With these transformations, the public-private partnership has started to be advocated by urban policy makers.

3.2. Business Privilege

The idea that the private sector drives economic development in cities causes citizens and public policy makers to welcome a privileged role in business. Many policy areas privilege business groups more than any other interest groups. First of all, businesspeople usually get economic inducements from the local governments, such as tax credits, contract incentives, and location subsidies to mobilize private skills and resources. They enjoy legislations that are designed to attract private capital to the city. Those legislations even include enterprise zones, which require legislation that city governments have to sell all the land in that zone at auction and have to provide tax-free zones. They were brought to several state congresses during the 1980s and the State of Connecticut enacted enterprise zone legislation in 1981. This meant the state government provided subsidies, a local property tax cut of up to 80%, and tax freezes. The obligation of state governments to create tax and regulation relief leads to restrictive policies toward city governance. According to Barnekov, Rich and Warren (1981), pro-business policies became important for the sake of business more than for the well-being of citizens.

The underlying reason that policy makers privilege corporate business is that they have an enormous capacity to provide employment and increase living standards. For example, Amazon, in 2017, announced that it will open its second North American Headquarters. Some states sent proposals to attract the 5 billion investments and 50.000 jobs that will come with the headquarters. For a small state like Delaware, this number is more than its entire annual budget and the number of jobs created over the past five years (Goss and Neiburg, 2017). The grandiose economic opportunity that the big corporations have to offer causes competition among public officials to attract capital and jobs to their states. From a neoliberal approach, these economic opportunities are valid reasons for policy makers to privilege the business interest.

Most of the citizens also accept the claims of business and government officials on the necessity to meet the needs of business instead of insisting on their control over the public policies and see if the dire consequences that the business sector threatens would follow (Lindblom, 1977). People accept the privileged role of business because public policy makers convince the people that business is necessary for economic development and growth. Because the citizens believe that their jobs and financial well-being can only be provided by the private sector, they think they have no choice but to accept any demands of business interest groups.

3.3. The Impact of the Business Sector on Urban Policy Making

The business sector takes advantage of certain ways through which it can penetrate the policy making processes. First of all, because businesspeople have more communication opportunities with the policy makers, it is more likely that the officials are convinced by their business interests. Thus, business interests are often prioritized over social and environmental concerns. Secondly, they have lobbying power through their funds to the politicians' campaigns. The big corporations can buy bargaining power with policy makers through their financial capacities. The money they put into campaigns, projects, and advertisements pays them back when policy makers feel in debt to them. Thirdly, they have leverage power because of their economic promises for a city. They can threaten the governments with dire consequences if their demands are unmet. Most government officials are concerned with being re-elected. Thus, attracting jobs to their constituencies is one of the most important goals in their political agenda. Fourthly, some business interest groups can manipulate public opinion using mainstream media and social media. Lastly, as Lindblom (1977) claims, businesspeople enter social and political groups such as parties and interest groups to get public support for their economic activities. These ways allow

the business sector to gain disproportionate influence over the electorate, government officials, and, consequently, public policy making.

3.4. The Implications of Business Influence on Urban Development

There are advantages and disadvantages of privileging the role of business in urban governance. The first positive implication of business influence on urban governance is concentrating the cities' efforts and resources on local economic development in line with national economic growth needs (Barnekov, Boyle and Rich, 1989). This way, the cities can attract employment opportunities. The second positive implication is attracting capital and investment to the cities' infrastructural development. In the US, there are many cases where private companies take care of the infrastructure of cities. For instance, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, Milton Hershey's chocolate company helped with many public infrastructure projects. The DuPont company is also an example of the significance of a private group over the economic development of the state of Delaware.

