

SHAPING THE CITY WITH PROJECTS: THE CASE OF AKP GOVERNMENTS  
IN THE 2000S

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SHAPING THE CITY WITH PROJECTS: THE CASE OF AKP GOVERNMENTS IN THE 2000S**

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Cities are places where political actors establish their hegemony by shaping (urban) space through strategic interventions. By transforming space materially and symbolically, governments also establish some form of relationship with society. This thesis focuses on the AKP's urban strategy as a part of construction of its hegemonic project by paying attention to the methods of its realization and the political approach it embodies. In order to make this assessment, concepts such as antagonistic and agonistic politics, one-city and two-cities are included in the thesis while the concept of populist strategy is also utilized. Through these concepts, the impact of the government's urban strategy on cities and society in general is analyzed. In this direction, a general situation analysis is attempted by focusing on some urban (large-scale) urban projects realized by the AKP government in different cities from the 2000s to the present day, the ways in which they were realized, the discourses produced about these projects and their reception in society. Analysis shows that such a strategy was quite successful in sustaining the AKP's hegemony in social and political domains throughout the last two decades. Such an antagonistic strategy was not without its problems as it resulted in a highly divided urban society especially in large metropolitan areas. So-called large-scale projects analyzed in this thesis have shown that they contributed to the creation of socially and politically divided cities

while also arguing that these urban projects produce different results depending on the level of social and political exclusion.

**Keywords:** Antagonism, two-nations, one-nation, liminality, populist strategy

## ÖZ

### KENTİ PROJELERLE ŞEKİLLENDİRMEK: 2000'Lİ YILLARDA AKP HÜKÜMETİ ÖRNEĞİ

ÇAKAR, Ece

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Kentler, siyasi aktörlerin stratejik müdahaleler yoluyla (kentsel) mekânı şekillendirerek hegemonyalarını kurdukları yerlerdir. Hükümetler, mekânı maddi ve sembolik olarak dönüştürerek toplumla da bir tür ilişki kurarlar. Bu tez, AKP'nin hegemonik projesinin inşasının bir parçası olarak kentsel stratejisini, gerçekleştirme yöntemlerine ve içerdiği siyasi yaklaşıma dikkat ederek ele almaktadır. Bu değerlendirmeyi yapabilmek için antagonistik ve agonistik siyaset, tek şehir ve iki şehir gibi kavramlara tezde yer verilirken popülist strateji kavramından da yararlanılmıştır. Bu kavramlar üzerinden hükümetin kentsel stratejisinin kentler ve genel olarak toplum üzerindeki etkisi analiz edilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, AKP hükümetinin 2000'li yıllardan günümüze kadar farklı kentlerde gerçekleştirdiği bazı kentsel (büyük ölçekli) projelere, bunların gerçekleştirilme biçimlerine, bu projelere dair üretilen söylemlere ve toplumdaki karşılığına odaklanılarak genel bir durum analizi yapılmaya çalışılmıştır. Analiz, böyle bir stratejinin son yirmi yıl boyunca AKP'nin toplumsal ve siyasi alanlardaki hegemonyasını sürdürmede oldukça başarılı olduğunu gösteriyor. Böylesine antagonistik bir strateji, özellikle büyük metropollerde son derece bölünmüş bir kent toplumuna yol açtığı için sorunsuz değildi. Bu tezde analiz edilen sözde büyük ölçekli projeler, sosyal ve siyasi olarak bölünmüş kentlerin yaratılmasına katkıda bulduklarını gösterirken, aynı zamanda bu kentsel projelerin

sosyal ve siyasi dıřlanma dzeyine baęlı olarak farklı sonuçlar rettięini de savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Antagonizma, iki-ulus, tek-ulus, sınırdalık, poplist strateji

*To my father...*

*“Those eyes at the last glance  
It stayed in our minds”*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC: Atatürk Culture Centre

AFF: Atatürk Forest Farm

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)

EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment

MoEUCC: Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change

TMMOB: Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects)

TOKİ: Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı (Mass Housing Development Administration)

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Political hegemonies are established in and through (urban) space is an argument developed by Henri Lefebvre. Political movements and parties are key actors in the establishment of hegemonic projects even if the actors involved in such processes go beyond these political organizations. Parties in power are convenient examples of such political forces trying to establish hegemony in their respective societies via (urban space).

Thus, the effort to establish the hegemony of governments is inherent in the nature of politics. As a result of this natural necessity, the governments incorporate the opposition as an aspect of their politics, aiming to distinguish those who are not their own and keep the distinction between 'us' and 'them' alive. As the construction of hegemony can be carried out through many different areas, urban spaces can also be one of these construction tools. As a natural necessity of the struggle for hegemony, while trying to strengthen the relations they have established with their own supporters and appeal to them, the governments also make the opposition, which is the nature of the relationship they establish with those who are not their own, a part of their politics and keep the distinction between 'us' and 'them' alive.

This thesis focuses on the case of the AKP governments since the early 2000s and problematize the wide use of urban space as an arena of establishment of political hegemony. It is possible to say that what makes the practices of transforming space, which can be seen as a part of this struggle for hegemony, problematic in the case of the AKP government, which is the subject of this thesis, is not the transformations themselves but the ways in which they are realized. While trying to establish its hegemony, the AKP government, presents the distinction between 'us' and 'them'

dramatically visible in urban spaces, and carries out its politics in a way that often antagonizes the people and things. The politics are realized through the populist politics characterized by the duality of 'elites' and 'those oppressed by the elites', through a nationalist-conservative identity.

Looking at AKP politics of urban spaces, the political approach is visible throughout most of its city projects. In its urban transformations, the AKP government acts with the strategy of allocating different uses to a space, carrying many of the antagonisms it has established within the framework of its own politics (especially its antagonism with the Kemalist ideologies of Republic) to city politics, and often antagonize everyone and everything it defines as 'others' against itself. Even when it does not decide to do so, it can deliberately ignore the needs and demands, and openly express its intolerance for the existence of 'others' and their spaces. Another part of the AKP government's city projects, on the other hand, does not aim to produce such a harsh antagonism in terms of their content, but do not also appeal to the needs and demands of a large segment of the society. The groups it defines as its opponents are ignored, if not demonized, and that segregation can be clearly observed in the discourses built on these projects.

The starting point of this thesis is urban interventions and the impacts that can be directly identified through personal and social experiences. From this point of departure, the context and political basis of the urban projects implemented by the AKP government through public spaces started to be questioned and elaborated.

After these inquiries, the research question that constitutes the thesis emerges as follows:

“In what context can the cities formed as a result of public space interventions and transformations, which are assumed to be antagonistic and designed to shape cities during the AKP government, be evaluated?”

As a continuation and complement to this basic question, the following sub-questions emerge:

- Under what conditions is it possible to discuss the emergence of antagonism as a result of the city interventions carried out by the AKP government?
- Which individuals and groups can feel 'excluded, unshared, and antagonized' as a result of the AKP government's spatial projects?
- Under what conditions do these feelings of individuals and groups who are subjected to the feeling of 'excluded, unshared, antagonized' emerge?

The aim of this study is to make an evaluation of the process of the creation of urban projects by problematizing the representations that the government tries to destroy and replace through public spaces. This evaluation will be carried out by examining the political and ideological approaches on which the AKP's implementation of urban projects is based on the act of 'destruction'. The justification of this questioning comes from the idea that whether the policies of a government can be solely built on destroying or completely suppressing the other side with the act of destruction through cities. It is possible to think that when the power changes hands and the power to rule passes to the 'other side', the re-destruction of all the public spaces produced as a result of the struggle for hegemony will not leave anything to the cities and their inhabitants. Within the scope of this thesis, with the assumption that the absolute and common happiness of everyone is not possible, this vicious cycle of eliminating the other side is presented, along with the ways that affect cities, social relations, and the relations between the city and society.

As a brief introduction to the discussion, the AKP's spatial policies are mostly characterized by practices of destruction and reconstruction. This destruction can be the destruction of an identity or symbol, as well as the destruction of a way of life, or the destruction of a natural area. At this point, what is worth thinking about is what kind of political attitude lies under these demolitions. Starting from this point, the thesis elaborates these demolitions through concrete examples and discusses what kind of demolitions these demolitions might have been.

The method mentioned by Batuman in his own article with reference to Karl Marx's Brumaire and his own approach is also taken into consideration in this thesis. According to this method, the main strategy is to make a scientific analysis of the current situation and to caricature the subject of power, which is the object of research.

As Batuman emphasizes; “It is a form of writing that is political but does not compromise its scientific quality for politics; scientific but does not give up its political identity for the sake of science.” (Batuman, 2015, p. 53)

### **1.1. Significance of the Study**

The concepts of antagonism and agonism, which will also be mentioned in the theoretical framework and which Chantal Mouffe also cites, are considered important to briefly mention here in order to explain the importance of this thesis. Mouffe emphasizes that not everyone in society can be in a state of common happiness and agreement, that there is no need for this, and that democracy actually needs opposition. With her definition of agonistic politics, Mouffe claims that it is possible to produce a politics by softening the hostile 'them/us' distinction that exists in antagonistic politics and by accepting the fact that all these oppositions will exist (Mouffe, 2010). Here, it is possible to argue that Mouffe constructs an agreement on disagreement. Besides the fact that Mouffe considers this distinction as the nature and even the necessity of politics, in reality, its reflections do in fact, exist in this way. In the chapter titled "Space, hegemony and radical critique", Mouffe states that she became aware of the importance of the spatial dimension in politics through the work of Doreen Massey. However, it is also known that he does not follow this statement with a detailed urban analysis (Agonistic politics - Mouffe., n.d.).

When looking at the politics of the AKP government, agonistic politics cannot be clearly defined, in fact it is almost impossible to do so, mostly due to the lack of acceptance of the other side's existence. However, it should be emphasized here that an agonistic political attitude has not been observed in Turkish politics before. Just as there is no example in Turkish politics where differences have been accepted and a consensus has been reached on the oppositions themselves, the AKP government does not attempt to find a middle ground as well. The differentiating point of the AKP government is that it does not attempt to find a solution to these oppositions, and conducts even harsher politics of opposition in an effort to deepen the divide.

Jessop's concepts of 'one-nation' and 'two-nations', which will be discussed in more detail below, stand out as critical concepts for understanding the urban relations that

have emerged as a result of AKP's urban policies. By reconceptualizing these concepts borrowed from Jessop as 'one-city' and 'two-cities' projects this thesis attempts to conceptualize the urban projects as hegemonic projects.

In line with all these conceptualizations, the city projects, the urban politics of the government, the developing/prospective city and urban relations are analyzed in order to present a picture of a situational assessment in the context of Turkey. Due to the fact that there has never been an analysis made of political attitudes based on the similarities and differences of multiple urban projects or an evaluation of the impact of city projects on cities, a detailed analysis has been attempted. These evaluations and situation analyses are believed to bring together multiple concepts and discuss them, to provide a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to each of the urban projects. Furthermore, the discussions in the following chapters will try to demonstrate, based on the urban projects included in the thesis, that being favored by or biased against the government has a determining quality in making sense of a project, while acknowledging the risk factor of misleading from time to time when evaluating all urban projects across the country. It is hoped that this thesis, which aims to examine selected examples of urban projects within the borders of Turkey through the AKP government, can make a humble contribution to the literature by opening a new field of discussion within the boundaries and intersectionality of the contexts of city - antagonism/agonism - liminality - populist strategy, and open the door to new research and discussions on each of the urban projects that are discussed.

## **1.2.Organization of the Thesis**

Within the scope of this thesis, the ways which the cities have been shaped through the projects carried out in public spaces in the 2000s are analyzed, which corresponds to the years which AKP government has been in power, and the consequences these projects may have led to in terms of the city and society with specific examples are elaborated. The evaluation will first start with a general discussion of the relationship between the city and power, followed by the concrete examples of urban projects of the AKP government. This discussion, which will be carried out from the general to the specific, aims to provide a holistic analysis and that each section will provide an insight for the sections that follow. At the end of each individual examinations of the

city projects, a general situation analysis will follow. As such, the evolution from the starting point into a conclusion will be presented at the end of the discussion of each project. The scope of each chapter in this thesis is summarized below.

Following the 'Introduction' chapter, which includes the importance of the study, the structure and methodological approach of the thesis, the first chapter, 'Theoretical Framework', will present the theoretical framework on which the evaluations to be carried out will be based, and will attempt to provide definitions of the concepts utilized and their relevance to the project examples within the scope of this thesis.

In the proceeding section titled 'AKP's Symbolic Uses of Space and Understanding of Public Space Transformation', firstly the ways in which a relationship between power and space is formed will be presented just before delving into the Turkish context and the specific examples of the AKP government can form a basis for the following sections within the sub-heading 'Strategic Use of (Urban) Space in The Construction of Hegemony'. While explaining how governments are able to use urban spaces in their struggle for hegemony, the impact simultaneously created on urban people through cities will be mentioned. The thought process carried out in this part of the study will enlighten the AKP government's relationship with the city, its urban strategies and the consequences of all these for the city, which will be the main focus of the following chapters.

'AKP's Symbolic Spaces', which is presented as a second sub-heading in this chapter, will also seek an answer to the research question of the thesis and try to present some examples of the projects realized by the AKP government using public spaces in Turkey during the 2000s, which are thought to best reveal the discussion. These projects will be categorized under the themes of 'Identity' and 'Capital', explained in detail in the title and will be presented under separate sub-headings under these headings. After each group's own short evaluation is summarized under the headings of 'Identity' and 'Capital', at the end of the main heading, there will be a 'General Evaluation' section, where the theoretical framework and the projects are linked, and which constitutes the main emphasis of the thesis. The situation analysis of cities and

urban projects, which is intended to be realized through the projects, has been provided in this section.

The 'Conclusion' section, in the last chapter, will try to present a summary of all the topics covered in the study and all the discussions and analyzes carried out in the form of an inclusive and summarizing explanation.

### **1.3.Methodology**

In this thesis, the methods of literature review and secondary source review have been utilized to analyze the spatial interventions implemented by the AKP government in the cities. Within the scope of the analysis, some examples of city projects have been analyzed in order to evaluate the urban interventions led by the government, along with political approaches and strategies that are emphasized, and how exclusionary or inclusive they are.

The academic literature and secondary sources were used to examine both the main sources of the theorists who introduced these concepts and the academic studies that utilized these sources in the process of creating the theoretical framework. In addition, an attempt has been made to compile information about the project examples included in the study that are relevant to the thesis topic. In this context, to understand the ways in which each city project is presented by the government, newspaper articles about the projects, visuals to make the projects more tangible for the reader, columns and internet forums were scanned to lay out the reflections of government in society as well as its visual presentation. While utilizing these sources, while the news information about the projects was included in the thesis, the discourses produced by the President of the Republic as well as the co-founder/leader of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and several politicians who are members of AKP on the projects were also presented. The aim of reflecting these discourses in particular is to examine the approach of AKP and especially Erdoğan through the projects and to understand where these discourses fall on the exclusion/inclusion axis. In selecting the quotations from the relevant discourses reflected in the thesis, care was taken to ensure that each of them is complementary to the narrative of the project. Attempts have been also made

to include statements that support the evaluations made within the framework of the concepts and best reflect the views of the individuals.

Considering that there are many city projects of the AKP government that can be included in the scope of the analysis, the projects are carefully selected so that they are both endorsed by the AKP government and resulted in public discourse. At the same time, the project examples are thought to best reflect the 'identity' and 'capital' based distinction created within the scope of this thesis and to contribute to the thought process carried out together with the theoretical framework.

The aim of this study and the method of discussion is not to introduce the AKP's public space projects or to analyze each of them in detail. Since all the projects included are multi-layered and spread over a long period of time, they provide a rich opportunity of discussion that allows for more detailed analysis from many different aspects. At this point, the analysis is focused on specific topics such as the transformation that the AKP government is trying to create, the urban strategy, the urban policy, the approach to the city, the effects of urban project on the shaping of cities and as such, factual and superficial information about the projects themselves has been limited. While trying to make evaluations, an effort has been made to understand how intense and determinative the concepts of 'identity' and 'capital' are in the content of the projects, who the users of the projects are, the ways in which the projects are realized and the purposes for which they are realized, and how the projects are shaped as exclusionary or inclusive.

Finally, new conceptualizations are proposed while evaluating the impact of these city projects on cities and urban people. By making use of Jessop's concepts of one-nation and two-nations hegemonic projects, the concepts of one-city and two-cities were created, and the examined city projects are categorized on the basis of inclusiveness-exclusiveness along with reconceptualizations in parallel with the emphasis on identity and capital. In addition to this categorization, the concept of liminality has been used to develop a holistic analysis in order to explain the projects that fall outside the dichotomy of one-city and two-cities theory.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multiple theories will be utilized in this study, due to the diversity of various city projects that are being evaluated and the different layers within all these practices. It is thought that utilizing different theories will enrich the explanations of the contents of city projects, the purposes of their implementation, the motivations of the government throughout the production of projects, the reception of the projects in society, as well as their current and possible effects on cities from a scientific perspective.

In this context, firstly, Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space and his perspective will be utilized to understand the city and relations in the city. The main reason for adopting Lefebvre's approach in the analysis of the city is that the city is not treated as a 'thing' but as a set of relations. In addition to this, Lefebvre's theory of the Spatial Dialectics is important in that it states that space is not one-dimensional, but composed of different types that interact with each other and reflect the understanding of space within the scope of this thesis.

The next theoretical concept will be analyzed through the concept of the Right to the City, which was first introduced by Lefebvre and then elaborated by David Harvey. The public space transformations realized in Turkey during the 2000s were largely realized through projects implemented with the involvement of the private sector. The fact that the private sector's dominance of the public sphere, which is increasing in intensity and number day by day, results in the seizure of public spaces, taking away the initiatives of the people who relate to these spaces. Transformations of public spaces that do not involve private sector intervention but still have limited participation and inclusiveness have also a similar effect. With space and society

mutually influencing and transforming each other, the people of the city have begun to be unilaterally affected by this transformation. The city dwellers, who no longer have a say over their own living spaces, remain as passive spectators in the process of the transformation of space and is forced to live within the boundaries drawn for them in the city, in the way they are shown, and their relationship with urban spaces becomes weaker and weaker. For this reason, the concept of 'right to the city' emerges as a natural part of this discussion when analyzing the city projects of the AKP government.

Thirdly, the definition of populist strategy will be used to develop an understanding of the basis of the political approach adopted by the AKP government and the antagonisms it has created in society through its politics. Elaborating these antagonisms here will provide a starting point for understanding the impact of antagonistic politics on the formation of an antagonistic politics and the extent to which it makes agonistic politics possible.

As the next stage, the concepts of antagonism and agonism will be included in the theoretical framework of the study. While including these concepts, the discussions on the politics of the AKP government, which are claimed to be antagonistic, are taken into consideration. This inclusion is according to the starting point of this thesis with the assumption that there is an antagonistic attitude in the politics of space, and the reasons for this assumption are tried to be shown through selected examples. The reason for this assumption is the preference for symbolic structures, locations, nomenclature and forms in the production of space under the AKP government, the destruction of existing representations as if ignoring the existence of the other side, and the effort to target and deepen the antagonisms in society. In this context, the concepts of antagonism and agonism are thought to explain public space projects and the motivations behind them in more depth.

Then, Bob Jessop's concepts of one-nation and two-nations hegemonic projects will be utilized to conceptualize the city projects in this thesis. It is expected that by explaining these hegemonic projects through two basic distinctions as expansionist and limited strategies, will help to understand cities through these two distinctions.

These borrowed concepts will be included in the study as 'one-city' and 'two-cities' projects through a new conceptualization, and in this way, the impact of these projects on cities will be analyzed. As a continuation of these concepts, the concept of liminality will be presented with a brief explanation, and an attempt will be made to understand and explain the existence of groups and projects that can be defined as in-between in the divisions formed in society as a result of hegemonic projects from a theoretical plane.

Finally, using the three concepts (recognition-representation-redistribution) that Nancy Fraser claims to be important in the formation of social justice, the marginalization, exclusion and inability to benefit equally from these spaces for various reasons will be the subject of discussion. It is thought that the city projects, which will be tried to be observed through the perspective of both the government and the society, will offer a comprehensive perception by evaluating the three concepts together as suggested by Fraser.

These theoretical approaches, which are included in the analysis and discussion, are included in the study together, considering that they support and compliment to each other.

## **2.1. Production of Space**

In this study, the city projects realized in Turkey during the 2000s have been tried to be read through Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space. The reason for this is that space cannot be considered as something passive and empty but it intervenes in production itself through action or reaction. He also mentions that space is the basis of economic and social relations (Lefebvre, 2014).

The production of space is presented through a concept called 'spatial triad', which categorizes space into three different categories that interact with each other: Perceived space (where daily practices and routines take place), conceived space (produced by power) and lived space (contradicting, differentiating, liberating). According to Lefebvre, space is a structure as "the space of everyday life practices",

as "representations of space" that emerge through processes of design, fiction, and construction, and as "spaces of representation" where social processes take place. In Lefebvre's words:

*There is no general (conceived) space on the one hand and a fragmented (lived) space on the other, just as there can be solid glass in one place and broken glass or a mirror in another. Space is both whole and broken, and general and fragmented. At the same time, it is what is conceived, perceived, experienced.*

To look in a little more detail at what the dialectic of triple space is:

- The **spatial practice** of a society creates its own space. This reveals space in a dialectical interaction. When analyzed, the spatial practice of a society is discovered by deciphering space. Everyday reality (the use of time) and urban reality (the routes and networks that connect places of work, "private" life and leisure) are tightly coupled within **perceived space**.
- **Representations of space**, that is, conceived space; the space of scholars, planners, urbanists, technocrats who "dismantle" and "organize", and some artists who are close to the scientific, who identify what is lived and perceived with what is conceived. This is the dominant space within a society (a mode of production).
- **The representational space**, that is, the space lived through the images and symbols that accompany it, that is, the spaces of the "inhabitants", the spaces of the "users", but also the spaces of some artists and perhaps of those who describe it and believe that they are only describing it - writers, philosophers. This is the space that the imagination wants to change and appropriate, the space that is dominated and therefore exposed. It encompasses physical space by using its objects symbolically (Lefebvre, 2014).

While he states that representations of space encompass places of passion and action, places of lived situations and directly involve time, representations of space have a practical scope. It requires "representations" that do not get lost in the symbolic or the imaginary, not as the construction of a "real estate", a palace, a monument, but through

architecture that is embedded in a spatial context. He adds that representations of space are not productive, except for symbolic artifacts, which are usually unique and disappear after a certain period of time (Lefebvre, 2014).

## **2.2. Right to the City**

The concept of the right to the city was first put forward by Henri Lefebvre in 1968. Lefebvre critically emphasizes that the hegemonic classes reside in the city, even occupy the cities, and that they have privileged spaces, while other groups, which he describes as poor, exist to serve the hegemonic classes. Lefebvre mentions that cities are constructed according to these hegemonic classes in every sense. Based on this, he conceptualized the right to the city as a 'right to urban life' rather than a simple right to be a citizen (Lefebvre, 2014).

David Harvey, on the other hand, has expanded this concept he borrowed from Lefebvre. He states that the right to the city is not derived from some intellectual whims, but from the cry for help and support of oppressed people in the streets and neighborhoods. Harvey sees the right to the city as a human right, and that it has a special place among other human rights. More than access to resources, it is the right to change and reinvent the city to our wish. He explains this by saying that the right to the city has more connotations of collectivity than individuality and property and is more suitable for questioning the neoliberal system than other human rights (Harvey, 2012).

In an interview, Harvey emphasized that in order to achieve the right to the city, a social struggle must be launched:

*I think there needs to be a fight about who has the right to be in urban space and under what conditions they have that right. (...) Now you have to get permission to have political dialogues, and I actually think that one way to challenge this trend is to suddenly, simultaneously, be present in many public spaces at the same time and start discussions (Harvey, 2014).*

## **2.3. Populist Strategy**

According to the Turkish Language Association, populism is defined as "politics made to arouse public interest by dramatizing the political situation". The term *populism*

was first used in the nineteenth century and has since been used to describe a variety of people and movements. Although multiple definitions have been applied to the term, the basic idea involves contrasting “the people” against “the elite” (Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2023).

According to Şengül, politics is shaped around two logics: Pluralism and populism. According to this view, pluralist politics can address the demands of different segments of society, while populist politics aims to persuade different segments by building a common denominator (Şengül, 2018). Populist politics exists by creating a duality by its very nature. This duality is shaped by the populist politician through the opposition of 'us' and 'them/others'. The 'us' depicted here represents those who make populist politics and the people who support these politicians, while the 'others' represent the elites who are positioned against these people and who are often claimed to be the cause of the oppression of the community and the rape of their rights. By establishing this dichotomy, the populist politicians present themselves as the ones who protect the 'real public/community' against the 'enemy elites' and defends their rights. What is noteworthy here is that in the production of populist politics, there is an assumption that the groups presented as two opposing sides are hostile to each other and that these sides are homogeneous within themselves.

Although populism is associated with right-wing politics, it can also emerge as a strategy used by left-wing politics. Although the emphasis in the populist discourses and practices of different political views differ from each other, it is possible to say that the common point for both of them is the effort to create and perpetuate a perception that 'they are the real representatives of the community'. In addition to this, it is also known that they emphasize that they produce policies on behalf of the people by making the public believe that they are the ones who act together with them for their benefit. From this point of view, it is possible to say that as a result of the emphasis on the group defined as the 'other' as the enemy of the community, it has become increasingly impossible for the opposite sides to come to common ground and compromise with each other in a society divided into two. With this perception presented in society, the most reliable way to gain the support of the targeted groups

is to appeal to their emotions. It is possible to say that the most concrete form of this situation is to produce discourses in this direction. Politicians who produce a populist strategy create some demands themselves rather than addressing the real demands of the community and make the public believe that these are real needs. This demand is presented as the demand of the 'community', causing the groups that do not find a place for this demand to be labeled as 'the other', and reproducing the antagonism produced again. It does not matter how large a mass exists within the emphasized 'us' and 'others'. Regardless of which segment represents a larger mass, even if the 'others' are more numerous, in populist politics, it is the 'us' who is the 'public'.

After the brief definition of populist strategy, when we look at the practices and approaches promoted by the AKP in the Turkish case, we can see that the aforementioned opposition between 'us' and 'others' is strongly established. Following Şengül identifies three different ways of constructing the people in populist strategies;

- 1) Defining the people as a nation
- 2) People as working class/people
- 3) People as oppressed masses by governing elites

It would be argued that in the last two decades, AKP have made use of people as oppressed by elites and people as nation/Islamic communities by excluding the class-based definition of people. The AKP government builds its politics on these dichotomies and displays an approach that defines the citizens as groups that are opposing each other. While examples of this approach can be seen in many areas of its politics, it is also possible to see these oppositions in urban spaces. In addition to and even independently of the content of the city projects it has implemented, it is seen that the discourses produced on these projects also emphasize the opposition of 'us' - 'others' and construct the society as distant groups.

When looking at the city projects of the AKP government, nationalist-conservative structures and symbols that reflect the identity of 'us' that the government has put forward can be highlighted, the naming of spaces can be chosen according to this vision, and positioning of city projects are specifically chosen to cater to this

opposition. In addition, the discourse targeted towards the public regarding these projects includes an emphasis on the 'nation', and that this emphasis is shaped by 'us' that manifests itself. At this point, it is necessary to say that the fact that the AKP government, as a part of its politics designed with a populist strategy, brings this strategy to the forefront in the production and presentation of the spaces it uses has inevitable consequences for cities and society. It is important to be able to determine in which sense and to what extent the populist strategy produces antagonism in terms of identity, class or representation, to finally understand the impact on the formation of antagonism and agonism, which will be explained in more detail in the next section.

#### **2.4. Antagonism - Agonism**

Carl Schmitt (2006) argues that the definition of the concept of the political is only possible through the discovery of specific political categories, and that the specific political distinction that can be used to explain political actions and motives is the friend-enemy distinction. The friend-enemy distinction is argued to be only a conceptual criterion and expresses the extreme degree of intensity of a bond or separateness, a union or separation. The political enemy does not have to be evil, ugly or a rival, but what is important is that the political enemy is foreign. The parties in a conflict can decide for themselves whether the existence of the other means the denial of their own right to exist and whether they should be fought. According to Schmitt, the enemy is not a rival or adversary, but is another similar whole struggling against a whole consisting only of human beings (Schmitt, 2006).

Chantal Mouffe notes that Schmitt's criterion of the political consists of a friend-enemy distinction and that the political only consists of the existence of an 'us' constituted against 'them', while drawing attention to Schmitt's emphasis on the impossibility of a rational consensus that includes everyone (Mouffe, 2010).

Mouffe argues that pluralist liberal democracy seeks to resolve the antagonism that potentially exists in human relations, in which case it would be necessary to establish a 'us' without a 'them', but this is not possible. She goes on to ask how this distinction can be constructed in such a way as to allow for the recognition of pluralism. A

distinction between "the political" and "politics" is explained through "the political" which is the ontological dimension of antagonism, while "politics" is the set of practices and theories that attempt to organize how people live together. According to Mouffe, once it is accepted that antagonism is indestructible and that every order is a hegemonic order, the question arises as to what the limits of antagonism are and what forms of institutions and power need to be created to allow the radicalization of democracy to take place.

