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### Article

## Urban transformation in the context of the right to the city and citizens' rights: The case of Trabzon Beşikdüzü

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### ABSTRACT

While cities make decisions regarding urban space, citizens who experience effects of decisions are excluded from decision-making processes. Urban plans are generally designed regardless of residents. The pursuit of searching for answer to the question: “Who are managing cities?” by urban politics, necessitates both neo-liberal urbanism and answer to the question “to whom cities belong.” Since the 2000s, the concept of “right to the city” has been frequently brought to the agenda in the search for an answer. The problem of the study is “What are the results of urban transformation practices in the context of the right to the city and the rights of the citizens? In this context, the aim of the study is to discuss the results of urban transformation practices to produce urban space in relation to the violations of the right to the city and the right of the citizens, through the example of Beşikdüzü. The study was prepared with knowledge that urban transformation and spatial changes in Beşikdüzü led to the desire of citizens to own the in 2014-2019. Study reveals that the participation of city residents in the decisions taken regarding the production of urban space hasn't been enabled, there have been implementations that violate the rights of city residents, and the decisions have resulted in the destruction of the spaces which represent the identity of city, have led to the demand for conservation of city-by-city residents.

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### INTRODUCTION

The urban built environments of cities are subject to a constant change. Rent potentials of aged living spaces in city centers have emerged concurrently with the neoliberal transition. Space has evolved into a marketable commodity. As a result, urban areas have become the primary focus of headquarters (Kuran, 2021: 177). On the other hand, for each political government to express itself corporally is

possible by leaving a mark on an urban built environment. Thus, capital accumulation is achieved via the production of an urban space. Along with this, the channels, in which the changes within the urban built environment of cities could take place with the consent of the residents of a city, are restrained. This restraint leads the administrators, who hold a permeable force against the demands of capital accumulation and current conditions, to make decisions regarding changing the urban built environment despite

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the sensitiveness of residents. As neoliberalism, market and change-oriented intervention, spatial inequalities, and displacement processes, urban administrators change and the understanding of urban entrepreneurship, which tends to draw the investment onto itself during an intercity competition, evolves; the suppression for a change upon the urban built environment increases, therefore, resulting in changes that would destruct the memory of a city. These changes, in turn, lead to urban social movements by bringing about violations of rights. “Right to the city,” which suggest residents having a voice on the changes occurring in cities, and “urban rights,” which is expressed in detail in various international documents, are used together with the understanding of participation, when we examine today’s practices. The right to the city is a struggle of individuals and communities (Balzarini and Shlay, 2015: 505). However, right to the city prescriptions lack any political component that ensures that the outcomes of such battles will either challenge neoliberalism or be redistributive. Without any political content, the right to the city generates competing claims on the community (Kartal and Gençtürk, 2022: 75).

This study touches on the right to the city and urban rights, and therefore provides information on city councils, which are considered to be one of the limited methods of participation in urban policy in Turkey. The fact that “right to the city” in the recent years have been used often in international agreements, academic literature, alternative policy pursuits and for public opposition, have led this concept to expand as to embody many distinct references. Purcell (2014: 142), stresses that despite the expansion of the content of this concept, Lefebvre considers right to the city a fundamental component of a wider political conflict for revolution, rather than an addition to current liberal democratic rights. This emphasis also constitutes the main reason for the need to consider the concepts of “the right to the city” and “the urban rights” apart from each other. The reason why the history of Beşikdüzü County’s Village Institute is included in the study is to reveal the emergence of objections toward urban transformation practices in Beşikdüzü, in relation to the spatial changes in the city, as well as social and political reasons and the existence of citizens with urban ethics. Based on environmental ethics, Akkoyunlu Ertan (2008a) analyzes urban ethics under two headings: the practical level, where decisions are made on how we should live in the city, and the abstract and academic level, which involves thinking about how we make decisions regarding the future of the city, what we value, and how we carry urban values into the future. In the same study, he also states the necessity of urban ethics being at the basis of the cooperation efforts of managers and individuals who produce spatial and urban structures for the benefit of society. Through this, individuals who are raised with urban awareness will realize the problems in their urban environment and make cooperative efforts to

produce solutions to these problems for present and future generations (Akkoyunlu Ertan, 2008a).

### **NEOLIBERAL URBANIZATION: THE RIGHT TO HAVE A SAY IN THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF “THE RIGHT TO THE CITY” AND “URBAN RIGHTS”**

*Each type of society and each form of design has its own specific type of a city* (Lefebvre, 1996). We are in a phase, which has been called “neoliberal” since 1980s, in which corporatization, liberalization, implementing private sector approaches in public sector as well, have been related to efficiency, and localization and globalization have been focused on. In this phase in question, the growth in building trade due to production of space, establishment of cities, and even establishment of new cities, and large-scale mega-projects have been carried into effect. Neoliberal urban policies are performed through a constant building and destruction and reconstruction of urban built environment, for accumulation of capital, and the most prominent one of these implementation tools is called “urban transformation.”

