



*Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

## Urban Policies on Diversity in Istanbul, Turkey

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**Authors:** Ayda Eraydin, Özge Yersen, Nazda Güngördü, İsmail Demirdağ  
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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter on the assessment of urban governance arrangements and policies concerning diversity in Istanbul, Turkey, is threefold. First, it aims to summarise the distribution of powers between different types of administrations, actors and institutions that are responsible for urban governance and diversity in Turkey and the Istanbul Metropolitan Area. The short descriptive section on the institutional set up is based upon a review of secondary resources namely, policy documents, plans, programmes of the central and local government departments and the related legislation. The information on the governance structure and institutional set up are later finalised with the help of the interviewees from two main institutions of the central government - the Ministry of Development and the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation. The second section introduces a brief summary of the existing and earlier forms of governance and decision-making processes for urban policies connected to the main discourse on diversity. Although this section is concentrated on the policy discourse after 1980s, short introductory paragraphs present the key issues that characterised the transition from a multi-ethnic multicultural towards a unitary society, beginning from the late Ottoman Period. The third section of this chapter constitutes both the assessment of current governmental and non-governmental urban policies, views and strategies on urban diversity. The first part of this section is devoted to describe dominant urban governmental policy strategies. They are based on the evaluation of the policy documents, strategic plans and action programs of local departments of the central government in Istanbul, besides those of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and district municipalities. This section is also supported by the interviews of four officials of key organisations. The second part of this section, which aimed to describe non-governmental views and reflections on diversity policy, is based upon eight interviews from different non-governmental bodies, such as universities, professional organisations and the NGOs specialised on different issues. The research was conducted between August and October 2013.

The overview of the research findings on urban governance and diversity highlight several important points. First, it indicates the unwillingness of policy makers to address the different forms of diversity explicitly. Even if the term *diversity* is used in certain policy documents, it is observed that the existing urban policies of central and local governments are primarily focused on the need for improving the well-being of disadvantaged groups and the access of such groups to public services. Second, the official documents, including policy briefs, plans and the programmes of different central government agencies and local authorities reflect the limited concerns about cultural and ethnic diversity. In fact, the legislation on the responsibilities of both central and local government departments does not define clearly their roles on issues related to ethnic and cultural diversity. Third, as most of the interviewees emphasised, the emergent discourse on cultural diversity adopted by some central and local government departments is not reflected in current policies and practice. While the general discourse was *the decreasing social pressure* on the immigrants that belong to different cultural backgrounds to adapt to the way of living of urban dwellers symbolised as the 'Istanbul way of living', most of the interviewees highlighted the current devaluing and stigmatisation of some urban identities and the conservative attitude of the Turkish society. Fourth, there are conflicting views among the actors of urban governance on the policies to be introduced with regard to ethnic diversity. While the recent changes in the legislation that provide special rights and freedoms to ethnic groups are appreciated by most of the interviewees, the further demands by some of these ethnic groups are not approved by most of the interviewees. Lastly, there is a growing criticism of

the recent authoritarian urban policies and discourse of the government, especially underlined by respondents who belonged to non-governmental organisations.

## 2. Overview of the Political System and Governance Structure in Istanbul

### 2.1. Governance structure for Urban Policy in Istanbul

The overview of urban policies and governance structure in Turkey and Istanbul shows that substantial changes have taken place since the 1980s in the distribution of powers between different scales and different types of administrations (Eraydin, 2011). In the 1960s and 1970s, the central administration had a dominant position in urban policies, planning and practice and had the major responsibility to finance major urban infrastructure projects. The municipalities were only accountable for the provision of services. In the 1980s, the growing need for housing due to the rapid increase of population, increasing numbers of squatter housing (*gecekondu*) areas and the increasing frustration of people about their living conditions enforced several reforms that covered both economic, governance and housing issues in the 1980s. The 1984 Local Government Reform initiated the transfer of power and resources from the central government to elected bodies and enhanced the political status of local governments significantly. Beginning in the late 1990s, several important changes have been introduced in Turkey to comply with EU rules, which have affected the structure of governance. These changes continued in the first years of the 2000s; several laws were enacted to support the earlier decentralisation trend, all assigning new roles to municipalities. However, soon after their enactment, they were amended (Duyguler, 2006) and planning rights (usually for core areas in metropolitan cities) were transferred from municipalities to central government bodies. The Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the Ministry of Environment, the State Railways Authority and the Housing Development Administration (TOKI) besides others (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok, 2013) have received power to intervene in the spatial reorganisation of metropolitan areas. The above shows that although the central government administration transferred some of their rights and responsibilities to local governments in the past decades, the current government has a stake in controlling certain nodes in the metropolitan areas. The current central administration views the control of urban areas as important for generating financial resources, which is essential to put its economic policies into practice.