According to liberal political theory, when different perspectives and values can come together, they can form a harmonious whole, free from conflict. Mouffe, on the other hand, emphasizes the limitations of any rational consensus by introducing the concept of antagonism and mentions that there cannot be any rational solution to conflicts in society. Based on this, the concept of agonism is introduced. According to Mouffe, one of the most fundamental tasks of politics is to create institutions that will enable conflicts to take an "agonistic" form. In this model, rivals do not exist as enemies but as opponents with a conflicting consensus between them. In addition, with this model, a democratic order becomes possible even when antagonisms are recognized as inevitable (Mouffe, 2015).

As can be understood from the definitions above, antagonistic politics has an exclusionary content, given that it constructs the distinction between 'us' and 'them/others' on the basis of hostility, whereas agonistic politics allows for a social consensus due to its more inclusive approach. It has been mentioned above that agonistic politics does not eliminate the distinction between 'us' and 'other', but it does not create a hostile distinction either. Although agonistic politics does not ensure that groups divided into two different poles are evaluated equally, it seeks a minimum level of consensus in society and can make inclusive approaches such as recognizing different segments of society in the political plane, taking into account their needs, demands, aesthetic tastes or ensuring their participation.

Throughout the struggle of the governors who aim to establish their hegemony and make it the dominant one in society, it is possible to evaluate the creation of the emphasis on 'us' and the distinction between the groups defined as 'others' as a natural part of this process. At this point, by focusing the evaluation on how this distinction

is constructed and the government's approach to the group defined as 'others', it becomes possible to identify the difference between the effects of approaches. When looking at the politics of the AKP government in the case of Turkey, as a way of implementing its populist strategy, it exhibits an antagonistic approach in many different areas of its politics, producing policies and practices that ignore or even antagonize the 'others'. This political attitude and strategy is also visible throughout the urban spaces.

It is possible to see that the AKP government often presents an antagonistic approach to the differentiation of opposing groups as a product of its populist strategy. In cases where the emphasis in defining 'us' is presented through a nation/nationality or religion, the separation can actually be harsher, a much larger mass of the society can feel excluded compared to a class distinction, and that politics move away from an agonistic approach. In cases where the projects created in urban spaces are presented with conservative-nationalist identities, it could be argued that antagonism is more pronounced, and this harshness can be felt as a threat by the 'others'. As mentioned earlier, while a government's appearance as a representative of a group can be part of the process in the way it presents itself, its ideology and its political stance, an approach that does not allow for the negotiation of groups divided into different sides can have a divisive effect on society. It becomes apparent that the populist strategy of the AKP government has led to very harsh segregation in line with this harshness and that combination of the afore-mentioned factors result in a structure that does not allow for agonistic politics.

When looking at the examples of this approach in urban spaces, it is seen that the nationalist-conservative emphasis in city projects is more intense in some spaces and more subtle in others. Factors such as the strategic determination of the locations where this emphasis is intensified (places that are mostly used by groups that can be defined as secular), the design of the functions and contents of the buildings in a way that follows this strategy, or the discourses presented to the public are shaped around emphases such as 'us' and 'groups that want to harm us' can give an idea about the emergence of antagonism in urban space.

The opposition is constructed between 'Kemalist elites' and 'the large segments oppressed by them', which is prominent in the AKP government's populist strategy. It is understood that the groups identified as 'Kemalist elites' also include large segments of society, and in this sense, it displays a political approach that excludes, marginalizes and ignores large segments of society. The city projects that are indicative of this signify that some of the interventions were carried out especially in places where there is a perception in the society that they 'belong to the Kemalist elite', and this perception is emphasized.

This discussion, which will be presented with additional evaluations through city projects in more detail in the next sections, briefly shows that the exclusion can be felt much more harshly in the spaces created by the AKP government by emphasizing the nation and religion, while at the same time, the antagonism can be perceived more visibly by the society in the spaces where this emphasis is intensified, and as a result of this distinction, a large segment of the society can be marginalized and pushed out of urban spaces.

## **2.5. One-Nation / Two-Nations**

Antonio Gramsci identifies two forms of class dominance: Force and hegemony. While force refers to the use of a coercive apparatus to bring the masses of the population into conformity with the demands of a particular mode of production, hegemony refers to the ability of the dominant class to obtain the 'active consent' of dominant groups through intellectual, moral and political leadership (Jessop, 1990). Similarly, Bob Jessop defines hegemony as the calling and organization of other classes under the political, intellectual and moral leadership of a particular class. The hegemony is argued to be conditioned and limited by the process of accumulation and involves the sacrifice of the short-term interests of the hegemonic class and concessions to other social forces (Jessop, 2005).

Jessop also mentions that three important elements for the successful realization of the hegemonic project are the 'structural determination/selectivity', 'strategic orientation' and 'relationship with accumulation' of hegemony:

1. *'Structural determination' or 'structural selectivity'*: Jessop prefers to call this element 'strategic selectivity'. It refers to the structural privileges inherent in a given state form that favor some social forces and interests to the detriment of others. In line with structural selectivity, he states that these transformations are short-term, and that hegemony will return to the structurally privileged class in the long run, depending on its relationship with accumulation and its strategic orientation.
2. *The strategic orientation of hegemony*: In addition to the elements of structural determination, attention should also be drawn to the formation of a hegemonic project that successfully links the realization of certain specific interests of subordinated social forces to the pursuit of a national-popular program that supports the long-term interest of the hegemonic power. Jessop argues that the seizure of hegemony consists of three spheres: political, intellectual and moral. He emphasizes that the social forces mobilized behind a particular hegemonic project need not be directly referred to as class forces.
3. *The relation of hegemony to accumulation*: Jessop argues that the hegemonic project has no direct economic significance or priority. Nevertheless, he adds that the success of the hegemonic project depends on material concessions to dependent social forces (Jessop, 2005).

Jessop argues that even at the end of these elements, there is no guarantee that hegemony will have the support of the entire society. Consequently, he introduces the concepts of 'one-nation' and 'two-nations' hegemonic projects. According to Jessop's definition, 'one-nation strategies' describe expansionist hegemonies in which the support of the whole society is gained through concessions and symbolic rewards (the case of the Keynesian welfare state), while 'two-nations strategies' describe limited hegemonies (the case of Thatcherism) that target the support of a strategically important segment of the population and involve a strategy that shifts the costs of the project to other segments. Jessop notes that 'two-nations' projects also involve certain concessions to 'others', but adds that they require the restraint and even suppression of 'others' (Jessop, 2005).

British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1845) mentioned 'two-nations' in its book as follows:

*Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.*

As for the case of Turkey, the fact that the AKP government presents the contradictions created in society with an exclusionary political attitude strongly implies that city projects are also formed with this approach. It has already been mentioned that in projects created with an antagonistic attitude, whether or not they are perceived as antagonistic by society can change depending on the intensity and form of the emphasis. The important point here is that rather than making definitive determinations on whether the projects are antagonistic or not, which may not yield definitive results due to the evaluation of the government's intentions and society's perception together, it is more critical to make a critical observation about the AKP politics dividing cities and society. The populist strategy used by the AKP government in creating 'us' and 'others' can evolve into exclusionary practices in urban spaces, and a situation where consensus becomes impossible to reach as a result of the city projects.

By making use of Jessop's theories, an attempt has been made to conceptualize these projects as well as one-nation and two-nations hegemonic projects have been used as one-city and two-cities projects in this thesis. Considering that two-nations hegemonic projects target the support of certain groups of the population and therefore establish a limited hegemony, it would be possible to say that two-cities projects are city projects that focus on certain groups in parallel. As mentioned above, some city projects are created in a way that reflects the beliefs, lifestyles and ideologies of the groups representing 'us' with an antagonistic approach that incorporates marginalization, ignoring and antagonizing, and therefore can be considered as two-cities projects. On the other hand, where the distinctions are not as emphasized, and where the emphasis on nationality and religion is more subtle, the projects can be perceived as relatively more inclusive and therefore more likely to be perceived as agonistic, and more likely to be considered as one-city projects. The extent to which the projects that present less of these emphases can be inclusive or not, and whether

they can be interpreted as one-city projects will be discussed in the presentation of the project examples of the following sections.

## **2.6. Liminality**

Van Gennep's theory of 'rites of passage', is used to describe the state of being in transition between one social status and another. This was later formed into the basis of the concept of liminality for Victor Turner. Gennep states that those who remain on the threshold experience a void between two statuses and that society acts as if they do not exist until they claim a new status. In a sense, it could be argued that the concept of liminality describes the 'other', those who cannot be included within the boundaries and who are structurally on the threshold. The inability to belong to a status and the state of being in-between is emphasized when individuals on the threshold differentiate from other groups in society (Gennep, 2019).

Similarly, Turner gives a definition of liminal entities as neither here nor there and that they are between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. Turner mentions the similarity of liminality to death, being in the womb and invisibility as well as bisexuality. According to Turner, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves high-low, *communitas*-structure, homogeneity-differentiation and equality-inequality. Turner states that the first phase, which is separation, is a symbolic behavior that refers to the detachment of individuals from a fixed point in their social structure, from a combination of cultural conditions, or from both. During the liminal period, the situation becomes ambiguous. Moreover, in the third phase, which is reaggregation or reincorporation, the passage is consummated (Turner, 1991).

Stavrides introduces the concept of common spaces, defining them as spaces that people produce collectively in an effort to build a shared world that accommodates, supports and expresses their community, emphasizing that communal spaces are different from both public and private spaces. Public spaces are created primarily by a specific authority (local, regional or state) that controls them through setting the rules by which people can use them, whereas private spaces are owned and controlled by specific individuals or economic organizations that have the right to determine the

conditions under which others can use them. The concept of common space, which is presented as an exception, is conceived as a relationship between a social group and its attempt to define themselves, a shared world among its members (Stavrides, 2016).

When the concept of liminality is examined within the scope of this thesis, it is understood that it provides integrity in terms of making sense of the concepts of antagonism and agonism presented above, and the one-city and two-cities projects as a continuation of them. As mentioned before, the exclusion or relative inclusion in the city projects of the AKP government are shaped by the emphasis presented in these urban spaces, and that evaluations of each of these spaces as antagonistic or agonistic may not always be as clearly defined, taking into account the functions of the spaces and their relationship with society.

It is not always possible to accurately identify the various attitudes of the public towards city projects and where they position themselves against these projects. While mass protests against certain city projects and long debates in the media/social media can provide an understanding of the attitude, it is not possible to determine whether the attitude towards most projects involves discontent or satisfaction at the societal level. In cases where people react concretely by responding to their own marginalization, the way the projects are being created and perceived can reveal whether it is antagonistic. While the definition of the liminal zone is an important point in cases where it is seen that even though it is structurally constructed as antagonistic, it does not find such a response in the society. In this sense, it would be an accurate assessment to say that the liminal zone emerges more frequently in most of the city projects, apart from classifying the projects as antagonistic and agonistic, and therefore as one-city and two-cities projects.

## **2.7. Recognition – Redistribution - Representation**

Nancy Fraser, a political scientist, has mentioned the concepts of recognition, redistribution and representation to discuss the concept of social justice. Fraser states that in today's world, social justice demands are divided into two types, one of which

is redistributive demands that aim to redistribute resources in a new and fairer way, and the other is a type that emerges from the politics of recognition. According to this second type, the aim is to create a diversity-friendly world in which there is no assimilation to the majority or dominant cultural norms. At this point, there is a demand for the recognition of all kinds of differences. Fraser states that social justice in today's world requires both redistribution and recognition, neither of which can be sufficient on its own. (Fraser, 2003)

In society, injustice is often evaluated in terms of the unequal distribution of material resources. Fraser does not leave this dimension in the background and agrees with the idea that the distribution of resources creates injustice and states that a fair redistribution of resources can lead to justice. Fraser reminds that injustice does not consist of a single dimension and that there are other types of injustice that complement each other, and touches upon another dimension, recognition. Stating that groups with various identities and statuses are not equally recognized at the social level and that some groups are exposed to various levels of injustice at this point, he states that one dimension of ensuring justice is related to ensuring equal recognition of each community.

Emphasizing the need to ensure equal participation of all groups in social life, he proposes the application of the principle of 'full parity participation'. According to Fraser, thanks to this principle, institutionalized barriers that prevent equal participation of some groups in social interaction can be eliminated. He mentions that these barriers can be of three types: first, unequal access to the resources people need for equal interaction; second, barriers created by institutionalized cultural value hierarchies that prevent equal access; and third, decisions that prevent people from having an equal voice in public deliberations and democratic decision-making processes, i.e. political injustice or misrepresentation. (Fraser, 2007)

The most important reason for making use of these concepts presented by Fraser in this thesis is to approach the injustices, exclusion and marginalization that urban space projects have created or may create from a holistic perspective through a multi-faceted conception of justice. With the awareness that there are individuals and groups who

cannot / do not benefit from these spaces for various reasons in urban projects where identity is emphasized or capital relations are visible, the reasons for this inability to benefit / not benefit will be tried to be understood through the combination of these concepts.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **AKP'S SYMBOLIC USES OF SPACE AND UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC SPACE TRANSFORMATION**

After providing a general overview of the ways in which governments use urban space in the process of building hegemony, we will focus on the ways in which the AKP government uses urban spaces and try to make a detailed analysis of the selected project examples. Before examining the spaces where the AKP government has constructed its hegemony in line with its own political understanding, a brief overview will be presented on the ways in which governments in general carry out these construction processes. This will be followed by an attempt to understand the relationship between space and power from this perspective which will enable us to develop a more comprehensive perspective on each of the urban projects presented below.

In the first section, many different tools were mentioned to be used by governments to make their power 'visible and acceptable', which is considered one of the natural goals and consequences of politics, and that the urban spaces are one of these tools. In addition to this, political powers organize their own masses through public spaces in cities, just like in other areas where their politics have an impact, and produce spaces in line with their wishes, needs and tastes of their supporters, thus making the opposition of 'us' and 'them' visible which is accepted as the nature of politics.

In the following section, the way urban spaces are used and what kind of a political approach is adopted in the process of hegemony building of the AKP government will be the main topics of discussion, as well as what the opposition between 'us' and 'them' is constructed on, and how the power-space relationship mentioned in the first section takes shape in the AKP example. In order to understand all these, the selected urban projects are analyzed in detail.

### **3.1. Strategic Use of (Urban) Space in the Construction of Hegemony**

Governments, as required by the nature of politics itself, try to make their power as visible as possible in society, to consolidate their hegemony, to legitimize their power in society and to assemble a large part of society to support their power. In this sense, many different tools are used for this purpose and these messages are conveyed to societies at different points of life and in different ways. In societies where democracy is adopted and practiced as a form of politics, the formation of opposing groups and the struggle between the government and the opposition to establish their hegemony are considered normal.

As mentioned above, with many different tools being instruments of hegemony for the powers, it is possible to evaluate cities in this context. Political forces are instrumental in creating spaces in cities to appeal to their own masses and establish a relationship with the society through spaces. Governments take advantage of their power to transform public spaces in cities much more than other political forces that exist within society and use public spaces in cities as a tool.

Public spaces, where the public has the most contact with each other and where the masses can be reached from a single point at a single moment, is an accessible and robust tool for those in power to convey the messages they want and to engage communities by placing their own symbols in the city. These symbolic initiatives sometimes manifest themselves in the form of construction of a monument, sculpture, or a large building, changing the name of a place or imply demolishing a symbol. In this sense, they incorporate their politics into urban planning. Although the urban planning mentioned here does not always include the inclusion of scientific methods applied in the construction of cities, it includes strategies on many issues such as the methods of engaging people with new symbols that are established in public spaces, which target groups will be emphasized and to what extent, as well as, the identity and the message that is trying to be communicated.

While the governments remind the people of the city of their existence in different ways and with different symbols, this move is not limited to asserting themselves in

the present. It aims to carry itself into the future with the symbols it has established and to perpetuate its presence and power. In doing so, it seeks to show that it is part of a tradition by taking refuge in a powerful image from the past or tries to create a tradition to ensure its permanence. All of this effort ensures that the transformations are legitimate in the eyes of society.

Public space also contains invisible borders within itself. Therefore, while constructing a public space, the effort to shape these invisible borders around a certain ideology has the power to determine the users of that space in an unwritten way and to exclude those who are against or outside its ideology from these borders. On one hand, those in power who seek to dominate public spaces wish to keep these spaces free of dissidents due to this critical political function. Bülent Batuman mentions that there is a construction process in all areas of society according to the worldviews of the governments and that individuals are expected to behave according to the typology of 'acceptable' citizens in public spaces created in line with this construction process (Öktemer, 2019). With the hegemony they establish in public spaces, the governors not only determine the users of the space and the way it is used, but also confront the society with their ideology. While they tend towards practices that appeal especially to the groups they influence and want to influence, prioritizing their interests and aesthetic tastes, they also clearly display their power to the society in general.

In addition to all these efforts mentioned above, the governments also try to establish a cultural power through space. Attempts to turn the dominant ideology into the dominant culture are mostly achieved through public spaces. Particularly in cases where there are cultural images that the governments identify as opposed to their own, the direct destruction of these images becomes a high priority in terms of consolidating their power. For this purpose, the creation of political symbols and constructions that reflect their politics and world views is frequently observed especially in large city squares that host the highest number of citizens at one place, they involve the highest possible amount of contact and reflect the identity of that city the most, the efforts of the governments to place their own identities in these squares will be more understandable.

### **3.2. Symbolic Spaces of AKP**

Looking at the AKP government's politics and governance practices in general, there exist various discussions whether the adopted strategy is divisive, whether it leads to various conflicts and whether this strategy creates antagonistic politics. As a continuation of these debates, it is important to discuss the conditions under which the government's urban space projects can be characterized as unifying or divisive, whether it is possible to talk about the existence of an antagonism created as a result of divisions, and how all these relate to the cities in order to understand urban policies and their consequences.

The AKP government, which has been in power in Turkey since 2002, is a government that has many practices in the transformation of space. It often transforms space by constructing buildings and spaces in line with its ideology, or by changing the meaning and use of existing ones in order to transform space in line with its ideology. In addition, the construction efforts clearly provide capitalist entrepreneurship opportunities in certain cases by toning down the signs that point towards its ideology and transforming the public space into a private space or paving the way for it.

One could argue that the primary strategy of the AKP's transformation of public space is the seizure of a public space that is open to everyone's use and transformation of its usage. What is important at this point is how and through what means these transformations are realized as these transformations do not always involve a capitalist enterprise. For such cases, it is possible to make critical evaluations of the transformations such as the construction of a large mosque in a square, the transformation of a park into a Nation's Garden, and the construction of a Presidential Palace in Atatürk Forest Farm in this category to reflect on the traces of its own politics. In these examples, public space is transformed by embedding political motifs into it. With these moves towards spatial use, the AKP attributes new identities to cities and constructs these identities within the framework of conservatism, nationalism and traditionalism. On the other hand, it is possible to observe the effort to make its presence memorable, and its power felt both today and in the future.

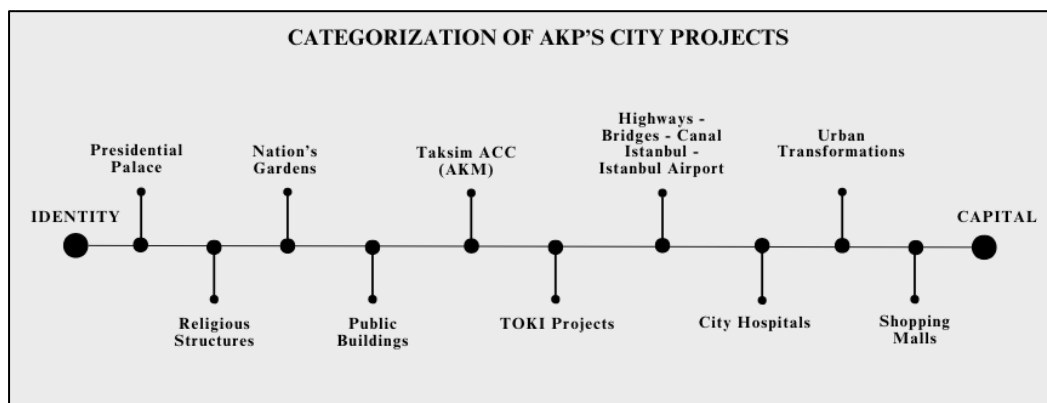
Examples where the goal is to change the purpose of the use of public space and capitalist enterprises are involved can also be presented such as the establishment of City Hospitals, the construction of highways and bridges, and Urban Transformation practices. In these examples, it is noteworthy that the signs of the nationalist-conservative 'nation' identity created by the AKP are either not used at all or at least the symbols of this identity are not strongly emphasized.

In general, when looking at the ways in which AKP's public space transformations have been realized, it is possible to say that these transformations have mostly taken place independently of the participation, ideas, values and usage practices of a large part of the public. Although these transformations, which do not involve participation and inclusiveness, are generally accepted by certain segments of society, while the reflections of this lack of consensus in society may vary according to conditions and situations. Depending on their meaning, the things they symbolize, their intended use, the way they are transformed, what they transform and what they transform, and many other factors, these projects can be accepted in society or cause some conflicts and divisions. For this reason, it is possible to talk about the possibility of all spaces, even those that are almost impossible to demolish, returning to their previous practices of use or acquiring new practices and meanings when a new government will be in charge. At this point, it is important to try to understand the conflicts, divergences and commonalities in order to understand the urban policies of the government and the cities that emerge as a result of these policies.

It has already been mentioned above that the distinction between 'us' and 'them' produced by the populist strategy of the AKP government is based on three different definitions of people. As a result of these different definitions of people, situations in which identity-based and class-based distinctions with an emphasis on conservatism and nationalism can be observed, even if not directly and large segments of society are inevitably excluded, and these situations are also revealed in various urban projects. In order to be able to discuss and evaluate the urban policies of the AKP government on the basis of the existence of an antagonistic politics based on this exclusion, some examples of city projects have been included in this thesis.

Examples among the projects that AKP prefers to bring to the forefront and that are highlighted as 'mega projects' both by the AKP itself and in the public opinion are carefully selected for in-depth analysis. In addition to this, care was also taken to ensure that they were the best representations that could concretely exemplify the emphasis on 'identity' and 'capital', which will be emphasized under two main headings in the following sections. Throughout the city projects realized by the AKP government, an emphasis on identity based on the definition of 'nation' is very visibly observed. In other cases, this emphasis is subtle and sometimes not present at all. In parallel to this, capital relations are seen at the forefront in certain projects.

The main premise is that the spatial projects selected to elaborate the AKP's populist strategy in the city can be shown by concretizing them around the emphasis on 'identity' and 'politics'. Although it is seen that these two main themes, which are located at two extremes, occasionally intersect with each other in various projects, it could be argued that it would be more efficient to evaluate these two main themes as two separate titles in order to differentiate them. The line in the image below (Fig 1) does not aim to symbolize a hierarchical structure, but to show concretely how the projects, which are placed between the two main themes, which are fluid and have intersections with each other but still have a main heading of which they are considered closer to in terms of their content.



*Figure 1 Categorization of AKP's City Projects*

Although each project will be discussed in detail under its own heading in the following sections, a clearer overview is provided here by first explaining the

categorization that forms the following image. The examples shaped around the theme of 'Identity' in the above chart stand out as space projects in which the AKP government emphasizes primarily its own political identity and creates an identity politics through this through a nationalist-conservative concept of 'nation'. It is also noteworthy that there are also projects in which the AKP government, and sometimes even Erdoğan himself, asserts his own political power which are strategically positioned and realized especially in big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. These strategic placements in metropolitan cities strengthen the arguments that the national identity that is being created is being made more visible, that these spaces have symbolic qualities and that they are deliberate, political acts.

The 'Presidential Palace' project, which is placed at the far end of the line, emerges as the most striking example under this heading since it is a project directed towards the politics of the AKP government, even Erdoğan's own politics as an individual, and the structure carries a 'nation' emphasis from top to bottom. 'Religious Buildings', which comes next, describes the buildings but especially the mosques, which carry a more conservative identity and show how the symbolic space of a universal religion is exploited as a political tool. Then comes the 'Nation's Gardens', which the AKP government inherited from the Ottoman Empire. These spaces are known for being a product of the AKP government, identified with AKP politics and emphasized through the 'nation'. The next heading, 'Public Buildings', draws attention to the way the AKP government reflects its political understanding and architectural style in almost all branches of the state. The last example of a city project that can be evaluated under this heading, the 'Istanbul Taksim Atatürk Cultural Center', unlike the other projects, does not emphasize a 'nation' in terms of form, but draws attention as a critical space that reveals the power of the AKP government's own politics, where a political attitude can be seen that prevents the rent agenda visible in it.

The projects at the other end of the line, which are shaped around the theme of 'Capital', generally do not emphasize an identity, but mostly contain references to the political power of the government and capital relations are interpreted clearly. Although it is noteworthy that the government does not emphasize any form of identity in these urban projects, the discourses produced on most of them show the form of the

relationship that the government establishes with these projects. Apart from this, including projects that are purely private initiatives, each of them are projects produced as a result of the urban policies of the government. The projects in this context can be encountered almost everywhere in the country and whose examples are widespread. For this reason, it is possible to think that the functions, size and multiplicity of these spaces are intended to make the 'success' of the government more visible. The shopping malls, which are placed at the very end of the 'Capital' heading, are spaces created entirely by private initiatives that do not bear the traces of power in any way, with some exceptions that will be explained in the heading. When we look at the examples of 'City Hospitals', these structures, which also appeared for the first time during the AKP government and were built by private initiatives, are places where the AKP government frequently references its own political power, although they do not contain any emphasis on identity or AKP politics.

Under the same heading, 'Highways-Bridges-Canal Istanbul-Istanbul Airport', are presented to the public with frequent discourses on the 'greatness and success' of the government's own political power, and which have turned into a propaganda tool, some of which can be seen to contain some identity symbols, are examined. Finally, another urban transformation tool referred to as 'TOKI Projects' are analyzed in this section, which refers to the mass-housing transformations carried out by the state in addition to urban transformations carried out by private initiatives. The TOKI projects mentioned under this heading are again a propaganda tool of the government, but they also draw attention due to their close relationship with capital as a result of the diversity of the projects.

When looking at the distinction between 'us' and 'you' produced by the government, it has been mentioned above that it is basically a distinction produced on the basis of an identity, and that the identity in its most basic form is formed on the basis of 'elites' and 'those oppressed by the elites'. The communities referred to here as 'the oppressed, the victimized' describe the groups that have been subjected to this by 'secularists' as defined unilaterally by the government. It can be seen that the AKP government's policies are designed to exploit this victimization, to regain what they have lost and to

become the powerful party again. Like the representatives of the government, Erdoğan reveals the reality of these aims with his discourses on this issue. In this sense, he includes a large part of the public in a group that he has externalized as 'secularists/elites' in the dichotomy created and actually creates a new 'elite group' with his own supporters. By introducing a part of the public with the definition of 'nation', it adopts an exclusionary policy towards those who fall outside this definition.

As for the concept of 'nation', the question of who can be included in this definition comes to the fore. Bülent Batuman argues that this nationalist-conservative definition of 'nation' developed by the AKP through the nation-building process represents a group that is positioned against the secular state's definition of 'nation' and that the concept of 'nation' is reinforced with terms such as 'Nation Garden' and 'House of the Nation'. Batuman states that he interprets this definition as 'Islamic nation' (Öktemer, 2019). In line with this definition, the first thing that comes to mind is to think that city projects, in which the emphasis on nationhood is prominent, are created by demolishing certain symbolic structures and areas instead of discriminating against the groups that are outside this identity or that are excluded by this identity itself, and therefore are realized with a political attitude that is more open to the formation of antagonism. On the other hand, other types of projects where the emphasis on identity is kept in the background and private initiatives are put into play, are consumed by the majority of the public due to their functions and that it is not possible for an exclusionary attitude to be dominant due to the capital relations behind them. At this point, it can be considered that a politics closer to agonism is constructed in the projects under the heading 'Capital'.

As a continuation of this discussion, this thesis will try to argue how valid the assumptions mentioned in the paragraph above are, and to examine whether the debate on exclusion and inclusion is accompanied by an emphasis on identity and capital. The titles 'Identity' and 'Capital' are not reflected in the image above through any kind of discrimination or inclusiveness. The visual has been shaped according to the frequency with which the government has put forward its own understanding of politics, and a line has been drawn from the example where this emphasis is the most

to the example where it is the least. It is noteworthy that in the examples, as the emphasis on political identity decreases, emphasis on capital becomes more apparent. Based on the visuals presented, it is possible to see how the phenomena of exclusion and feeling excluded are formed in both identity-themed and capital-themed projects, under which conditions an antagonistic understanding emerges, whether some groups are still excluded from these spaces despite the projects that are assumed to be 'inclusive', or whether they prefer to remain excluded for certain reasons. The discussion will be deepened by considering whether a selective destructiveness is created based on a symbolic meaning, and what are the examples where groups and individuals feel unrecognized or unrepresented. Ultimately, the end goal is that a clear picture emerges at the end of it all in terms of society, the city and their relationship to each other.