*Secondary circuit of capital* is based on the investments made on urban built environment. For capitalism to expand and for capital accumulation to disentangle the crises/conflicts which it involves in, there has been changes experienced in urban built environments of cities from past to present, hence, urban housing and infrastructure investments play a determinant role in capital accumulation (Harvey, 1982). In this aspect, the roles of state and finance are of remarkable importance as well. Within this dominant urbanization model, urban managements that are in a competition with one another attempt to implement urban plans that are to draw the investments to themselves through an entrepreneurship suppression. Cities are renovated by change values rather than value of use. One of the most important urban policy tools in this renovation process is urban transformation applications. At the same time, one of the most commonly utilized conceptualizations of the capital-space interaction under neoliberalism is the concept of urban transformation (Kuran, 2021: 175). Urban renovation practices date back to the process that started with the industrial revolution, and today’s practices are based on an economic-centered approach that includes urban revitalization (Özden, 2016: 49-50). In this context, in today’s world, urban transformation policies are attributed an important role with the reasoning that the transformation of the urban built environment will attract international capital and revitalize many sectors and consequently create social welfare. In addition, the preservation and maintenance of historical areas through the urban transformation policies are aimed (Türkün, 2014: 5-8; Öktem Ünsal and Türkün, 2014). While old city

centers undergo urban transformation under the name of urban renovation, the necessity of preserving their original identity requires “renovation by preserving,” that is taking urban conservation principles into account (Özden, 2016: 47). However, when we look at the urban transformation practices, it is seen that these principles have not been carried out. At the same time, all segments of the society cannot benefit equally from the urban rent generated by urban transformation practices. In addition to this unequal distribution, the fact that urban transformation decisions are carried out together with free market actors in practice and that urban residents are excluded from decision-making mechanisms also deepens the unequal power relations. Although any change to be made in the urban built environment determines the future of the people living in the city, these decisions are determined by a group of central and local administrators and potential investors, and the people living in the city may be left out of the decision-making processes (Türkün, 2014: 5-8; Öktem Ünsal and Türkün, 2014).

Urban built environment holds the fundamental role in disentangling-although temporarily-the over-accumulation crisis of capital through *spatial expansion* and *temporal shift* (Harvey, 1989). Urban transformation practices function as production inputs for capital accumulation in the commodification of cities in global capitalism (Şahin, 2015: 85). Although the city governments which aim to draw the investment into their side, make decisions regarding urban spaces, the citizens, who are to experience all the outputs and impacts of the decisions in question, are excluded of these decision-making processes. In addition, urban plans are designed and implemented without the participation of the people of the city and without being fully discussed. The pursuits of searching for an answer for the question: “Who run cities?” by urban politics, necessitate both neo-liberal urbanism practices and an answer for the question “to whom cities belong” through putting it on the agenda. Within this context, the recent practices in 30–40 years have put the concept “right to the city” on the agenda of the search for answer in question, since 2000s.

The concept “right to the city” is theocratized by Lefebvre. Lefebvre (1996) who considers city as a work close to a work of art rather than a material product, regards production of city as a human production and reproduction. According to Lefebvre, production of urban space necessarily includes the reproduction of social relations related to the space to be produced. Production of urban space, therefore, requires much more than planning material space of a city, hence, includes production and reproduction of entire aspects of urban life. According to Lefebvre (1996) *the right to the city is like a cry and a demand...* Through right to the city, individuals will therefore transform their own daily lives by having a voice on the decisions to be made in regard to city.

Harvey (2012), suggests that right to the city is one of the most neglected fundamental human rights and defines the rights in question as a set of rights that is beyond an individual freedom of accessing resources, and rights for *changing the city, thus, changing one's own self* reinvention of city. In this sense, since the demands of dissentient movements, which are to congregate under right to the city slogan, are one of the primary channels of urban process plus production and use of product, there needs to be more inspections with respect to maintaining democratic control on plus value via urbanization. Harvey, (2012), stresses that right to the city needs to target the capital accumulation that exploits collective spaces, and, that it needs to be understood as a set of rights purposes of which is reproduction through a completely different model, which is to eliminate poverty and inequality, to repair the destruction imposed on the environment, rather than being a set of rights on something that currently exists.

The “right to the city” cannot be put into reality in concrete terms in the capitalist system, which is nourished by unequal relations and can only survive because of these unequal ties. In other words, due to the unequal nature of capitalism, it is impossible to realize a “urban administration” in which everyone is at an equal distance, individuals have a say in all city decisions, and all urban resources and opportunities are distributed equally and fairly to the people of the city (Şahin, 2015: 76). Accordingly, Purcell (2002), who regards right to the city not as a completed resolution, but as a movement towards a new urban policy, hence, describes as urban politics of citizens, suggests that global reconstruction processes after the year 1970 led to changes on urban management models, and, in addition to this, residents are excluded from the decisions that shape cities. Local administrations that move from demand-oriented redistribution to supply-oriented competition perform the practices, which are to draw the capital accumulation onto themselves, together with non-governmental organizations via efficiency pursuits. Therefore, this leads to the decisions of actors other than local governments, who are not elected, thus, are not subject to democratic control, shaping cities. Purcell, (2002: 101-103) positions right to the city towards production of urban space, by moving decision-making away from the state. Purcell highlights the necessity of shifting the control on all the decisions that contribute to production of urban space from capital accumulation and the state to city residents, with reference to Lefebvre. Right to the city contains the voices of residents of cities in areas related to nonstate decisions that produces urban space, as well. Right to the city which includes the right for participation and residence, embodies the direct contributions of residents to entire decisions that produce urban space in their cities. In addition to this, Purcell (2002: 104), expresses that citizen live in intertwined concrete scales that restrains their participation and these

scales are formed in a hierarchical relation. Therefore, it is possible to come into question that decisions made through participation in lower scales could deteriorate on higher scales.