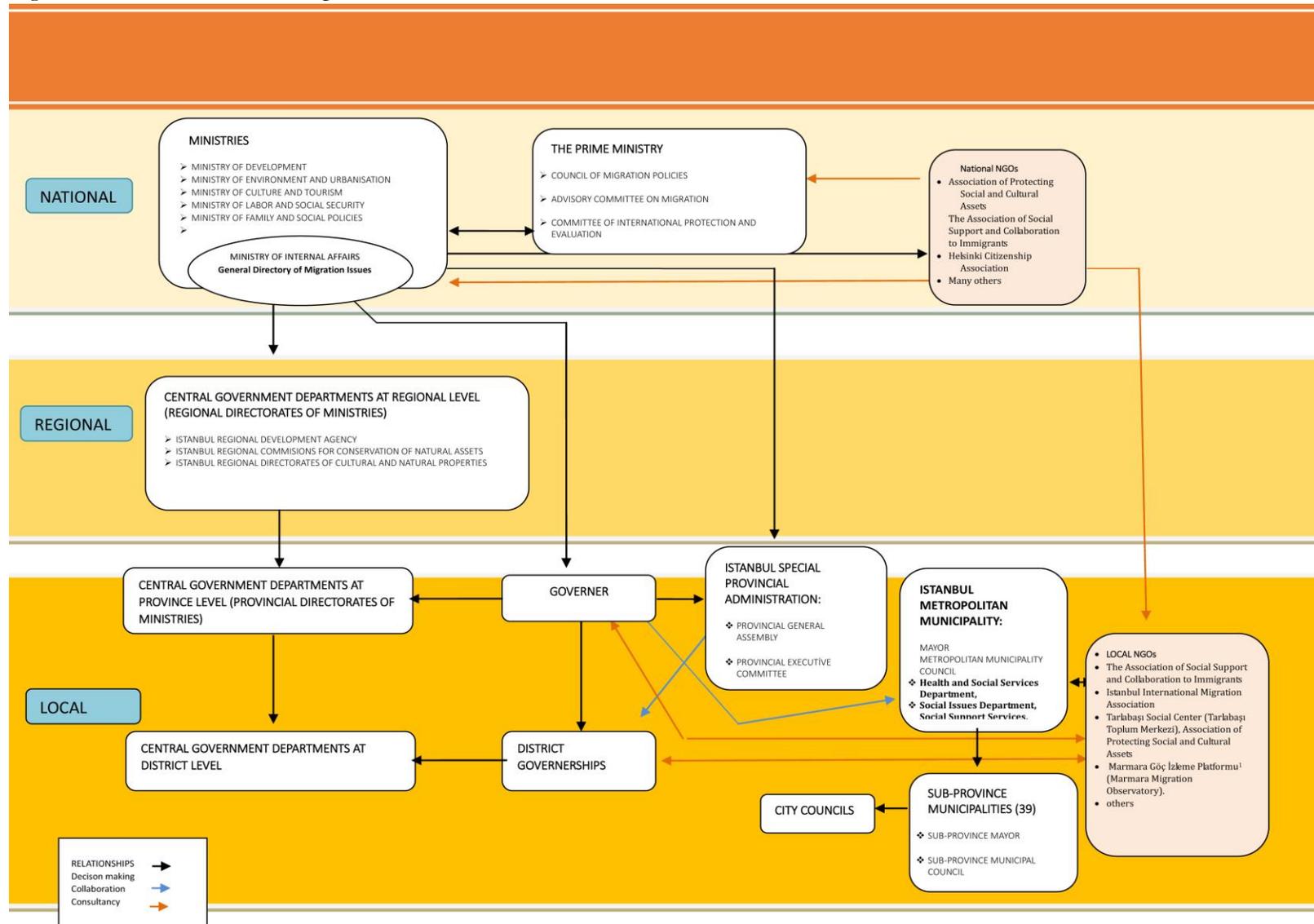
The central administration in Turkey includes the Office of the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers and Ministries. The Prime Minister, according to the 1982 Constitution is the head of both the Council of Ministers and the Administration in general. There are also several administrative bodies operating under the jurisdiction of the Office of Prime Ministry, such as the Housing Development Administration. While the main territorial units of the central government are provinces and sub-provinces (*ilçe*), some of the ministries also have departments at the regional level. Each province has a Governor, an Office of the Governor and a Special Provincial Administration (*İl Özel İdaresi*) which consists of a General Provincial Assembly and a Provincial Executive Committee. Special Provincial Administration is responsible for provision of the different types of public services deemed necessary in the rural areas that are not under the jurisdiction of municipalities (Dedeoğlu, 1997). The Provincial General Assembly is composed of elected members, while governors are appointed by the Ministry of Interior. In addition to existing governmental departments, Development Agencies - institutions of the Ministry of Development - were recently established in each region, including Istanbul.

In Turkey, there is a self-government system of metropolitan and urban settlements, namely municipalities. A municipality has an independent legal status with an independent budget, and a self-government system including a mayor, an assembly of elected politicians and a local office. A Metropolitan Municipality, on the other hand, has a two-tier system; a Metropolitan Municipality Council and a Metropolitan Mayor at the metropolitan level and District Councils and District Mayors at the sub-province levels. The roles and responsibilities of the metropolitan municipality and district municipalities and the division of work among them are defined by the *Metropolitan Municipality Law* No. 5216.

Currently, Istanbul has three administrative levels: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Istanbul Province and Istanbul Region; as one of the 26 NUTS II regions of Turkey (see *Law on the Establishment, Coordination and Duties of Development Agencies*: The Act No. 5449 adopted in 2006). *Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality* was created in 1984 by Law No. 3030. After being in effect for almost twenty years, Decree Law No. 3030 was replaced by *Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216*, which was drafted in the course of substantial reforms in the local government system in 2004. With this law, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's area jurisdiction was enlarged to cover the whole area within the provincial administrative borders and identified *first level municipalities (Birinci derece belediyeler)*, which were the municipalities connected to Metropolitan municipalities only in planning issues. The changes on the legislation on Metropolitan Municipalities both in 2008 (The *Law No. 5747 (Establishing Districts within the Boundaries of Metropolitan Municipalities)*) and 2012 (The *Law No. 6360, Law on the Establishment of Thirteen Metropolitan Municipalities in Thirteen Provinces and Twenty-six Districts*) brought other substantial changes in the governance structure of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. While most of the independent municipalities lost their status and became integrated into different district municipalities, according to the new legislation the settlements with village status will lose their status and will become neighbourhoods of the municipal districts following the 2014 local elections. Moreover, the legislation of 2012 brought another important change in the governance mechanism in Istanbul; it abolished the Special Provincial Administration in Istanbul. The existing duties of the Istanbul Special Provincial Administration will be assigned to the Department of Monitoring Investment and Coordination at the Metropolitan Municipalities following the 2014 local elections (Ministry for EU Affairs Report, 2012). These changes increased the area of jurisdiction of the metropolitan and district municipalities, and enhanced the role of the Metropolitan Municipality.

Interestingly, while the existing Government provided increasing power to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and enlarged its hinterland, at the same time its planning rights on the different sites and districts of Istanbul have been transferred to a range of central government bodies. How can this apparent inconsistency be explained? The answer is related to the importance of Istanbul for the Turkish economy and the importance of property development for the sustained growth of the national economy (Eraydin, 2011). In fact, the construction sector became the driver of economic growth in the last decade by creating multiplier effects in all economic sectors and by attracting remarkable amounts of foreign capital. In general, there is a need to emphasise the changing attitude of the central government departments from social to entrepreneurial mode of governance, referring to the fact that central and local government institutions desire to obtain higher shares from the increasing values of urban land, and to use them to support their policies. Some of the financial resources collected from urban areas, on the other hand, are used to pacify the increasing frustration of the low-income disadvantaged groups (regardless of their degree of ethnic and cultural diversity), who were not able to cope with the changing urban economic conditions.

Figure 1: The institutional set up



## 2.2. Key shifts in national approaches to policy over migration, citizenship and diversity

Today the limited democratic rights of minorities, including rights of protecting identities, are still one of the important issues that have caused the civil upheavals by the Kurdish population in the recent three decades in Turkey. In the year 2013, debates on how their aspirations should be reflected in the legislation or in the Constitution are still ongoing. In fact, setting a deal is not easy, since it is not just a matter of recognition. In order to understand the current debates and discourses on citizenship and diversity, there is a need for pinpointing some issues that constitute the background of existing problems and the scepticisms of a large part of the Turkish people about the notion of diversity.