Besides the positive implications of business influence on urban development, there are more negative consequences of this transformation as well. First, as the business became more able to enter the public policy making process, the local self-governance diminished, and the significance of cities as social and economic collectivities has been challenged (Barnekov, Boyle and Rich, 1989). Second, the local governors started to behave like entrepreneurs as they compete to get the most businesses to their towns as possible (Reese and Rosenfeld, 2002). Some urban policy makers became the strongest advocates of public-private partnerships. Third, this transformation has changed the "alliance goals, modes of conduct, discursive strategies, and discourse enabling content" (Wilson, 2017: 122). It means that the ever-increasing role of the private sector in public policy making challenges the democratic spirit of urban governance. Fourth, there are also socio-economic impacts of business domination over the urban governance process. When public policy was influenced more and more by the business interest, the inequality within cities was exacerbated: the rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer. Harvey (2003: 940) also states that the increasing influence of business interest on public policy making shows us that "the freer the markets, the greater the inequality and more monopoly of the power over cities.". Fifth, public spaces shrunk and access to public usage is increasingly restricted. In other words, with the privatization of public spaces, businesses express their rights to the place where they operate for the private use of their property, which is publicly accessible. Last, the diminished capacity of public offices and leaving the economic realm to the conscience of the market created severe consequences, such as the informal economy, which is unregistered and unprotected by the state. For the citizens, globally expanding urban informalities means more street vendors, a lack of job security, and no social insurances (Lindell, 2008; Yiftachel, 2009).

The problems listed above have further implications on the communities' relations in the urban areas, the free access to public spaces, and most importantly, the claim to the right to the city. The prioritization of the private sector transformed the way policy makers and residents think about public spaces in a way that ignores the right to the city of an ordinary resident. The new understanding of public spaces resonates more with the concept of "the right in the city", which grants rights to residents within a given structure that they have no say in its design, decision-making process, and ruling (Villanueva, 2017). The next section discusses the concept of the right to the city and criticizes the position of privatism. Later, this article argues that approaching the rights of the residents in urban areas with the right in the city viewpoint is a misconception of the actual rights and responsibilities of residents, and thus constitutes a barrier to accomplishing fostering and governing inclusive communities.

4. THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Many scholars have debated the role of citizens in decision-making mechanisms over the places in which they live. Cities are crucial in creating one's desired world. As Harvey quotes from Robert Park, "if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself." (Harvey, 2008: 23). However, it is still controversial in what ways these people should remake their cities and what remaking entails exactly. The right to the city is a concept developed by Henry Lefebvre to address this issue in his book named after the concept itself, *The right to the city*. In his book, Lefebvre discusses what the capitalist city has displaced and destroyed through neoliberal policies. David Harvey published his seminal article, "The Right to the City", in 2008 and discussed Lefebvre's concept. Harvey (2008) argues that the right to the city is more than an individual right to access urban resources and infrastructures. He uses Marx's dialectical method to reconceptualize the right to the city in a more comprehensive way. According to him, the right to the city is a right to change ourselves by changing the city and vice versa. He also argues that making and remaking cities and ourselves is one of the most significant human rights, but we do not pay enough attention to it. That is why economically and politically powerful elites have used this right to shape the city more often for their interests than for the common good.

The academic literature on the right to the city adopts different perspectives on the concept. Villanueva (2017) organizes the ways scholars discuss the concept into three broad categories. In the first category, the right to the city is conceptualized as a *right to space*. Although Lefebvre argues that the right to the city entails the right to participation, other urban scholars such as Dikeç (2001) and Mitchell (2003) go beyond Lefebvre's point by arguing that the right to the city is not only about participation but also a right to political space. People, especially minority groups, need a place to communicate the political and social issues that concern them. In order to make a difference in the city, one needs a political space to articulate their demands as well as to engage politically.