Marcuse (2014), in evaluating different readings of the right to the city in the context of its relationship with the struggles for the right to the city, states that the strategic reading of the right to the city is seen as an umbrella concept by many different social segments that are dissatisfied with their living conditions and disadvantaged in today's urban society and that alliances are formed accordingly. Marcuse interprets the content of this use of the concept in the direction of the demand for inclusion in the city as a step with more limited claims rather than contradicting the content used by Lefebvre. The discontented reading of the concept, on the other hand, involves the demand for rights by people who think that it is not enough to just be included in the current city, and that they feel incompatible in a society over which they have no control. The spatial reading of the concept, while having a narrower scope in practice, includes the efforts to design and manage a better city. Marcuse argues that a spatial reading of the right to the city—because it is likely to show alternatives for the disaffected rather than changing power relations that lead to further exploitation and exclusion—distracts from the broader goals of struggles for the right to the city, and that in this context it can only be seen as an addition to the right to the city movements. The collaborationist reading of the concept has a content in which radical content is warped in the context of its support for moderate reform efforts. When the concept is included in a condition that is recognised officially, it takes on a content that supports the search for rationality and consensus, where the inevitability of conflict and the necessity of struggle are explicitly rejected. The subversive reading of the concept, on the other hand, refers to demands and actions that can produce transformative results. This reading points to the radical goals of Lefebvre's original work and the related aims of social movements and economic struggles that have inspired and continue to inspire political protest movements throughout history (Marcuse, 2014).

Policies and practices for participation in urban decisions have been developed along with the governance approach after 1990. In relation to this context, we see that the right to the city has been removed from its revolutionary content and included in international documents as “urban rights” in a way that includes a collaborative and spatial reading of the right in question. In various international documents such as European Urban Charter and European Urban Charter II, the “right to participate” as a citizen, is regulated among the fundamental rights, grounding on consulting with citizens in all the decisions that are to affect the future of a society (Pektaş and Akın, 2010; Akkoyunlu Ertan, 2008b: 9; Çelik, 2013: 220). The right to the city as

an urban right is considered within the third generation of human rights and at the same time makes it possible to achieve urban social sustainability (Akkoyunlu Ertan, 2008b: 126, 135). However, city rights are linked to first- and second-generation rights. “Right to settle” is one of the first generation rights that can be considered basic human rights. The “right to settle” in first generation rights evolved into “The right to housing” in second generation rights. Urban rights are one of the most significant aspects of this stage, which encompasses rights such as the right to the environment, the right to peace, and the right to profit from humanity's collective heritage. As previously indicated, “right to settle” in the first generation rights becomes “right to housing” in the second generation rights, and “quality of life” in the third generation rights (Arslan, 2014: 34). Urban rights include, in relation to human rights, because a citizen is a member of the city they reside in as well as all the rights they have as a human being, a citizen's having voice on all urban and environmental values and decisions in the city (Karasu, 2008: 38).

And right of participation includes right to the city context, which includes not only an individual's participation in decision-making processes of managements, but also participation in processes of production of urban space. Enabling participation of public in decision-making processes, which is one of the steps to carry right to the city into effect, will decrease the crimes committed against cities as well (Karasu, 2012: 524). The right to the city entails the creation of an urban environment for everyone, taking into account the requirements and expectations of all city segments. However, in such an urban area, there can be civic freedom, an environment of involvement and negotiation, the preservation of personal distinctions, and the reduction of poverty, social isolation, and urban crime (Bahçeci Başpırmak, 2020: 228-229). The process of designing urban space is accomplished by technical and political persons due to the consensus on that the balances between two parties could change. On the other hand, results of spatial changes have the potential to affect all residents of cities.

Interventions against urban built environments in many different cities are performed through urban transformation projects and gentrifications. Nonetheless, residents of cities, conserving their living environments, intending upon having a voice on spaces being shaped in different forms is related to that citizen may have adequate physical, economic, social and cultural conditions (Akkoyunlu Ertan, 2008b: 2). In order for right to the city to be performed within the frame of conserving and improving urban environment, it requires to accord the right for citizens to be informed of plans, projects and implementations which can deteriorate urban environment, the right for participation which enables individuals and communities to participate in decisions regarding their cities, the right for resort which enables individuals and communities to

resort to the jurisdiction in case of deterioration of urban environment. Akkoyunlu Ertan (2008a), who regards citizen ethics a significant support in accomplishing right to the city, regards citizen ethics as a moral responsibility for production of an urban environment, in the way of conscious and responsible individuals who are aware of the problems occurring in their cities, conserving the rights of future generations, befitting to human dignity (Akkoyunlu Ertan, 2008b: 3-4, as cited in Kaboğlu, 1994).

The concept of the right to the city, which Lefebvre views as the fundamental component of a political struggle, is expanded by Harvey (2012) who adds the content of “social justice” to it, emphasizes its use value and radical revolutionary content, and then uses it to describe a variety of struggles. They have their reading. With more people residing there, cities have transformed into fundamental living areas and have emerged as structures where rights will be upheld. Therefore, the right to the city has been used in multiple contexts to fight for rights and end inequalities rather than just in the context of actions in the urban environment.

## RESEARCH

In the research chapter of the study, firstly, the information which are remarkable in the sense of being illustrative with the research findings regarding county of Beşikdüzü, following that, the research method and the findings obtained with respect to field survey specific to Beşikdüzü will be presented afterwards.

## Methodology

In the study, qualitative research methodology was employed. The qualitative research process is divided into seven steps: Topic selection, focus question, study design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and informing others (Neuman, 2010a: 22). These steps were carried out within the parameters of the study. Furthermore, many methods have been used during the data collection step (Neuman, 2010b: 548). Field study is one of them. The study included field study as well.