In the Ottoman Empire, the status of individuals was defined with respect to religion - Muslims and non-Muslims. The non-Muslim population groups were accepted as minorities and the people with different religions and ethnic background were provided special rights and responsibilities. Towards the end of the Empire, several nationalistic movements among certain minorities began to argue for their civil rights. In order to meet the demands of these groups, beginning from 1839 reforms were initiated leading to the change of the structure of the Empire to a constitutional monarchy in 1876 (*I. Meşrutiyet*) and other reforms in 1908 (*II. Meşrutiyet*). However, not all these changes were able to impede the increasing separatist nationalist movements. By the late 1800s the weakening Ottoman Empire was in retreat, freeing up the Balkans for self-rule; Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria all achieved independence from Ottoman rule. In the Balkan War of 1912-1913 they united in an alliance against the Ottoman Empire. Because of the war, almost all remaining European territories of the Ottoman Empire were captured and partitioned among the allies. On the other hand, the Arab revolt in 1916 also helped the loss of territories in the Middle East. In fact, both the hostility of the new states and some of the ethnic minorities collaborating with the Empires fighting against Ottoman Empire became important to accelerate the end of the Ottoman Empire. Following the War of Independence, the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 formed the basis of the new Turkish Republic. According to The Treaty of Lausanne, *non-Muslims minorities* included only the Greeks, Armenians and Jews who were living inside the boundaries of the new Republic and can enjoy special civil and political rights. Ethnic groups that belonged to the Muslim religion, such as Arabs, Kurds, Circassians, besides many others, were not identified as minorities.

The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, consolidating the territory remaining with Turkey after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. The 1924 Constitution defined *equal citizenship*, without any special provisions for groups with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, other than *formal minorities* (the ones defined by Lausanne Agreement). The experience in the late Ottoman period played an important role in this attitude, namely ignoring the cultural and ethnic diversity in the definition of citizens of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, in the early years of the Republic, the population exchange between the countries separated from Ottoman Empire and Turkey caused the decreasing shares of minority groups in the country. It helped the increasing dominance of the majority group, and facilitated the increasing *homogenisation of the population* in Turkey. This situation is used as the justification of the structure of the State that was shaped according to the needs of the majority, the Sunni Muslim Turks. The new national set-up paid no attention to the needs and claims of the diverse groups that were not defined as minorities (İçduygu and Kaygusuz, 2004), which became a source of tension in subsequent years, up to now. More importantly, the new Turkish identity has become ethicised itself in relation to the idea of a persistent danger coming from outside and finding allies inside (Kentel, 2001). The threat of potential separation has always

been important in defining socio-economic and regional policies since the beginning of the Republic and most of the Turkish population still think the nation is under the permanent threat of potential separations.

In Istanbul, because of population exchange schemes and the outmigration of people with Greek origins following the violence against minorities on 6-7 September 1955, which shrunk the numbers of non-Muslim citizens, the diversity of the population has reduced substantially up to mid-1950s. In the period from 1950 to 1970, however, both the country and especially Istanbul experienced massive migration from rural to urban settlements due to important structural transformations in rural areas (see Table 1). The interregional migration increased the cultural and ethnic diversity of the metropolitan areas, since people coming from different parts of the country had very different cultural, ethnic and even religious features. Usually these differences were ignored in urban policies and practice - these immigrants were supposed to get used to the urban way of life. The existing discourse was that they had to adopt Istanbul's living practices, language and learn how to live with the existing urban dwellers and use public spaces. In this respect, both the period from the beginning of the Republican period to 1950s and the period from 1950 to 1970s, can be defined as periods of *limited openness and recognition of differences*. However, the immigrants who needed support in order to survive in the metropolitan area and to protect their existing social networks, formed associations named as *hemşehri dernekleri* (Compatriot associations, which are formed by the immigrants coming from the same province). These associations have been very important, not only for sustaining cultural diversity, but they also acted as collaborative networks that helped people coming from disadvantaged regions of Turkey, to enable them to reach employment opportunities and housing (Kurtoğlu, 1994; Kiray, 1964).

In this period, although there was a clear segmentation between immigrants and the existing urban population in terms of residential areas and employment opportunities, there were also mechanisms that enabled upward mobility of these immigrants, namely housing sector dynamics, the redevelopment of *gecekondu areas*, and employment opportunities provided to the second generation of immigrants (Eraydin, 2008). Moreover, the massive labour emigration of Turks to European countries in the 1960s, invited by the advanced industrial countries of Europe to fill the gap in increasing labour demand, has been also important for the upward mobility of several immigrant families who were living in the metropolitan areas. First, they provided economic growth and increasing employment opportunities in Turkey via sending their remittances and secondly providing direct financial support for their families. The mechanisms for upward mobility, acted as the process of *assimilation of immigrants from less developed regions*, since the people who experienced the change in social status began not only to be integrated but also assimilated by the urban society. In the decades that followed, however, the out-migration of 'guest workers', which was thought as temporary in the beginning, became permanent and the transfer of remittances lost its importance.

The economic crisis of the late 1970s, however, brought increased economic problems for the immigrants in large cities. The declining job opportunities became the source of social unrest for the immigrants, who were not covered by the social security system, and led to increasing violence, especially in the major metropolitan areas. The ones that felt excluded both economically and spatially in the previous decades now began to demonstrate their dissatisfaction (Keyder, 2005), which also made them to express that their disadvantages are due to their *identity*. In fact, up to the 1980s, most of the people living in urban areas were not aware of or interested in the differences in the ethnic, religious and socio-cultural diversity of the Turkish society. The main categories used to

define social groups in the urban areas were based upon income differences and the differences in the levels of education. The identity/ethnic politics and increasing violence in the southeast regions, which began from the 1980s onwards showed the importance of ethnic and cultural differences. They proved that there are groups with diverse ethnic and cultural background, which were not only asking for better economic conditions, but also for rights that are more specific. It was the first time that both the State and the individuals had to face the existing diversity in society, not only in a socio-economic sense, but also culturally and ethnically. However, the general discourse on diversity of the government did not change in this period. The 1982 Constitution was not sensitive to the new rights asked by different ethnic groups and people that belonged to different religious sects of Islam.

Period	International migration	Urban policies connected to interregional migration	Policies on citizenship and diversity
Pre-1950s	Exchange of population (1934 <i>Settlement Law</i> )		1923 <i>Lausanne Agreement</i> defining non-Muslim population as minorities 1924 <i>Constitution</i> -principle of equal citizenship
1950s-1970s	Violence against minorities Agreements with European countries for immigration of Turkish workers	Policies and practice related to squatter housing  1966 <i>Law on Squatter Housing (775)</i>	1961 <i>Constitution</i> -principle of equal citizenship and more democratic rights 1962 <i>Minorities Commission</i>
1980s-1990s	Policies to control the number of refugees from Middle East	Reforms on Local Governments  1984 <i>Local Government Reform</i> 1984 <i>Metropolitan Municipality Law</i>  Legislation on provision of new housing and regularisation of the illegal housing stock	1982 <i>Constitution</i>  Limitations on the practice of cultural differences
2000s	More positive attitude to international immigrants  Regulations facilitating foreigners to work in Turkey  Enactment of <i>Civil Committee on Minorities</i> (2004)	Increasing role of Central Government on urban areas  Transformation of urban areas, without paying the needs of diverse groups	The importance of EU accession process  1999 <i>Helsinki Summit</i> 2001 <i>National Programme</i> 2004 <i>Progress Report</i> 2008 <i>EU Council Decision</i>
2010+	Efforts to cancel the geographical drawback on the Geneva Convention  Encouragement of immigration of skilled manpower to Turkey	The policies for transforming urban areas, where immigrants are living	Attempts to provide special institutions and governance to different ethnic groups  Legislation on Democratic Rights