The second category that Villanueva points out is the view of the right to the city as a *transformative process*. These scholars argue the existing economic conditions and institutions perpetuate structural discrimination and inequality. These have to change if the people want to implement the right to the city to its full potential. It requires a radical change for the people to collectively claim their rights over the surplus produced and circulated in cities. What this radical change entails is transforming the institutions and economic conditions in a way that enables equal distribution of the right to the city among the political and economic elite and the people. This transformation does not naturally occur. According to Harvey (2008), people should strive for their right to the city by pressuring the political and economic elite. Archon Fung (2006) also agrees that public pressure that compels authorized officials to act justly is necessary and this could be achieved through broader participation in decision-making processes. Thus, the transformative process could be achieved only if people actively pursue it.

The last category that Villanueva considers is the scholars who view the right to the city as an *all-encompassing slogan*. Scholars argue when academics, non-governmental organizations, and social movements that do not critically engage with its content and meaning use the right to the city as an encompassing slogan, it will lose its utility. For those, Villanueva suggests a possible solution: theorize the concept under an umbrella of social justice and substantive democracy to tackle the concept stretching.

5. BARRIERS TO ACCOMPLISH FOSTERING AND GOVERNING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Since urban public spaces have increasingly been privatized in cities, fostering and governing inclusive communities have become hard to achieve because there are some barriers and obstacles in front of these goals. Even though there are many barriers to accomplishing these goals, in this section of the article, we discuss three significant barriers: (1) lack of inclusive mechanisms, (2) misunderstanding of the right to the city, and (3) privatization of public spaces with neoliberal influences.

5.1. Lack of Inclusive Mechanisms

Privately owned public spaces are different from publicly owned ones. With the privileged private sector and privatization of cities, the right to rule and design privately owned public places is given to their operators. For instance, according to some scholars, shopping malls and shops are privately owned public spaces (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2006; Stillerman and Salcedo, 2012). Based on this approach, Christiana Mall, a shopping mall located between the cities of Newark and Wilmington, Delaware, can be accepted as a public space in which citizens, especially urban youth, get together and socially interact. Even though there is no comprehensive research on Christiana Mall, it looks like young people use this place for socialization because of the limited number of public spaces that they can go to for social interaction. Although malls became the venue, especially for teenagers, not only to purchase goods but also to socialize, and they spend long hours there almost on a weekly basis, they have no say in the decision-making process of designing and ruling the space of the mall. This example demonstrates that the privately owned public spaces which are increasingly used lack any participatory mechanisms that could have accomplished inclusiveness. The privileged private sector and privatization of cities impede the emergence of participation mechanisms to help create inclusive communities. The lack of these mechanisms is a challenge to accomplish fostering and governing inclusive communities.

5.2. Misunderstanding of the Right to the City

Considering Villanueva's three thematic categories, mentioned in the earlier section of this article, for the scholarship that discuss the concept of the right to the city, we can argue that the concept is particularly important in the discussion of citizens' rights over the places in which they live. In the implementation of urban policies, the concept of 'rights' is also understood in a different and very restricted way as well. For instance, decision makers create spaces for citizens to claim their rights in the city, but this does not involve transforming the city or providing a space for the residents or visitors to raise their voices over the city. Thus, the right in the city does not necessarily refer to the inclusion of all citizens in the decision-making process. The right in the city only refers to that residents claim their rights in a space that administrators designate. However, the fact that administrators/policy makers designate a place for citizens to claim their rights in the city does not give the residents the right to change places where they live, nor it provides a political space to express their thoughts. Furthermore, as Garcia (2006) argues, when citizens are excluded from decision-making mechanisms, their interests are not usually considered in the policy making process. To put it briefly, the right in the city refers to the right to live in a space that is created without providing the right to participate, change, design, and voice rights, whereas the right to the city is claiming rights over the city, shaping its fate collectively, and eliminating the structural inequalities through significant transformations.