In order to examine and make sense of the cities that have emerged as a result of these project examples and many more, with the practices of segregation/exclusion and the perception of exclusion, the concepts of "one-nation / two-nations", which were also presented in the theoretical framework section, were utilized. As mentioned earlier, one-nation hegemonic projects seek to achieve a minimum level of consensus in society through an expansionist approach, while two-nations hegemonic projects aim to strategically secure the support of a certain segment of the population. Beginning with the assumption that the themes of 'Identity' and 'Capital' presented in the chart above may similarly create such a distinction, the discussion utilizes these theoretical concepts to explain the divisions and unifications in the city. Based on this, 'one-nation' and 'two-nations' projects are reconceptualized as 'one-city' and 'two-cities' projects in the thesis. In order to establish this connection, an attempt will be made to evaluate 'one-city' and 'two-cities' projects in terms of the degree to which publicness can be formed in the projects to be examined, the extent to which capital is determinant, and how exclusionary or inclusive the projects are.

The other concept that will accompany these concepts will be Liminality. As will be reflected in the following discussion, it is possible to encounter situations where not every project can be considered directly antagonistic or agonistic under all circumstances. This can happen in cases where the government does not take a very

clear political stance, but does not completely withdraw itself either, or in cases where communities, while benefiting from, engaging with or making sense of a project, cannot directly position themselves against or within it in cultural, political or class terms. The concept of liminality can help to understand and conceptualize this ambiguity and in-betweenness in examples of projects that cannot be clearly distinguished as 'identity' and 'capital', or as 'exclusionary' and 'inclusive'.

In order to be able to carry out this discussion, it is thought that elaborating the specific conditions of each project within their context in the following sections provide a more meaningful and possibly a holistic assessment of the emerging pictures.

### **3.2.1. The Projects Under the 'Identity' Theme**

Under this heading, the 'Presidential Palace', 'Religious Buildings', 'Nation's Gardens', 'Public Buildings' and 'İstanbul Taksim Ataturk Culture Center' projects shown in the figure (Fig 1) above will be evaluated.

The conservative and nationalist character, which is dominantly at the forefront of the identity definition of the AKP government, is combined with the traditional character defined as Ottoman-Seljuk and puts forward a style and attitude. This eclectic identity, which shows itself concretely in urban spaces, is sometimes considered as imitation by some experts in architectural structures. It can be seen that this identity is more emphasized in the buildings produced by the government to refer to its own political understanding and approach. This conservative-nationalist identity can be read as an outcome of the populist politics of the AKP government. It can be seen that the distinction between groups defined as "elites," which refers to seculars, and "masses oppressed by elites" created by the AKP government, is brought to the forefront with this identity emphasis, and this opposition is deepened through the dichotomy of conservatism and secularism. What is remarkable at this point is that by including a large part of the society within the secularists, whom it defines as 'the elite', it creates a great disruption in the society with a group it defines as 'us' and embraces. Within the projects under the theme of "identity", it will be tried to look at examples of populist politics in which this distinction is emphasized.

### **3.2.1.1. Presidential Palace (Külliyе)**

The Presidential Palace, which was built during the AKP government, is included in the discussion as it is both a strong symbolic example of the AKP's political understanding and an important example that formally demonstrates the distinction between 'us' and 'them', which is an outcome of the aforementioned populist politics.

Until 2014, Çankaya Mansion, which served the highest level of the state until 2014, was left in the background as of this year and a new structure was built. In this building, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his family, who are at the highest level of the state, reside. The first point that draws attention when looking at this building is that it was built in the form of a 'palace' and its official name is “Külliyе”. Although the AKP government uses palatial architectural structures in various public institutions (to be discussed under the heading 'Public Buildings'), it is possible to say that the Presidential Palace is the most symbolic of such structures. The messages behind the presentation of this building as a 'palace' can be interpreted that such a building complements the political understanding of the AKP government by incorporating Ottoman-Seljuk references.

In addition to this, the fact that it is associated with the image of a kingdom or empire can be understood as a message that the government puts itself at the top and as the sole power. Richard Sennett describes the space of authority as a place, a stage or an image that radiates rays of privilege around, thus making power visible (Sennett, 1999). Again, Sennett, using the Roman Empire as an example, mentions that power needs stone and in this way it can make people look at, believe in and obey symbolic spaces (Sennett, 2008).

The most important reason why the Külliye is represented in the chart at the most extreme point in the theme of identity is that it goes beyond a nationalist or religious narrative and directly makes the public feel the intensity and power of the AKP and even Erdoğan. While the construction of a new building separated from the Çankaya Mansion can be read as the first move in this sense, when factors such as the architectural form of the building, its naming, and the Beştepe Mosque inside it are considered, it can be said that it has become a representation of AKP politics rather

than a representation of the state. In light of all these considerations, it cannot be ignored that the Presidential Palace is a major political symbol in its own right.

Beyond the fact that the palace bears the concrete signs of the 'us' narrative, which is the product of the AKP government's populist politics, it has also become a space where one can observe how the opposition is created with the majority of the society, clearly defined as 'them', meaning the secular public in the broadest sense. Erdoğan emphasizes that he built this structure on behalf of himself and his power as 'for the nation, for the nation':

*Only the nation is the real owner of all these opportunities. Only our dear nation will decide to whom the trust will be entrusted (9 soruda..., 2014).*

*Beştepe Presidential Palace is being built. Lies... As if this is my personal palace. He hasn't traveled the world, he doesn't know. He doesn't understand state administration. You know how he ruined SSK. It doesn't have 1,000 rooms. You're wrong. It has 1150 rooms (Erdoğan sarayın kaç... 2014).*

In addition, Erdoğan's emphasis on the fact that being a strong state and a strong nation has certain symbolic requirements and that the reputation of the state can be ensured in this way is also noteworthy:

*Does it befit the Republic of Turkey to block traffic and hold a parade? These places are places of prestige. Decisions are made based on these places (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı eleştirilerine yanıt verdi, 2014).*

Even though these statements made by Erdoğan declare that the building is targeted towards all people in the society, the contradictions embedded in the statements show that it is not a structure that addresses 'all the people'. Looking at other points that support this view, it can be seen that this 'Palace' built on the land of Atatürk Forest Farm (AFF) represents the political view of the AKP, especially Erdoğan, which is positioned against the Republican regime and the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It is possible to say that through the Presidential Palace placed in Atatürk Forest Farm, there is another symbolism that is trying to be built by destroying the values represented by AFF. While this 'palace' structure, which is built to assert his hegemony

and political understanding, is a symbol in itself, the construction of this structure in a symbolic place, AŞF, has deepened the opposition between values. In addition, the Beştepe Mosque was also built within the large complex built on the site, integrating a structure that is presented as the Presidential Palace on behalf of the state with a religious structure. This situation can be read as a symbolic characteristic of his conservative political view, which is understood to be positioned against secularism. Erdoğan clearly expresses the opposition he has established through the Presidential Palace with his own statements:

*You know there is a New Turkey now. ... How do you express it, you call it Atatürk's legacy, we are a country that came on the Seljuk legacy and the Ottoman legacy. We have an understanding of architecture. (Erdoğan'dan 'AK Saray' eleştirilerine cevap, 2014)*

*Our aim is to leave a lasting legacy for our country, just like our ancestors. Regarding the project, I told them what kind of thing we wanted, and it was this: The outside of the building should have the Seljuk architecture that we see traces of in Ankara. Inside, there should be the comfort of the Ottoman floor-to-ceiling distance. In terms of equipment, it should be a smart building using modern technology. Thanks to my friends, they did a good job. They showed all sensitivity in terms of materials. Quality comes at a price. (Erdoğan: Ak Saray Ülkemiz..., 2014)*

In his book *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre states that monumentality can always be read very clearly, that it says what it wants and hides what it does not desire. In short, he states that the monument disguises the 'will to power and arbitrariness' of power (Lefebvre, 2014). When evaluated together with these approaches, it is seen that although it is presented as the 'home of the nation' where everyone can enter, the fact is that the entrances to the campus where the Palace is located are limited, people who want to enter here are accepted after certain official interrogations, so it is not actually possible for everyone to enter. Based on this, it is possible to say that the actual users of the Palace, which is presented as the 'home of the nation', are predetermined and an invisible wall emerges, creating a separation between those who are included in the definition of 'nation' and those who are not or cannot be a part of. This separation, which can be interpreted as an output of the political understanding and

populist strategy of the government, can be evaluated as an antagonistic approach. The fact that a large part of the public is excluded from the definition of 'nation' signifies an attitude of exclusion reflected on the society in general.

Conversely, there are individuals and groups who would prefer not to use the Palace campus even if they have the chance to use it due to existing political antagonisms. In this sense, it can be said that the antagonistic attitude manifested here by the government is interpreted as antagonistic by some groups, perhaps even by the majority of the people who are excluded, and they may prefer to stay outside with a similar approach.

Looking at the current situation, it is possible to say that a public space that was previously open to everyone as AFF has now turned into an enclosed, segregated private space. This structure, which was built with the support of a certain group of people in mind, has become a symbol of the AKP government and Erdoğan himself, and has therefore lost its public character. This building, which was symbolically opened to public use on a limited basis and under certain conditions, has created a space where its use is divided both by the government and the majority of the public, and has become a city project that offers one of the most important examples of identity politics. Apart from the concrete objections of certain groups, experts, political organizations and professional chambers, the objection of the society has not resulted in a visible mass reaction, but this does not mean that the majority of the public does embrace this structure. Although the AFF land is a public land, it is difficult to say that it is as much a part of people's lives as an urban center. Especially when people who do not reside in Ankara are considered, it is possible to say that the use of this land for the Presidential Palace is not sufficiently reflected in daily practices. It can also be said that the political connotations of the Palace built in this area, where direct contact is relatively less, can still be read very clearly and its message can be understood by the society.

Looking at the construction process of the Presidential Palace, its architectural form, and the discourses produced by the government and especially Erdoğan on this construction in general, it can be said that this project represents an antagonistic

political attitude. It is clear that this project is a space project that includes an appeal to the groups that the government defines with 'nation' to represent 'us' and tries to keep the support of the same groups alive with themes such as 'greatness and magnificence' emphasized with this building. The people and groups whose use of this space is limited, who cannot find any representation of themselves for various reasons, or who prefer to be completely politically opposed to it, are those who fit the definition of 'them' constructed by the government, and who are therefore enemies and excluded, and that these people and groups correspond to a large part of the society. Where the invisible border drawn sharply here divides the society into two at the points explained above and one group is directly outside this line is evaluated, it is possible to argue that the Presidential Palace is an antagonistic city project, thus a 'two-cities' hegemonic project.

### **3.2.1.2. Religious Buildings**

Religious buildings are places where worship of different religions can take place and where people of that religion can come together. In the case of Turkey, mosques are the most prominent religious buildings in public spaces that outnumber many other places of worship. As one of the symbols of Islam, mosques are symbolic religious buildings that represent an identity and a way of life. While it is known that the historical background of some of these buildings increases their influence, the shape and location of others can also increase the power of this representation. Through the construction of these religious buildings, the AKP government today utilizes the references made on religion, to which large segments of the public will respond positively, and benefits from the representational capacity of the religious motives. While religious buildings have often been landmarks in cities throughout their history, it can be seen that most of the large and symbolic mosques built during the AKP government have a direct purpose of becoming landmarks for the city. In this context, it is possible to say that religious buildings have almost always been used as a political tool under the AKP government. In addition, the fact that mosques are 'landmarks' in cities and that it is not possible to remove them even if the government that built them changes paves the way for their use as political tools.

There are examples of the AKP government communicating its political views through mosques that are specially planned in terms of their positioning and form. In this sense, the Çamlıca Mosque built on Çamlıca Hill in Istanbul can be presented as a good example. From Erdoğan's own statements, it is clearly understood that the aim of the positioning of this mosque is to be seen from anywhere in Istanbul (Çamlıca tepesine tüm İstanbul'dan..., 2012). It is known that the architect of the building, Hacı Mehmet Güner, started talking about his goal of building the largest mosque in the world while it was still in the planning stage (Çamlıca'ya Camiye mimarlardan..., 2012). Çamlıca Mosque is a building that was specially designed to have an impact on the silhouette of Istanbul, that contains many references to nationalist views, the Ottoman Empire and its own power, and whose location and size were determined accordingly.



*Figure 2 Çamlıca Mosque<sup>1</sup>*

Apart from ensuring visibility, there are also sites whose location is chosen specifically with the intention of destroying another identity. The most visible example in this sense is the Taksim Mosque. Taksim Square, formerly known as Cumhuriyet (Republic) Square, which was one of the squares designed to represent modernism and the new state with the Republic, was faced with the construction of a

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<sup>1</sup> (Asrın mührü..., 2020)

mosque to give it a conservative identity under the AKP regime. Erdoğan's remarks about the Taksim Mosque plan when he was the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality make it clear that this mosque is more than a center of worship, but a carrier of political identity:

*The key to Istanbul tourism is that region. Once the person who comes to that region sees that center, he will understand that he is in an Islamic city. (...) When we gradually reveal the historical and cultural texture of our city, I believe that the tourist who comes to Istanbul will understand that he has come to a city whose people are Muslims. (Irmak, 2021)*



*Figure 3 Taksim Mosque and Republic Monument<sup>2</sup>*

A similar example was experienced in the Ulus neighborhood in Ankara. It is known that during the Early Republican period in Ankara, buildings and the city were specially designed to symbolize Republican urbanization and the new. When the Ulus neighborhood is considered in relation to this design, many buildings such as the first parliament building, the statue of Atatürk in the square, and the İller Bank building that used to stand where the Melike Hatun Mosque now stands can be considered in this context. Similar to the interventions made in Taksim Square, the most important move of the AKP government to conservatize Ulus and put its own political identity

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<sup>2</sup> (Irmak, 2021)

against the Republican identity through the demolition of the historical IIBank building, a symbol of the Republic, and the construction of a new building with religious references in its place.

As can be seen from all these examples, the AKP government establishes a political identity and ideology through religious structures. While combining the ideological content of mosques with its own conservative political view, the AKP government does so in the Ottoman-Seljuk style (as declared by the AKP representatives), thus presenting a power by blending religion and tradition. In the chart given at the beginning, it is noteworthy that this form of public intervention through religious buildings is a politics that takes place under the heading of 'Identity'. In addition to the fact that the Presidential Palace providing a very strong message directly referring to Erdoğan's own power, religious buildings refer more to the political understanding of the government and Erdoğan, and presented in public spaces in an unlimited architectural form, and therefore can be said to create more numerous and diverse public spaces than the Külliye.

However, mosques, which are one of the ways in which the AKP government's nationalist-conservative and traditionalist identity, also provide a practical and powerful example of limiting the use of a space for certain groups. People or groups who are already on two different sides of a very clear line, those who use these religious buildings and those who do not, are also differentiated from each other as those who are inside or outside this space due to the religious buildings that appear in public spaces. The areas where mosques are located are not visited by 'people who do not use the space' due to the content of these religious buildings, and the understanding of public space in these spaces is formed only for a certain group. Through the construction of mosques, the government limits and shapes the ways of existence of the communities that it leaves beyond the line and can spatially clearly show who and how it wants to exist within that space. In this context, many examples are known in which the government has positioned mosques in areas that are used more intensively by those who oppose it or that are known as symbols of views different from its own political view.

When looking at these transformations realized through religious structures in public spaces, these moves that the government has built on separation can be evaluated as the product of an antagonistic politics. By their very nature, religious buildings are spaces that already harbor differentiation and even segregation within society. In this sense, religious buildings have an identity of their own and predetermine their users by themselves. The fact that the government uses this distinct conservative identity to integrate and present it with its own politics can be interpreted as an antagonistic attitude. The antagonism in society that can be read through mosques starts with this very attitude of the government.

Looking at the locations where the government has positioned these religious buildings, and also pay attention to their architectural forms, sizes and sometimes the naming of the mosques, it will be understood that the AKP government deepens the existing divisions and exclude certain groups from the public space through its deliberate decisions. These religious buildings become ideological symbols representing the public spaces in which they are located. Throughout history, the construction of a mosque in any area did not cause tension in the society, it only caused the users of the building to be determined according to its content, and therefore it was possible to define who the groups that did not use the same space were. However, during the AKP government, it is understood that these structures, which have always been present in public spaces and enabled an agonistic relationship in society, have been transformed into a tool of antagonism with political motives.

Mosques have been turned into political tools in order to deepen this disparity of groups that are not in a state of conflict against each other's existence and that fall on different sides of the conservative-secular dichotomy by creating enmity. The meaning of these moves is also understood by the society and the symbolic meanings of these structures result in a positive or negative response within society and a large segment of the society may feel excluded from these spaces. Although secular communities may feel excluded due to the conservative identity of the mosques, in fact, a large part of the society may feel that their relationship with the space is limited if they do not use these mosques. People who realize that their existence is rendered invisible and

unrecognized in this type of city project are discriminated against in this sense and cannot feel themselves as a part of the space. When there is no 'feeling of being a part of the space', communities may prefer to withdraw themselves from that space. At this point, the preferences of exemption and exclusion regarding the religious buildings sometimes go hand in hand. This situation evolves into the loss of the functions of spaces that provide coexistence, especially squares, or the opening of these spaces to the coexistence of only one group or identity. These projects, which divide public spaces do so in a provocative way, appealing only to a certain group of people, are antagonistic and can be evaluated as two-cities projects.

### **3.2.1.3. Nation's Gardens**

Erdoğan first mentioned Nation's Gardens as an election promise in the 2018 Turkish General Elections. In this project, which covered only some provinces (Bursa, Eskişehir, Trabzon, Gaziantep, Konya, Samsun, Samsun and Ordu) when it first came to the agenda, it was stated that the old stadium areas, which became idle with the construction of new and bigger stadiums, would be repurposed and transformed into green areas (Eski statlar 'Millet Bahçesi' olacak, 2018). Nation's Gardens are defined on their official website as 'symbolic green areas of the cities in which they are located, which bring people together with nature, meet the needs of recreation, active living and socialization, and can also be used as gathering sites during natural disasters when necessary' (ibid.). Although this form of public space has entered the Turkish agenda with the AKP government, it is a concept that dates back to the Ottoman Empire. The AKP government, as in many of its political moves, has made references to the Ottoman legacy to reinforce a concept and has identified this concept with its own power.

The first point that draws attention to the Nation's Gardens is that this concept does not have a significantly positive or negative reception in society, as is the case with any of the other projects exemplified in this thesis. Any question about how much these public spaces is used and by whom will pave the way for an important debate. These spaces are highlighted with concepts such as 'green space, park' and it is touted

that the areas where these gardens are built are publicized and open to the use of everyone. However, how much these parks are publicized and how much they are opened to public use remains a question mark. The fact that the Nation's Gardens are spaces created as green spaces and that there is no limit to the users of these spaces are points that should be taken into consideration. Although the 'Nation' is emphasized in the name and the discourses produced by the government about these spaces are understood to be moves towards separation, it does not seem possible to say that the project itself has an antagonistic content.

On the other hand, although these spaces do not seem to be built with an antagonistic attitude in terms of their content, the critical locations where some Nation's Gardens are selected specifically render the AKP politics visible and create an environment suitable for creating conflict. Both areas that are clearly ideologically strategic choices and areas where the destruction of nature and natural resources may result in reactions by some segments of society and especially by relevant experts. Although the scale of these reactions varies from one to another, we have not encountered an example where one of them has reached a critical mass involving the majority of the society. Nevertheless, it is important to assess the conditions under which these reactions occur. Several Nation's Gardens that have provoked reactions in society from different angles will be presented below as short examples.

#### **3.2.1.3.1. Atatürk Airport Nation's Garden – Ankara Atatürk Culture Center Nation's Garden:**

The Nation's Gardens, which are claimed to be designed to create public space as green areas and parks and seem to appeal to the whole society inclusively with this claim, sometimes become a topic of discussion with their strategic positioning, suggesting that the government has other ulterior motives other than the stated purpose of creating public space.

Tezcan Karakuş Candan, former President of the Ankara Branch of the Chamber of Architects, claims in a statement that the Nation's Gardens generally have a political purpose and that steps are being taken to change the identities of cities, especially the Republican identity:

*Nation's Gardens are conceptually ideological. (...) When we look at the AKP's choice of locations for Nation's Gardens, we see that the most strategic ecological thresholds, wetlands and natural areas, urban openings, corridors and green stepping stones, stadium areas including the symbolic buildings of the Republic, military housing and military hospital areas, which are already located in the open-air corridors of cities, have been chosen. (...) Wherever there is a Nation's Garden, there are either large-scale rent projects or Republican values that they want to destroy. The concept of 'Nation's Garden', which is one of the ideological spatialities of neoliberalism and political Islam, means plundering the most important areas of the city. The Nation's Garden is a massive destruction and rent project under the deception that we are building green spaces. (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi alanlarında..., 2019)*



*Figure 4 Nation's Garden Design planned for Atatürk Airport land<sup>3</sup>*

The first example of strategic positioning is the Nation's Garden planned on the former Atatürk Airport land in Istanbul. This area, built in place of Atatürk Airport, which was selected as the third best airport in the world, was inaugurated with the 'Great Istanbul Meeting' in May 2023, announcing the completion of the first phase (Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Büyük İstanbul..., 2023). The Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Murat Kurum, announced that this Nation's Garden

<sup>3</sup> (Danıştay İBB'yi haklı buldu..., 2024)

was the fifth largest of its size in the world and the largest city park in Turkey. In May 2023, the AKP organized a rally in this area before the general elections, calling it the 'Meeting of the Century' (MoEUCC, 2023). The lawsuit filed by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality against the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization regarding the Atatürk Airport land was concluded on February 12th, 2024, and the Council of State ruled for the cancellation of the tender process (AK Parti İstanbul..., 2023).



*Figure 5 Preparation of Atatürk Airport for the Construction of a Nation's Garden<sup>4</sup>*

Professional chambers, relevant experts and political parties reacted to these demolition and construction processes, but did not generate a massive public reaction. One example of such reactions is the call for a demonstration for Atatürk Airport by the then Istanbul Provincial Chairman of the opposition party. It is known that the provincial chairman made the following statements in his statement at this demonstration:

*No matter what they do to Atatürk Airport, which bears Atatürk's name, they will leave anyway, we will hold those who damaged Atatürk Airport*

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<sup>4</sup> (Atatürk Havalimanı'nın son hali..., 2023)

*to account. We will hold the politicians behind this to account. (CHP'den Atatürk Havalimanı'nda eylem..., 2021)*

The media close to the government responded to the opposition's highlighting of the government's anti-Atatürk stance. It was stated that this action was a provocation and that the emphasis on Atatürk complemented this provocation. As can be understood from this, the transformation of space created by the AKP government is read as an intervention against secularism and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by certain segments, especially the opposition, and the ruling wing deepens the opposition here and characterizes the emphasis on Atatürk as a provocation. In this sense, the distinction between 'us' and 'elites' produced by the populist politics of the government reveals itself both in the transformation of the space itself and in the debates on it, and points to the points where the Nation's Gardens are divisive.



*Figure 6 Ankara ACC Nation's Garden<sup>5</sup>*

Another application whose location is argued to be strategically controversial is the Nation's Garden built on the site of the Atatürk Cultural Center in Ankara. Announced as a social living space in touch with nature, this Nation's Garden (Gündoğmuş, 2021) is still in service in 2024. It is known that there was no mass reaction from the public

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<sup>5</sup> (AKM Millet Bahçesi 28 Ekim'de açılıyor, 2021)

to this space used by the people of Ankara, but it is also known that experts, especially the Chamber of Architects, objected very strongly. In February 2024, as a result of a lawsuit filed by the Ankara branch of the Chamber of Architects, the second plan of the Nation's Garden established in this area was also canceled by the judiciary. The Chamber of Architects issued the following statement on this situation:

*As the Ankara Branch of the Chamber of Architects, we will continue to oppose those who ideologically seek to destroy space and transform urbanization policies based on rent. We will continue to defend and protect the values of the Republic and develop them in the footsteps of science and technique. (Chamber of Architects Ankara, 2024)*

The reason for the reaction to this project is that, similar to the example of Atatürk Airport, the space project here is thought to be positioned against the values of the Republic. Considering other types of urban spaces where this motivation is present in the strategic spatial choices of the AKP government, it can be expected that it will build a spatial project that identifies with its own power and political narrative in places that are accepted as the spaces of the Republican ideology.

As can be seen from the two examples given above, it is noteworthy that the projects that are not opposed by a large segment of the society, but where experts and some segments positioned against the government raise their objections and reactions are examples where a value is attempted to be destroyed or an existing symbol is replaced with a new symbol of the AKP. Especially in these projects where opposition is attempted to be established, it is understood that this opposition can be read by the society, especially by certain circles. At this point, although any Nation's Garden cannot be directly evaluated as antagonistic, it is possible to interpret the examples built in this context as antagonistic and evaluate them within the scope of two-cities projects.

### **3.2.1.3.2. Salda Lake Nation's Garden – Aydos Forests Nation's Garden**

Apart from the above examples where strategic spatial choices were made, it is known that there are other Nation's Gardens where natural resources are significantly

damaged and which seem to have caused more reaction in society than other examples. Here, it is seen that not only experts, but also environmentally sensitive groups and groups related to these places in various ways can react, and even these groups come together and put forward an organized reaction. One of the examples that can be given in this context is the Nation's Garden built on Salda Lake in Burdur province. Salda Lake and its surroundings were declared a Special Environmental Protection Area by the Presidential Decree in 2019 (Salda lake, n.d.). The bulldozing of this area, which is one of the most important natural beauties of Turkey, and the start of the construction of the Nation's Garden has been observed through public discourse much more widespread than any other Nation's Garden projects and has gathered reactions from almost every segment of society. In this sense, it is understood that various groups in society are able to put forward a relatively more mass and collective reaction to events that affect everyone, such as the environment and nature, even if they do not appeal to only one segment of society, such as an ideology or value. The President of the Salda Lake Protection Association expressed the following statements:

*Those who govern the country say, 'This is a protected area', but they do the opposite. We want full protection for Salda Lake (Salda Gölü'nde tepki çeken görüntü, 2021)*

Another example that can be evaluated in this context is the Nation's Garden in Aydos Forests in Istanbul which continues to operate. Different communities that reacted to the opening of the forest area for construction for the sake of utilizing it as a rent area came together to express their reactions. The spokesperson of the Aydos Forest Defenders group explained how they evaluate this project with the following statements:

*Aydos Lake has wildlife. There are ducks, geese and various fish in the lake, and it is also a storks' accommodation point. But dirty water is poured into the lake from dairy farms. They have targeted the lake and turned it into a rent-seeking area. (Abayoğlu, 2022)*

In this example, similar to the case of Salda Lake, the communities that came together against the destruction of nature tried to make the actual profit visible and to massify the reaction. The fact that profit is preferred to nature and in this sense, the Nation's

Gardens are realized with a destructive and non-compromising attitude, it will be possible to evaluate that these projects are created by the government with an antagonistic approach. In parallel to this, it is understood that the society also perceives these projects as antagonistic. It seems possible to evaluate the Nation's Garden projects, in which nature is destroyed, as two-cities projects.

### **3.2.1.3.3. General Evaluation**

Looking at the approach of the government to the Nation's Gardens, it is understood that there is no definite attitude as described in previous project examples. As mentioned above, these public spaces have been designed as parks and no identity is revealed other than the naming. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that the way of socializing in these spaces will be expected to be in harmony with the government's understanding of the way of life. The Nation's Gardens are spaces that are produced as symbols of the AKP government and that can be understood to have an identity even from their name. At this point, it is possible to say that the people who will go to Nation's Gardens and use these public spaces for socializing are certain groups of people.

Nevertheless, as mentioned before, these spaces do not seem to have been created with a direct exclusion approach due to their structure. Although it is understood that the term 'nation' sets a certain boundary, it seems more difficult to claim that these spaces were created for a certain group of people because they are 'parks'. Considering that especially the people who support the government use these spaces, it does not seem a very weak possibility to think that the people who spend time in the Nation's Gardens shape the socialization there and that this fits the conservative identity of the government.

Even if it cannot be said that the structure itself harbors an antagonism, both the strategy in the positioning of some of the gardens and the discourses produced on them show the populist strategy that the AKP government tries to keep alive. The statements made by Erdoğan, show that he equates the secularists, whom he himself defines as 'others', with Gezi Park protests of 2013 and implies that he designed the Nation's Gardens for his own audience, thus reasserting the 'them'-'us' distinction.

*Those who organized the Gezi protests and oppose everything for the good of the country should come and look at these nation gardens and see what real environmentalism is. (Duru, 2020)*

In this sense, it is understood that although there is no harsh marginalization, antagonization and exclusion, boundaries are set and an invisible border is drawn between the groups falling on either side. There is no direct intention of antagonizing and destroying a particular group, but there is also no appeal to the existence of these groups, and the parks are not designed taking into account the inclusion of these groups. Therefore, although it cannot be said that this project is an antagonistic project, it is also not possible to say that it is an agonistic project.