Table 1: Summary of official discourses and main legislation on migration, citizenship and diversity in Turkey

In the late 1990s, the *negotiations of accession* with the EU have generated important changes in the existing discourses on both citizenship and diversity (Kaya, 2010). *The Helsinki Summit* in December 1999, in which Turkey was designated as an accession country by the EU, provoked reforms in Turkey on democracy, human rights, citizenship and the protection of minorities, parallel to the Copenhagen criteria of 1993. The period from 1999 to 2005 can be characterised as an intense period of reforms. The Turkish Government prepared the *2001 National Programme* (ABGS, 2001). *This programme* was committed to the recognition of cultural differences and practice of differences in daily life. In the *2004 Progress Report on Turkey* by the EU (EU, 2004), the term minority was used to include both Kurds and *Alevi*s, who are not officially identified as minority groups. In the Council

Decision of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey and repealing Decision 2006/35/EC, “*safeguarding cultural diversity*” is defined as one of the main principles.

In the following years, however, the reforms on the democratic rights of diverse groups have been rather slow, since the definition of citizenship in the existing Constitution, still does not meet the demands of the ethnic groups. Today, it still seems difficult for the political parties in the Parliament to reach a consensus on the definition of *citizenship* and the *democratic rights of a citizen* with a different ethnic background. Although much has changed in the last decade in the discourse on diversity - now many government officials, bureaucrats and local administrators define diversity as richness *for society* - little has changed in political practice and governance. The changes were restricted to allowing the use of languages of ethnic groups in broadcasting, mass media and publishing, besides using them in public services. The so-called democratisation packages were passed by Parliament to provide additional democratic rights not only for ethnic groups, but also for all Turkish citizens. The 2000s have been the beginning of a new era in refugee and migration policies. Turkey introduced several regulations concerned with enhancing refugees’ living conditions, as well as simplifying the processes of obtaining work permits in Turkey. The general attitude has become *more open to migrants* and the earlier view that defined *immigrants as temporary workers* has changed substantially, since the governments have become aware of the fact that in achieving higher levels of development, attracting a skilled workforce is important.

### **3. Critical analysis of policy strategies and assessment of resource allocations**

#### **3.1 Dominant governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity**

In this section of the report, we present the dominant discourses and policies of two main groups of governmental institutions with respect to diversity, namely the Central Government and Local Government.

##### *Central Government*

The key Ministries, which define main policies, strategies and practices on urban issues, are the Ministry of Development, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. While the Ministry of Development defines the general economic and social policies and the general guidelines for urban policies and strategies, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security are responsible for implementing and auditing the policies and strategies that aim to improve the material well-being of particular groups. They also aim to increase their access to services such as health, education, and training, and so on (Ministry of Development, 2013). The policies of the above Ministries are defined within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and the EU Policies on Justice and Citizen’s rights and Employment and Social Rights aim to overcome social exclusion and improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups such as women, children, handicapped, elderly and immigrants. Furthermore, they develop strategies and initiate projects for poverty alleviation, reducing unemployment and improving income distribution (Ministry of Development, 2007). However, Ministerial departments are particularly uncomfortable with using the notion of diversity, as one of the interviewees point to the “*irreconcilability of community and diversity*” (Respondent A, August 26, 2013). This statement reflects the view of many actors of urban governance, who think diversity as a

negative condition that needs to be overcome through the enhancement of communities with shared values.

The overview of the main policies of the key Ministries show that there has been limited explicit attention on diversity as an issue, while most of the policies and practice have been focused on *disadvantaged groups*, which can be defined as policies for *equity*. The practice of these Ministries has focused on the provision of different social support and training programmes for disadvantaged groups, including unemployed people, children of poor and single parent families, women, handicapped and young people that are in need of help. Besides, there are programmes for increasing participation of young people, especially disadvantaged young people, to social life and to increasing access of these groups to education and training facilities. They have also introduced strategies and policies for the well-being and empowerment of women and for protecting women against violence and discrimination. “*The Law on Protecting Family and Women against Violence*” of 2012 was adopted to increase the social awareness on violence against women, as well as to protect women against violence. Training programmes, flexible work practices and other facilities such as childcare facilities are expected to facilitate the entrance of women into the labour market (MFSP, 2011). Besides, the Ministry of Interior also has several projects such as a Joint Programme with the United Nations: “*To Protect and Promote the Human Rights of Women and Girls*” (Ministry of Interior, 2012).

One of the other important tasks of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security is focused on the elderly and handicapped. They aim to enable the participation of handicapped in society through increasing the access of disabled people to health and education services, besides employment and social security. Moreover, to enhance the participation of handicapped in the labour market, the Treasury took the burden of contributing to the social security payments normally made by employers if they provide employment for disabled people. In addition to this, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies formulated measures related to social and physical environment, the pre-school counselling and guidance service and home care services in order to increase the life quality of the handicapped (MFSP, 2011). There are also policies and programmes defined for children aiming to enhance the accessibility of all children to educational facilities. Furthermore, measures to impede the use of child labour and prevent child abuse and neglect have been defined.

The Central Government, however, has a very limited concern and very few specific programmes for immigrants from outside Turkey, refugees and asylum seekers. The only concrete measure for immigrants is the provision of guiding service in the school for students with adaptation problems (Ministry of Development, 2008). In general, the policy documents do not define immigrants among the disadvantaged groups.

While the departments of the Ministries specialised in Istanbul are responsible for preparing specific measures and action programmes in socio-economic issues, the Istanbul Development Agency, which is an institution of the Ministry of Development, has the authority to identify policies and measures. It also prepares Regional Plans in collaboration with the relevant ministries. Up to now the Istanbul Development Agency has prepared two Regional Plans (2010-2013 and 2014-2023), which comprised social policies besides the major economic policies for Istanbul. In the Regional Plan of 2010-2014 (ISTKA, 2010a) social policies have been formulated to address the needs of disadvantaged groups and issues related to disabled and elderly people received considerable

attention. It also touched upon the migration issues and proposed some policies for the social inclusion of immigrants and economically disadvantaged groups. The recently completed Regional Plan for 2014-2023 (ISTKA, 2013a) also addressed the disadvantaged groups. Similar to the former plan, it proposed policies regarding the social needs of such groups and their socio-economic integration into urban life. The aim of social policies is declared as “*enabling social integration, providing equal opportunities for every citizen in the city, creating the sense of city citizenship and reducing the gap among different groups*”(ISTKA, 2013a; 27). This plan, moreover, introduced new measures for the needs of migrants, unemployed and poor people, such as family counselling schemes for immigrant families, besides the educational and vocational counselling services to integrate these groups to the society. The provision of employment opportunities in their home countries to the expatriated people who want to return their home countries is another measure introduced in the plan.