The case of Philadelphia Starbucks, mentioned at the beginning of the article, is significant to observe the common misunderstanding of the right to the city. Before the incident, it looks like Starbucks and the police provide a space for people to claim their rights in the city, but this does not involve

providing a space for the visitors to raise their voices over the space. In other words, a privately owned public space is created, but visitors do not have a say in the ruling and designing process. However, after the incident, Starbucks' announced that its restrooms will be open to everyone. In addition, the two young men have reached separate agreements with the city and Starbucks. The city government of Philadelphia has agreed to pay them $1 each and set up a $200,000 program for young entrepreneurs (Madej, 2018). These decisions prove that people have a say over a public space even though it is privately owned. This is an example of transforming people's rights from "the right in a public place" to "the right to a public place".

The concept of the right to the city is created as a reaction to transformations in cities that are implemented via neoliberal policies. Cities have become carriers of the neoliberal project with a rapidly increasing number of shopping malls, coffee shops, and financial buildings that promote consumption and financial circulation. This neoliberal project paved the way for the privatization of public spaces which is the last barrier to fostering and governing inclusive communities that are covered in this article (Villanueva, 2017).

5.3. Neoliberal Transformation of Cities and Privatization of Public Spaces

Public spaces have become privatized due to the neoliberal transformation of cities. This transformation created a barrier to accomplishing fostering and governing inclusive communities because interconnectedness between communities is deteriorated by favoring economic motivations at the expense of social and communitarian values and relations. When it comes to the impacts of neoliberalism on cities, the most obvious problem would be the increasing inequality regarding access to consumer goods and services. Harvey (2008) claims that implementing neoliberal policies extended the inequality gap within the cities. Those policies have made the rich richer and the poor poorer. The history of neoliberalism shows us that "the freer the markets, the greater the inequality and more monopoly of the power over cities." (Harvey, 2003: 940). Rossi (2017) argues neoliberalism and cities have two-sided relations, as they mutually reinforce each other. Cities are laboratories for neoliberalism, with the idea of entrepreneurship coming to the cities. For instance, the financialization of the housing market and massive expansion of consumerism promoted new entrepreneurship, which changed the socio-economic relations in the city.

Neoliberal policies have created unequal structures in cities that have damaged and restrained the right to the city concept. These unequal structures go beyond the issue of equal economic opportunities for all citizens. For instance, they have created socially excluded marginalized groups in cities. Madanipour (2011) argues that social exclusion in cities can be seen in three distinct forms: economic discrimination, political discrimination, and cultural exclusion. First, members of marginalized groups are not allowed to take advantage of economic opportunities such as employment. Second, members of marginalized groups are excluded from full political representation, or they are deprived of voting rights. Third, members of marginalized groups are assimilated into the dominant culture of the city, rather than creating the culture together. These three distinct forms of social exclusion are interrelated; one usually correlates with another. In cases where they overlap, the oppression through discrimination reaches peak levels. Madanipour (2011) discusses how social exclusion has created marginalized groups. In addition, discriminatory policies also reproduce unequal relations by disproportionately benefiting the already powerful political and economic elite. The unequal treatment of specific urban policies creates different target populations as well. Schneider and Ingram (1993) discuss the social construction of target populations. They argue the powerful target populations receive beneficial policies whereas powerless groups get punitive policies. The target groups, and the allocation of resources for them, are shaped through the interrelation of two characteristics: social construction and

power of the group. Thus, there are four major types of target populations: advantaged, contenders, dependents, and finally deviants. Although the dependents and deviants are subjected to punishment-related policies, they should be considered in discussing the right to the city. Politicians are mostly concerned with reelection and addressing policy problems as much as possible. However, the weak groups' rights to the city are unacknowledged because the politicians do not prioritize their needs to be recognized, empowered, and involved.