Beşikdüzü Municipal Council consists of 16 members including the mayor. Within the scope of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the mayor of Beşikdüzü County and 9 municipal council members: 5 from CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party), 2 from AK Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party), 1 from MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, Nationalist Movement Party), and 1 from İYİ Party, about the problems of the county.

Standard questionnaires were sent to the members of BDK (Beşikdüzü Düşünce Kulübü – Beşikdüzü Think-Tank)<sup>1</sup> in order to understand the reasons for their gathering, their demands, and the main reasons for these demands. The answers given by 38 members were evaluated through content analysis.

Moreover, an in-depth interview was conducted with the member (Interviewee 3; Table 1) who provides the communication and coordination that brings together the members of the BDK.

This study has been prepared in accordance with the Ethics

**Table 1.** Profile of interviewee council members

Interviewees	Duty	Term	Party	Place of Birth	Age	Education
Interviewee 1	Mayor	2. Term 2009-2014/ 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Beşikdüzü	65	University-Agric. Eng.
Interviewee 2	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Vakfikebir	65	University-Teacher
Interviewee 3	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Tonya	65	University-Teacher
Interviewee 4	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Beşikdüzü	57	High School-Businessperson-Building Trade
Interviewee 5	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Iyi Party	Trabzon Merkez-Ortahisar	40	University-Businessperson-Building Trade
Interviewee 6	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Beşikdüzü	65	University-Teacher
Interviewee 7	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Republican People's Party (Chp)	Akçaabat	64	University-Teacher
Interviewee 8	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Nationalist Movement Party (Mhp)	Beşikdüzü	52	High School-Business Owner (Bakery)
Interviewee 9	Member of Assembly	-	Ak Party	Trabzon Merkez-Ortahisar	55	-
Interviewee 10	Member of Assembly	1. Term 2019-	Ak Party	Tonya	44	-

Committee Approval Certificate dated August 13, 2021 and numbered E-82554930-050.01.04-158895-300-1358 and the rules of scientific research and publication ethics. The questions of the study are detailed below:

**Table 2.** Profile of interviewees - members of Beşikdüzü Think Tank

Gender	
Female	12
Male	26
Place of Residence	
Beşikdüzü	24
Outside of Beşikdüzü	14
Level of Education (Graduation)	
Primary School/Secondary School	1
High School	7
University	21
Master's Degree	8
Ph.D. Degree	1
Age Range	
Between 18–24	-
Between 25–31	4
Between 32–38	3
Between 39–45	-
Between 46–64	22
Over the age of 65	8
Occupation	
Archaeologist	1
Attorney at Law	1
Bank Employee	2
Student	1
Electricity Sector Employee	1
Retired	1
Teacher	12
Healthcare Worker	1
Self-Employed	1
Graphic Des.	1
Engineer	2
Urban Planner	1
Journalist	1
Psychologist	1
Tradesperson	1
Private Sector	1
Tourism	1
Academic Member	1
Financial Consultant	1

### Questions for the mayor and council members of Beşikdüzü district

Questions to learn about the interviewer's age, style of council participation, political affiliation, and occupation (Table 2).

What are your thoughts on city councils?

Do you believe that Beşikdüzü requires a city council?

What do you expect from the Beşikdüzü city council?

What are the potential issues for Beşikdüzü?

Because this was a semi-structured interview, it was allowed to address other sub-topics in addition to the primary questions.

### Questions for Beşikdüzü think tank members

Questions to learn about the interviewer's profile, such as e-mail, gender, educational background, high school graduation, age, occupation, and domicile.

What do you think about the Beşikdüzü Thought Club's (BDK) founding mission?

What motivated you to join BDK?

How did you become a member of the Beşikdüzü Thinking Club (BDK)?

What do you hope to get from BDK?

What are your thoughts on city councils?

When and where did you first become aware of City Councils?

What do you expect from the Beşikdüzü city council?

Do you believe Beşikdüzü requires a city council?

Aside from City Councils, do you have any alternative alternatives for Beşikdüzü's spatial growth, and if yes, what are they?

### About County of Beşikdüzü

Trabzon is the Eastern Black Sea Region's oldest and most important port city, as well as the province with the largest population density. During the Russian occupation, Trabzon witnessed its most intensive spatial alteration on a city-wide scale. Along with the Republican era's modernisation efforts, city planning studies gained traction throughout Turkey. In 1937, J.H. Lambert, the French urban planning specialist, received the most important development in Trabzon's urban planning. The authorities linked to plan making were passed from the central government to the local government with the passage of Zoning Law No. 3194 in 1984. As a result, the Trabzon Municipality began work on the development of an additional revision zoning plan in 1987 (Akkaya, 2018: 49-54). Trabzon has undergone a new structuring process in recent years, with urban transformation works, relocation

of public institutions, large-scale investments, and the development of high-density residential areas that create attraction in the city's east-west-south direction. Under urban transformation, the geographical consequences of globalization and neoliberalization on the city, as well as the projects that promote change, are investigated. Along with the globalization process and the consequences of neoliberalization, urban transformation projects, which are one of the most effective studies in city restructuring processes, began to exhibit major effects in Trabzon around 2000 (Özlu et al, 2018: 198). Trabzon's historical texture has been altered throughout time, as it has in many cities, as a result of rapid and unregulated construction (Akkaya, 2018: 49-54). Trabzon's first urban transformation case was opened in 2007. There were 24 cases under the subject up until 2015. The cases are titled as follows: appeal action (14) and annulment action (10). The lengths of the aforementioned cases are as follows: <1 year (7), 1 year (1), and 2 years (16). Acceptance (2) and rejection (22) are the outcomes of these cases (Aghabalaei Fanid and Kavacik, 2019: 805).