From the point of view of the public perception, the fact that these gardens are identified with the AKP government may cause the public to take an oppositional stance and take a cultural or political distance. For example, as a result of the attitude and intentions of the government, the limits of socialization in these parks and the users of the space are understandable, it is possible to talk about the existence of people who distance themselves from these parks because they cannot find a representation of themselves. For these people, there is no process of participation and representation in the design, location, name or many other aspects of the parks, which can lead to a large part of the public not feeling antagonized, but not feeling invited to compromise. In this sense, while it cannot be said that Nation's Gardens are two-cities projects with an antagonistic and antagonizing attitude, it is equally impossible to say that they are one-city projects created with an agonistic and inclusive approach. In short, it does not seem possible to say that these parks are publicized and exist in cities in a way that can be used by everyone.

With this assessment, it is possible to say that Nation's Gardens are a city project that can be evaluated in a relatively more liminal region despite its emphasis on identity. Considering that the use of Nation's Gardens is limited to certain segments, it seems that the government is trying to organize its own public open spaces within the framework of the identity it has created without using force and without creating enmity, and this effort seems to be reciprocated in the direction it wants.

Beyond this general evaluation, the decisive examples presented in the sub-headings above show that there are also cases where the government's approach to the Nation's Gardens has become harshly concrete. It is seen that this public space project, which can normally be evaluated as being located in the liminal zone for the reasons explained above, takes on an antagonistic form within the framework of certain examples and is evaluated in this way by the society. Especially in such examples, considering that the objections of the public, solution proposals, warnings of experts are not taken into account, the public is not included in the design and implementation process of the projects, the communities or nature that relate to these areas in various ways are not taken into account, and their existence is not visible, it is understood that a representational and recognitional distinction is created against the oppositional segments in society. Under these circumstances, it is more accurate to evaluate the examples that can be considered antagonistic not in the liminal zone, but in the context of two-cities project examples.

#### **3.2.1.4. Public Buildings**

The AKP government has made its political approach visible in almost all public buildings. Although the architectural style referred to by the government as Ottoman - Seljuk architecture is most visible in the Presidential Palace, this style has rapidly become visible in all public buildings, starting from the building that is the AKP Headquarters, thus symbolically expressing that the understanding of this tradition has settled in every branch of the state.

This architectural style, which is claimed to be 'traditional', is frequently seen in the buildings of the Ministry and the Governor's Office, and in the courthouses called the 'Palace' of Justice. Similarly, this architectural form can also be seen in the newly built or transformed primary schools and university campuses. Batuman mentions that there is a search in this architectural form and that the meaning produced by this architecture is related to the process itself rather than being inherent to the form (Ökteker, 2019). This new understanding manifests itself in the design of public buildings as part of the aim to create a new 'state' and 'nation' identity. In doing so, the government emphasizes

Ottoman-Seljuk architecture in an attempt to connect the masses with the past governments. As the government reconstructs public buildings, it adopts a new form in different areas such as schools, governorships, ministries and courthouses, and what it does is to put forward an ideology.



*Figure 7 Kalkandere Courthouse<sup>6</sup>*



*Figure 8 Kocaeli Governorship Building<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> (Rize Adliyesi, n.d.)

<sup>7</sup> (Kocaeli Valiliği, n.d.)

Despite all the visibility of a large symbol in these constructions, despite the fact that the majority of the public cannot find a formal representation of themselves, despite the AKP government's emphasis on identity politics, it is seen that these buildings are discussed and criticized by the general public, with the exception of experts and certain professional groups, only from an aesthetic perspective as a lack of taste due to the 'ugliness of the architectural form'. Although it is an ideological move for the government to embody its ideology through public buildings belonging to the state, it has been stated before that presenting its own ideology can be one of the tools of hegemony of a government. At this point, it does not seem possible to discuss the existence of an antagonistic attitude and that these projects are two-cities projects where there is no exclusionary, discriminatory attitude towards a particular group, or a destructive transformation based on an ideological selectivity.



*Figure 9 Vali Cahit Bayar Primary School Building<sup>8</sup>*

However, there are examples such as the selective transformation of some public buildings. As mentioned above, the demolition of the historic IIBank building in Ankara's Ulus neighborhood and the construction of the Melike Hatun Mosque in its place can be included in this context. Looking at these examples, the spatial transformations realized by the government through public buildings can be evaluated as antagonistic according to their content.

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<sup>8</sup> (Album, n.d.)

In terms of the perception of the society, similar to the approach of the government, the interpretation of the project can also change according to its content. Although it is not always seen concretely that the design of these buildings causes a great reaction or deep divisions, in the transformation of some projects, the ulterior motives of the government is also detected by the society and more than just the aesthetics of any public building comes to the agenda. Apart from these examples, in general, the groups do not feel excluded from these building forms or antagonistic towards them, even if they are aware of the ideology behind the architectural form.

Public buildings are used by all segments of the public for different purposes due to their functions. Those who do not adopt the identity and architectural form do not read this as an attack against them and approach public buildings at the level of 'getting their work done and leaving the space', so there is no rising mass objection, but on the other hand, there is no appropriation either. Bülent Batuman cites the results of a survey conducted with the users of newly constructed public buildings and notes that although the iconography is adopted and found beautiful, it should also be questioned whether 'finding it beautiful' corresponds to an ideological adoption (Batuman, 2020). Based on this, it can be said that, as in many projects of the government, the comments directed towards the implementation of transformations related to public buildings may be directly related to whether one is for or against the government.

As far as the strategies followed in the transformation of public buildings are concerned, it is seen that a form that is not specifically opposed to a group but supportive of an identity is determined. The exclusion of all the users of these buildings as service recipients and providers from the transformation processes, and the fact that they are not created according to the needs of any of them, especially the needs that arise according to the function of a particular institution, but are shaped according to the demands and tastes that remain in a limited area, can show that many groups in society are discriminated in a representational and recognitional sense. In the transformation of these spaces, there is neither antagonization nor assumption and inclusion, and for these reasons, a complete inclusiveness is not achieved, including in cases where antagonism is not visible, and therefore cannot be considered as one-city projects.

Considering both the government's approach and the perception of the society, different evaluations can be made according to the content of the project with an emphasis on identity and sometimes selective transformations, although there is not a segment of the society that is particularly excluded. Due to various factors such as the inability to clearly identify the society's rejection or acceptance and the fact that no group can be excluded from these spaces in terms of the functions of the buildings, it leads to the fact that the transformations carried out in public buildings cannot be directly positioned as agonistic or antagonistic, and therefore they are not considered as one-city or two-cities projects, but as projects in the liminal zone.

### **3.2.1.5. Istanbul Taksim Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM/ACC)**

It has been mentioned above that the AKP is trying to establish hegemony over symbolic places and present its symbolic politics in these places. It is possible to read the various interventions around Istanbul's Taksim Square and almost the entire Beyoğlu neighborhood in this context.

When the AKP government intervenes in Taksim Square and the Beyoğlu neighborhood in its favor, it not only presents a symbol of its political identity, but also opens up new cultural, social and economic spaces for itself and those in its periphery. Before discussing the demolition and construction of the Atatürk Cultural Center, it would be useful to take a brief look at the history of Taksim Square in order to understand the meaning of this symbolic structure in the context of identity politics.

Taksim Square was designed as Republic Square during the Early Republican period. Until the recent Republican period, Taksim Square became a symbolic space for secularists and left-socialist groups. Similarly, the Beyoğlu neighborhood and especially the main Istiklal Street, which extends from Taksim Square downwards, have been practically adapted to the lifestyle of the secular sector and the space has been used by these groups for many years. Starting from the 2000s until today, the AKP's interventions in this neighborhood, which have been increasing day by day, have been designed to change the cultural, social and economic structure of the neighborhood. One of the pillars of these interventions was realized through Atatürk

Cultural Center (ACC). Knowing that the conservatization of the square and the neighborhood would gain strength by destroying the image of the Republic, the government continued these interventions by demolishing the ACC building, another example of modern architecture of the Republic, which has been engraved in the social memory with this identity. Tezcan Candan emphasizes that space is political and claims that all demolitions carried out by the AKP are ideological. At the same time, she evaluates all these demolitions as a 'destructive constitutive process' resulting from a neoliberal political Islamist perspective that comes to terms with the values of the Republic (Şahin, 2017).

As a result, the ACC, which had been in the square since 1969 and was one of the symbolic architectures of the Republic, was demolished in 2018. Although it can be said that this intervention, with its demolition and construction, as well as the private initiatives that take place in the space, creates a profit opportunity and that the plan includes obtaining rent, the meaning of the intervention here should not be read as pure profit. It would be critical to read this intervention as the AKP's struggle for political identity in order to grasp the importance of the issue. Erdoğan himself has expressed this situation, saying the following:

*Our ACC, which I see as the last link of the seals we have put on this city since its conquest in 1453, will hopefully survive for centuries as the place where the pulse of culture and art of our country beats. (Aksoy, 2021)*

Beyond being a symbol of the Republic, the ACC building also became a symbol of the Taksim-based Gezi Resistance in 2013, which resulted in the visibility of another ideology positioned against the AKP government and Erdoğan. The main motivation behind the demolition of the ACC, which has been so memorable and which has now been presented on international platforms through the Gezi Resistance, is more clearly understood in this way. Erdoğan reacts to this situation with the following words:

*We all know and remember very well what these so-called art lovers did during the Gezi events, how they insulted our nation, how they defiled the old building with the rags of the terrorist organization. Those who supposedly acted with the sensitivity of ACC turned ACC into a tool for attacking our democracy and looting the property of our shopkeepers. (...) They used this old building when they wrote on the walls of this*

blessed city: 'Oppression began in 1453'. (...) This is not a cultural center, it will be the best answer to the enemies of the homeland and nation who have been attacking the national will for the last 5 years. Istanbul will find itself in this project. ACC will be a monument of victory erected against the Jacobin mentality that fights with the values, beliefs, history and culture of our people. (Erdoğan: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi..., 2019)



Figure 10 Iconic photo of the old ACC building taken during the Gezi Resistance<sup>9</sup>

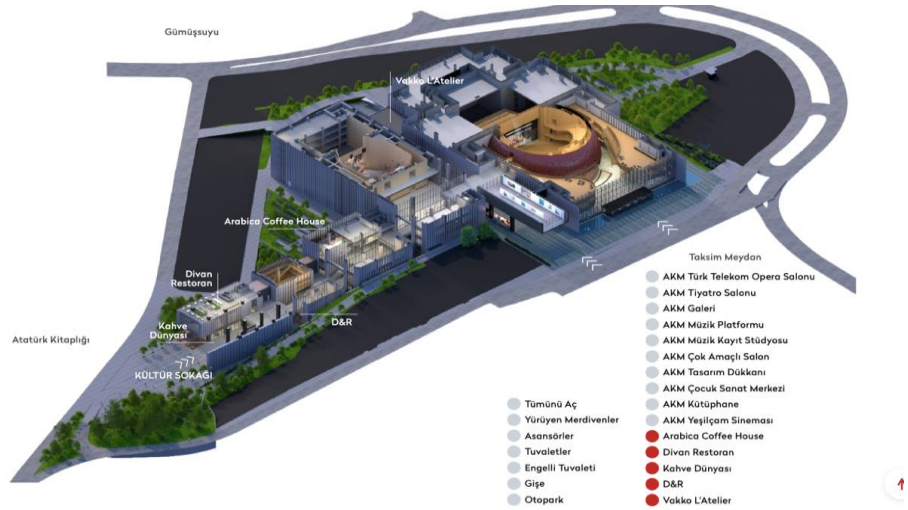


Figure 11 Taksim ACC Layout Plan<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> (Yarım Asırlık..., 2018)

<sup>10</sup> (MoCT, n.d.)

In its current form, ACC has become a center that hosts various functions in addition to its function as a cultural center. For this reason, it is possible to talk about an agenda for profit in the transformation of Taksim ACC. The presence of restaurants and shops that can appeal to the upper/upper-middle classes, such as Divan Restaurant, draws attention. With this transformation, it is possible to say that class differences have been made visible within the Cultural Center and that a gentrification has taken place specifically in this space.

Unlike other examples, this transformation can be considered to have been approached with some 'commonalities'. Although some points such as the fact that the architect of the building is Murat Tabanlıoğlu, the son of the architect of the old ACC building, the adoption of a form similar to the old building by not emphasizing any tradition or religion in its architectural form, emphasizing the presence of advanced technological developments and designs in the building (Başer, 2017) not changing the naming of the building, not removing the name Atatürk and not emphasizing the 'nation' may seem to be close to an agonistic approach, the demolition of the building itself proves that this attitude is not agonistic. In addition to this, when we look at the examples given above, as mentioned before, the moves that appeal to the upper/upper-middle class and aim to increase the return on rent show that economic and cultural segregation is being created within the Center. What is noteworthy and worth questioning here is the extent to whether the functions and users of the two ACC buildings stayed the same and how far they have been able to maintain their function as a public space that allows people from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to come together and take advantage of this space. The fact that a building that was more inclusive in its previous function is now changing its function and becoming a building that aims to provide services to a more limited group of people, as its new functions make class differences more visible, may cause a large part of the society to feel excluded from this space.

Although the purpose of the demolition of the old ACC building is explained with reasons such as retrofitting and renovation against earthquakes, it is possible to say that it is actually for the AKP government to put forward its own symbol and to express that it has the power to realize the transformation it wants only with its own will

without asking the public opinion. Therefore, even before discussing what the transformation of the reconstructed ACC building entails, it can be said that this demolition and reconstruction is itself an identity politics and a powerful tool to show that it can put its own ideology and power into practice without question. The fact that the exterior of the ACC, which was rebuilt after its demolition, is not very different from the old building, and that it does not contain an Ottoman or Seljuk reference, as would be expected given the aesthetic appearance of other buildings built under the AKP ideology, can be interpreted as Erdoğan's direct reference to his own political existence rather than to another political understanding.

The fact that Erdoğan chose this symbolic building instead of any other area when using this reference to his political power gives the message of whom he is expressing this power towards and against. The demolition of this building, which has a symbolic meaning for the left-wing tandem in general, instead of any other area, can be evaluated as a concrete move of the groups and ideologies to be destroyed. Although the function of the building is not designed to create opposition, it seems to create serious oppositions and exclusions through political situations as well as the economic situations mentioned above. In this sense, it is possible to say that the newly constructed ACC building was put forward with an antagonistic approach.

On the other hand, even if the demolition of a symbolic building and the construction of a new building in its place is perceived as antagonistic by the society beyond the intentions of the government, it is not possible to say that there has been a mass reaction to the demolition of ACC and the construction of a new ACC building, except for the reaction shown by certain segments and especially by experts in the field. Moreover, the space that has been created continues to be actively used by large masses. But what needs to be questioned is who these users are. As mentioned before, some groups, whose presence in this gentrified space is not visible both culturally and economically, and who are not included in the transformation processes by not taking their ideas, values and tastes into consideration, cannot use this building beyond its limited functions.

In this sense, it is possible to say that recognitional and redistributive distinctions are visible. Apart from the economic reasons mentioned here, political differences,

which constitute the main motivation of the AKP government, should also be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the building, its use and its users. It is important to note that apart from the groups that cannot find representation for themselves in many respects, there are also some groups that read the AKP's political approach, feel belonging to the groups 'excluded' by the government and refuse to use this space due to political antagonisms. In this sense, it is possible to argue that antagonism can be mutual or that the antagonism created by the AKP government is reciprocated in society.

In the chart given at the beginning (Fig 1), this building, which is evaluated under the theme of 'Identity' but whose relationship with the title of 'Capital' is also visible due to the visibility of the capitalist initiatives it contains, is positioned relatively closer to the middle point and all the meanings it contains are tried to be shown. Although the new ACC, which was built as a new and modern version of an old building, appeals to a large segment of the society and seems to be inclusive because it is a cultural center, the political antagonisms described above, which are understood to be the main reason for the demolition, as well as the class differences created by them, show that the inclusiveness of the building is not as inclusive as it seems.

Both the demolition of the old ACC building and the various statements made by the government about it reveal the antagonistic attitude specific to ACC. Looking at this transformation realized by demolishing the values and symbols it opposes, it is possible to say that the Taksim ACC project is an antagonistic project and can be evaluated as a two-cities project.

### **3.2.1.6. Summary of the Projects**

The projects described above show that the AKP government is clearly presenting its concept of 'nation' and its own political stance in such spaces, and in doing so, it is often, although there are exceptions, showing an antagonistic political stance that subverts and excludes other identities that are understood to be in opposition to its politics. It is possible to say that the conservative and nationalist emphases of the identity that is brought to the forefront carry a discriminatory aspect on their own. It

is clear that people who are not included in the boundaries drawn by these identities or who do not feel that they belong to these identities will be directly excluded from the boundaries and may feel excluded. The fact that the AKP government creates a perception of 'us' by identifying another opposing identity to this already divisive emphasis, and puts these two different identities into a conflicting form, while dividing the society and thus the urban spaces with this deep distinction it creates, can be evaluated as an antagonistic approach. At this point, it is possible to say that the AKP government's urban politics, in which it targets a symbol or a way of life and tries to transform these places through an identity, is often seen as such by the public.

The examples under the theme of identity and the segregation caused by the emphasis of the government seems to result in the exclusion of certain groups in society from these public spaces. The segregation here is caused by the government's failure to recognize the existence of groups other than a certain group, and even beyond not recognizing them, building structures and spaces that do not accommodate their representation. It is noteworthy that the groups that cannot participate in the processes of construction of these spaces or their aftermath, and cannot find representation during the production and functioning of these spaces, are the groups whose existence the government ignores, as well as their needs and demands. These structures, in which the AKP government reflects its own understanding of 'nation', make the dichotomy of 'Republican-secularist' vs. 'Nationalist-conservative AKP' identity more sharply visible. For this reason, it is seen that agonistic politics is absolutely absent in these spaces and some groups in particular may feel excluded. Although inequalities arising from class distinctions and groups that do not benefit from resources to the same degree are evident in the example of Taksim ACC, it is not noticeable that such an economic-based distinction exists in other city projects under this heading.

The example of the Presidential Palace is noteworthy that it represents as the most prominent example where the AKP government, especially Erdoğan, makes direct reference to his own politics. The fact that the AFF land where the palace was built has a symbolic meaning associated with the ideological values of secular groups reveals the political importance of the area designated for the building. The fact that

the power of power transmitted through the palace is conveyed through conservative and nationalist images and identity emphases such as the Ottoman-Seljuk reference reveals the conflict and separation that is tried to be established in this area. In addition, it stands out as a critical example in terms of transforming an area donated to the public by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk into a private space for political purposes.

Religious buildings, especially mosques, have been transformed into a tool of political expression by the AKP government by combining their conservative identity with the Ottoman - Seljuk image. The discriminatory identity that religious buildings already embody becomes a symbol of the government's attitude through their strategic positioning, architectural forms and sometimes their naming.

The Nation's Gardens can be interpreted as identity presentations that are put forward as a political tool with their direct identification with the AKP government and the identity they contain in their names. The fact that these areas are basically designed as green spaces and that there are no discriminatory elements in their content or form causes them to be read as spaces open to the use of more people than other identity-emphasizing projects. However, it is seen that some examples of Nation's Garden projects have drawn the general approach of this project towards a more antagonistic approach, and that these projects are designed in a way that is discriminatory in parallel with the intention of the government and the perception of the society.

Looking at the content and function of public buildings, it is known that these buildings are open to the use of everyone. Changing the forms of these buildings one by one over time can be read as one of the means of the AKP government to reveal its own political understanding and identity. Similar to the case of the Nation's Gardens, public buildings are not strategically located, but rather, one can encounter this shaping and approach in almost every part of the country and in buildings representing every branch of the state.

Although there is no 'nation' emphasis on the Taksim ACC building debate , a direct product of the politics of the AKP government can still be observed. It is understood that the AKP government has decided to demolish the original building and replace

it with a very similar building in its place, , for reasons such as the fact that this building is located in the Taksim area, that it is one of the symbolic buildings of the Republic and moreover that it has become one of the symbolic buildings of the Gezi Resistance. In the case of this project, in addition to the distinction created through the emphasis on identity, the class distinctions that have emerged indirectly, if not directly, as a result of the capital relations that the government has paved the way for are also noteworthy. The fact that the users and the way of use of this building, which can be said to have been gentrified, have changed, seems to have deepened the separation of groups that cannot benefit equally from the distribution of resources.

The projects that are categorized under the theme of identity in general, present structures where the identity adopted by the AKP government is visible but relatively less exclusionary and antagonistic, while on the other hand, there are interventions such as the ACC building, where this identity is not visible in form but can be clearly identified as antagonistic in approach. At this point, to understand the antagonistic approach of power, it is necessary to evaluate not only what the identity emphasized is, but also 'what' and 'how' this identity is replaced. When all this is done with a selective destructiveness, it becomes possible to talk about the antagonistic approach. Looking at the projects under the theme of 'identity' in general, the government's intentions and the perception of the society is observed to proceed in a similar manner. In projects where the government clearly emphasizes identity, it is understood that the groups that the AKP government defines as 'elites' and which correspond to a large part of the public read the message in these projects in a similar way and remain outside these public spaces.

On the other hand, the example of Public Buildings, show that even if there are identity messages embedded in many of these projects, they are not perceived as antagonistic by the society and are not excluded from the communities. At this point, it should be underlined once again that it is critical to make this assessment by considering the functions of Public Buildings. In the case of the Nation's Gardens, similar to the Public Buildings, although the perception of the society varies according to the content of the project, a great antagonism does not appear to exist in the society in general.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Nation's Gardens are identified with the AKP government may lead some groups to remain excluded from these projects.

In addition, the fact that certain groups have no representation in almost any of these spaces, their identities are not recognized, and as a result, they are not included in the creation and decision-making process of any project shows that these groups are subjected to a representational discrimination. As a continuation of this, these projects again ignore the needs, demands and tastes of certain groups, and even in cases where these groups are not specifically antagonized, there is still no sign that their existence is recognized. From this point of view, it can be said that they are subjected to a recognitional discrimination. As a result of all these discussions, it is understood that under the theme of 'identity', antagonism is generally dominant, two separate sides are identified in society, the boundary between the two sides is clearly drawn and only the support and existence of a certain side is accepted. Therefore, most of the projects under the theme of 'identity' can be evaluated as two-cities projects with an antagonistic approach, except for the Nation's Gardens and Public Buildings.

### **3.2.2. The Projects Under the 'Capital' Theme**

Under this theme, the examples of 'Shopping Malls', 'Urban Transformation projects', 'City Hospitals', 'Highways-Bridges-Istanbul Airport-Canal Istanbul' and 'TOKI projects' will be analyzed among the urban projects that appear in the chart above.

Where capital relations are more prominent, there is often no emphasis on identity and various 'services' are generally offered to the public. When the definition of the people through class is evaluated, which is another output of the populist strategy of the government, , it is understood that this distinction has emerged in such projects, albeit indirectly. In the city projects under this heading, the government does not have a direct approach and discourse on class, but it can be seen that there are low-income groups who cannot benefit equally from the resources in terms of the effects created by the capital that it has paved the way for with its urban policy, or who are victimized by some projects more than other segments of the public. These projects, which

cannot be considered to have been shaped according to the usage and living practices, needs and demands of low-income communities in general, are nevertheless not produced with a strategy of excluding any group in particular, in terms of their content and functions. In addition, in the examples under this heading, there may be some exceptions where the political presence and approach of the government is more visible even in cases where capital relations are at the forefront, and the society's approach to the project may vary within this framework. In this section, that the general discussion will be made on the premise that it is not always possible to sharply separate the themes of Capital and Identity and what these situations may lead to in society and cities. In the examples of projects under the theme of 'Capital', the situations where this distinction is visible will be emphasized, at which points and to what extent the emphasis on identity is put forward, and to what extent capital is determinative in its realization.

### **3.2.2.1. Shopping Malls**

The shopping malls, which are positioned at the extreme end of the chart under the heading 'Capital', are the structures that the AKP has opened up a large space for in its urban policies. Today, there is at least one of these structures in every city in Turkey, which can be considered as a completely private space, and they mostly do not harbor any identity politics. It is known that since 2002, when the AKP came to power, there has been a significant increase in the number of shopping malls and that the government, especially Erdoğan, has supported them.

Considering the capital cycle they perpetuate, it is not wrong to consider shopping malls as direct capitalist enterprises. Considering the AKP government's relationship with the capitalists, many factors such as the areas opened to these structures, the EIA exemptions granted to the constructions, the transfer of some public buildings to capital owners cheaply or for free, show that the construction of shopping malls is paved with political support. At this point, it will be possible to evaluate shopping malls, which can be seen almost everywhere, in the context of the government's urban policies.

Although it is understood to be a political urban strategy, the fact that most of them do not emphasize an identity or have any sign referring to the politics of the AKP government causes these spaces to be evaluated under the heading of 'Capital' rather than 'Identity'. In addition, evaluating shopping malls only in terms of profit relations would leave the subject incomplete. Batuman states that the proliferation of urban services such as shopping malls, universities, airports and hospitals are important in terms of urbanization dynamics, and that it is a very narrow perspective to evaluate this urbanization process only as a capital tool for the production of urban space because there is a total urbanization dynamic (Öktemer, 2019).

The existence of shopping malls through the AKP government's relationship with capital, raises the question of spaces opened to these structures and visibility of the efforts to facilitate them. Beyond this, it is also known that there are some examples that can be read as the direct product of the AKP government's own political approach. In this sense, in order to examine the impact of the government on cities through shopping malls, four projects realized in Istanbul will be selected and brief information will be provided.

#### **3.2.2.1.1. Taksim Military Barracks**

The Military Barracks Shopping Mall, which is planned to be built in Gezi Park (İnönü Park) in Taksim, Istanbul, stands out as one of the most exceptional examples of this form of space where identity politics and a political emphasis come to the fore. As the plan came to the agenda, the Gezi Park Resistance, which has left a very important mark on the political history of Turkey, began. Taksim Barracks, also known as Halil Pasha Artillery Barracks, was a building that existed in Istanbul's Taksim Square during the Ottoman period, between 1780 and 1940, and was demolished in 1940 upon the request of Lütfi Kırdar, the Governor and Mayor of Istanbul, and the recommendation of Henri Prost, a European urban planner, and replaced with Gezi Park as a symbol of modernization (Gezi Parkı Projesi neleri kapsıyor?..., 2016). The park that replaced this building, which was demolished to create a large empty space in the city with Proust's design proposal, was initially named İnönü Park. Today, it is possible to interpret Gezi Park and the Military Barracks, which is to be demolished

today, as a response to the practice of the 1900s. In this context, replacing Gezi Park with a new Military Barracks also means 'putting back what was taken from them' according to AKP politics. Erdoğan,

*The barracks project did not come out of the sky. There was a barracks there that the CHP demolished. (AVM yerine müze de yapılabilir, 2002)*

With this statement, he clearly states what he is positioning himself against. Similarly, he used the following expressions:

*If you saw the original Military Barracks, you would say 'Shame on those who demolished it', it is such a magnificent work. I am having its architectural designs made in accordance with the original. We will revive it. (Gezi eylemlerinden sonra dördüncü kez..., 2019)*

On the other hand, according to the plan to be realized, the fact that the building to be constructed is a shopping mall, in other words a private property, increases the rent yield of the space even more. Both the income to be generated by allocating the space to private ownership and the fact that more tourists and visitors will be attracted to Taksim due to the presence of a shopping mall in the square seem more profitable for the government than using the square as a park. The striking point here is that even though this move planned by the AKP to strengthen its own power is based on capital relations, it prefers the discourses of 'tradition and preserving history' when presenting it to the public. Here, it seems that not only an ideology is directly put forward, but the planned project actually creates a large capital area. On the one hand, the government emphasizes that rebuilding the Military Barracks is about preserving a tradition, while on the other hand, the government also shares with the public options on what the content of this structure will be. As Erdoğan put it:

*Under the Military Barracks can be a shopping mall, it can be a city museum, there is no final decision. You can come from Istiklal Street and shop here. There are shops next to the park, there are carpet shops, why don't you oppose them? We can also build a city museum here. The side of the Divan Hotel can be a city museum. These are not finalized yet. We seriously need a hotel in Istanbul. The same goes for residences (AVM yerine müze de yapılabilir..., 2022).*

It is known that the Military Barracks plan could not be realized as a result of the Gezi Resistance that started in Istanbul and spread to all provinces. It is noteworthy that the reactions that emerged reached a very large mass mobilization and created a widespread resistance that was visible in the whole country, which, in terms of recent political history, would become a breakthrough. When we look at what the difference is here, it is possible to say that the Military Barracks, just like the urban projects under the theme of 'Identity', is the violent emphasis on an identity and the usurpation of a park area that is open to public use while doing so. While the fact that similar space projects are being carried out one after another all over the country, especially in Taksim, Istanbul, has been criticized by the public, the fact that this plan has come to the agenda has caused a rupture by combining with many reactions accumulated in the society. The plan to build a building that includes a militarist reference to the Ottoman Empire in an area known as Cumhuriyet Square, originally known as İnönü Gezi Park, has caused a great objection in the society.