Neoliberal transformation of cities deeply affected public spaces in cities. With the nature of neoliberalism, those places have increasingly become privatized. What it means that transfer ownership and control of those places from public to private. Some scholars claim that a space's publicness can be located along a continuum from completely private to completely public (Kohn, 2004; Marcuse, 2004; L. Staeheli and Mitchell, 2016), whereas others argue that management practices in publicly owned spaces prioritize development and economic growth over social and ecological concerns (Németh and Schmidt, 2011; Schmidt, 2004; Zukin, 1995). According to Németh and Schmidt (2011), the fact that public spaces are provided through private means raises some concerns. First, it can relinquish control to private parties that may not have the broader public interest in mind. Second, privately owned public spaces reflect the owner's public image, which shapes the space accordingly. Even though there are some conflicts in the literature, many scholars argue that privately owned public spaces are less public and more controlled than publicly owned ones. The barriers in front of fostering and governing inclusive communities create conflicts about the rights people have over public spaces. These conflicts cause social mobilizations such as the Philadelphia Starbucks protests and the Black Lives Matter movement, which pave the way for social unrest.

Lack of inclusive mechanisms, misunderstanding of the right to the city, and privatization of public spaces with neoliberal influences are the major barriers to fostering and governing inclusive communities. In order to address these barriers, a multilayered responsibility approach is needed. Several actors should take on responsibility in different ways. We argue that academics, policy makers, and residents should seek their roles and fulfill their responsibilities. The next section of the article discusses the relevant stakeholders and what they can do to address the barriers to fostering and governing inclusive communities.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

Fostering and governing inclusive communities is not under the responsibility of a single actor, or a group. The goal of removing the barriers of fostering and governing inclusive communities needs the togetherness of different actors such as academics, policy makers, and residents.

In a general sense, academics and policy makers should study public spaces in order to find out a better way of governing urban areas that can lead to the improvement of the daily lives of all residents. Specifically, they should study public spaces as an example of urban areas because those places are important to analyze in order to understand the functioning of democracy. Furthermore, they provide more specific public services to places (Saltzstein, 2003). When academics study public places, they can develop efficient ways of providing public services by creating theories. Moreover, even though cities, representatives of public spaces, are the most appropriate unit of democracy for some (Dahl, 1967) and important to understand the human condition; modernization, modernity, post-modernity, and capitalist and industrial society are not widely discussed in relation to those places (Harvey, 1997). This gap reveals some questions that open new discussions in public spaces. For instance, whether citizens have a say over the use of public spaces in democracies (Saltzstein, 2003), if yes, how the interests and preferences of citizens should be incorporated into the decisions regarding the use of public spaces?, in

what ways the potential conflict between the interests of citizens and private owners of the public spaces can be resolved?, and what kind of promises the urban affairs scholarship has to offer for a better life are some of the questions many scholars debate.

Discussing and studying public places is relevant, but it is not always possible to come up with specific solutions because there are no standard cures for issues society has faced. Even though it is not always easy to find out solutions, studying and discussing public places help us to see different questions from different angles, which helps to understand the human condition and build powerful communities.

Those dynamic places consist of communities that have the idea of social interaction, connection, and mutual reliance among a group of people. In addition to obtaining sustainable, wealthy, and growing communities, having interconnected communities are significant to create an area –not just a physical place– where the needs of stakeholders in the community are met. As a result, one of the significant ways to build stronger communities is to analyze public places both academically and practically.

In addition to academics, policy makers should prioritize the interests of citizens over the business profit maximization concerns. If the policy makers engage with the ordinary people, they can have a better understanding of their needs and preferences and then translate citizen interest into policy making. A truly democratic urban governance requires citizen participation in decision making process, either through direct involvement of citizens, or representation of their interests. The policy makers are responsible for fulfilling this goal by considering the values and preferences of citizens in their decision-making process and going beyond a rational understanding of cost-benefit analysis.

Finally, the residents also have a responsibility to foster and govern inclusive communities. They should claim their right to the city in public spaces. If the residents are content with the rights given by authorities, they will never feel comfortable with public spaces because these places will be designed and ruled under the influence of neoliberal projects and become increasingly privatized. The ways the citizens can utilize to raise their voices include formal and informal mechanisms such as city council meetings, judicial paths when their rights are compromised as well as social protests, sit-in demonstrations, and raising awareness on the rights of citizens over the public spaces.