Within the frame of this study, in the context of the reason for preferring county of Beşikdüzü which constitutes the research subject and that the obtained findings give explanatory results, topography of the place in question, population, political identity and the urban transformation project launched in 2015 are mentioned below about county of Beşikdüzü.

County of Beşikdüzü is an Eastern Black Sea coastal residential area and the border of west coast of Trabzon. On the north Black Sea, on the east and south Vakfikebir, Şalpaazarı and Tonya counties of Trabzon, and on the west Eynesil county of Giresun are located. The total population of Beşikdüzü as of 2021 is 23,594. 50.28% (11,862 people) of the population is male and 49.72% (11,732 people) is female (Nufusu).

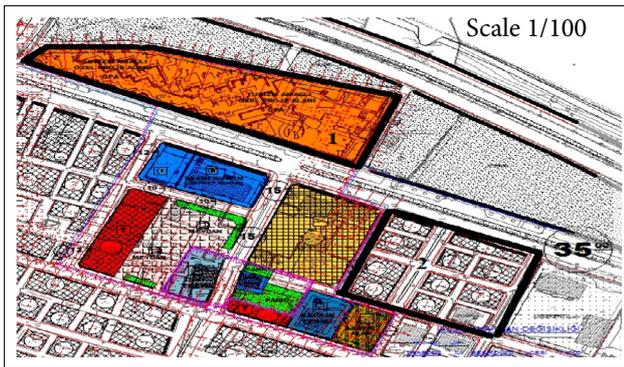
The instructor course, which was established in 1939 in Beşikdüzü via the process of revitalizing the villages through educational institutions in the Republican period and was transformed into a village institute a year later, made significant contributions to the development process of Beşikdüzü (Zaman and Birinci, 2009: 150). In the 1940s and 45s, despite the low male population after the Second World War, Beşikdüzü did not experience the expected decrease in the male population due to the effective establishment of the village institute in these years. The name of Şarlı, the center of settlement of Beşikdüzü, was changed to Beşikdüzü in 1939 and it was accepted not as a village but as a neighbourhood of Beşikdüzü County, within the municipal organization established in 1949, which was one of the reasons for the significant increase in the population graph of Beşikdüzü in this period. One of the important reasons for the population increase until 1975s is that Beşikdüzü,

which wanted to become a center of the county, has given an effort to include some villages in the population of the sub-district centers. As a matter of fact, the population of Beşikdüzü decreased in 1980 when the population of these settlements was excluded from the center. After Beşikdüzü became the center of the county, Adacık, Çeşmeönü, and Vardallı neighbourhoods were connected to Beşikdüzü in 1992 and the horizontal development of the settlement, which was developing toward East and West, accelerated even more after the establishment of the municipality. It is also observed that population growth accelerated in these years. The population decrease in 2007 is due to the fact that before the address-based population registration system, people who did not live in Beşikdüzü were shown as if they lived here (Zaman and Birinci, 2009: 151, 153-154). In 2012, due to the legal regulation numbered 6360, Beşikdüzü experienced another significant population increase in the following years when the Law was put into practice (T. C. Resmi Gazete (2012)). Thus, while Beşikdüzü county was a settlement area with 11 neighbourhoods, seven of which were central neighbourhoods and four of which were neighbourhoods under the municipalities of the towns affiliated to Beşikdüzü county before the relevant regulation, it became a settlement area with 34 neighbourhoods after the regulation.

Considering the historical and sociological developments, it is possible to evaluate Beşikdüzü politically as the "leftmost" district of Trabzon. The results of the local elections held since 1987, when the county was separated from Vakfikebir and became an independent county, justify this assessment. Especially after 2007, Beşikdüzü became one of the rare settlements in Trabzon politics where social democratic parties and candidates were able to make a political presence against the conservative Justice and Development Party (AK Party) (Düzenli, 2021).

#### **Urban Transformation in Beşikdüzü District and its Social and Spatial Consequences**

In 2015, county of Beşikdüzü was announced as area of urban transformation and development projects, within the borders of Fatih and Cumhuriyet districts (T. C. Resmi Gazete (2015)). Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation Project, which was launched in 2015, designed as 4 stages and is to be conducted in the county town has brought along many disputes: The matter caused heated debate in the Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality Council. One of the criticisms is that the difficulties raised in the expert reports or in the stay of execution have not been properly resolved. The decision "to sell the parks" was rejected. Another criticism leveled at the council members who opposed the decision was based on ethical and legal grounds. Another of the criticisms made was related to the extortion of the area belonging to the city council member due to the zoning arrangement (61saat, 2018a, 61saat, 2018b). 11 complaints were filed for



**Figure 1.** Beşikdüzü urban transformation and development area.

the first phase of the Beşikdüzü urban transformation and development project. The complaints to the commission were put to the vote of the council members. However, the majority of council members disregarded the complaints (61medya, 2016).

In Figure 1, the locations where Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation and Development Area has taken place are shown in red and yellow colours. In the picture in Figure 1, the area numbered with 1 shows the area where Şehit Erdal Kurtoğlu Park is located and the area numbered with 2 shows the area where the village institute building is located.