While this building, which was originally planned as a shopping mall, could have been an example of a capital project in terms of being a part of the interconnected rent plans of Taksim, this identity emphasized by Erdoğan and the specific location chosen for the positioning of this identity reveals the antagonistic attitude of the government behind this urban project. It is seen that with the prominent political emphasis added to this space, it has turned into an example where antagonism is strongly felt by the society. This situation created a major outburst within the society and prevented the realization of the space.

### **3.2.2.1.2. Grand Pera Shopping Mall**

The demolition of the historic Emek Cinema in Beyoğlu, Istanbul to make way for the Grand Pera Shopping Mall is a manifestation of the close relationship between power and capital. Since the day of the demolition of the Emek Cinema for the construction of this shopping mall was on the agenda, certain opposition groups, professional chambers and some political organizations, as well as the public, have raised objections. This building which was designated as a 'renovation' area by the Council of Ministers with the decision dated 20.06.2006 and numbered 2006/10172, was completely demolished in 2013 (Bakanlar Kurulu Kararı, 2013). Artists participated

to a great extent in the opposition, while professional chambers and politicians fought for a long time against the demolition of this area and denounced it as a great mistake. In the protests that continued for a while, the initiatives formed summarized what was being opposed as follows:

*With Istanbul's skyline being changed by shopping malls and residences, we are losing not only our homes, schools and streets, but also our individual and collective rights. We do not want a Emek Cinema hidden in Demirören's illegal floors. We insist that the restoration of Emek should be carried out in its current location, as it is in the dictionary meaning, with the original intact. We will not leave Emek in the hands of capital. We will not let it crawl like ACC or be left to burn like Haydarpaşa Station. (Eylemciler Demirören AVM'yi İşgal Etti, 2011)*



*Figure 12 Photo from protest against Grand Pera Shopping Mall<sup>11</sup>*

As can be seen in this example, the resistance of the people has to some extent become mass and people from different professional groups have come together and raised their objections. The main objection here is that it is read as a conscious attack on the cultural values rather than a habitat or a damage to nature. Although the objections continued for a while, the demolition of the Emek Cinema could not have been

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<sup>11</sup> (Eylemciler Demirören AVM'yi İşgal Etti, 2011)

prevented and the construction of the Grand Pera Shopping Mall is finished. Today, although it is known that this shopping mall is actively used, it should be taken into consideration that there are people who prefer to stay outside this space for political reasons and do not consume this space. In this sense, it can be interpreted that the antagonism that appears in the intervention of the government in a symbolic place is understood in this way by certain segments of the public and that some segments respond in the same way.

### **3.2.2.1.3. Kadıköy Söğütlüçeşme Shopping Mall**

The shopping mall project, which will transform the Söğütlüçeşme High Speed Train and Marmaray station in Kadıköy, Istanbul into a shopping mall, draws attention as a project where various solidarity groups established by the people of Kadıköy, professional organizations and some political parties have come together and reacted against its construction. It is understood that the opposition to this project, which is apparently supported by the government by granting an EIA exemption, is primarily based on the rent scheme that this project will create, and then on the fact that it will cause many environmental problems for Kadıköy and even a security hazard in terms of transportation (Chamber of Architects İstanbul Büyükkent, 2024). According to a news report, during the period when the shopping mall was on the agenda, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization approved the Shopping Mall project in Söğütlüçeşme in 2019, but the plan was canceled as a result of lawsuits filed by the Chamber of Architects, Chamber of City Planners, Chamber of Civil Engineers and Kadıköy Municipality (Kadıköy Kent İnisiyatifi'nden... 2022). However, it is known that by 2024, the construction will have been completed.

The statements made by the Kadıköy City Initiative on this issue are as follows:

*It is mentioned that over 100 shops and a parking lot for 443 cars will be built. So far 250 trees have been cut down for this. More trees are on the agenda. Moreover, the construction of a viaduct is not necessary for the ongoing operation of Söğütlüçeşme as a station. Even if it were necessary, the ground structure in Söğütlüçeşme is not suitable for the construction of a viaduct, the area is a river overflow area and carries a tsunami risk. (Çeri, 2022)*

The statements of the Kadıköy Urban Crimes Monitoring Network are as follows:

*They are building a new shopping mall in the heart of Kadıköy, using a transportation project as an excuse that has no necessity. Instead of meeting the needs of the people, they are increasing their burden and making life more difficult. They are forcing Kadıköy residents to migrate. (...) During and after this construction, the environment is being massacred, trees are being cut down. It is said that new trees will be planted under the name of landscaping. We want real trees, not greenery that will be an accessory for concrete. The traffic problem will multiply. They are planning to build a parking lot so that it will multiply even more. Soon all Kadıköy will turn into a giant parking lot: More asphalt, more exhaust gas, less oxygen and soil. Hasanpaşa will be transformed accordingly. The people of Kadıköy will experience a process like the one in Fikirtepe. (Kadıköylülerden eylem çağrısı... 2022)*

The striking point in this shopping mall example is that the motives of the AKP government itself are not directly visible in this urban project, but it is understood that it supports this transformation by granting EIA exemption to the area. Here, as in the two examples above, it is seen that the government puts its relationship with capital ahead of its relationship with the people. It is known that the construction of this shopping mall is about to be completed despite the objections raised. It is noteworthy that the groups who oppose the transformation of this area and warn about the negative consequences it may have been especially the people living in this neighborhood. These objections and actions, which do not reach a large mass and remain at the local level, show that interventions in the living spaces of individuals and groups are met with people's demand for participation in processes and recognition.

#### **3.2.2.1.4. Galataport Shopping Mall**

One of the most recent and concrete examples of the government opening up public spaces to capital and transferring public space to private use is the Galataport Shopping Mall on the Karaköy coast of Istanbul. The construction of the Galataport Shopping Mall, which was established in 2021 with the occupation of the publicly owned coastline in Karaköy, Istanbul, means the privatization of an area that should be open to the public by covering an entire coastline. As in all the aforementioned

shopping centers, it is understood that the government prioritizes capital relations over public interest.

As it is known, from the day the construction of the Galataport Shopping Mall was put on the agenda until the completion of its construction, there was no mass objection from the public. Only professional chambers, experts and some opposition parties in politics have raised objections to the building, which today seems to be actively used by the public. The reason why public objections remain at the level of individuals and small groups is that this area continues to function as a public space and is open to all groups. The statement made by the General Manager of Galataport also seems to support this presentation:

*1.2-kilometer coastline that has been closed to the public for two centuries for various reasons will be made available to the city again.*  
(Tuna, 2021)

In the case of this project, where there is no direct intervention and exclusionary attitude of the government, it is understood that the privatization of the space does not destroy the perception of publicness, since the public does not perceive an antagonistic approach and they can continue to use the space. As argued earlier, in cases where the public does not feel excluded for economic, cultural or political reasons, the public does not raise an objection and even continues to use the space. It is possible to say that this example of a shopping mall is the most appropriate example of agonistic approach and agonistic perception among all the examples mentioned.

### **3.2.2.1.5. General Evaluation**

Looking at the different shopping mall constructions specifically mentioned above, it is seen that, with the exception of the Military Barracks plan, the plans other than the Military Barracks plan were constructed despite various reactions, and were then used by the public to a great extent. This confirms the previously stated argument that the existence of an antagonism is determined not only by the intentions of the government and project implementers, but also by how the public perceives that project. When

these examples are evaluated together, it is seen that even if the spatial project in question is the construction of a shopping mall, which involves a private initiative, the exclusionary attitude of the government comes along with an emphasis on identity and often creates a clash in the society, although not always with the same intensity. Especially when the identity emphasized by the government tries to build on the representation of another identity, it can be seen that the reaction can be greater in these space projects.

The shopping mall structures do not necessarily harbor an antagonistic attitude by the government or the project owners in general, or even that the presence of the government or its relationship with capital is visible. In the case of the Military Barracks, although it can be clearly said that there is an antagonistic attitude and it is perceived as such by the society because it contains a very similar approach to the projects under the theme of 'Identity', these structures, which are generally produced to encourage consumption and are expected to include people, do not contain such an exclusionary and discriminatory attitude. Some similar structures, which are not included in this thesis, but of which there may be other examples, can be evaluated as antagonistic by experts and people who oppose them with their political views. However, it is possible to say that the society in general does not show such a definitive attitude towards most shopping malls, and that they are places that are intensively used by consumers. From this point of view, it would be wrong to consider shopping mall spaces as two-cities city projects with a general antagonistic attitude.

On the other hand, it is also possible to say that these projects cannot be considered as one-city projects or that these spaces are inclusive spaces that create a minimum level of commonality. In the examples above, some groups may prefer to stay out of some shopping centers for political reasons, but on the other hand, it is possible that some class differences create a visible segregation through shopping centers. Considering that shopping malls are spaces that are not shaped according to the needs, demands or tastes of the society, but rather try to shape them, it can be understood that the existence, needs and demands of a large part of the society are not recognized. Fraser's distinction based on recognition seems meaningful at this point. It is seen that what Fraser means by redistributive distinction also manifests itself in the case of

shopping malls. When people turn to shopping malls for shopping and other needs, certain segments are observed preferring certain shopping malls.

This situation is determined by factors such as the location of the shopping malls, the brands in a shopping mall and the activities organized in the shopping malls. In this case, people tend to go to the malls that they think represent them. As it is understood, everyone starts to consume a space that they find for their own existence in the city, and a segregation that is not created by the government but makes itself felt becomes visible in shopping malls.

As a result of this segregation, choosing not to visit a shopping mall may be due to economic or cultural differences, or it may be due to a political 'boycott' as in the history of Grand Pera Shopping Mall. In short, it is seen that these places, which seem to create a large-scale commonality in society, are also places where people sometimes segregate themselves for cultural, class or political reasons. This situation causes each shopping center project to be evaluated in its own right, and the public's response to each project may vary. Considering all the examples mentioned above, when communities feel pushed out with an emphasis on identity, when there is an attack on their values and an intervention in their living spaces, they are more disturbed by the fact that shopping malls are not public spaces and the relationship that the government is trying to establish with capital, and they may react more to this. In general, the construction of shopping malls in an antagonistic or agonistic manner and the public's perception of them may vary depending on the situation. What is noteworthy here is that while different segments of the society react to the shopping malls that they perceive as antagonistic and clearly stay outside these spaces, they may turn towards shopping malls that are not produced in a conflictual manner, or even those that are created and perceived in an agonistic manner that respond to their own needs, demands and tastes, thus creating divisions where cultural and class distinctions are visible. These private spaces, which everyone is included in or excluded from for many different reasons and where they can establish their own relationships, are not inclusive under all circumstances and are spaces that limit people's use of the same space together.

### **3.2.2.2. Urban Transformations**

Urban transformation projects generally do not have an identity and are characterized by the capital cycle. In addition to the examples of urban regeneration projects implemented by TOKI, which will be discussed below, there are also other projects implemented by private construction companies. In this section, urban transformation practices carried out by these private initiatives will be evaluated. Urban renewal and transformation is defined by the Istanbul Branch of the Chamber of Civil Engineers as an action that is consciously planned for the whole of a city or for residential areas in certain regions and that is not detached from the integrity of the city (Gökçe, 2013.)

The basic principles such as producing healthy and resilient structures for the benefit of society, ensuring the development of the city in this direction and ensuring that transformations are designed with the participation of the public, rather than top-down decisions, which were the main motivations behind the idea of urban transformation, have evolved over time to a point that serves capital interest. Urban transformation projects, examples of which can be seen in many parts of the country and very frequently during the AKP government, not only create a major transformation in the places where they are realized, but also become another important pillar of profit-driven interventions. Urban transformation projects, which can now be easily encountered in almost every neighborhood in every city in Turkey, are mostly carried out with the stated aim of constructing earthquake-resistant buildings. In practice, however, it is seen that while the aim is to demolish buildings that carry risk, the demolition of sound buildings is also carried out by claiming 'integrity of implementation' (Uğurlu, 2013).

These 'valid' reasons are generally considered as an acceptable form of intervention by people who are not directly affected or who do not experience victimization even though their houses are under transformation. This shows that communities that are unaware of each other's lifestyles and practices due to class differences are affected by urban transformation in different ways and evaluate these transformations in different ways. Although transformations in poor neighborhoods displace many

people from their living spaces and cause serious victimization, people from the upper income class can see these transformations as cleaning and beautifying the cities and transforming unhealthy spaces into healthy and safe neighborhoods. Due to class differences, groups that have little interaction with each other and whose lives do not touch each other's lives are divided into two sides: Those who are victimized by these transformations and those who support these transformations. In place of the demolished slums, large housing estates/residences/living spaces are built, the space is gentrified and the owners of that space are now 'upper class people'. At the end of this process, the people living in the slums suffer a great loss of rights and are victimized. As mentioned before, in urban transformation practices carried out by private firms, there is no symbol that emphasizes any kind of identity.

However, just like the shopping malls, these urban practices highlight make visible the political attitude and strategies pursued by the government in its urban policies. When the AKP government's approach to the city and its policies are evaluated through urban transformation practices, it becomes clear that it sees the city as a commodity. The fact that cities are seen as a commodity from which profit can be made shapes the government's practices and interventions in the city in this direction.

As it is understood, although urban transformation practices are very common in almost every part of the country, not every transformation takes place at the same level in every part of the city. In transformations carried out in the city centers in the form of renovation and reinforcement of a building, property owners are usually able to get a share of the renovated building in a way that they can reside in the same place, and do not undergo a major change in terms of living space, practice and culture of life, and are generally not victimized. Moreover, it would be possible to say that people living in these areas have become more advantageous as a result of the increase in the value of their houses.

On the other hand, in the transformation of poor neighborhoods, especially shantytowns in urban centers, it is seen that the residents of the neighborhoods do not get a share of the renovated buildings and neighborhoods, are forced to move away from their living spaces, and are subjected to great cultural and economic injustice.

Urban transformation practices, especially in the neighborhoods to be transformed, destroy the social structure of a neighborhood by removing living spaces one by one. The regulations introduced to the law called 'Urban Transformation Law' numbered 6306, which was put into force by the AKP government in 2023 (Afet Riski Altındaki..., 2012) were evaluated by the TMMOB Chamber of Architects Istanbul Branch and it was stated that with this law, the obligation to designate reserve building areas as new settlement areas and the obligation to seek a two-thirds majority of the right holders for the urban transformation decision were abolished, and for this reason, the right to property was ignored and rent-oriented transformation was created (Chamber of Architect Istanbul, 2023).

As it can be understood from the difference here, each of Fraser's recognitional, redistributive and representational distinctions manifests itself in urban regeneration practices. In particular, groups living in poor neighborhoods cannot benefit from any resources that can be considered within the scope of urban transformation equally with groups living in other neighborhoods. It is seen that the groups that can return to relatively the same areas are forced to adopt a new way of life, and that the existence of these groups in terms of cultural and living practices is not taken into consideration, and therefore a recognitional distinction can also be realized. As a result, it can be said that while in other neighborhoods in the city centers, the residents of the buildings can manage the transformation processes themselves, in poor neighborhoods, their participation in the transformation processes is not included and they are not represented, thus a representational discrimination occurs.

In the face of these transformations, from time to time in many slum neighborhoods, groups who do not want to lose their living spaces to urban transformation come together and engage in a struggle and show resistance. As it can be understood from these examples, a conflict between the people and the power can occur in transformations that will lead to an attack on a living space and the disappearance of a community from an area, as well as the overt victimization of a group or class, and the antagonistic dimension of urban transformation practices can emerge at this point. To the extent that the masses, who are disadvantageous in the face of gentrification and who suffer injustice, are able to massify their struggle against this situation, this

conflict is embraced by a wider section of the public; when this cannot be done, it may remain as an objection only by the locals, some opposition groups and some experts. In this sense, it is important to consider the local dimensions of urban regeneration projects when evaluating the objectives of the project.

When urban transformation practices are analyzed in general, it is understood that these practices can vary at local levels in terms of the way they are implemented, the strategy of implementation and the impact they create. It would be a mistake to consider these urban projects, which the government does not directly target a particular group, habitat, ideology or anything else, as directly antagonistic. In general, the fact that there is no example among the government's city projects that is designed to emphasize identity or differentiate with another dimension, and that each project varies in this sense, prevents the evaluation of urban transformation practices as two-cities projects.

On the other hand, considering the economic injustice and exclusion strategy it has created in many cases, it is understood that these projects are not unifying or inclusive. The sense of injustice suffered by certain segments in the picture that emerges as a result of these transformations causes these segments to be displaced by a demolition and to remain outside the invisible line that is felt to exist in the city, and causes them to experience a sense of exclusion. It does not seem possible to say that urban transformation practices that do not aim to reconcile the groups divided into two sides in any sense and address the needs of different groups have an agonistic approach. In this sense, it is seen that urban transformation concepts do not have the goal of inclusiveness with an expansionist approach and cannot be considered as a one-city project due to the lack of commonalities.

As mentioned above, urban transformation practices are implemented in different areas in different ways and can lead to a diverse range of impacts. Considering that these differences are due to cultural and mostly economic reasons, a distinction can be formed where the victimization of one group can be legitimized by another group, and even the existing class distinctions can deepen. Urban transformation practices stand out as an example of class differences dividing society, even if not on the basis of

identity. In this sense, considering the class level at which the government defines the public in its populist strategy, urban transformation projects can also be evaluated as an extension of the government's politics. The new, modern and 'gentrified' living spaces created through transformations create a distinction between those who can afford housing and those who cannot, deepening the existing economic injustices and becoming an even bigger obstacle to the coexistence of these groups.

### **3.2.2.3. City Hospitals**

City Hospitals, a new phenomenon that entered the literature with the AKP government in Turkey, are presented as part of the 'Health Reforms' initiated in the country. The AKP government and Erdoğan frequently emphasize that this is the most beneficial system for the country and the 'nation' and that Turkey should adopt this model.

The City Hospitals, do not represent any religious references in the form and content of the buildings, no Ottoman-Seljuk style is adopted or the names of the hospitals are not given according to this tradition. In this sense, no identity emphasis has emerged. However, the government has put forward its own politics and made reference to its own political power. In order to legitimize these large investments and these major changes that also affect the practices of the people, the government engages in symbolic politics through 'strong government, strong state'.

*Now you see this giant hospital, right? When you enter this hospital, God willing, you will see modernity inside, you will see modern care inside, and you will remember that you are a human being here. You will say, 'My state takes care of me'“ (...) Look, in the US, former President Obama tried to implement a reform that could be considered a very small part of our health system, but he failed. (Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2017)  
These hospitals are exemplary in the world. Turkey has longed for this for years. I have personally followed each and every stage of the city hospitals, which I see as my dream. (...) The city hospitals model, which was realized in our country for the first time in the world, is being closely examined by many countries today. (Altaş, Özdener, Karaaslan, 2022)*

Although they provide public services and the government references its political power through the 'worldwide success' of these projects, the capital cycle created by

City Hospitals, which are established directly through the private sector, is remarkable. The first reason why City Hospitals are evaluated under the heading of 'Capital' is the way in which this major project was realized. Since the second half of the 1980s, many plans have been implemented in Turkey in terms of 'development' through Public Private Partnership (PPP). While the 'build-operate-transfer' model has been used more often in large-scale plans such as highways, bridges and dams, this method has also been used in hospital construction for the first time under the AKP government. Although the Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca has stated that “There is no guarantee neither for inpatients, nor for surgeries, nor for bed occupancy rates” (Yılmaz, 2022), CCN Holding boss Murat Çeçen explained how the system works in an interview:

*We do the construction and undertake the operation for 5 years. (...) We build a building on behalf of the state, we make the investment. We don't just build the building, we equip it with the best, newest equipment on the market. The state pays us rent for 25 years. Whether the hospital is empty or full... (...) That's why the price we charge is a bit higher. (Beşiroğlu, 2019)*

Due to the launch of City Hospitals and in order to direct the public to these hospitals, public hospitals located in city centers were closed down and the doctors and specialists there were directed to City Hospitals with the explanation of 'gathering all health services under a single roof' (Göksedef, 2019). In addition to this model, City Hospitals built outside the city centers have led to the creation of new constructions in these areas, gathering the city center around itself and revealing new rentable areas. This has undermined the order around the older public hospitals in the city centers, the welfare of the tradesmen and the ease of access to the hospitals has been severely disrupted.

City Hospitals have also caused some disruptions in the health service itself. While health services gathered under a single roof are tried to be highlighted as a positive move, too much emphasis is placed on the size of hospital buildings, patient and bed capacities. On the other hand, based on data from scientific research, the World Health Organization has declared that hospitals with a capacity of more than 600 beds are not deemed efficient (Göksedef, 2019).

Looking at all these details, it can be understood that the City Hospitals are not projects that are discriminatory by the government and exclude a particular group. When City Hospitals are evaluated with their stated aims and objectives, they are read as a project that is open to the whole society in terms of providing health services. From this point of view, it is possible to say that City Hospitals were not created with an antagonistic approach and therefore cannot be considered as a two-cities project. On the other hand, considering many different factors such as the fact that there are many data indicating that these Hospitals are not efficient for both patients and healthcare professionals, and even make services more difficult, that the State Hospitals in the city centers were closed with the establishment of City Hospitals, and that the newly opened hospitals are located in locations that are not easy to reach for patients, it is understood that a project independent of the needs and demands of the public is realized. The existence of the communities are rendered invisible in this sense is not taken into consideration, and in parallel, their needs and demands are not taken into account, thus they are subjected to a recognitional discrimination. Although groups that cannot be included in the decision-making processes while these spaces are being created, are not represented in the creation and operation of these city projects and experience some difficulties afterwards are subjected to a representational discrimination, they are still not completely excluded from the project and do not face any limitations in service procurement.

In terms of the content of the services provided by City Hospitals, it is known that they are widely used by a large segment of the society. The fact that City Hospitals are not perceived as antagonistic despite the various limitations and difficulties experienced by large segments of the society can be attributed to the fact that people are obliged to receive the basic health services offered by this project even when they are politically opposed to this project, do not feel an ownership, or even think that they are not benefiting from it sufficiently. On the other hand, the fact that, the practices of benefiting from health services in general have not undergone a major change, and that the capitalist relations that appear strong in the background are not reflected on the people and do not affect them, especially financially, may also prevent the formation of any opposition and reaction.

The City Hospitals being the most standardized type of project among all the city projects in the thesis also prevents the approach of the government or the perception of the society from changing from place to place. The fact that the health service offered by this project is a service that appeals to everyone and its content, which does not exclude any class, cultural or political group, allows it to be considered as the closest example of the agonistic approach among all projects. When we look at the relationship that the community has with this project, we can see that a parallel conclusion can be drawn. Even though they are experiencing difficulties in various ways, it is seen by the society as a state service that they can easily benefit from and can be perceived as inclusive and therefore agonistic. Nevertheless, considering the discourses produced by the government on these projects and the way they are presented to the public, it does not seem possible to say that they are directly agonistic. For all these reasons, it is the most accurate option to evaluate City Hospitals as an urban project located in the liminal zone.

#### **3.2.2.4. Highways - Bridges - Canal Istanbul - Istanbul Airport**

The buildings mentioned under this heading consist of the examples under the 'Capital' heading of the chart, which do not emphasize the identity of 'nation' to a large extent, which are basically constructed on the basis of rent, but with the images of 'necessity', 'greatness' and 'magnificence' attached to them, the government calls them 'important projects' and references them to its own politics. Bülent Batuman argues that building big and grandiose projects is a product of the right-wing tradition and that this is a modernist rather than an Islamist attitude (Öktemer, 2019).

It is understood that the public space projects that will be mentioned under this heading are projects in which capital is much more visible and which are based on 'providing services' rather than being a challenge in which identity is emphasized or an image is destroyed and tried to be put in its place. On the other hand, although a conservative-nationalist identity is not emphasized intensely, symbols in this sense can still be placed in some projects, and positioning or naming can be chosen accordingly. In addition to this, examples where the discourses of the government developed on these projects, which are reflected with many positive definitions by the government, are

also based on creating a distinction through a publicity, can come to the fore, and the populist strategy developed by the AKP government over 'us' and 'them / elites' can manifest itself. For such reasons, it is possible to say that the projects also include an emphasis on identity, albeit from a limited point of view.

While trying to position the projects between the themes of 'Identity' and 'Capital' in the table, highways, bridges, Canal Istanbul and Istanbul Airport projects have been evaluated together, as they are considered to be at the same distances to both themes.

- **Highways:**

In the political history of Turkey, the first structures preferred by almost every government as a policy tool and political practice are highways, which can be seen in almost every part of the country. Road construction stands out as an activity that is a reason for voting in elections or an approval mechanism for a large part of the population in Turkey. It is possible to say that this approval and acceptance stems from a fundamental need to overcome the great difficulties in transportation. Throughout Turkey's political history, all politicians who have been able to identify this need have mostly based their election promises on this issue and have mostly acted in this direction after taking office. The AKP government, on the other hand, has taken this one step further and has been able to propagandize its road-building activities very strongly and has made reference to the power of its own government by claiming that the largest and most advanced double roads, underpasses, tunnels and rail systems can be built by itself. Tayyip Erdoğan explained his political stance on this issue at the AKP Group meeting in 2013 as follows:

*Everything is sacrificed for the sake of the road. Because the road is civilization. But those who are not civilized do not know or understand the value of the road. In our values, the road knows no obstacles. Even if there is a mosque in front of it, if the road will pass through it, we will demolish that mosque! (Dural, 2013)*

Going one step further from all these ways of presentation reveals the capital relations behind the construction and operation of road constructions. The existence of these relations is evident from the formation of offices, residences and shopping malls along

the road line, especially in urban areas, and the rapid construction around new roads built outside the city. In addition, the responsibility for the construction of roads, bridges, tunnels, crossings and many other structures is entrusted to large companies through the 'build-operate-transfer' method. As a result of this method, highways, which are seen as important for guaranteeing the use of roads and for the continuation of the vitality of the market because they are one of the most demand-oriented projects, are seen as projects that do not produce an exclusionary approach for a political purpose, but on the contrary, as an inclusive form of construction in order to ensure the use of roads.

Contrary to this general approach, some examples come to the fore at this point. Unlike the road constructions in most of the country, it is possible to read examples such as the Malazgirt Boulevard Road through the METU campus in 2013 and the Bilkent City Hospital road, which is currently on the agenda and will occupy a large part of the campus, as a direct attack on a 'symbol' by claiming that it is needed. In 2013 and during the subsequent road planning process, there were mass protests and massive reactions to the real meaning of the construction of this road and the antagonism created by the government became very visible. As a result of the ever-present and ongoing conflict and antagonism between METU and the government, the need for road plans that would physically interfere with the METU campus has been put forward, especially by former Ankara Metropolitan Mayor İ. Melih Gökçek. Melih Gökçek who made the following statements on the Bilkent-ODTÜ road:

*They should not aspire in vain. Just as 1071 Malazgirt Boulevard was finished, these roads will be finished. We have no other choice. We will not build housing or commercial centers here. We will build the roads that the people need. We will either build these roads or we will build them. (Yeğin, 2017)*

In this sense, road projects are put forward as the projects most likely to convince the public that they are 'needed' and these projects are implemented especially in some areas that are to be destroyed. Road constructions that affect nature, some living spaces and sometimes practices of use are not always met with a great reaction and are often not even interpreted as an attack. However, in the case of METU, this project was

considered to be a direct attack on an identity and a community, and the society wanted to take on the protection of the symbols that were thought to be harmed.

In the case of METU and in many other examples, it can be seen that, just like in other city projects, when road construction is seen as an attack on a way of life, a living space, a symbol, and when it is believed that the demolition there is a strategic demolition rather than a necessity, it can be met with a great reaction by the society. Even if it becomes massive and remains within a local framework, resistance can be organized and objections can be raised in different sizes and forms. Especially in the construction of roads that have a serious impact on some settlements and may have a negative impact on nature, objections may arise mostly from groups that have close ties with these areas. In this sense, it would not be too difficult to say that the route of a road is determined in line with class differences. The distinction between the people, which the AKP government defines on the basis of class, manifests itself in concrete practices in such projects. Even though there is no class difference in discourse or content, the route of a road is determined precisely according to this difference. From this point of view, it can be said that a redistributive distinction emerges for some groups, considering that some groups can sometimes be harmed by projects for class reasons. In addition to this, it can be said that communities living in or related to the areas where road construction is carried out are not included in the construction processes, are not represented and are excluded from the processes, which creates a representational discrimination, while they are subjected to a recognitional discrimination when their needs and assets are not taken into account and sometimes even directly victimized.

Except for such examples, it is not possible to say that a road construction involves antagonism from either the government's or the community's perspective. For this reason, they cannot be considered as two-cities projects. However, road projects are generally viewed positively and supportively by society. Nevertheless, given the above-mentioned differentiation of road projects at the local and project levels, it seems difficult to consider them as directly agonistic or one-city projects. For all these reasons, road projects are considered as projects located in a more liminal zone.