7. CONCLUSION

The conflict between the two positions, advocating citizen control and supporting private interests of the business sector, is inevitable in the context of US urban areas because of the specific way they historically developed, the unique culture of business privilege, the disconnection among communities, and the lack of inclusive mechanisms. We believe, there are responsibilities for every individual living in an urban area, as we remake the cities, and they remake us (Harvey, 2008). To claim the right to the city is actually to claim democratic governance of urban areas in which we live. Therefore, the right to the city should be considered as a basic human rights issue. The policy makers should be pressed with the preferences of citizens as the business sector already influences heavily the policy choices in urban governance. With the contributions of post-modernist urban theory, one can consider the different interests of citizens, but with assigned spaces, they should be able to come together and discuss what they want to pursue in the context of privatized public spaces. The critical urban theory will make the greatest contribution in identifying the existing and potential problems of privatization of public spaces, and also determining the ways citizens can adopt to transform and reform their urban governance.

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Ethical Statement

During the writing and publication of this study, the rules of Research and Publication Ethics were complied with, and no falsification was made in the data obtained for the study. Ethics committee approval is not required for the study.

Contribution Rate Statement

All the authors in the study contributed to all processes of writing and drafting the study and the final version of the study has been read and approved by them.

Conflict Statement

This study did not lead to any individual or institutional/organizational conflict of interest.

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Extended Abstract

Privatization of Public Spaces and the Right to the City in the United States

With the industrial age, people moved from rural areas to towns that rapidly transform into complex urban areas. Over time, towns expanded into cities, and cities into metropolitan areas with high density in terms of people, culture, architecture, and infrastructure. As a result of the industrial revolution and rapid urbanization, larger and physically, politically, economically, socially, culturally, spatially, and infrastructurally more complicated places –urban areas– have emerged. Within urban areas, urban public spaces "where we all come together, remain public in the sense of providing a place for everyone to relax, learn and recreate" fulfill a significant need for open and inclusive areas.

The rapid change of cities from the industrial revolution to today has caused a differentiation in communities. Social relations, economic processes, and shared values have been changed because cities have rapidly grown up in terms of population, environment, and culture. Urban public spaces and communities' access to them are essential to understand the emerging conflict between communities and the private sector as well as the urban policy makers who privilege the private sector. Declining connectedness within communities and between communities both create a challenge for urban residents to collectively claim their rights to the city. Becoming an urban society without achieving to be an urban civilization is one of the reasons of the absence of connectedness. Moreover, privileging the private sector has led to the privatization of urban spaces which has contributed to the lack of connectedness. Most importantly, the privatization of cities has also intensified with neoliberalism.

When it comes to the impacts of neoliberalism on cities, the most obvious problem would be the increasing inequality regarding access to consumer goods and services. The history of neoliberalism shows us that "the freer the markets, the greater the inequality and more monopoly of the power over cities.". Rossi argues neoliberalism and cities have two-sided relations, as they mutually reinforce each other. Cities are laboratories for neoliberalism, with the idea of entrepreneurship coming to the cities. For instance, the financialization of the housing market and massive expansion of consumerism promoted new entrepreneurship, which changed the socio-economic relations in the city.

Privatization of urban public spaces leads to two conflicting positions regarding the private or public rights over a place. This article discusses the problems of urban areas with regard to the privatization of public spaces and the consequent reaction of the citizens to claim their right to the city in various forms of social mobilization. This contestation between citizen and business claims over urban places is analyzed through a historical perspective that traces the development of business role in public policy making, the ways in which business influences policy making process, and their outcomes. We, then, identify three barriers that we regard the strongest in overcoming these problems: (1) lack of inclusive mechanisms, (2) misunderstanding of the right to the city, and (3) privatization of public spaces with neoliberal influences.