In 2016, 1/5000 scaled Master Zoning Plan and 1/1000 scaled Implementation Zoning Plan amendments for the 1st Implementation Phase of the Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation and Development Project were the subject of a lawsuit for the cancellation of the amendments in question and various grievances were reported to arise. Some of the grievances experienced are as follows: With the zoning plan amendments subject to the lawsuit, the functions of the real estate owned by the person (the plaintiff), where the independent sections with the function of housing and shops are located, are transformed into park and square areas, by the consequence of which, housing and the right to housing are harmed. The public area where the Village Institute Park is located, which has been used by the citizens for many years as a park area, is transformed into housing and commercial area; the function of the real estate where Şehit Erdal Kurtoğlu Park is located is transformed into tourism and commercial area, violating the environmental rights of the people. On the other hand, residents' rights to use these areas socially and physically are also restricted. In accordance with Article 8 of the Spatial Plan Construction Regulation, necessary analyses, surveys, research, and studies should be carried out by obtaining data, opinions, and suggestions from relevant institutions and organizations on the issues mentioned in general headings. However, the research, analysis, and consultation processes in question were not carried out, and zoning

plan amendments were prepared without ensuring the participation of institutions and organizations, especially citizens. In addition, the fact that the zoning plan was not announced to the public within the legal procedures violated the citizens' right to information.

As can be understood from the content of the aforementioned grievances, Beşikdüzü urban transformation practice includes interventions aimed at the exploitation of common spaces in the context of the right to the city and the elimination of the memory spaces of the city. The citizens of the province, who are the real owners of the city, have not been able to have a say in the use of urban space and changes in the city. In the context of urban rights, this practice has a content that limits participation and the use of judicial remedies during the planning process due to the failure of timely and accurate processes regarding information. Therefore, it can be said that the urban transformation practice creates both a violation of the right to the city and a violation of urban rights. During the implementation period, the lack of consultation and agreement with the people living in the city during the preparation of the project and the emergence of grievances caused the project to be reacted by the public. The residents of Beşikdüzü, who came together around the Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation Platform, have shown their efforts to own the urban space with frequent public informative activities and meetings. According to the Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation Platform, "a socialist and populist local government approach has been moved away from Beşikdüzü with the help of municipal council decisions that do not include democratic participation and a modern management approach. As a result of these judgements, the inhabitants lost their right to be considered city owners and became merely residents of the city" (Gündoğdu, Ö., 2017).

Despite the motion for stay of execution, the changes of city development plans were put on the agenda of municipal council again in 2018. Inefficiency of the changes made in the project which included transforming park zones into housing zones as well, the objections from residents (781 objections), 45 files claimed against the plans led to a polemical process of voting among the members of the Council of Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality, hence, the project was approved along with its plan changes, despite the dissenting votes from some council members from AK Party (61saat, 2018).

Due to the fact that municipality mayor ship relayed with 2019 elections and that Beşikdüzü municipal administration progressed in the 1st stage to a certain extent and hence this etape was completed, the claim of cancellation of 2nd, 3rd and 4th stages was put on the agenda of Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality Council in the year 2019. Beşikdüzü Mayor Ramis Uzun expresses that with its status quo, urban transformation projects lead to

numerous aggrievements, therefore, is not conducive to implement (Altıntaş, Ö., 2019).

A 15.3-hectare section, falling into the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> stages of the Urban Transformation and Development area-located within the borders of Cumhuriyet and Fatih neighbourhoods of Beşikdüzü County-was removed from the Urban Transformation and Development area in 2019. The annotations on the deeds of the citizens within this area have been removed (T. C. Beşikdüzü Belediyesi). The amendment of the 1/5000 scale Master Development Plan and the 1/1000 scale Implementation Development Plan for “Commercial and Housing Area” for the 1st Implementation Phase of the Urban Transformation and Development Project in Beşikdüzü county of Trabzon province was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation on August 14, 2020 (T. C. Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı, 2020).

One of the main problem areas related to Beşikdüzü county is that the county is experiencing financial problems from debt. In addition, it has been observed that the decisions taken in the previous period regarding the transformation of the urban built environment and the attempts to carry out the implementations despite the objections of the city people constitute the definition of a problem for the current administration. The mayor of Beşikdüzü makes the following statements about the problems faced by the current administration:

*“Since the moment we took office, we have been facing an intensive process regarding the application of urban transformation. There were problems with zoning, we are currently dealing with zoning. Decisions on zoning and urban transformation have been taken far beyond the expectations of our citizens, and we are trying to change these decisions in favour of the citizens”* (Personal interview with Interviewee 1).

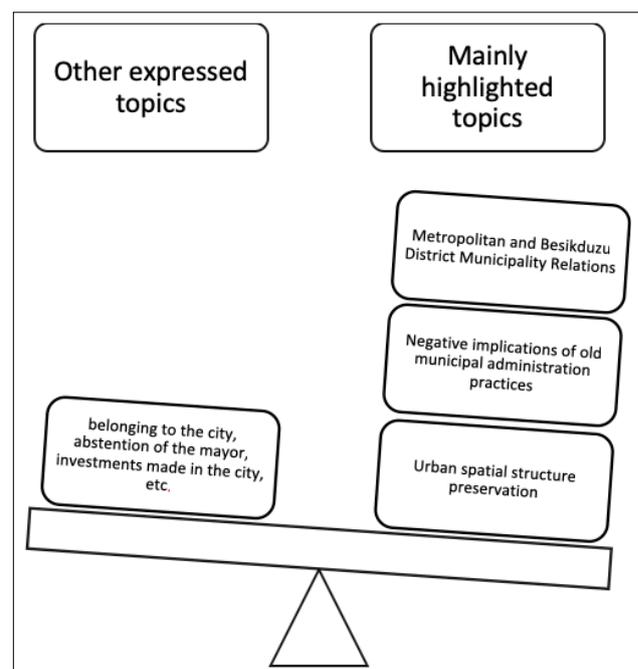
The city council is regarded as an important formation for the Mayor of Beşikdüzü in terms of knowing what the citizens think and taking into account the citizen’s suggestions and warnings, and the Mayor’s positive attitude toward the establishment of the city council draws attention:

*“Beşikdüzü is inhabited to people from various walks of life. Their suggestions will be valuable and helpful to us. It will serve as a roadmap for our future efforts. I am concerned about the light”* (Personal interview with Interviewee 1). Indeed, Municipal Law No. 5393 specifies that “everyone is a citizen of the town in which they reside.” As a result of this, “citizens have the right to participate in municipal decisions and services, to be informed about municipal activities, and to benefit from municipal administration assistance.” Again, this Law informs towns recognize that establishing a city council is required under Article 76 of the same Law and the City Council Regulation. The law does not mandate the creation of city councils in district municipalities other than metropolitan municipalities, notwithstanding the instructions in the law

and regulation. Due to this, the election of the mayor and the council of the time determines the composition of the city council in the district municipalities. In Turkey, the city council has actually been established on a very limited scale at the district level.

In Beşikdüzü, 3 stages of the urban transformation, which was planned to be carried out in 4 stages, have been cancelled by the current administration and one stage is still ongoing. However, the powers of the existing county municipality being limited, budget insufficiencies, and the reluctance of Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality and TOKİ cause the urban transformation to be incomplete.

In the interviews with the municipal council members, it is noteworthy that the mistakes made by the municipality in the previous term and the damage caused to the county come to the fore among the council members’ wishes to be involved in the field of urban politics (Figure 2). The interviewed CHP municipal council members emphasized this point in particular. It is seen that the belief that the changes in the built environment of the county in 2014-2019 destroyed the history and memory of the city, thus changing the social structure, motivated the members to take responsibility for protecting the city. When viewed in the perspective of the right to the city, it becomes clear that multidimensional and multi-stakeholder decision-making is required due to the fact that decisions regarding the production of urban space produce and reproduce all facets of urban life as well as modify daily life (Lefebvre, 1996). There is a prevailing view among the members that the changes in the city are not only limited to the built environment, but they also have



**Figure 2.** Common perspectives of municipal council members on Beşikdüzü.

an impact on the local development of the city. One of the comments on this is as follows:

*“Our county is the most educated and enlightened county of Trabzon. It is famous for its teachers. We are now disconnected from education, but unfortunately, we are on the agenda with strange projects, zoning plans, and prisons, unfortunately. We have become an ordinary county, people from different counties used to come here and want to move here, but now everything has changed”* (Personal interview with Interviewee 2).

Beşikdüzü Municipality Council members state that the fact that the local administration of Beşikdüzü district belongs to a different political party than the central administration and Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality leads to the investments made in the county to be insufficient nowadays and that the area to be served by the county municipality has expanded as the province of Trabzon became a metropolitan city, however the resource problem causes disruption in services. It is stated in the interviews that the practices carried out by the municipality in the previous period (2014–2019) have also made the municipality unable to perform today.

It is clear that the members of the municipal council have an opinion on whether a city council is necessary. Members of the city council have a favourable attitude about the city council. However, there are disagreements about the efficacy of the city council (Figure 3).

The spatial changes experienced in Beşikdüzü district also paved the way for the establishment of BDK, which was founded as an informal group in the form of a flexible organization with different profiles that has not yet gained legal personality. Interviews were held with 38 members of the BDK, which has 115 members as of May 2021, defines itself as a flexible, informal group and that has brought up the demand for the establishment of a city council in the district.

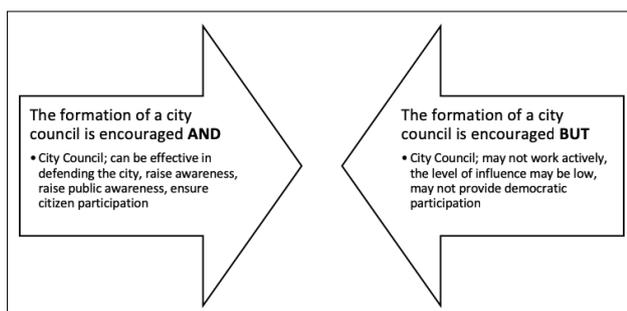
When we look at the answers given by the members to the question asked about the purpose of establishment of BDK; the belief that the problems experienced in the district will be overcome with cooperation and by acting mutually with BDK, the belief in the importance of the existence of a civil society that will act together for participation in the local decision-making process, and the idea of contributing to the economic, cultural, and social development of Beşikdüzü

come to the fore from these answers. In this context, BDK members explain the purpose behind the establishment of their foundation with the necessity of the existence of a supra-political, all-encompassing, and representative civil society that will protect the values of the county by creating a common mind, support local governments in producing new values, be active in decision-making processes, participate, contribute to the creation of social awareness about the future of the city and issues related to the district.