- **Bridges:**

The construction and operation of bridges is very similar to the practices applied to highways. Similarly, the way bridges are presented to the public is aimed at strengthening the political identity of the government. Private companies are also involved in the construction of these structures and the 'build-operate-transfer' model is also applied here. The major bridge projects realized by the AKP government during its term are the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, the Osmangazi Bridge connecting Istanbul and Izmir, and the Çanakkale Bridge built across the Çanakkale. The way in which these bridges were presented was again in a manner that emphasized his power and antagonized those who opposed their construction. For example, he used the following expressions for the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge:

*They also opposed the first and second bridges, the tube passages and tunnels we built under the sea. It is not in their nature to leave no stone unturned. 'Erdoğan is a dictator'. I swear I am not the master of this nation, dictatorship is not in my blood, it is not in my character. I am the servant of this nation. (Opera da cami de yapacağız, 2013)*

During the resistance against the construction of the Third Bridge, the 'We Want Life Instead of the Third Bridge Platform' stated that their needs and demands were not taken into account in the construction of this bridge and expressed their views as follows:

*The bridge is a murder that the AKP will not hesitate to commit in the name of the demands of international capital, which it has represented and collaborated with until today, and in the name of their needs. This murder is an important necessity for the AKP's continued existence. (Üçüncü Köprü Yerine..., 2013)*

It is possible to evaluate bridge projects in a very similar way to road projects. In these projects, as in the case of highways, the reactions against the construction of bridges come largely from experts and opponents. However, in projects that are likely to have a negative impact on residential areas and natural resources, the reaction may, in some cases, go beyond the local level and have the potential to spread across the country. In particular, people with shared sensitivities come together and sometimes even form

platforms to continue their resistance. Similarly, the above-mentioned strategy is applied in the determination of a bridge and the road routes that will connect to the bridge project, and the class levels of the communities in these regions are decisive. For this reason, it can be said that redistributional, representational and recognitional distinctions can emerge in bridge projects in the same ways as in highway projects. In assessing the existence of these distinctions, just like in the previous section, factors such as the distinctions that communities are subjected to due to class differences, their participation and representation in the processes of project development, and the extent to which their existence, needs and demands are taken into consideration are taken into account.

Although it is not possible to say that the AKP government acts on the basis of excluding a group in its bridge projects as it does in the construction of roads, factors such as its preference for capital over natural resources and living spaces, and beyond that, the names it uses in the bridges it builds, prove that it does not conduct a very peaceful politics. It is not possible to directly codify such city projects as antagonistic or agonistic, and therefore it is not possible to directly evaluate them as one-city or two-cities projects, as it is generally understood that they are not directly produced with the intention of excluding a certain group, but at the same time, they do not take into account the participation, needs and demands of different communities, and conflict and segregation can be more visible depending on the content of the projects. For this reason, bridge projects, just like road projects, can be evaluated as projects located in the liminal zone.

- ***Canal Istanbul:***

The Canal Istanbul project was first brought to the agenda by Erdoğan in 2011 as the 'Crazy Project' without disclosing the details of the project. With the statements made afterwards, it was stated that this Project, which is to be realized in Istanbul and which will touch the districts of Küçükçekmece, Avcılar, Başakşehir and Arnavutköy of Istanbul and connect the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, is a 'great need' and it was frequently emphasized to the public that this Canal is a very important project.

*Today we are rolling up our sleeves for one of the biggest projects of the century, which will not even compare to the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal and the Corinth Canal in Greece. (Akyol, n.d.)*

Since its announcement, this 'crazy' project has received strong reactions from national and international public opinion against its realization. Experts in the field often cite the negative economic, natural and social impacts of such a project (WWF, n.d). Opponents of the project, especially within the country, take every claim and statement as an attack on them, as in all other cases:

*When they realized that they could not prevent the construction of the bridge in Çanakkale, they directed all their hatred and hatred towards the Canal Istanbul Project. Moreover, they not only oppose the project in principle. They are in an all-out effort to prevent the development of our country by threatening all investors, both local and foreign. I tell you frankly, this mentality is not only an enemy of investment, but also an enemy of its country and nation. (Balcıkoca, Beyaz, Işık, Şahin and Taşdemir, 2021)*

As with other mega projects, the Canal Istanbul project is mostly defined in terms of its 'necessity' and 'power to show the country's strength', but the huge rent area that the project will create should not be ignored. According to a news report, 286 hectares of residential areas along the canal route will be included in the project, and the EIA report states that

*With the start of the transformation process in the neighborhoods that will be subjected to urban transformation, it is foreseen that some of the people will move to the mass housing areas planned by TOKI and KIPTAŞ and clusters will form in these areas.” (Akyol, n.d.)*

As can be seen in the project information announced by the government in different channels, as well as on the official website of the Project, there are many sub-projects that are annexed to the Canal Istanbul project (Directorate of Communications, n.d.). Although there is a national and international reaction and opposition to Canal Istanbul, especially from experts, it does not seem to have found a response in the eyes of the public yet, as it has not materialized and has not materialized. The fact that

predictions about the possible damages require a degree of expertise creates the result that most of the society does not have a perception of what should be opposed. Furthermore, the fact that it has been talked about for a long time but has not yet been initiated may have weakened the public's belief that it can be realized. As in previous examples, the fact that this project is not seen as a plan that can be perceived as an exclusion and an attack against a group, and that it is considered as a 'Crazy Project' that is thought to harm Istanbul seems to be preventing the response in the society from materializing. The fact that there is no intense agenda for this project in the society should not be taken to mean that there is an acceptance and consensus.

Rather than being a direct move towards a group, an identity or a symbol, the Canal Istanbul project seems to be a project aimed at increasing the political power of the AKP government, more specifically Erdoğan. This project, which could be a reference to his own political power, could also provide a second benefit for the government by strengthening his capital relations with the various groups he has surrounded himself with. Although this approach itself cannot be evaluated in the sense of 'producing an inclusive project for the people', it does not seem to be designed to create a divide. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that Erdoğan's will to carry out the project against the warnings of all national and international experts is a challenge in itself. In this sense, the Canal Istanbul Project, which cannot be directly evaluated as antagonistic, cannot be coded as a two-cities project.

It is understood that the project cannot be evaluated as inclusive either, considering that it does not contain any exclusionism towards the groups it defines through identity, but that people from lower income groups may be negatively affected by the project. Considering the aforementioned aspects of the bridge and road projects, it can be said that redistributive, representational and recognitional distinctions emerge together in this project when factors such as the victimization that may occur as a result of class differences, the fact that the people living in the living areas that may be destroyed and the experts on the subject are completely excluded from the process, and that the needs of the people and the city, especially the groups in these regions, are not taken into consideration and even faced with a situation where they may be

harmful. For these reasons, it is possible to state that this project, which cannot be considered directly agonistic, cannot be considered as a one-city project. When all these factors are evaluated together, it can be said that the Canal Istanbul Project is a project that has remained in the liminal zone.

### *Airport:*

Inaugurated in 2018, Istanbul Airport is one of the mega projects of the AKP government. Built with the 'build-operate-transfer' model as in other projects, this structure was put into use instead of Atatürk Airport in Istanbul.



*Figure 13 Istanbul Airport's Tulip-Shaped Control Tower<sup>12</sup>*

Aware of the fact that airports are the first contact with a country, especially in terms of international transportation, the government has created the space according to its own politics by placing its own symbols at the point of welcoming people here, and has been able to convey the messages it wants to convey in this way. The mosque, which is visible at first glance when entering the Istanbul Airport area and affects the silhouette of the area, the creation of the Control Tower in the tulip figure, which is frequently used during the AKP government due to its reference to the Ottoman

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<sup>12</sup> (İstanbul Havalimanı Kulesi kırmızı- beyaza büründü, 2023)

Empire and religion, and the replacement of the name 'Atatürk' in the previous airport with 'Istanbul' can be interpreted as symbols of AKP politics.

Another symbol is the prayer offered by Ali Erbaş, the President of Religious Affairs, at the opening of the Airport as an example of the attempt to make the representation of religion felt here as well. While the opening prayer itself is used as a religious tool, the content of the prayer is a concrete example of the political power's projects being combined with the power of religion and presented to the public:

*O Lord, through this beautiful work, we will be instrumental in enabling people to visit each other in the remotest corners of the world. Praise be to you. As we have provided this communication, this transportation, may God grant that the love of our nation will be in the hearts of all humanity. You have enabled our nation to unite continents with bridges over the seas and tunnels under the sea, may God grant us the opportunity to serve people with works such as these (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018).*

The way the airport was presented to the public was very similar to other examples of construction. Many officials emphasized how big and meaningful the work was. Erdoğan described Istanbul Airport as the 'new crossroads of the world':

*With the commissioning of Istanbul Airport, Turkey has become the most important transit center between the north, south, east and west axes. Our airport connects 60 countries and 20 trillion-dollar economies in this vast area. With this airport, we are further enhancing our key role as a country in the integration of global economies. This is an important line, so we see Istanbul Airport as a great service not only to our country, but also to our region and the world. (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2018)*

In addition to this, a user who has seen Istanbul Airport live is related to what he or she feels in the size of the building and offers a different perspective on what an ordinary user might be thinking in the face of this gigantic structure:

*After the first impression and excitement, this place, which you will be in for hours, comes upon you. After a while you feel crushed. You need a human scale, a place to hold on to. (Yırtıcı, 2018)*

As mentioned here, the perception of size draws attention as an element used by the government in many of its projects. It seems possible to associate the gigantic size of bridges, symbolic buildings, mosques, airports and many other constructions with the show of power.

Many experts have emphasized that the region chosen for the airport is not suitable for such a construction due to both weather and ground conditions. Despite the existence of a large, well-located and functioning airport such as Atatürk Airport, the reasons for this new construction should be read as an opportunity to create a huge source of rent beyond the AKP's efforts to produce its own products. In 2013, a tender was held with the build-operate-transfer model and it was decided that the winning companies would pay more than 1 billion Euros annually to the State Airports Authority, the owner, for 25 years. The winning companies are Cengiz - Kolin - Limak - MAPA - Kalyon Joint Venture Group, which is known to be close to the AKP government. DHMI, on the other hand, provided financing and passenger guarantees to the winning companies. (Köker, 2018)

When the Istanbul Airport project is analyzed, it is understood that the capital cycle is very dominantly visible. Although it is seen that symbols of identity have been placed within it, it is understood that this emphasis does not come to the forefront in the project. The fact that the construction of the project took place after the demolition of Atatürk Airport can be evaluated as a replacement of an existing large and functional structure, which also has a symbolic meaning, rather than creating a new space for the city and the country. Even though Istanbul Airport does not contain a dominant identity, and even if it does not contain an exclusion in terms of the function of the space, the creation of a space that refers to the AKP government's own politics instead of a symbolic structure shows the antagonism and the antagonistic intention of the government here. In addition to this, the construction of the Nation's Garden, one of the symbols of the AKP government, inside Atatürk Airport has led to the area to be destroyed to be similarly decorated with symbols and the elimination of a symbol from the past. Demolishing Atatürk Airport and building Istanbul Airport, which will become its own symbol, can be considered as a symbol that creates opposition in itself.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the demolition of Atatürk Airport, which is considered to be a symbolic value, did not provoke similar reactions to other interventions in symbolic spaces. Except for some opposition groups and experts, there does not seem to have been a major public reaction to the demolition of Atatürk Airport and the construction of another airport. As mentioned in many examples above, Istanbul Airport continues to be used intensively in this case as well. In this respect, it is thought that there is not a dominant group of the public that considers the demolition of Atatürk Airport and the construction of Istanbul Airport as a direct attack on a symbol, but it can be said that the function of this space allows it to continue to be used by a large part of the society.

In this sense, this airport, where the opinions of experts, users and service providers were not taken and their participation was not included in its creation, and at the same time, it was not designed with a large part of the society in mind, considering the practices of use, seems to have created recognitional and representational distinctions. This space, which provides transportation services, does not create a space that will allow any group to be excluded even in cases where they cannot find their own representation, do not think that it is created for their needs and even prefer to be politically opposed. In terms of the content of the project, it is not possible to say that the government aims to exclude a certain group. At this point, similar to the other projects under this heading, the Istanbul Airport project is located at a point between antagonism and agonism, and is positioned in the liminal zone since it cannot be directly evaluated as a one-city or two-cities project.

- ***General Evaluation of the Four Projects:***

A general look at all these projects reveals that they are similar to each other in terms of the approach of the government and the way they are perceived by society. When the projects under this heading are examined from a general perspective, and especially when their functions are considered, it is understood that they are not designed as a specifically targeted intervention against a group or an identity. Although different segments of the society have criticized these projects from different angles, it can be said in general that these projects are not perceived by the public as

projects involving direct opposition, segregation and exclusion, and are not considered as antagonistic. It is seen that these projects (excluding the Canal Istanbul project since it was not realized) continue to be actively used by the public. When we look at the groups that have a certain reaction and evaluate the attitude of the government as antagonistic, it is also understood that even those groups that are intellectually opposed to the projects with expert opinion, a political attitude or a class victimization are not or cannot be excluded from the projects due to their functions. In this sense, these projects cannot be considered as two-cities projects.

On the other hand, when we look at the ways in which each of these projects were realized, considering the warnings of experts and the lack of an effort to take into account the needs of the public, it is understood that we cannot talk about inclusiveness, and even if they are used by the public, it cannot be claimed that they are projects that are fully adopted and owned. In some projects, it is understood that the naming of projects is strategically determined, and in examples such as the METU road, strategic interventions are sometimes carried out with explanations of need, so in a sense they involve antagonism or are very close to it.

Moreover, considering that the groups living in the areas where these projects are realized are generally lower classes, it is seen that the needs and demands of economically disadvantaged groups can be ignored much more easily and become open to intervention more easily. Considering all these, it is understood that these projects sometimes create a recognitional, sometimes redistributive, sometimes representational distinction and that there is no inclusiveness in general, and for this reason, it is not possible to talk about these projects as one-city projects. When all these reasons are considered together, all of these projects can be considered as projects in the liminal zone in general.

#### **3.2.2.5. TOKI Projects**

Although there are projects that cannot be separated from urban transformation projects, TOKI implementations have been evaluated under a separate heading as they

correspond to different positions in the chart due to the differences they contain. In addition, since TOKI has become a symbol of urban transformation over time and a representative of the urban practices of the AKP government, it is considered important to evaluate it under a separate heading.

Established in 1984 with the Housing Law, the Housing Development Administration, which remained dormant for many years afterwards but became active again after the earthquake of August 17, 1999, basically aims to provide housing, infrastructure and social facilities to low-income people. (Kuruluş ve Tarihçe, n.d.) These projects, which are in line with the concept of social state by definition, seem to fulfill this purpose when we look at the widespread implementation of these projects in every province of Turkey. Housing areas are jointly determined by governorships and municipalities, and the size of TOKI areas is decided according to the size of the settlement, with 1000 housing units in main city municipalities and 400 housing units in other municipalities. (Toplu Konut İdaresi..., 2002)

After these theoretical insights, a look at the practical applications shows that with some legal amendments and permissions made after 2002, TOKI was authorized to declare areas as urban transformation areas and to carry out transformation projects on its own initiative. (Yeşilbağ, 2016) This situation, based on TOKI's involvement in the construction sector, led to the initiation of practices limited to lower income classes for middle and upper income groups, and the construction of residences and housing estates. Galip Yalman argues that TOKI has contributed more to accelerating the struggle for rent sharing in cities rather than providing housing for low-income people. He also states that in many of the first cities, there is now a housing surplus instead of a housing deficit, and that housing is not produced in line with need. (Yalman, 2021)

When we look at the neighborhoods and districts where TOKI implementations are taking place, we see that the identity of the cities is being destroyed and standard buildings that are almost identical to each other are being constructed. This can be explained by the fact that in interventions that are said to have the intention of creating 'new, modern and robust' buildings, the construction of buildings that bring

profitability in the fastest way and at the least cost is a practice that is prioritized. Yalman (2021), states that in the areas built by TOKI, a uniform life is offered, template projects determined independently of the identity, history, architecture, climate and topographical features of the cities are implemented in all cities and identical cities are created.

It is known that the “100 Thousand Lower Income Group Social Housing Project” launched by TOKI for 82 provinces in 2019 has caused great reactions among the public due to both the failure to deliver the houses to the citizens and the difficulties in payments. CHP Kayseri Deputy Aşkın Genç brought this agenda to the Parliament by stating that street protests were held in many provinces. (TOKİ mağdurlarının.., 2024) Looking at all these situations, it is understood that TOKI practices have gone beyond what is claimed and have moved away from the understanding of social assistance, leading to the victimization of poor groups from time to time. According to the results of an academic study conducted in 2014 with residents of TOKI housing in Çünür and Akkent neighborhoods in Isparta, TOKI housing is considered by the public as one of the main actors of development. The researcher interprets this as an indication that the majority of Turkish society is made up of low- and middle-income families. (Yüksel, 2014) Apart from this, it is seen that there is a distrust by the society regarding the earthquake resistance and the use of good materials in the housing projects developed by TOKI especially for low-income groups. This may lead these groups to feel invisible and further marginalized by the state.

However, in its 2024 Local Election Declaration, the AKP government promised that it would 'prioritize areas with high disaster risk and unplanned urbanization and support citizens to live in healthy and safe environments by building approximately 221,897 urban transformation houses' and that it would continue to 'continue to create settlements that are resistant to disasters with a sustainable urbanization model in line with social needs' in the new term of office. In 2023, as a result of the devastating earthquakes centered on Karhramanmaraş, it was also emphasized that more than 133 thousand TOKI houses, which were previously built in the affected region, were not destroyed. (AKP, 2024)

In addition to housing projects, TOKI is also known to have implemented projects in other areas. In the same declaration, the AKP announced the construction of “a total of 39,344 social reinforcement areas including 24 schools, 270 hospitals, 26 university buildings, 21 stadiums, 996 mosques.” (AKP, 2024) As can be understood from this, talking about TOKI projects as a homogenous set of projects would be an obstacle to adequately reflect the diversity of these practices and the effects they have created in cities. When we look at the projects realized by the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ), which is an air institution of the state, it can be said that different types of practices have emerged, as mentioned above.

In TOKI projects, the AKP government's conservative, nationalist and traditionalist approach does not manifest itself in terms of form or implementation. Considering the fact that these projects are basically realized with the aim of constructing housing and various 'public buildings' and that, unlike most urban transformation projects, each of them is implemented as a state project rather than through the private sector, it does not seem very possible to say that TOKI projects are implemented with an antagonistic purpose and therefore can be considered as two-cities projects.



*Figure 14 Slum Transformation in Erzincan Center<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> (MoUECC, n.d.)



*Figure 15 Ankara North City Urban Transformation<sup>14</sup>*

On the other hand, the fact that economically disadvantaged groups are victimized from time to time despite the fact that there is no direct exclusion or antagonistic attitude, the fact that the areas designated for TOKI implemetations are mostly implemented in slum areas, and the implementation of uniform projects in the buildings built, rather than according to need and demand, also show that it is not possible to evaluate these projects as inclusive projects. Although they do not create antagonism, they do not listen to the needs and demands of the communities, and for all the reasons mentioned, it is not possible to say that they contain an agonistic attitude by creating redistributinal, recognitonal and representational distinctions for a large segment of the population, and therefore it is not possible to say that they are one-city projects.

In terms of public perception, it can be seen that there are different approaches to the various TOKİ implementations for each project in particular. While some of the projects realized by TOKİ may draw a great reaction from the public, others, especially housing projects, stand out as projects that the public is open to benefit from and wants to be included in.

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<sup>14</sup> (ibid)

As a result of this discussion, it is understood that TOKI implementations cannot be directly evaluated as antagonistic or agonistic, considering the differences that each project shows within itself and from local to local, and therefore cannot be considered within the scope of one-city or two-cities projects. By considering the projects implemented by TOKI together with the differences within them, it is possible to evaluate them in the liminal zone in general, as in many other examples.

### **3.2.2.6. Summary of the Projects**

A general look at the city projects presented under different headings above reveals that, as mentioned before, capital is at the forefront and, in parallel with this, the emphasis on identity is kept in the background. Although in some projects identity references are given by using symbols identified with the AKP government, it is understood that these projects are generally put in the spotlight through the political 'success' and 'power of the AKP government'. Except for some examples presented under the heading of shopping malls, it can be said that these spaces and urban transformation projects are not associated with power through an identity, but the relationship between power and capital is visible, even if it is subtle.

Since the build-operate-transfer model is applied in many of the projects mentioned above, and since the capital that builds these spaces is promised a certain number of 'customers' or 'service recipients' by the government, it is also possible to say that the projects are not built on exclusionism and that no group is specifically marginalized, and therefore there is no antagonism. These spaces created to provide services are not designed in an exclusionary way by the power and capital, and it is understood that the public does not feel this exclusion or cannot exclude themselves in terms of use. This situation may vary according to the content of the projects and the ways in which they are implemented, as explained in each of the titles above. However, another common point that can be said for all projects is that there is not a complete inclusiveness. First of all, it can be observed that class distinctions are visible in many projects, that some groups, generally low-income groups, may experience more victimization than other groups in the process of creating and then operating the

projects, and that their living spaces and practices may be under great impact. When evaluated in their own right, it is possible to say that some urban projects are more inclusive than others and can be considered closer to agonistic politics. Although there is no clear example of a particular group being targeted in various ways, it is nevertheless clear that in many projects, the needs, demands and practices of the majority of the people are not listened to, projects are not designed by taking their existence into account, and their participation is not ensured in the design and implementation processes. For these reasons, it is understood that urban projects under this heading can create recognitional, redistributive and representational divisions in general.

The shopping malls, which are considered to be the most extreme under this heading, except for certain examples, are generally not designed with a discriminatory attitude, that there is no reflection of any AKP politics or identity emphasis, and that they are designed to attract as many 'customers' as possible, may prevent these projects from being perceived as antagonistic and enable them to be read as having a more agonistic and inclusive approach. In the examples specifically mentioned in the thesis, it is seen that when a shopping mall project is designed together with an intervention in a symbolic space or living space, it moves away from an agonistic approach and even gains an antagonistic dimension. The antagonistic dimension of the projects emerges in parallel with the approach of the government and the perception of the society.

The urban transformation practices, are also projects in which private firms are visible and no direct influence of the government can be read, and therefore no symbol of it can be seen. The impact of these projects can vary depending on where they are implemented. In urban centers, the transformation of buildings where middle- and upper-income class residents live often does not create a loss of rights and may even turn advantages to the property owners. However, when they are implemented in areas where lower-income class residents live densely, these transformations can turn into a gentrification practice and result in the loss of rights, especially by ignoring undocumented and illegal cases. In this sense, it can be understood that urban transformation projects are not fully inclusive projects and can sometimes have an antagonistic approach, depending on the situation.

The City Hospitals are noteworthy that they are touted as the political success of the government, despite the fact that they are spaces built by private initiatives. It is possible to say that the service offered by these projects can be considered the most inclusive type of project since it is a 'health' service that appeals to everyone. Although the situations of users, health workers, and various groups affected by the closure of state hospitals were ignored, it can be said that the City Hospitals were not created with an attitude of ignoring or excluding a particular group, and therefore cannot be considered to have an antagonistic political attitude; on the contrary, it can be said that the project closest to the agonistic approach among all projects are the City Hospitals. The 'Highways-Bridges-Canal Istanbul-Istanbul Airport' projects, which are tried to be evaluated together because they are very similar to each other in terms of their relationship with identity and capital, may have identity markers from time to time, but this is never shown as dominant. The most important point that these projects have in common is that they are projects that the government uses while constructing its own political propaganda and that can touch the lives of almost everyone in society, and therefore they can be shown as a reflection of the power of the government. When we look at the functions of these projects, it can be said that since they create 'service' oriented urban spaces, no particular group is excluded and therefore they can hardly be considered antagonistic. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that some of the discourses produced by the government in presenting its own politics through the projects show that the discriminatory attitude, which is not within the scope of the projects themselves, is not wanted to be kept in the background. However, as mentioned in the examples above, the needs and living practices of some groups, especially low-income groups, are not taken into account in the realization of these projects and that these groups may experience victimization from time to time.

The TOKİ implementations, are realized on the basis of urban transformation, but these transformations are carried out by the state itself. In addition, over the years TOKİ has gone beyond the construction of mass social housing and started to realize different projects. Considering that each project creates different effects, it would be misleading to evaluate the practices carried out by this institution as homogeneous. These practices, which do not involve any identity politics but can be used as one of

the propaganda tools of the government, do not exclude a particular group. However, especially when it comes to housing construction, the fact that slum areas are mostly chosen for transformation and renovation, and that uniform projects are implemented without considering needs, demands and class differences shows that an inclusive and participatory approach is not adopted.

All these projects cannot be simply evaluated as exclusionary or inclusive in general, nor can they be directly coded as one-city or two-cities projects. When we look at all these projects evaluated under the theme of 'capital', most of them can vary according to the situations and conditions they contain within themselves, and accordingly, the effects created by these different approaches are different from each other. When there is no concrete data on the satisfaction, acceptance or rejection of the society to the reasons such as the fact that the approach of the government through the projects is not fixed, the reaction of the society changes according to the conditions and even this reaction becomes mass or remains at the local level depending on the project. As such, it is possible to evaluate these projects as projects that remain in the liminal zone in general. As for the projects under the theme of identity, the distinction created by the AKP's populist politics on the basis of 'elites - oppressed groups' is not produced here, but this can be reflected in the discourses produced by the government on the projects. Due to the class differences, it can be seen that there are situations that have a negative impact on the lifestyles and living spaces of some groups, but this situation may increase or decrease depending on the content of the project. While evaluating these projects, many discussions take place such as the extent to which capital is specific in the creation of demolitions and transformations, public space interventions, various needs and demands of certain groups are taken more into account while which others can be ignored, under what conditions antagonism can occur in all these relatively more inclusive projects and under what conditions who can feel excluded should be carried out together.

### **3.2.3. General Evaluation**

Some of the AKP's projects on urban spaces have been selected and analyzed in detail under separate headings above. As mentioned before, the AKP government shapes urban spaces in line with its own political understanding. In this thesis, it is argued

that this shaping proceeds on two bases: 'Identity' and 'capital'. While the difference between these two bases is clearly visible in some examples, in others they are more implicit and intertwined with each other.

Regardless of the functions of the spaces in the projects or the character of the building, the discourses produced for almost all of them are also noteworthy. The divisive discourses produced by the AKP government, Erdoğan in particular, can bring the emphasis on 'us' and 'our space', which is not visible in the physical structure or use of the project, back to the forefront.

It seems to be the first thing that comes to mind to expect that projects that come to the forefront in line with the emphasis on identity and capital should also create a sharp distinction and clear lines of 'exclusion vs. inclusion' in parallel. However, as discussed above under each heading and frequently experienced in daily life, it is seen that the boundaries are not so clearly separated from each other and their responses in society may differ in each situation. It is clear from the discussions above that the extent to which city projects are exclusionary or inclusive can be understood by evaluating many factors together.

At this point, the first question to be considered is at what point society feels the presence of antagonism and when do people feel excluded. In the case of each urban project, this discussion has been carried out in conjunction with Nancy Fraser's concepts of recognition-redistribution-representation, and the divisions in the city have been tried to be understood through these concepts.

While the effects of each of the city projects on the society are different from each other, the divisions created can also differ from each other and bring different points to the forefront. City projects can create or accentuate class-based segregations, but they can also create segregations in many different aspects such as ensuring the participation of communities in the creation and implementation processes of projects, defining assets and taking them into consideration and reflecting them in practices. When all these factors are evaluated together, it is more possible to discuss the antagonism dimension of a project. It is practical to start evaluating a project by asking

the essential questions in order to understand whether it has been created with an antagonistic attitude. The questions to be asked about the realized projects are:

- What it transforms,
- What it transforms into,
- How it transforms,
- Who/which group remains where in these transformations

questions can help to assess whether an antagonistic urban politics has emerged or not. According to the answers given to these questions, it becomes more possible to talk about the existence of antagonism in cases where, as the city projects above reveal, one symbolic thing is transformed into another symbol or one way of life into another way of life, where these transformations are carried out in a destructive, discriminatory, antagonizing manner, and where certain groups are excluded or feel excluded from the spaces created as a result of these transformations. From this point of view, antagonism basically exists in two different dimensions: The intention of the power that produces the policy and the way the communities that are the addressees perceive this policy.

When the projects grouped around the themes of 'Identity' and 'Capital', which are presented through a visual at the beginning, are examined, it is seen that the projects under the same theme reveal similar answers to the questions mentioned above. The projects under the theme of 'Identity' show that in most of the interventions in these projects, a space that is considered symbolic or sensitive by the society is transformed and adorned with the symbols of the politics of the AKP government, and while doing so, a divisive political attitude is displayed and opposition is perpetuated.

The projects under the theme of 'Capital', on the other hand, mostly prioritize the places where low-income groups live and transform them into an area that generates rent; in doing so, segregation that does not spread to the whole society and generally remains at the local level can be seen, and almost every one of these projects is carried out by referring to the political power of the government rather than its identity and showing that they are an achievement. This dimension of the debate allows us to evaluate whether there is antagonism based on the government's intentions.