In general, the Agency introduced a comprehensive view on social policies and a wider understanding of diversity (including cultural and ethnic differences of immigrants etc.) compared to the above-mentioned Ministries, but still focused on defining inclusive measures for the disadvantaged groups and their social integration. This view is supported by one the interviewee from the Istanbul Development Agency (Respondent C1, 11 October 2013), which also exemplifies the diverse ideas and conflicting views the public officials have:

*When we prepare the Regional Plans, we take diversity as an important issue in the socio-economic development of Istanbul. We see diversity as the richness of this huge metropolitan area. Our plans are for all the people living in Istanbul and we try to prepare inclusive plans, which do not exclude any groups. In the first plan, there was relatively less concern about diversity, but in the second plan, we emphasised the importance of cultural diversity and tried to bring detailed strategies to enhance the diversity of society.*

In defining the strategies of the Administration, the other interviewee (Respondent C2, 11 October 2013) claims that

*In the policies we have defined, the needs of every social group are taken into account; but some of them are not among our priority groups. We have specific policies on Roma people, and social projects for children, disabled and youth. We organise Social Inclusion Workshops each year in collaboration with the Family and Social Policies Ministry, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and NGOs, and in each workshop, we identify a focus group. We try to define specific policies on this focus group during that year.*

Although the Istanbul Development Agency tries to act as a coordinator in the socio-development issues in Istanbul, it is not easy to argue that the perspective of the Istanbul Development Agency has been reflected in the practices of the departments of Ministries. The departments of Ministries in Istanbul usually follow the directives of their Ministries and Governorship of Istanbul, which acts as the local coordinator of all Ministries. The Governorship of Istanbul has the rights to define policies and programs on immigration and immigrants (Istanbul Valiligi, 2007); it operates its activities through the Social Support and Collaboration Foundation, which is supervised by an executive committee, composed of 15 members and the Governor, who is the chair of this committee (SYDV, 2013).

The Istanbul Special Provincial Administration is another governorship subsidiary in Istanbul. It engages policies that aim to help social integration process of disadvantaged groups (IPSO, 2012). It has specific policies defined for physically disabled people, the provision of special education and

physical and mental rehabilitation services, vocational courses and increasing the level of accessibility of disabled people to urban facilities by designing “barrier-free” urban spaces. The construction of new social, education and health centres, and reorganisation of public space for disabled people are examples of its space-based policies. As it has been indicated in the earlier sections of this report, this organisation will put an end of its activities following the local elections in March 2014.

The interview with the Chair of the Social Services Department of the Istanbul Special Provincial Administration interestingly shows that he does not categorise the activities that aim to overcome material inequalities and improve the material well-being of particular groups as pertaining to the context of diversity. As stated in the beginning of the report, policies for equity and redistribution of resources are not perceived as diversity policies by most of the interviewees, even the policies to combat discrimination or to eliminate oppression of groups are not evaluated as the measures of a diversity policy. According to him (Respondent D, 7 October 2013):

*“What we do in our department is to support women and children. We initiate projects to increase the access of women to employment opportunities, enable them to cover their living expenses and help them to get a housing unit. Therefore, we provide training courses and housing for women, who faced oppression, nursery schools for the children of poor families etc... These are the policies to support the people in need of help and have nothing to do with diversity. Using the term diversity can be perceived in different ways by different institutions. It is better to use the term “cultural mosaic” instead of “diversity”. Istanbul is having many immigrants each year and obviously many people from different cultural background are coming to Istanbul. However, we do not have any specific policies for them unless they belong to disadvantaged groups, who are in need of help.”*

He further elaborates on his views on diversity:

*“Diversity is an attractive term increasingly being used in many meetings, in which I have participated recently. However, it defines an ideal society and Turkish society is not ready to accept the wide meaning of diversity. In Turkey, we always claim that we have tolerance and respect for different ways of living, culture and religion, and claim that we want a peaceful way of living with diverse groups altogether in same areas, but all of them stay in words, the reality is quite different.”*

*“The ethnic and religious differences are still taboos, which are not easy to discuss in Turkish society. The notion of compatriotship, which is still very important in the Turkish society, indicates the importance of cultural affiliation and cultural bonds. Moreover, even each neighbourhood has its own culture and rules in terms of ways of living. Similar to many European countries, there are no institutions in Turkey for providing support to different voices. However, they are initiating some policies, which we do not. If we can create new institutions and organisations to help the people who do not feel themselves as the members of this society, we can be more hopeful.”*

The quotes given above were shared by many of the public officials we have interviewed, although they did not express their views so distinctively.

The last organisation of Central Administration we studied in this report is the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, which is responsible for developing urban strategies, preparing plans and providing financial support for new urban development and regeneration projects in

collaboration with the Mass Housing Agency (TOKİ) in Istanbul (MEU, 2013). This Ministry also has specific policies and measures for disadvantaged groups, such as determining urban and building standards for disabled and handicapped in order to enable them socialising in the urban space (KENTGES, 2009). Their main priority is defined as to meet the housing needs of low and middle income groups and the creation of healthy and sustainable living spaces for all (MEU, 2013). Respondent B1 (August 28 2013) says “*The number of houses built for low and medium income groups by Mass Housing Agency (TOKI) in the past ten years has surpassed six hundred thousand and these are mostly financed by the income yielded through luxury house sales and land sales.*” However, Sönmez (2013) criticizes the activities of TOKI in Istanbul, indicating that the 25 largest TOKI projects that were built within Revenue-Sharing Model account for only 20 percent of overall houses, but more than 50 percent of total project costs. Moreover, Revenue-Sharing Model that is based on production of housing units on TOKI owned lands in-cooperation with the private sector and sharing the sales revenue of the project with the shareholder firm accelerates the loss of open public space within the metropolitan area. Further criticisms indicate that these projects are not only problematic from equity point of view, but also the loss of places where people with the same identity can collaborate easily.

#### *Resource Allocations of the Central Government*

Except the Ministry of Development, which is responsible for defining macro policies and strategies for the central government, the Ministries allocate financial resources to activate their policies and projects. Therefore, the priorities of policies can be traced by the allocation of resources to different activities. The overview of the resource allocations of the key Ministries on social diversity shows that there is an important gap between emphasis on the disadvantaged groups in policy documents and the resources allocated to programmes for these groups.

The Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP, 2011) is the one which has allocated 27.4% of the budget in 2011 to the Social Assistance and Solidarity Incentive Fund, which had to be used for education, health care expenses and family support. The ministry has allocated 35.2% of the total budget for the general health insurance that aims to cover the expenses of the urban poor. On the other hand, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security has spent only 0.02% of its budget to increase the contribution of the disadvantaged groups in working life. They have, however, financed several projects related to increasing formal employment, poverty alleviation, ensuring equality of men and women with using resources provided by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) - the EU support scheme including financial and technical help for reforms (MESS, 2011).