When we look at the answers to the question asked to the members about their reasons for joining BDK, it is observed that producing benefits for the county, supporting a civil formation, the belief in achieving together, and the desire to influence the city administration are prominent. Again, the members frequently emphasise the importance of protecting the district and leaving a liveable, developed, and at the same time, historical Beşikdüzü for future generations. The expectations of the members from BDK are concentrated on working for Beşikdüzü, building a common mind, and contributing to the raising of public awareness on local problems. It is seen that individual reactions to the idea that the changes experienced in Beşikdüzü cause the loss of the identity of the county have turned into the expectation of taking measures, contributing to the future of the city, protecting common living spaces, and sharing ideas with the administrators on all issues concerning the county.

Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the demand for not to experience the destructions occurred between the years 2014–2019 in county of Beşikdüzü once again, constitutes the basis of BDK's congregation. Inasmuch as that the interviewer who is in charge of communication and coordination of congregation of members of the club suggests that people are responsible of what they do not manage to do as much as what they do manage to, and that despite belonging to different political approaches, it could have been effective to prevent the destructions in question if they had congregated before, and emphasizes that they structured BDK in order to at least avert the possible future incidents through co-operation and if a city council is established, they may use this as a tool to express themselves (personal interview with Interviewee 3).

We can consider the public reaction to the urban transformation in Beşikdüzü in relation to the spatial and collaborationist readings of the right to the city. In particular, the fact that the Beşikdüzü Urban Transformation Project and its implementation has revealed the demand for participation in the governance process in terms of the ability to influence the spatial changes and the decisions taken regarding the city can be understood through a spatial reading of the right to the city, moreover, as Marcuse (2014) states and like we see in the Beşikdüzü example, we observe that the reactions are not aimed at transforming the underlying power relations. The lawsuit processes of people who are dissatisfied with



**Figure 3.** The members' perspectives on the city council.

the current transformation, especially in terms of violations of rights to private property and interventions in common spaces, can be evaluated in this context.

The collaborationist reading of the concept is seen in the Beşikdüzü example in the reaction toward the urban transformation by the demand to come together under a club (BDK) in search of consensus and to be involved in the governance and decision-making process with the demand for a city council, rather than the reaction turning into an urban social movement. However, it should be especially noted here that the criticisms that the urban rights have a content distancing from the context of the right to the city are valid for both the collaborationist and spatial reading of the right to the city. As stated in the content of the study, the search for rationality and consensus of the collaborative reading distances the right to the city from its radical content; the spatial reading causes the right to the city to distance from its broader objectives; and the urban rights cause the right to the city to be absorbed by the liberal discourse and included in the third generation of human rights, thus distancing it from the context of struggle. The two different readings of the right to the city and the content expressed in international conventions as urban rights cause the struggles of urban residents against capital and the governance process, especially urban transformation, to be limited to the context of participation in urban decisions. In this study, it was observed that urban residents evaluated the struggle for the ownership of the city in the context of participation in urban decisions and that in this context, they have brought up the demand for a city council.

## CONCLUSION

Urban spatial structure is exposed to transformation by different actors. Urban investments that have increased in recent years change the spatial structure, including small settlements. These spaces which represent the city's identity, memory and history are subject to destruction through these transformations, from time to time. In such schema, a system in which the city residents are the most affected ones by the destructions and transformation in question have the least voice maintains continuity.

The concept of right to the city which was conceptualized by Lefebvre has found itself an area of use to make sense of many different struggles, together with Harvey's principle of social justice and its contribution in regard to that it is a common right for the struggles maintained for shared spaces. Right to the city, which we elaborate on within the context of city residents having a voice on the decisions made in relation to their cities, has been clarified in international agreements through "right to participate" in relation with human rights.

The urban transformation projects in Beşikdüzü county

and the spatial changes in the city, including the demolition of the Village Institute building, which is one of the places representing the identity of the city, the demolition of the parks, which are the gathering places of the people, and the execution of the urban transformation projects without the consent of the residents and in a way that causes grievances regarding the private properties of the urban residents have sparked reactions from the people of the city. Objections to urban transformation projects, the filed lawsuits, and the stay of execution decisions can be shown as concrete evidence of this.

For Beşikdüzü district, it has been observed within the scope of the research that the fact that the practices of the municipality during the previous administration period resulting in the dissatisfaction of the people is reflected on the political preferences of the citizens and the efforts of the people to own the space influence the new administration period's municipality to take this dissatisfaction into consideration. When we look at the urban transformation practices, it can be said that there are many violations of the basic principles of urban rights. In 2019, one of the first actions of the new municipal administration that took office was to attempt to cancel the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> stages of the previous urban transformation project.

In conclusion, the fact that the changes occurring through the decisions made in regard to urban transformation projects and urban space, have taken place in a way that they violate the urban rights in the city, eliminate the city's identity, and destruct the spaces in the city, has led the demand for conserving the city to become prominent. Nevertheless, the formal ways of being able to have a voice on the decisions made in relation to the city, the most effective construct in this restraint is city councils (along with the disputes on their effectiveness), are limited. Therefore, discontent, one of the results which are driven by the fact that citizens of Beşikdüzü, Trabzon do not have a voice on the decisions made in the city, has put the efforts for congregation of civil society and the demand for establishment of a city council on the agenda. Decisions made by city administrations regardless of residents of cities, have made the demands of residents for participation and conserving their cities become prominent, hence, efforts to pass on the city's identity and memory to future generations have been set forth.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>BDK does not have a website or a social media presence. It is widely recognized due to information obtained from BDK members. BDK defines itself as a flexible and informal group with 115 members as of May 2021. BDK is a group that does not take any interest, does not expose its political side, and where people gather together. It is a supportive and exciting working group that effectively produces ideas



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