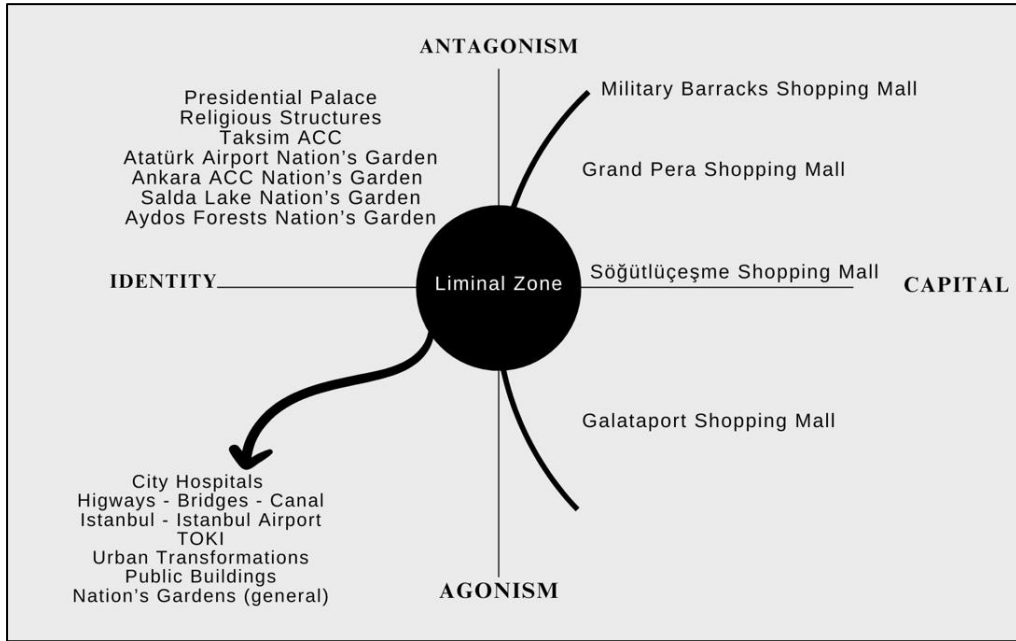


Figure 16 Matrix shows intersections of concepts (1)

When the political approach of the AKP government and its motivation in creating urban projects are evaluated together, it seems possible to draw a picture of whether the projects are exclusionary, that is, antagonistic, as follows. As reflected in the table (Fig 16), it is possible to say that the government exhibits a discriminatory attitude in all projects that emphasize identity and that the urban projects created in this context can be read as antagonistic projects. The details that make these projects antagonistic can be attributed to the intentional distinction between 'us' and 'you', which is produced through the definition of 'elites' in the populist strategy of the government. This division is presented in a very visible and destructive way, and that it is targeting specific groups and causes others to be excluded.

Looking at the projects in this area of the matrix one by one, first of all, all the previously mentioned characteristics of the Presidential Palace were taken into consideration and it was taken into account that the emphasis on identity directly targets the support of a specific group. In addition to this, it goes beyond being a power that seeks to consolidate its hegemony by gaining the support of certain groups, it realizes this effort on the values of the people, whom it defines as 'elites', by destroying them and therefore clearly shows that it is an antagonistic approach.

Another type of project in this field is the religious buildings. It can be seen that the religious buildings, which are located in specially selected areas and whose names and symbols are chosen in the same direction, create a particularly exclusionary effect. As a type of building that predetermines its own users, religious buildings also cause the space in which they are located to take on a conservative image and cause the boundaries of the building to expand to the boundaries of that public space. In this sense, it can be said that invisible lines are formed around public spaces and that there are clear distinctions in terms of the use of space. The AKP government's widespread use of this type of structure in cities is due to the influence of religious structures and their identity that allows them to be combined with its own politics. In this sense, the religious buildings are built with an antagonistic attitude towards the government and the public spaces where these buildings are located are transformed with the same attitude.

When it comes to the Nation's Gardens, it is noteworthy that these projects reveal the definition of 'nation' in a way that is appropriate to their name and can be read as spaces that open up space for the government's own cultural understanding. Although it cannot be said that this urban project, which is generally created with the fiction of a park or a green space, is antagonistic since it is not directly created against a certain group, the fact that its inclusiveness is limited in the ways described above also prevents it from being perceived as agonistic. These spaces, which can be considered to be in the liminal zone in general, have shifted to an antagonistic line for various reasons. It may be possible to evaluate that these projects have an antagonistic approach in cases such as the positioning of some Nation's Gardens in symbolic places or coming to a point that actually harms nature with the aim of 'making a park'. Although there is no concrete situation in which users are determined within these spaces, the fact that these are projects produced by the AKP government during its period in power reveals the identity of these spaces. As mentioned before, the discourses produced by the government in relation to Gezi Park clearly show that the government has coded these parks as 'our spaces'.

The last project considered to be in this area is the Atatürk Cultural Center building project in Taksim, Istanbul. This project does not formally embody a conservative or

nationalist image as described in the previous project examples. However, this reconstructed building clearly stands as a concrete output of the AKP government's reckoning with both the Republican regime and the Gezi Park Resistance. The AKP government, and Erdoğan in particular, do not hide the attitude on this issue and expresses very clearly that this is an important place that is important to 'take over'. Some examples of his statements on this issue are given above. Although it was announced as a retrofitting project, it seems possible to evaluate the government's attitude towards this structure as an antagonistic attitude since it is a place where the intention is clearly expressed. It is noteworthy that the only project example that can be considered agonistic in this matrix are shopping malls. As mentioned above, the examples where the emphasis on identity is kept in the background and the examples where capital is visible proceed parallel to each other. Shopping malls, where the government is not visible and only paves the way with urban policies and legal regulations, are completely private initiatives, and therefore the discriminatory attitude of the government over identity or capital is not included in these areas. However, when we look at the examples specifically described under the title of shopping malls, it is seen that these structures, which would not normally be considered antagonistic, can turn into projects where conflicts and major debates occur. It is understood that this conflict, and therefore antagonism, occurs in cases where an emphasis of identity belonging to the power is placed or a symbolic space is demolished. It has already been mentioned that the transformation of symbolic spaces into other symbols and the destructive way in which this is done can make antagonism visible. In this respect, the only spatial project that can be considered directly agonistic in terms of the intention of power, with some exceptions, are the shopping malls, and the examples that can be considered antagonistic under this heading are shown at separate points in the matrix. In these projects, an intervention is made on the living spaces and symbolic values, and that they are constructed over natural or public spaces, and therefore the intention of the government can be read as antagonistic.

All the other projects presented are located in the liminal zone in which all of them, except for the public buildings, are projects under the title of capital. The reason why public buildings are evaluated in the liminal zone is that the emphasis on identity

contained in their form is generally considered as a tool used by the power for its own hegemony and that it does not tell a particular group to stay outside through this form. The more critical point is that the public buildings are not homogeneous and the intentions of the government can evolve into antagonism depending on what their content is. The fact that a public building inspired by the Ottoman-Seljuk tradition in form and the removal of the IIBank building to build a mosque cannot be evaluated on the same level shows that this title cannot be simply explained by antagonism under all circumstances, but it cannot be interpreted as agonistic as well since it cannot be considered inclusive in general.

Apart from these projects, there are also examples where some projects cannot be categorized as either antagonistic or agonistic, and where the content, function and intentions of the government may contradict each other. City Hospitals, roads, bridges, Istanbul Airport, Canal Istanbul Project and TOKİ implementations do not contain any differentiating elements in terms of content or an intense emphasis on identity, even if there is a presentation of the nation that makes itself felt in some examples, and they have the function of serving the entire society due to their functions. In these titles, it is seen that the government mostly does not come to the fore with its own identity, but develops discourses on the power and success of its power. In this sense, although it is not possible to say that the government has produced these projects with an antagonistic approach, the fact that the discourses produced by the government, especially about these projects, maintain the distinction between 'us' and 'them, and that this distinction is based on the success of the government and the opposition of 'elites' who want to prevent this success, and that this group includes a large part of the society shows that the government has not completely left its discriminatory attitude behind. This contradictory approach in the context of these projects paves the way for the aforementioned examples to be evaluated in the liminal zone.

As mentioned before, while discussing all these projects, the government's intentions, how the society perceives these intentions and the resulting city project do not always proceed in the same direction. In this sense, in order to look at the issue from the other

dimension and to discuss antagonism through the perception of society, it is necessary to approach the issue of at which points the urban spaces produced or transformed by the government are perceived as divisive projects and at which point these projects create divided cities with a holistic evaluation. In this context, there is no clear distinction between an identity-based project that directly creates segregation or, on the contrary, a market-based project that is constructed in a way that invites everyone. As it is understood, for the most part, a project cannot be perceived as antagonistic by society as long as it does not displace a group, as long as it does not interfere with a symbolic space, a value, a belief, a way of life. This shows that the existence of the politics of exclusion or the feeling of exclusion itself does not proceed at exactly the same level in all cases, and that each project can be evaluated differently by each group in its own unique situation.

People demand that their existence be recognized in urban spaces, as in all areas where they are associated with politics, and that they see spaces where their cultures, beliefs, life practices, needs, demands and aesthetic tastes are taken into consideration and reflected. Beyond this, in a way that can be referred to Harvey's concept of the Right to the City, people and groups have demands for the right to produce the city, and therefore they expect to be able to express their opinions, to be represented, in short, to participate in all these processes in the actions to be taken regarding public spaces. In cases where all these are kept in the background and not taken into consideration, the first unrest may begin to occur in the society.

However, this does not necessarily mean that a direct conflict will occur. As can be seen from the above examples of projects and daily life experiences, there is no clear and immutable determinant of what individuals and groups react to or the degree to which they react. How a project corresponds to a place in society and what the use of that space means in practice can shape people's relationship with space and the criticisms and reactions to power. In order to assess whether urban projects, the government's intentions and society's perception of these intentions are similar or different, the matrix below may be instructive.

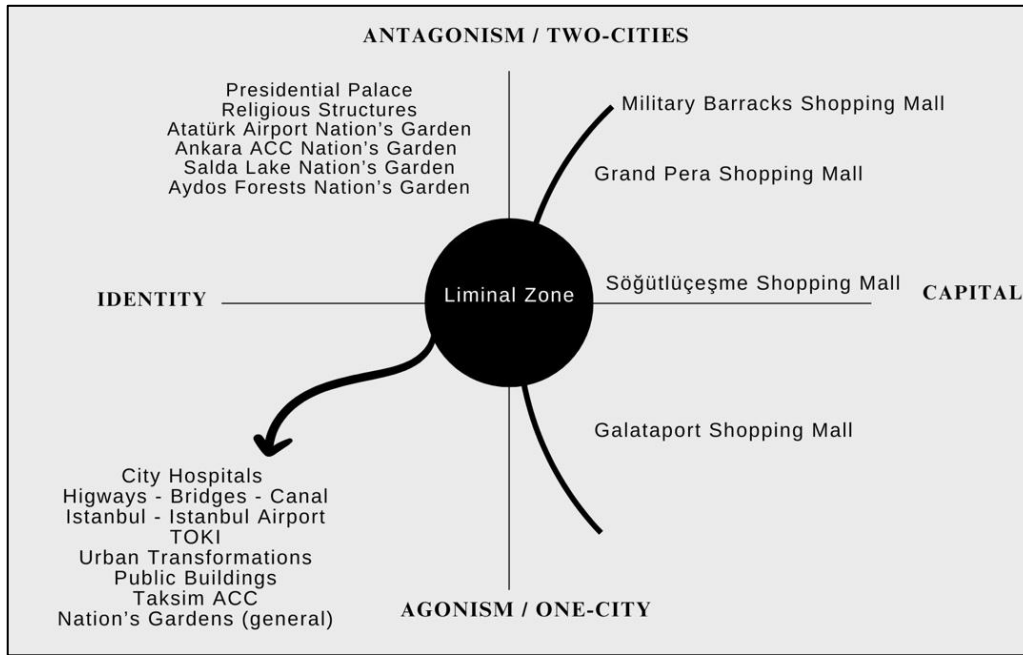


Figure 17 Matrix shows intersections of concepts (2)

Looking at these examples, it can be said that in the Presidential Palace and religious buildings where the emphasis on identity is very clear, this is also felt by the public. The fact that the government explicitly states how these projects are based on an opposition has an impact on the shaping of the perception here. The form of both the Presidential Palace and the religious buildings, their positioning and the antagonistic attitude, which is not hidden in terms of the presentation of power, is also evaluated in the same direction by the public. In the case of the Presidential Palace, on one hand, the inability to use this space at any time makes this antagonism clear to the public, while on the other hand, it is known that there are groups that will never use this space due to some political opposition. As for the religious buildings, in addition to the fact that the open statements of the government are heard by the public, the fact that these buildings are symbols of a belief, conservatizing the area in which they are located, therefore cause people who do not have this religious belief or who do not visit mosques even if they do, to stay away from these public spaces.

The simple act of knowing that these structures were built and placed in special locations for reasons related to a certain ideology and belief and the avoidance of these spaces as a form of opposition can be interpreted as signs that the society evaluates

these structures as an antagonism. When we look at the examples where the theme of identity is visible as two-cities projects, it is seen that the Presidential Palace and religious buildings are projects that create limited publicity in the city due to their defining characteristics directly mentioned above. Rather than the inclusion of a large part of the society, it is understood that the groups with the 'nation' identity expressed from the beginning, that is, groups where conservatism and nationalism are accepted, can use or prefer to use these spaces, while it is seen that these spaces have become spaces that people outside the aforementioned definition do not / cannot use.

The Nation's Gardens, which are thought to be constructed antagonistically by the government, but which are determined to remain in the liminal zone rather than a determination that the society evaluates them in this way, still emerge as a space whose use is divided. These spaces, which are not restricted in any way, but which are preferred for socializing by people who mostly fit the AKP's definition of the nation, have become spaces that people who do not feel compatible with this culture and form of socialization do not prefer to use. In this sense, it is possible to say that the actual users of these parks have been determined spontaneously as a result of their own impact. When we look at the Nation's Garden projects that are perceived in a similar way to the intentions of the government, it is understood that some of the projects that are given as representative examples have shifted to an antagonistic zone rather than being located in a liminal zone like other Nation's Gardens. The fact that various communities raise objections in such examples shows that these projects are perceived as antagonistic. Projects that can be evaluated in this way are more appropriately positioned as two-cities projects.

By evaluating the Taksim ACC building on the basis of both its economic and political divisiveness, it seems possible to determine that a large part of the society evaluates this project as antagonistic and therefore it is a two-cities project. It should be taken into consideration that some communities, who identify with the political antagonism created by the government through ACC, may be boycotting the use of this space. However, it can still be said that the main segregation in this space is due to economic conditions. As mentioned under its own heading, this building, which has been gentrified in a way, appeals to upper-income people with its luxury shops and

restaurants, and in this way, it is made clear who the people and groups targeted to spend time in this space are. As a result of this situation, the ACC building does not offer the same level of socialization or the ability to consume its services to everyone, and class differences emerge thanks to this building and the division created by the transformation of the public space is witnessed.

On the other hand, the examples of shopping malls, are more common in the public opinion that they do not represent any exclusionism. For reasons such as the lack of an emphasis on identity in the majority of these project examples, and the fact that almost every shopping mall is designed to be open to the use of everyone, it is possible to evaluate that the society in general, including the economically discriminated groups, does not feel an antagonism produced by the government. On the other hand, the visualization of the prominent examples mentioned in its own title in the matrix above is important in terms of showing in which situations the antagonism dimension of shopping malls is perceived by the society. The fact that these examples, which distinguish themselves among shopping malls, which are generally more agonistic and can be considered as one-city projects, are designed as interventions in living spaces, natural and public spaces, causes the society to perceive them as antagonistic, and therefore these examples are considered as two-cities projects.

In addition, when evaluating shopping malls, it is important to emphasize once again that it is critical to take into account that, as mentioned before, the fact that each shopping mall appeals to groups of different classes, and that this is manifested in the stores, restaurants and the effects it realizes, affects people's decision whether or not to use this space. It is also possible to say that shopping malls create divided spaces in cities to some extent in terms of everyone gravitating towards an area that appeals to them, and in this way, people from almost the same culture and class cluster in the same spaces.

The projects located in the liminalzone, with the exception of public buildings, are mostly capital projects. The fact that these projects are largely service-oriented projects and that a large part of the society continues to use these spaces, even if they are against them in idea or usage, is a sign that they do not position themselves as

either inside or outside the project. Even if each situation is sometimes perceived as antagonism in its own way, in general terms, these projects are not seen as an 'attack, separation, selective destruction' by the society. In cases such as a road or bridge passing through a strategic location, or the urban transformation of an area specifically designated for demolition, these projects may be perceived as antagonism by certain groups, and even reactions may emerge in large or small masses.

However, the lack of standard and unchanging content of the projects as reflected in general causes the reaction of the public to diversify. In this way, the fact that even communities perceived as 'other' by power and capital do not take action by directly placing themselves in the position of 'other' can show the state of in-between here. Groups that take a stance and approach according to the situations brought about by each project in their own subjectivity, while appreciating the government at the point of implementation of one project, may react by feeling excluded in the implementation of another project, and this reaction may even reach the dimension of conflict. In this sense, it is important to point out that the majority of the society is located in the liminal zone. In addition to this, despite the fact that the liminal zone projects are used very intensively by the society, there is no comprehensive study that shows how much this contributes to acceptance and how it is received by the society in terms of appreciation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Since a research to evaluate all these cannot be conducted and included in the scope of this thesis, the uncertainty here is taken into consideration and the projects are evaluated as liminal projects.

Going one step beyond evaluating in general terms the conditions under which the government's attitude towards urban projects and the society's response, another issue that is thought to be critical to evaluate is how these urban projects create cities. When the above urban projects are analyzed, it becomes possible to say that the ability of urban space to bring people together has been lost with the implementation of some projects. Individuals and groups who cannot use the same spaces together as a result of certain divisions and conflicts, whether due to the attitude of the government or the response of the society, cluster in areas that appeal to them, where they feel that their existence is recognized and represented, where they can participate in processes, and

in this way, separate life styles, separate cultures and separate classes are formed within the city.

For individuals and groups, the problem of being pushed out of a space, of not being able to exist in a space even if they want to, arises, while at the same time, individuals may prefer not to use a city space in line with their political preferences. There are also many projects that are formed out of necessity and that some groups continue to use even though they cannot find their own representation or even prefer to be politically opposed to them. While the inability to come together due to class differences manifests itself in market-based examples and it is understood that there is a distributional segregation at these points; in projects that are felt to be excluded due to not being recognized and not finding representation, cities increase the limitation of togetherness by offering different spaces to everyone with a segregation based on recognition and representation.

As a result of these evaluations, it is thought that utilizing Jessop's dichotomy of one-nation and two-nations adds depth to this discussion. Utilizing Jessop's concepts, the aforementioned urban projects are evaluated as one-city projects and two-cities projects, and the resulting cities are discussed (Jessop, 1990). It has already been mentioned above that some of the projects created by the AKP have set examples that divide the society. Jessop's arguments in explaining bi-national hegemonic projects become meaningful at this point. According to Jessop, the two-nations hegemonic project is aimed at mobilizing the support of strategically important sectors of the population, and given that the costs of the project are borne by other sectors and segments, it can be said that the project covers a limited hegemony (*ibid.*).

Based on this explanation, it is understandable that in the hegemony that AKP tries to create through its urban policies, identity-based projects prioritize the support of certain segments that will benefit in line with its own politics, and that it plans urban projects by determining its strategy through these groups. As in the explanation above, the cost of the projects produced in every sense is blamed on identities outside the concept of 'nation' and the bearers of these identities. In this sense, it becomes possible

to evaluate projects where a separation is created by emphasizing identity as two-cities projects.

The projects under the theme of 'capital' come to the fore as two-cities projects, it can be seen that the division here is not based on identity but rather on class. It has already been mentioned that projects under the theme of 'capital' can prioritize an inclusive attitude. However, it is understood that this inclusiveness cannot ensure that projects where capital is at the forefront are considered as one-city projects. Again in line with Jessop's definition, the one-nation hegemonic project aims to resolve all class differences on a nation-wide scale, and although it may seem like an identity emphasis, the concept of nation here has a class meaning. From this point of view, in the examples that are expected to be evaluated as one-city projects, it should be expected that the class and identity differences that everyone harbors are melted into a single pot and that urban spaces are created in this direction. However, as discussed in the examples above, it is understood that in these projects, differences are not eliminated in most cases, and in many cases they even become visible.

From this perspective, it is noteworthy that many projects remain in the liminal zone. The projects that remain in the liminal zone are used by a large part of the society, regardless of how intense their emphasis on identity or capital is. Although the subjective situation of each project may lead to the evaluation of a project as one-city or two-cities, in general terms, it can be seen that each project is produced as projects that are open to the use of the entire public. It would not be wrong to say that the society uses these projects intensively mostly because of their functions, beyond appreciation, satisfaction, and the search for representation and recognition. It is a fact that the positive or negative attitude of the people in the society towards the projects cannot be known with concrete data unless there is a mass action or an outburst, and for this reason, the reason behind their use can only be explained through the services they offer. The fact that these projects meet needs such as housing, health care and transportation does not make it possible for any group to be excluded or to refuse to be included and consumed by themselves, even if they are completely against them. At this point, one can understand that urban dynamism can be shaped by needs rather

than recognition and rejection, but as a result, most urban spaces are only consumed and quickly passed by.

In the end, all these projects basically reveal the new state of cities. It is a universal truth that hegemonies are established and that urban spaces are used as tools for their concrete presentation, and governments always do this in different ways. The AKP government's policies show that such harsh, divisive, and restrictive urban projects lead to major rifts, groupings and segregation in cities. As a result of these divisions, city dwellers who are unaware of each other for cultural, class or political reasons, who do not live in the same culture, who are not even familiar with each other's culture, feelings or thoughts, and whose all practices differ from each other. As can be understood from this point, as mentioned at the very beginning and as Lefebvre also stated about the mutual production of society and the city, it is clearly and concretely revealed how society is affected as a result of urban policies. The existence of different nations, classes and identities in cities and the effort to make these differences visible by deepening and differentiating them creates a city where groups cannot coexist, cannot share the same public space, do not perceive the same symbols in the same way and are even unaware of each other

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

Cities are places that have a great impact on society and the communication between communities and are open to being affected by these communications in the same way. Considering this relationship between cities and society and their impact on it, it becomes understandable that governments have been trying to establish political and cultural hegemony in cities throughout history. Like all governments, the AKP government aims to make its hegemony permanent and concrete by producing many projects on cities, and there are various examples in this context. It is possible to argue that the AKP government pursues an antagonistic policy in its urban policies and practices, similar to the political attitude it adopts in other areas of its general politics. In cases where the existence of antagonism is not clearly visible, it is generally not directly possible to say that it pursues an agonistic policy that is inclusive and listens to the needs and demands of different segments.

In this thesis, the urban strategies of the AKP government are analyzed by selecting the most controversial urban projects of the AKP government, which are referred to as mega projects. The conditions under which antagonism and states of exclusion occur and how cities are shaped as a result of these urban projects, were the primary topics of discussion.

As a first step, the projects selected for the thesis were considered within the framework of a categorization through the relationship of antagonization and deepening divisions. Then, each project example was examined individually under their own sub-headings, and the political motivation and approach behind their realization as well as their impact on society were elaborated and discussed. It can be seen that while some urban projects of the AKP government are shaped around the

nationalist-conservative definition of 'nation' defined by the government itself and establish the segregation in society through this point, other urban projects are mostly capital projects and these projects do not exclude on the basis of an identity. Nevertheless, it is possible to propose that even in projects where there is no direct antagonistic politics, there is no agonistic political approach, and the AKP government mostly does not realize urban projects that allow for the representation of different segments. Moreover, even in projects where it is not necessary or even possible to include an exclusion due to the context of the project itself, it emphasizes the 'us-them' distinction with the discourses it builds upon.

The other critical theoretical framework in this thesis is Bob Jessop's one-nation/two-nation concepts. As a result of the reading of Jessop's hegemonic projects, respectively expansionist and limited/strategic hegemonic projects, with AKP urban projects, a new conceptualization is created within the scope of the thesis. In this context, while it is claimed that public projects are 'two-cities', it cannot be said that private projects are neither 'one-city' nor 'two-cities' projects. The government's urban projects are mostly constructed through 'two-cities' projects and it becomes possible to argue that both 'two-cities' projects, which appeal to a strategic segment, and other types of projects where capital relations are at the forefront, result in divided and fragmented cities.

Turner's concept of liminality was then utilized to argue that a large part of society is located in the liminal zone. In line with this concept, it is understood that while a large part of the society can sometimes be directly positioned against a project, sometimes they do not establish a strong opposition relationship, and sometimes they can even take a position that approves and appreciates the project. Except for the groups that are politically opposed to the government's actions, this group, which includes the majority of the society, can evaluate and act according to the content of the project. As can be understood from this, the positioning of social groups in the face of projects may vary depending on the situation.

Ultimately, in cities where divisions can exist on the basis of identity or class, urban projects implemented by the government have the power to deepen these divisions, and examples of this can be seen in the case of Turkey. This thesis aimed to to analyze

the shape that cities take as a result of the exclusion/exclusion/preference to remain outside as a result of antagonisms and their impact on the societies living in the city

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Toplumdaki birey ve gruplar kentlerdeki kamusal alanlar aracılığıyla sosyalliklerini kurabilmekte, bu sayede kendi aralarında ilişkiler oluşturabildikleri gibi kentin kendisi ile de bağlar geliştirebilmektedirler. Kentler içerisinde birbirinden politik, kültürel, sınıfsal ve başka birçok açıdan farklılaşan gruplar minimum düzeyde uzlaşarak ortak bir yaşamı paylaşmaktadırlar. Harvey de bu düşünceye paralel olarak kenti “her türden ve sınıfsal toplumdan insanın, her ne kadar gönülsüzce ve agonistik bir biçimde de olsa, yan yana gelerek durmadan değişen, gelip geçici ama yine de müşterek bir yaşantıyı ürettiği bir mekân” olarak tanımlamaktadır. (Harvey, 2012)

Kentler zaman içerisinde kimi zaman olumlu sonuçlara da yol açabilen ve kentlerin gelişimine katkı sunabilen ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel değişimlere uğrayabilmektedirler. Kentlerdeki bu değişimlerin en çok hissedildiği yerler ise kentte her gün farklı vesilelerle ve yollarla temaslar kurulan kamusal mekanlar olmaktadır. Bireylerin toplumdaki diğer bireylerle ve kentin kendisiyle temasının olduğu ve etkileşimin yaşandığı bu kamusal mekanlar sayesinde bir kolektif hafıza oluşmakta ve tüm bu etkileşimler bu sayede bir süreklilik kazanabilmektedir. Kent kültürü ise bu şekilde oluşarak sonraki nesillere de aktarılabilmektedir.

Gücü elinde tutan yöneticiler mekan aracılığıyla aynı zamanda kültürel bir iktidar da sağlamaya çalışmaktadır. Baskın ideolojinin baskın kültür haline getirilmeye çalışılması çoğunlukla kamusal mekanlar üzerinden sağlanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Siyasetin doğası olarak değerlendirilebilecek olan hegemonya mücadelesinin yine doğal bir gerekliliği olarak iktidarlar kendi taraftarları ile kurdukları ilişkileri güçlendirmeye ve onlara hitap etmeye çalışırken, kendisinden olmayanlarla kurduğu ilişkinin sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan karşıtlığı da siyasetlerinin bir parçası yapmakta ve ‘biz/onlar’ ayrımını diri tutabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla bir kamusal mekan inşa

edilirken görünmeyen bu sınırları, belirli bir ideoloji etrafında şekillendirme çabası, o mekanın kullanıcılarını da yazılı olmayan bir şekilde belirleme ve kendi ideolojisinin karşısında / dışında olan kişileri bu sınırların dışında tutabilme gücüne sahiptir.

Türkiye’de 2002’den bu yana iktidarda olan AK Parti, mekânları siyasal projesi çerçevesinde dönüştürme konusunda zengin bir pratiğe sahiptir. AK Parti’nin kamusal mekân dönüşümü stratejisinin en önemli ögesi herkesin kullanımına açık olan kamusal alanların başka kullanımları öngören dönüşümlere uğratmasıdır. Bu tez, AK Parti iktidarının kentlerdeki hegemonya mücadelesini dönüşümlerin doğasından çok gerçekleştiriliş biçimlerini problematize etmektedir.

AK Parti iktidarı, hegemonyasını kurmaya çalışırken, kent mekanlarında da sıklıkla görünür kıldığı üzere, ‘biz’ ve ‘onlar’ ayrımını keskin bir biçimde sunmakta, ‘biz’ olarak belirlediği grubun karşısına koyduğu kesimleri çoğu zaman tanımladığı toplumsala ait olmayan dışarıdaki olarak konumlandırmaktadır. Bu siyasetini ise en temelde ‘seçkin elitler’ ve ‘elitlerin ezdiği kimseler’ olarak üretmiş olduğu popülist siyaset üzerinden gerçekleştirmekte, buradaki ayrımı ise milliyetçi-muhafazakâr bir ‘millet’ kimliği üzerinden oluşturmaktadır.