The budget of the Istanbul Development Agency consists of financial transfers from the Central Government, Istanbul Special Provincial Administration, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, and Chamber of Industry and Commerce, besides revenues from its own activities (ISTKA, 2010b). The Agency supports collaborative projects and activities by providing financial support to project developers (public institutions, private firms or NGOs). Since 2010, the Agency supported projects for the social inclusion and social integration of diverse groups, especially disabled people, youth and children. In 2010, financial support was provided for 14 projects under the theme of “Small scale infrastructural studies based on social inclusion and social integration” (ISTKA, 2010a). In 2011, the main social theme was physically disabled people and 34.37% of the total budget was allocated to 11 projects under the “*Engelsiz İstanbul*” (Barriers Free Istanbul) theme (ISTKA, 2011). The main social theme of the first half of 2012 was defined as support for skills, competences, and entrepreneurship capacities of youth and children. In that year, 49.5% of the total budget was devoted to 61 projects

developed under this theme. In the second half of 2012, the main social theme was again social inclusion. Among the 88 projects, 21 of them were supported by the Agency under the heading of “Small scale infrastructure for social inclusion” (ISTKA, 2012). The increasing shares of social (diversity) projects, is a solid indicator of the rising interest on social inclusion and integration processes of diverse groups in the society.

The Istanbul Special Provincial Administration has a budget, transferred directly from the central government revenues, to achieve its policies and projects. The Administration generates projects of its own or cooperates with other public institutions (local departments of Ministries and/or Municipalities) when necessary. The Administration’s investment budget, which has been divided to 6 priority sectors, remained almost the same in the last decade. Education has the highest share, which is about 40-50% of the total fixed investment, in contrast to health services (22-30%), social services (8-12%), youth and sports (8-9%), and culture and tourism (3-5%) (IPSO, 2010b).

The brief overview of the resource allocations of the key central government organisations in Istanbul first indicates that certain kinds of social policies namely policies to increase the communication level between distinct groups and to enhance the level of tolerance to others remain somewhat shallow and less demonstrable. The main reason of this failure is the shortcomings in defining appropriate measures. Second, although both the Istanbul Development Agency and the Istanbul Special Provincial Administration work in collaboration with many public institutions, universities and non-governmental organisations, this collaboration is limited to formulating policies without giving enough to the practice of the policies identified and the implementation of projects. Third, the evaluation of the policies referred above is still poorly defined and it is still not clear how they will be put into practice, and who will be in charge of them. The workshop called “*Istanbul Benim*” (Istanbul is Mine) organised by the Istanbul Development Agency (in 29 April 2013), is one of the best examples of producing policies without paying enough attention to possible implementation measures, methods and projects. At this workshop, the importance of tolerance and trust within a society has been highlighted and for the first time in Istanbul, cultural and ethnic diversity has been considered as a positive asset of the society for creating a tolerant society. It has also been mentioned that the interaction between diverse groups should be maximised (ISTKA, 2013b:21). The question, however, remains how to achieve these and who will be responsible for the interaction process.

#### *The main policies and programmes of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality*

The most crucial roles in urban policies and practice in Istanbul undoubtedly belong to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM). This section of the report is based on the review of official urban policy documents including plans, annual activity and performance reports and investment programmes in order to identify the main policies, which have been related to diversity.

In the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, several department and directorates are in charge of social and cultural issues, namely the Health and Social Services Department, the Social Issues Department and the Social Support Services Department. They are responsible for improving the well-being of the different disadvantaged groups and facilitating their access to resources and services of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. The existing social policies developed by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality comprise different fields. IMM (2011: 35) declares that its aim is ‘*to follow an inclusive approach; to serve all social groups in the city including the disadvantaged ones, enable them to be involved in decision making processes and meet the specific needs and demands of each group*’. This policy includes

ensuring healthy and safe living conditions for the disadvantaged groups and facilitating their integration to the society and the city, while increasing their self-sufficiency. A similar statement can be found in the 1/25.000 Istanbul Master Plan (2009) of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, indicating the importance of social projects for social justice, equal opportunities and income equality, besides combating poverty and social exclusion.

However, the general discourse is not supported by the existing policies and policy measures. In its strategic plan for 2010-2014 (IMM, 2009), the main policy themes of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the issues with a high priority are specified as transportation, environmental management, disaster and risk management, planning and property development, building up sports facilities and information systems. The social issues do not figure prominently in the list of priorities. In fact, the analysis of activity reports and investment programmes produced over the last five years shows that more than half of the expenditures (fixed capital investments) of IMM have been allocated to transportation services. Moreover, the moral and social needs of different groups within the society, including religious services, are not highlighted enough and the measures that are clearly specified are mostly on the use of urban space and buildings. For example, in the Investment Programmes and Activity Reports of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality from 2010 to 2013, the major activities of the Social Support Services Department are specified as, building social housing for the poor, constructing entertainment and exhibition centres and new sports facilities for children and young people, and delivering amenities for elderly disabled and oppressed women. Although there are some efforts to maintain the social integration of these people in society with the help of vocational courses, training opportunities and so on, a detailed evaluation shows that most of the measures focus on physical arrangements. Similarly, the Directorate of Cultural Services of the Metropolitan Municipality has engaged in policies over urban space and buildings, such as the rehabilitation and restoration of cultural heritage, construction of new cultural buildings and libraries besides the support for cultural events (IMM, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013).

The short summary above shows that the main concern of IMM is for demographic (age, gender) and socio-economic diversity, with special attention to disadvantaged groups, similar to Central Government departments. IMM identifies disadvantaged groups based on their demographic characteristics such as elderly, children, youth, women and disabled or socio-economic conditions namely poor and unemployed. The problems of immigrants and people with different religion, ethnic and cultural background have not been handled explicitly within the existing documents. In the 1/100.000 scale Istanbul Environmental Plan (2006) carried out by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, “*the need to support and enhance the diversity of this huge metropolitan area*” is only stated in a general way, without specifying any measures. The main reasons for this deficiency are explained by the Coordinator of Cultural and Social Affairs of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (Respondent E, 8 October 2013):

*“We attach importance to diversity issues in preparing our spatial plans, since it is not possible to think the city independently from its social structure. However, I have to admit that we did not pay much attention to identify and plan for the needs of different ethnic and cultural groups. Even if we put our concerns in reports, plans and planning practice do not reflect any concerns or perspective on diversity. In the future, we hope we can be able to put more emphasis on urban diversity in our policies, plans and policies.”*

He emphasises the importance of integration of disadvantaged groups to society and the need for integrationist policies. However, he is quite sceptical about the policies of democratic deliberation of *different groups*. His personal views (Respondent E, 8 October 2013) consist of similar arguments to Respondent D.