In order to address these barriers, a multilayered responsibility approach is needed. Several actors should take on responsibility in different ways. We argue that academics, policy makers, and residents should seek their roles and fulfill their responsibilities. Lastly, we discuss the role of these stakeholders. We believe, there are responsibilities for every individual living in an urban area, as we remake the cities, and they remake us. To claim the right to the city is actually to claim democratic governance of urban areas in which we live. Therefore, the right to the city should be considered as a basic human rights issue. The policy makers should be pressed with the preferences of citizens as the business sector already influences heavily the policy choices in urban governance. The conclusion provides our assessment of this conflict and preference of urban theory schools to strengthen citizen control over urban areas. With the contributions of post-modernist urban theory, one can consider the different interests of citizens, but with assigned spaces, they should be able to come together and discuss what they want to pursue in the context of privatized public spaces. The critical urban theory will make the greatest contribution in identifying the existing and potential problems of privatization of public spaces, and also determining the ways citizens can adopt to transform and reform their urban governance.

Genişletilmiş Öz
Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde Kamusal Alanların Özelleştirilmesi ve Şehir Hakkı

Sanayileşme ile birlikte, insanlar kırsal mekanlardan kasabalara taşınmaya başlamıştır ve bu yeni alanlar hızla karmaşık kentsel mekanlara dönüşmüştür. Zamanla, kasabalar genişleyerek şehirlere, şehirler de nüfus, kültür, mimari ve altyapı açısından yüksek yoğunluklu metropollere dönüşmüştür. Sanayi devrimi ve hızlı kentleşmenin bir sonucu olarak daha büyük ve fiziksel, politik, ekonomik, sosyal, kültürel, mekansal ve altyapısal olarak daha karmaşık yerler – kentsel mekanlar – ortaya çıkmıştır. Kentsel kamusal mekanlar, "hepimizin bir araya geldiği, herkese dinlenmesi, öğrenmesi ve yeniden düzenleme anlamında söz sahibi olacağı" bir mekan sağlama anlamında, kamusal alanlara yönelik önemli bir ihtiyacı karşılamaktadır.

Sanayi devriminden günümüze kadar şehirlerin hızlı değişimi toplumlarda da farklılaşmaya neden olmuştur. Kentler nüfus, çevre ve kültür açısından hızla büyüdüğü için sosyal ilişkiler, ekonomik süreçler ve ortak değerler değişmiştir.

Kentsel kamusal alanlar ve toplulukların bunlara erişimi, topluluklar ve özel sektör ile özel sektöre ayrıcalık tanıyan kentsel politika yapıcılar arasında ortaya çıkan çatışmayı anlamak için çok önemlidir. Topluluklar içinde ve topluluklar arasında azalan bağlılığın, kent sakinlerinin kent üzerindeki haklarını toplu olarak talep etmeleri için bir zorluk yaratıyor. Kent uygarlığı olmayı başaramadan kent toplumu haline gelmek, bu bağlılığın olmamasının nedenlerinden biridir. Ayrıca, özek sektör çıkarlarının vatandaşların şehir hakkından daha ön planda tutulması, kentsel mekanların özelleştirilmesine yol açmış ve bu da bağ eksikliğine katkıda bulunmuştur. En önemlisi de, neoliberalizm ile birlikte şehirlerdeki kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi de artmıştır.

Neoliberalizmin şehirler üzerindeki etkileri söz konusu olduğunda, en bariz sorun, tüketim mallarına ve hizmetlerine erişimde artan eşitsizlik olacaktır. Neoliberalizmin tarihi bize şunu gösteriyor: "Piyasalar ne kadar özgürse, eşitsizlik ve şehirler üzerindeki güç tekeli o kadar büyük olur.". Rossi, neoliberalizm ve şehirlerin birbirini karşılıklı olarak güçlendirdiği için iki taraflı ilişkilere sahip olduğunu savunur. Şehirler, girişimcilik fikrinin şehirlere gelmesiyle birlikte, neoliberalizm için birer laboratuvardır. Örneğin, konut piyasasının finansallaşması ve tüketiciliğin büyük ölçüde genişlemesi, şehirdeki sosyo-ekonomik ilişkileri değiştiren yeni girişimciliği teşvik etti.