Tezin ana hareket noktasını oluşturan bu tespiti sınamak üzere AK Parti iktidarının kamusal mekanlar aracılığıyla uygulamaya koyduğu kent projelerinin nasıl bir bağlamda ve nasıl bir siyasi temelle gerçekleştiriliyor olduğuna dair bir sorgulamaya gidilmiştir. Bu sorgulamalar sonrasında tezi oluşturan araştırma sorusu şu şekilde ortaya çıkmaktadır:

“AK Parti iktidarında kentleri şekillendirmek üzere kurgulanan ve antagonistik olduğu varsayılan kamusal mekân müdahaleleri ve dönüşümleri sonucunda oluşan kentler hangi bağlamda değerlendirilebilir?”

Bu temel sorunun devamı ve tamamlayıcısı olarak ise şu alt sorular ortaya çıkmaktadır:

- AK Parti iktidarı tarafından gerçekleştirilen kentsel müdahaleler sonucunda antagonizmanın hangi şartlarda ortaya çıktığını tartışmak mümkündür?
- AK Parti iktidarının mekân projelerinin sonucunda hangi birey ve gruplar ‘dışlanmış, pay alamamış, düşmanlaştırılmış’ hissedebilmektedir?
- ‘Dışlanmış, pay alamamış, düşmanlaştırılmış’ hissine maruz kalan birey ve grupların bu hissiyatı hangi şartlarda ortaya çıkmaktadır?

Bu sorulara cevap bulmak için tartışma yürütülen bu çalışmada amaç, iktidarın kamusal mekanlar aracılığıyla mevcutta yıkmaya çalıştığı ve yerine yeni kazandırmaya çalıştığı temsiliyetleri sorunsallaştırarak kent projelerinin oluşturulma sürecine dair bir değerlendirme yapmaktır.

Daha önce birden çok kent projesinin bir araya getirilerek benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları üzerinden bir siyasi tavır analizi, bununla beraber kent projelerinin kentler üzerindeki etkisi konusunda bir değerlendirme yapılmamış olmasından yola çıkılarak ayrıntılı bir analiz yapılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu değerlendirmelerin ve durum analizinin birden çok teorik kavramın bir araya getirilerek tartışılmaya çalışılmasının kent projelerinin her birine daha kapsamlı ve çok açıdan yaklaşılmasını sağladığı düşünülmektedir. Gerçekleştirilmeye çalışılan bu analiz için ilk önce genel bir kent-iktidar ilişkisi tartışmasıyla yürütülmüş, sonrasında AK Parti iktidarının kent projeleri somut örnekler üzerinden değerlendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu tartışmanın yürütülebilmesi için, AK Parti iktidarının Türkiye’deki kamusal mekanları kullanarak gerçekleştirdiği projelerden, tartışmayı en iyi ortaya koyabileceği düşünülen bazı örnekler seçilmiştir. Seçilen örneklerin AK Parti’nin ön plana çıkartmayı tercih ettiği ve hem kendisi tarafından hem de kamuoyunda ‘mega projeler’ olarak öne çıkan projeler arasından seçilmesine dikkat edilmiştir.

Bu tez çalışmasında temel olarak literatür taraması ve ikincil kaynak taraması yöntemlerinden faydalanılmıştır. Çalışmaya dahil edilen proje örnekleri hakkında tez konusuyla ilgili bilgiler derlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, her bir kent projesinin iktidar tarafından sunulmuş biçimlerini anlayabilmek adına projeler hakkındaki gazete haberleri, anlatılan projelerin okuyucu için somutlanabilmesini sağlamak adına

görseller, iktidarın sunumun yanı sıra toplumdaki yansımaları da sunabilmesi amacıyla da köşe yazıları ve internet forumları taranmıştır.

Hedeflenen tartışmayı yürütebilmek amacıyla ise, tez çalışmasına dahil edilen somut kent uygulamalarının çeşitliliği ve tüm bu uygulamaların kendi içinde de farklı katmanları olması sebebiyle birden fazla teoriden faydalanılmıştır. Öncelikle Lefebvre'in Mekânın Üretimi teorisinden faydalanılarak mekânın tanımlanması konusundaki yaklaşımı göz önünde bulundurulmuş, kent ve kent ilişkileri bu perspektif üzerinden anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır. Daha sonra AK Parti iktidarının kent projeleri incelenirken dikkate alınması gereken Harvey'in 'kent hakkı' kavramından faydalanılmıştır. AK Parti iktidarının kurmuş olduğu ikili karşıtlığı ne üzerinden oluşturduğunu anlayabilmek ve ürettiği popülist stratejinin temelini değerlendirebilmek adına ise popülist strateji kavramından faydalanılmıştır. Daha sonra bu tez çalışmasında temel kavramlar olarak kullanılmış olan, antagonizma ve agonizma kavramları dahil edilmiştir. Bob Jessop'ın tek-ulus/iki-ulus kavramlarından faydalanılarak yeni kavramsallaştırmalara gidilmiş ve 'tek-şehir' / 'iki-şehir' kavramları oluşturularak kent projeleriyle ilişkilendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Daha sonra bu kavramları tamamlaması amacıyla Turner'ın sınırdalık kavramı dahil edilmiş, hegemonik projeler sonucunda toplumda oluşan ayrışmalarda arada kalmış, antagonistik veya agonistik olarak değerlendirmenin zor olduğu kent projelerini anlayabilmek ve açıklayabilmek adına katkı sunması sağlanmıştır. En son ise Fraser'ın sunmuş olduğu tanınma, yeniden dağıtım ve temsil kavramlarından faydalanılarak kentsel mekân projelerinin yaratmış olduğu ve olabileceği adaletsizliklere, dışlamalara ve ötekileştirmelere bütünlükçü bir perspektiften bakarak çok yönlü bir adalet kavrayışı üzerinden yaklaşabilmeye çalışılmıştır.

AK Parti iktidarının popülist stratejisinin üretmiş olduğu 'biz' ve 'onlar' ayrımı temel olarak millet/ulus olarak halk ve seçkinler tarafından ezilen mağdurlar olarak halktır. AK Parti iktidarı tarafından gerçekleştirilen kent projelerinde kimi örneklerde 'millet' tanımına dayalı bir kimlik vurgusunun çok görünür şekilde ön planda tutulduğu, kimi örneklerde ise bu vurgunun daha geri planda kaldığı, bazen ise hiç kullanılmadığı görülmektedir. Bu tip projelerde buna paralel olarak sermaye ilişkilerinin de ön plana çıktığı anlaşılmaktadır. AK Parti'nin popülist stratejisinin kentteki örneklerine

bakmak için seçilen mekân projeleri tartışmanın en başında temel olarak iki uç olarak ayrıştırılan ‘kimlik’ ve ‘siyaset’ vurguları etrafında yerleştirilmiş ve aşağıdaki, hiyerarşik bir ifade içermeyen görsel meydana gelmiştir. Bu görsel, mekân projelerinin bu çalışma boyunca nasıl kurgulandığını ve içeriği bakımından hangi ana başlığa daha yakın değerlendirildiğini somut şekilde gösterebilmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

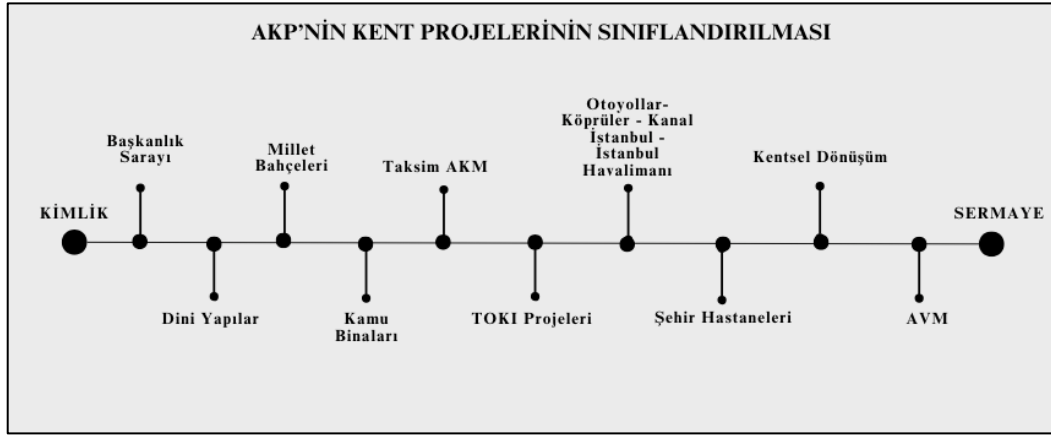


Figure 18 AKP'nin Kent Projelerinin Sınıflandırılması

Bu çizelgede ‘Kimlik’ teması etrafında şekillenen örnekler, AK Parti iktidarının kendi siyasi kimliğini öne çıkarttığı, bunun üzerinden bir kimlik siyaseti yarattığı, bu kimlik siyasetini de milliyetçi-muhafazakâr bir ‘millet’ kavramı üzerinden yürüttüğü mekân projeleri olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Buna ek olarak AK Parti iktidarının, hatta kimi zaman doğrudan Erdoğan’ın kendi siyasi gücünü ortaya koyduğu projeler olduğu da dikkat çekmektedir. Bu projelerin bazılarının özel olarak konumlandırılışlarının stratejik olduğu ve özellikle büyük şehirlerde (İstanbul, Ankara) gerçekleştirildiği anlaşılmaktadır. Şehirlerdeki bu stratejik konumlandırmalar, oluşturulmaya çalışılan millet kimliğinin daha görünür kılınmaya çalışıldığı, bu mekanların sembolik nitelikler taşıdığı ve politik hamleler olduğu savlarını güçlü hale getirmektedir. Çizginin diğer ucunda kalan ve ‘Sermaye’ teması etrafında şekillenen projelerin ise genellikle bir kimliğin öne çıkartılmadığı fakat çoğunlukla iktidarın siyasi gücüne referanslar içeren ve sermaye ilişkilerinin daha baskın olarak okunduğu projeler olduğu görülmektedir. Bu kent projelerinin genelinde iktidarın herhangi bir kimlik vurgusunun görülmediği dikkat çekmekle beraber, çoğunun üzerine üretilmiş olan söylemler iktidarın bu projelerle kurduğu ilişkinin biçimini göstermektedir. Bunun

dışında tamamen özel girişimler olan projeler dahil olmak üzere her biri iktidarın kent politikalarının bir sonucu olarak üretilmiş projelerdir. Bu bağlamdaki projelerin ülkenin hemen her yerinde karşılaşılabilen ve örnekleri yaygın olan projeler olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bu sebeple bu mekanların işlevlerinin, büyüklüğünün, çokluğunun ve dolayısıyla iktidarın 'başarısının' daha görünür kılınması amacı taşıdığını düşünmek mümkündür.

İlk değerlendirme çerçevesinde, millet vurgusunun öne çıktığı kent projelerinin, bu kimliğin dışında kalan ya da kendisinin bizzat dışarda bıraktığı gruplara yönelik ayrıştırıcı, çoğunlukla bazı sembolik yapı ve alanların yerine, onların yıkılarak oluşturulduğu, bu sebeple de antagonizma oluşumuna daha açık bir siyasi tavrıla gerçekleştirildiğini düşünmek ilk akla gelen olmaktadır. Öte yandan kimlik vurgusunun geri planda tutularak, özel girişimlerin devreye alındığı diğer tip projelere bakıldığında ise, bu projelerin işlevleri sebebiyle halkın büyük çoğunluğunun tükettiği ve arkasındaki sermaye ilişkileri sebebiyle de dışlayıcı tavrın baskın olmasının çok mümkün olmadığı projeler olduğu dikkat çekmektedir. Bu noktada 'Sermaye' başlığı altındaki projelerde agonizmaya daha yakın bir siyasetin kurgulandığı düşünülebilmektedir. Bu tartışmanın devamı olarak, bu tez çalışmasında yukarıdaki paragrafta bahsedilen varsayımların ne kadar geçerli olduğu anlaşılmaya, dışlayıcılık ve kapsayıcılık tartışmasının kimlik ve sermaye vurgularının beraberinde gelip gelmediği incelenmeye çalışılmıştır.

Her bir kent projesinin ayrıntılı incelenmesi sonucunda anlaşılmaktadır ki, AK Parti iktidarı oluşturduğu 'millet' kavramını ve kendi siyasi tavrını 'Kimlik' teması altında görünen mekanlarda açıkça ortaya koymakta ve bunu yaparken çoğunlukla, istisnaların olduğu göz önünde bulundurulmakla beraber, kendi siyasetinin karşısına koyduğu anlaşılabilir diğer kimlikleri yok sayan ve dışlayan antagonistik bir siyasi tavrı göstermektedir. Ön plana çıkartılan kimliğin barındırdığı muhafazakâr ve milliyetçi vurguların sadece kendi başına dahi ayrıştırıcı bir yanı olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Bu kimliklerin çizdiği sınıra dahil edilmeyen veya bu kimliklere ait hissetmeyen kişilerin doğrudan sınırın dışında kalacağı ve kişilerin de kendisini dışlanmış hissedebilecekleri açıktır. AK Parti iktidarının kendi içinde zaten ayrıştırıcı olan bu vurguyu başka bir karşıt kimlik belirleyerek 'biz' algısı oluşturması ve bu iki

farklı kimliği çatışan bir biçime sokması, yarattığı bu derin ayrımla birlikte toplumu ve dolayısıyla kent mekanlarını bölmesi antagonistik bir yaklaşım olarak değerlendirilebilmektedir. Bu noktada, AK Parti iktidarının bir sembolü veya yaşam biçimini hedef alarak buraları bir kimlik üzerinden dönüştürmeye çalıştığı kent siyasetinin çoğu zaman halkın azımsanmayacak bir kesimi tarafından da bu şekilde görüldüğünü söylemek mümkündür. Bu mekanların inşa edilme süreçlerinde veya sonrasında bir katılım sağlayamayan, bu mekanların üretilmesi ve işleyişi sırasında bir temsiliyet bulamayan gruplar, iktidarın varlıklarını yok saydığı, ihtiyaç ve taleplerini görmezden geldiği, hatta değerlerine seçici bir yıkıcılıkla yaklaştığı gruplar olduğu dikkat çekmektedir. Bu başlık altındaki diğer kent projelerin genelinde ekonomik temelli bir ayrımın olduğu dikkat çekmemektedir. İktidarın antagonistik yaklaşımını anlamaya çalışırken vurgulanan kimliğin ne olduğuyla beraber, bu kimliğin ‘neyin yerine’ ve ‘ne şekilde’ koyulduğunun da birlikte değerlendirilmesi gerektiği anlaşılmaktadır. Tüm bunlar seçici bir yıkıcılıkla gerçekleştirildiğinde yaklaşımın antagonistik olduğundan bahsetmek daha mümkün hale gelmektedir.

Sermaye ilişkileri ön planda olan ve ‘Sermaye’ başlığı altında görünen projelere bakıldığında ise çoğunlukla bir kimlik vurgusunun olmadığı ve genel olarak piyasalaşmış biçimde ‘hizmetlerin’ halka sunulduğu dikkat çekmektedir. İktidarın popülist stratejisinin sınıf üzerinden halk tanımlamasından kaçındığı dikkate alınacak olursa bu tür projelerde ironic biçimde sınıfsal boyutun öne çıktığı görülmektedir. Bu başlık altındaki kent projelerinde iktidarın sınıf üzerine doğrudan bir yaklaşımı ve söylemi bulunmamaktadır fakat kent politikası ile önünü açmış olduğu sermayenin yarattığı etkiler bakımından kaynaklardan eşit şekilde yararlanamayan veya bazı projelerden halkın diğer kesimlerine göre daha fazla mağduriyet yaşayan alt gelirli gruplar olduğu görülebilmektedir. Genel olarak alt gelir grubundan olan toplulukların kullanım ve yaşam pratiklerine, ihtiyaçlarına ve taleplerine göre şekillendirildiği düşünülmeyecek olan bu projelerin yine de içerikleri ve işlevleri açısından bakıldığında herhangi bir grubu özel olarak dışlama stratejisiyle üretilmediği anlaşılmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, bu başlık altında verilecek örneklerde bazı istisnalar ise sermaye ilişkilerinin ön planda olduğu durumlarda bile iktidarın siyasi varlığının ve yaklaşımının daha görünür olduğu durumlar mevcut olabilmekte ve toplumun

projeye yaklaşımı da bu çerçevede değişkenlik gösterebilmektedir. Yine de ‘Sermaye’ teması altındaki projelerin birçoğunda yap-işlet-devret ve benzeri modellerin uygulanıyor olması, bu mekanları inşa eden sermayeye iktidar tarafından belirli bir sayıda ‘müşteriyi’ veya ‘hizmet alıcısı’ vadediyor olması sebebiyle de projelerin siyasal dışlayıcılık üzerine kurgulanmadığını ve herhangi bir grubun özel olarak ötekileştirilmediğini, bu sebeple bir antagonizmanın siyasal olarak öne çıkmadığını söylemek de mümkün olmaktadır.

Bununla beraber tüm projeler için ortak olarak söylenebilecek bir diğer nokta ise tam anlamıyla bir kapsayıcılığın da meydana gelmediğidir. Öncelikle birçok projede sınıfsal ayrımların görünür olduğu, projelerin oluşturulması ve sonrasında da işletilmesi sürecinde kimi grupların, genel olarak alt gelirli grupların, diğer gruplara göre daha fazla mağduriyet yaşayabildiği, yaşam alanlarının ve pratiklerinin büyük etki altında kalabildiği gözlemlenebilmektedir. Belirli bir grubun hedef olarak seçilerek çeşitli şekillerde yok edilmeye çalışıldığının net bir örneği görülmemekle birlikte, yine de birçok projede halkın büyük çoğunluğunun ihtiyaç, talep ve pratiklerine kulak verilmediği, varlıklarının göz önünde bulundurularak projelerin tasarlanmadığı ve katılımlarının tasarım ve uygulama süreçlerinde sağlanmadığı açıkça görülebilmektedir. Bu sebeplerle bu başlık altındaki kent projelerinin genel anlamıyla tanınma - yeniden dağıtım - temsil temelli ayrımlar yaratabildiği anlaşılmaktadır.

Tüm projelere, bunların üretilme şartlarına ve oluşturduğu etkilere bakıldıktan sonra üzerine düşünülmesi gereken ilk soru, toplumun hangi noktada antagonizmanın varlığını hissettiği ve insanların ne zaman kendisinin dışlandığını düşündüğü olmaktadır. Her bir kent projesi örneğinde bu tartışma Nancy Fraser’ın ele aldığı tanınma - yeniden dağıtım - temsil kavramları ile birlikte yürütülmeye, kentte oluşan ayrışmalar bu kavramlar üzerinden anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. AK Parti iktidarının kent projelerine bakıldığında bir projenin antagonistik bir tavır ile oluşturulup oluşturulmadığını anlamak adına bazı sorular sorarak değerlendirmeye başlamak pratik bir yol olmaktadır. Gerçekleştirilen projeler hakkında sorulacak olan:

- Neyi dönüştürdüğü,
- Neye dönüştürdüğü,

- Nasıl dönüştürdüğü,
- Kimin / hangi grubun bu dönüşümlerin neresinde kaldığı

sorularının antagonistik bir kent siyasetinin ortaya çıkıp çıkmadığını değerlendirmek konusunda yardımcı olabildiği düşünülmektedir. Anlaşıldığı üzere, bu sorulara verilen cevaplara göre, sembolik bir şeyin başka bir sembole ya da bir yaşam biçiminin başka bir yaşam biçimine dönüştüğü, bu dönüşümlerin yıkıcı, ayrıştırıcı, düşmanlaştırıcı bir şekilde gerçekleştirildiği ve belirli grupların bu dönüşümler sonucunda oluşan mekanların dışında kaldığı ya da kaldığını hissettiği durumlarda antagonizmanın varlığı üzerine konuşmak daha mümkün hale gelmektedir. Buradan yola çıkarak söylemek mümkündür ki antagonizma temelde iki farklı boyutla var olmaktadır: politikayı üreten iktidarın niyeti ve muhatabı olan toplulukların bu politikayı algılayış biçimi.

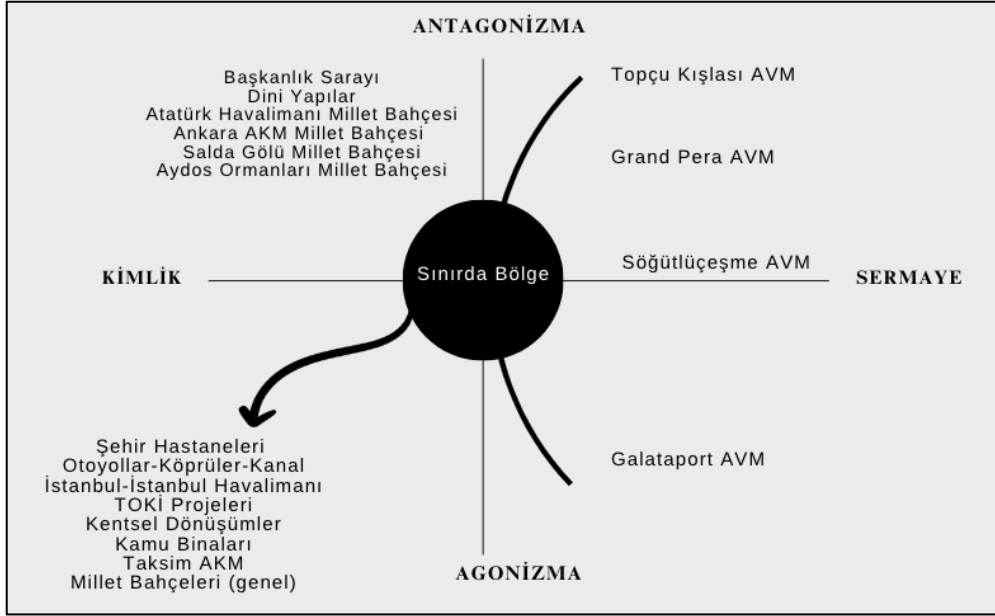


Figure 19 Kavramların kesişimini gösteren matris (1)

Bu anlamda ilk olarak AK Parti iktidarının siyasi yaklaşımı ile birlikte kent projelerini oluşturmaktaki motivasyonu birlikte değerlendirildiğinde, projelerin dışlayıcı, yani antagonistik olup olmadığına dair yukarıdaki gibi bir tablo çizmek mümkün görünmektedir.

Daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi, tüm bu projeler tartışılırken iktidarın niyeti ile toplumun bu niyeti ve sonucunda çıkan kent projesini nasıl algıladığı konusunun her daim birbirine paralel ilerlemediği, dışlama siyasetinin varlığı veya dışlanmış hissetmenin kendisinin her durumda tamamen aynı düzeyde ilerlemediği, her projenin kendi özgün durumunda farklılaşarak her grup tarafından farklı şekilde değerlendirilebildiği görülmektedir. Bireylerin ve grupların tepki gösterdikleri şeylerin ya da tepki gösterme derecelerinin net ve değişmez bir belirleyicisi bulunmamaktadır. Bir projenin toplumda nasıl bir yere karşılık geldiği ve o mekânın kullanımının pratikteki karşılığının ne olduğu, insanların mekanla kurdukları ilişkiyi ve iktidara yöneltile eleştiri ve tepkileri şekillendirebilmektedir. Kent projelerinin, iktidarın niyeti ile toplumun bu niyeti algılayışı arasında nasıl benzerlikler veya farklılıklar olduğunu değerlendirebilmek adına aşağıdaki tablo yol gösterici olabilmektir:

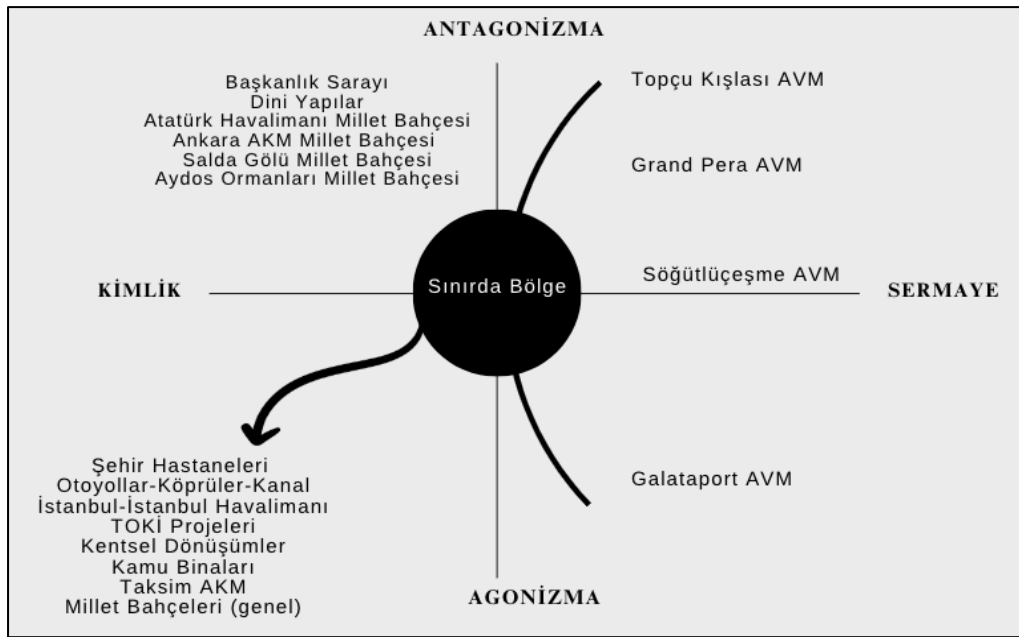


Figure 20 Kavramların kesişimini gösteren matris (2)

Aynı mekanları, ister iktidarın tavrı sebebiyle olsun ister toplumun verdiği karşılık sebebiyle olsun, belli ayrışmalar ve çatışmalar sonucu birlikte kullanamayan kişiler ve gruplar kent içerisinde kendilerine hitap eden, varlıklarının tanındığını ve temsil edilebildiklerini, süreçlere katılım gösterebildiklerini hissettikleri bölgelerde

kümelenmekte ve bu şekilde kent içerisinde ayrı yaşam biçimleri, ayrı kültürler, ayrı sınıflar oluşmaktadır. Bireyler ve gruplar açısından bir mekanın dışına itilme, bir mekanda istense de var olamama sorunu ortaya çıkmaktayken, aynı zamanda kişiler politik tercihleri doğrultusunda da bir kent mekanını kullanmamayı tercih edebilmektedir. İhtiyaç doğrultusunda oluşan ve bazı grupların kendi temsiliyetlerini bulamasa da hatta politik olarak karşısında konumlanmayı tercih ediyor olsa da kullanmaya devam ettikleri birçok projenin varlığından da yukarıda bahsedilmiştir. Sınıfsal farklılıklar dolayısıyla bir araya gelemeyişler kendisini piyasa temelli örneklerde göstermekte ve bu noktalarda dağılımsal bir ayrışma olduğu anlaşılmaktayken; tanınmamak ve temsil bulamamak üzere dışında kalındığı hissedilen projelerde ise tanınma ve temsil temelli bir ayrışma ile kentler herkese farklı alanlar sunarak bir aradalığın sınırlılığını arttırmaktadır.

Bu değerlendirmeler sonucunda Jessop'ın kavramlarından faydalanarak bahsi geçen kent projeleri tek-şehirli projeler ve iki-şehirli projeler olarak değerlendirilerek, ortaya çıkan kentler tartışılmaya çalışılmıştır. AK Parti'nin kent politikaları ile yaratmaya çalıştığı hegemonyada kimlik temelli projelerin kendi siyaseti doğrultusunda fayda sağlayacak belirli kesimlerin desteğini ön plana alması, stratejisini bu gruplar üzerinden belirleyerek kent projelerini planlaması anlaşılır olmaktadır. Yukarıdaki açıklamada olduğu gibi, üretilen projelerin her anlamdaki maliyeti muhafazakarlıkla eklenilen 'millet' kavramının dışında kalan kimliklere ve bu kimliklerin taşıyıcısı kimselere yıkılmaktadır. Bu anlamda kimlik vurgusunun öne çıkartılarak bir ayrıştırmanın meydana getirildiği projeleri iki-şehirli projeler olarak değerlendirmek mümkün hale gelmektedir.

Sonuç olarak; AK Parti iktidarının inşa ettiği popülist siyaset geçtiğimiz 20 yıl içinde AK Parti'yi iktidarda tutacak bir toplumsal desteği üretmeyi başarmıştır. Ancak bu başarının önemli maliyetlerinden biri özellikle büyük kentlerin, keskin bir "biz" ve "ötekiler" ayrımının sonucunda bölünmüş mekânsal birimlere dönüşmesidir. Keskin ve ayrıştırıcı ve bir araya gelişleri kısıtlayan kent projeleri, kentlerde büyük yarılımalara, gruplaşmalara ve ayrışmalara yol açmıştır.

Bu ayrışmalar sonucunda kültürel, sınıfsal ya da politik sebeplerle birbirinden habersiz olan, aynı kültürü yaşamayan, birbirinin kültürüne dahi aşına olmayan, birbirlerinin

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Adı / Name : Ece

Bölümü / Department : Kentsel Politika Planlaması ve Yerel Yönetimler / Urban Policy Planning and Local Governments

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