*“In Turkey, I do not think that several groups do have freedom to express their identities. The existing social rules and the low level of tolerance of the society are the major obstacles to be yourself and live as you like. Turkish society is quite conservative, contrary to what we usually believe in. In recent years, NGOs helped to break the conformist perspective and got involved in existing decision-making mechanisms, which is quite positive. There is an urgent need for reforms and change in the approach of the central government, especially among central government administration.”*

*“Although some of the policies seem to support social, ethnic and cultural diversity, what happens is the opposite. Especially new urban transformation projects are working against diversity and excluding the people with different cultural ethnic backgrounds.”*

The allocation of total expenditures of IMM supports the above arguments. The financial resources devoted to social support services and cultural facilities by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has been quite low, though with substantial positive changes in recent years. Similarly, the analysis of the expenditures of the Directorates of the Metropolitan Municipality shows that the Departments related to social issues and diversity have very low shares in total expenditures (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Expenditures of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2010-2013** (in thousand Turkish Lira current prices)

	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Social Support Services</b>	57.039	108.044	126.175	163.647
<b>Cultural Services</b>	37.246	61.595	38.373	100.22
<b>Total</b>	3.289.856	2.734.998	2.963.744	3.230.577
Percentage of Investment Expenditures between 2010 and 2013				
	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Social Support Services</b>	1.7%	3.9%	4.2%	5.1%
<b>Cultural Services</b>	1.1%	2.2%	1.3%	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Note: One Euro is equal to 2.12 TL in 2010 January, 2.06 in 2011 January, 2.43 in 2012 January and 2.34 in 2013 January

Sources: IMM, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 Investment Programmes of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

*District Municipalities: Beyoğlu Municipality and the Others*

Beyoğlu Municipality is the major local administration responsible for the provision of basic services such as infrastructure, education, health, etc., in addition to many social and cultural services and training facilities for different social groups in Beyoğlu district.

The review of Strategic Plans, Performance Programmes, Activity Reports and Annual Budget Documents of Beyoğlu Municipality with respect to diversity clearly shows the emphasis on demographic (age, gender) and socio-economic equity. In the 2007-2009 Strategic Plan and Performance Programme of Beyoğlu Municipality (Beyoğlu Municipality, 2006) the concepts highlighted were “*equal opportunity*”, “*participation*” and “*social municipalism*”, which were indicated as the main principles in service provision. The equal opportunity principle is defined as “*the demands of each people are of equal importance*”. The participation principle, on the other hand, is defined as “*all the citizens are expected to participate in the decision making and implementation processes of the Municipality*”. *Social municipalism* principle stands for “*the support of all disadvantaged groups*”. In this regard, the activities of the municipality are defined as follows: cooperation with NGOs, support for socially disadvantaged groups (the poor, young, elderly, women, children and disabled people), the development of the capacity and capability of disadvantaged groups, organising activities to integrate the disadvantaged groups to the society, support for children and young people (youth centres, sport activities, etc.). Among these three principles, especially the participation principle is not translated into practice and it stays as a rhetorical statement. However, with this strategic plan, the priority was given to low-income families, students and disabled people, who are especially in need of financial support. Interviewee F (10 October 2013) declared that:

*“The municipality has been engaged to meet the school supplies of the students who are in need of help and has decided to set up a new the department for handicapped to meet the basic needs and services of the disabled people in Beyoğlu district. Poor families were also included in the social support schemes, especially the ones who cannot afford to meet their basic needs.”*

The 2010-2014 Strategic Plan (Beyoğlu Municipality, 2009), has introduced almost the same principles. According to this plan, the priority areas of the municipality are defined as the provision of social and cultural amenities, the protection of historical and cultural heritage, the support of educational and sports facilities, the upgrading living conditions of the poor and other disadvantaged groups. The measures defined to achieve these objectives are the construction of neighbourhood halls, community health centres for social institutionalisation, providing *allowance* to low-income households that are unable to meet their needs, including heating needs and food aid, cleaning services, service vehicles, medical aid for disabled people, public soup kitchens, school supplies and stationery for children. The Beyoğlu Municipality works in collaboration with related institutions, civil societies and people living in this part of the metropolitan area in order to fulfil its objectives. However, as it is clear from Table 3, the expenditures allocated to provide social support and cultural services for disadvantaged groups remain limited, and there were no noticeable changes in the last five years (Beyoğlu Municipality, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 Budget Programmes).

**Table 3: Expenditures of Selected Directorates of Beyoğlu Municipality** (Thousand Turkish Lira, current prices)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Cultural &amp; Social Affairs</b>	2.600	3.020	4.240	8065	9.500
<b>Social Welfare Affairs</b>	3.208	1.522	3.875	3.768	7.090
<b>Total</b>	85.000	130.000	131.000	137.000	190.000
Expenditure Percentages of Selected Directorates of Beyoğlu Municipality					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Cultural &amp; Social Affairs</b>	3.06%	2.32%	3.24%	5.89%	5.00%
<b>Social Welfare Affairs</b>	3.77%	1.17%	2.96%	2.75%	3.73%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Note: One Euro was equal to 2.12 TL in 2010 January, 2.06 in 2011 January, 2.43 in 2012 January and 2.34 in 2013 January

The other district municipalities in Istanbul defined similar policies with respect to the disadvantaged groups within the society. They hardly ever deal with the religious, ethnic or cultural diversity in their social and cultural policies and the activities. However, some of the municipalities attempt to approach people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and their representatives. The attitude of these municipalities, namely Şişli and Beşiktaş, where most of the ethnic minorities live, is quite different from the others and central government as well.

To give some examples from the other district municipalities; both Bakırköy Municipality and Şişli Municipality emphasise the '*Social Municipality*' concept in their strategic plans and highlight the core of their policies as the support to social cohesion and integration, cultural diversity and tolerance (Bakırköy Municipality, 2009). Additionally, Şişli Municipality supports the cultural and linguistic diversity, regarding the differences as cultural richness and asserts that the Municipality does not pursue any language, sex, religion, sectarian or ethnicity discrimination in the provision of its services (Şişli Municipality, 2009). Similarly, the provision of support to diversity is highlighted as one of the strategic aims of Beşiktaş Municipality in its annual activity reports, performance programmes and in its strategic plan. In this respect, being aware of different cultures within the society, verifying the demands and the problems of the people with distinct cultural and ethnic backgrounds by contacting the representatives of these groups is specified as the main strategy (Beşiktaş Municipality, 2009).

On the other hand, Kadıköy Municipality has embraced the '*Social Cooperation*' concept as a model to create employment opportunities since 2006, and established the *Social Cooperative Development Centre* in 2009 in order to facilitate the social participation of the disadvantaged groups, including women, disabled people and youth. Additionally, the Municipality has initiated several activities via its existing social centres or in collaboration with several NGOs, namely Kadıköy Municipality Education and Social Support Centre, Job and Employment Centre for Disabled People, Volunteers of Kadıköy Municipality, Voluntary Training and Consulting Centre for the Disadvantaged Groups (Kadıköy Municipality, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012).