Kentsel kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi, bu alanlar üzerindeki özel veya kamusal olmak üzere iki farklı hak iddiasına yol açmaktadır. Bu makale, kentlerdeki kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi ile ilgili ortaya çıkan

sorunları ve bunun sonucunda vatandaşların çeşitli toplumsal hareket yöntemleriyle şehir haklarını talep etme konusundaki tepkilerini tartışmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, vatandaş ve özel sektörün kentsel alanlar üzerindeki iddiaları arasındaki çekişme, kamu politikası yapımında özel sektörün rolünün gelişimini, sermayenin politika oluşturma sürecini etkileme yollarını ve bunların sonuçlarını izleyen tarihsel bir perspektif aracılığıyla analiz edilmektedir. Bu makale, bu sorunların aşılmasının önündeki en belirgin bu üç engelin (1) kapsayıcı mekanizmaların olmaması, (2) şehir hakkının yanlış anlaşılması ve (3) neoliberal etkilerle kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesi olduğu sonucuna varmıştır.

Bu engellerin üstesinden gelmek için çok katmanlı bir sorumluluk yaklaşımına ihtiyaç vardır. Birkaç aktör farklı şekillerde sorumluluk almalıdır. Akademisyenlerin, politika yapıcıların ve bölge sakinlerinin üstlerine düşen görevleri bulmaları ve sorumluluklarını yerine getirmeleri gerektiğini savunuyoruz. Toplumsal olarak şehirler üzerinde yukarıda bahsedilen düzenlemeleri yaparken şehirler de bizim dönüşümümüze yol açmaktadır. Bu süreç içerisinde kentsel mekanlarda yaşayan her bireye düşen sorumluluklar olduğuna inanıyoruz. Sorunların giderilmesi konusunda, akademisyenler, politika yapıcılar ve vatandaşlar gibi farklı paydaşların rolü makalenin son bölümünde tartışılmıştır. Şehir hakkını talep etmek, aslında içinde yaşadığımız kentsel mekanların demokratik yönetimini talep etmektir. Vatandaşların haklarını talep etmek için kullanabilecekleri yollar, belediye meclisi toplantıları, haklarından taviz verildiğinde yargı yolları gibi resmi mekanizmaların yanı sıra toplumsal protestolar, oturma eylemleri ve vatandaşın kamusal alan üzerindeki hakları konusunda farkındalık yaratan gayriresmi mekanizmaları içerir. Bu nedenle şehir hakkı temel bir insan hakları sorunu olarak ele alınmalıdır. Özel sektör kentsel yönetişimdeki politika seçimlerini zaten büyük ölçüde etkilediğinden, politika yapıcılara vatandaşların tercihleri konusunda baskı yapılmalıdır. Bu çatışmaya ilişkin değerlendirme sonucunda, kentsel alanlar üzerindeki vatandaş kontrolünü güçlendirmek için kent kuramları üzerine çalışan ekollerin tercihlerine önem verilmesine ulaşılmıştır. Post-modernist kentsel teorinin katkılarıyla, vatandaşların farklı ilgi alanları göz önünde bulundurulabilir, ancak tahsis edilen mekanlarla, özelleştirilen kamusal mekanlar bağlamında bir araya gelmeli ve ne yapmak istediklerini tartışabilmelidirler. Eleştirel kentsel teori, kamusal alanların özelleştirilmesinin mevcut ve potansiyel sorunlarının belirlenmesinde ve ayrıca vatandaşların kentsel yönetişimlerini dönüştürmek ve reforme etmek için benimseyebilecekleri yolları belirlemede en büyük katkıyı yapacaktır.