The policies that are actually implemented by the district municipalities are the ones specialised in the provision of social and cultural services and mostly centred upon the physical needs of disadvantaged groups (social facility buildings, nursing homes, and so on), rather than focusing more on the integration of these groups regarding both the social and economic aspects. This fact is clearly demonstrated by the review of the policy documents. Although there are some general references to diversity included in the policy programmes of some district municipalities - relatively more than the Metropolitan Municipality - , the analysis shows that existing social policies usually do not refer to religious, ethnic or cultural diversity. Therefore, these issues do not get substantial financial resources from financial allocation programmes.

### 3.2 Non-governmental views on diversity policy

In this section of the report, the views of four non-governmental groups on diversity, namely universities, professional associations, non-governmental organisations and mediators between local administrations and neighbourhood associations, and their reflections on the current policies are briefly summarised. In the last part of this section, the major differences between non-governmental and governmental views are pinpointed. The section depends upon eight in-depth the interviews conducted on 7-13 November 2013 in Istanbul (see Appendix A).

In general, it is possible to see that the different non-governmental views are rather sceptical of diversity policies. Most of them even claim that diversity gets no reference in urban policies, except the diversity of rich and poor/disadvantaged. They also declare that there is a growing discourse on diversity, but this discourse is not reflected on current policies and practice.

#### *Universities*

Scholars think that the notion of diversity exists as a general discourse in both the academic and the political fields, but it is not possible to see the real manifestation of this notion in both social and urban policies. They emphasise that the increasing diversity in society is not taken into consideration in defining urban policies; diversity is ignored in urban programs and practice. Moreover, they underline that the current policies of the government lead to increasing segmentation in the society, which is the major threat for the future of the society.

One of the interviewees (Respondent G, 10 October 2013) pointed that ‘the right to the city’ concept is very important in order to evaluate urban policies. She defined the concept as “*a claim for shaping power over the ways in which cities are made and re-made, not only for the general needs of the urban population, but also by every diverse group according to their needs and aspirations*”. She indicated that in the existing urban policies, there is limited evidence illustrating that the needs and aspirations of diverse groups are respected. According to her, the real practice is completely against diversity; most of the urban policies and practices define deprived areas, where poor immigrants with different cultural and ethnic background live, as clearance/redevelopment areas that have to be transformed. The policies are mainly related to the built environment without paying attention to the multi-ethnic and multicultural background of different low-income groups. The scholars interviewed claim that ignoring the needs of diverse groups make their integration to the urban society and the urban way of living quite difficult. According to one of the scholars (Respondent H, 10 October 2013), the real outcomes of the recent discourses on diversity and multicultural society is restricted to building huge cultural centres, spectacular buildings, which have nothing to do with the enhancement of a multicultural multi-ethnic society.

The answers to the question on the categorisation of the current urban policies on diversity as assimilationist, pluralist and intercultural policy were not very clear. Especially the academics were not happy about the concept of *assimilation*. They claimed that it is better to use the word *integration*. They claimed that especially the immigrants from different parts of the country should be integrated to urban areas, which is different from assimilation. On the other hand, they said the existing policies could be described as homogenisation of the society under the Sunni Islam rules that is completely different from the free society that enables diverse groups to practice their differences.

The answers to the question on the importance of diversity in the current urban policies in Istanbul reflect the disappointment of the academics about the ongoing urban policies and practices in Istanbul. The interviewees indicated the importance of diversity policies for Istanbul, due to its historical background and existing composition of population and provided the examples of projects and practice that have negatively affected its diverse character (see also Enlil, 2003). The examples referred were mainly related to the current legislation on transformation of the historical neighbourhoods, besides other transformation projects, which have been initiated since 2012. Sulukule, Küçükbakkalköy, Tarlabası, Bizans Evleri are some of the projects mentioned as examples of the negative outcomes of the practices implemented under the legislation related to deprived historical neighbourhoods. They claimed that these projects forced people to leave their neighbourhoods and made them to lose their earlier networks, culture and the positive contribution of the neighbourhood spirit. In general, they have heavily criticised the current urban practices due to their limited attention to cultural and historical values, although they have indicated their positive role in the awareness of different groups to protect their rights and cultural assets. The increasing numbers of voluntary groups, networks and platforms against the existing transformation projects in different historical neighbourhoods, such as Sulukule, and Tarihi Yedikule, are defined as a positive consequence of such projects, although they were not able to change the negative outcomes of these projects.

According to academics, the main policies of local governments on diversity are restricted to the provision of services to low-income groups. Some local governments are rather active in the delivery of services, such as providing accommodation and food for the poor and special services for elderly and children. These services usually do not cover the increasing numbers of illegal immigrants coming from poor countries namely Africa, Asia and Middle East. According to interviewees there are very few local governments, such as Zeytinburnu Municipality, that provide services for these groups, since municipalities do not have any legal obligations and financial resources to initiate projects for such groups.

The two academics interviewed emphasised the increasing role of NGOs in the policy making process. *Tarlabası Mülk Sahipleri ve Kiracıları Kalkındırma ve Sosyal Yardımlaşma Derneği* (Society of Social Support and Enhancement of the Tarlabası Owners and Tenants) in Beyoğlu, negotiated with the local government on behalf of the people that have been negatively affected by the project, in order to find solutions to the conflicting issues between local government and the people living in Tarlabası. The academics pointed that similar to this NGO, which faced difficulty to get necessary financial resources, most of the NGOs working on socio-economic diversity and immigration have the problem of sustaining their activities for a longer period. Moreover, they face the problem of being dominated by municipalities or other public institutions in defining their activity programmes (Türkün, 2011), since they are not very strong in financial terms.

*Professional Organisations*

The opinions of the two interviewees from professional organisations, namely the Chamber of Architects (Respondent I) and the Chamber of City Planners in Istanbul (Respondent J), on urban governance and diversity are not very different from the academics. They emphasise that the notion of diversity is not well integrated into the policies and practice in Turkey yet, although there is a growing interest in Turkish civil society in cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity in general. According to them, although policy makers talk about diversity, they aim to create a homogenous society, disregarding the differences in cultural norms, habits, religious practices and ways of life. The representatives of professional associations strongly underline the difference between discourse and practice of both central and local governments. They strongly criticise the urban policy makers saying that the main motivations of the decision makers are to transfer urban rent, disregarding the needs of the others. The upgrading and transformation projects, according to the respondents, end up with the gentrification in the neighbourhoods and the loss of both multicultural society and cultural heritage.

The interviewee from the Chamber of City Planners in Istanbul (Respondent J, 8 October 2013) emphasised that

*“The existing policies, planning and practice do not take into account the needs and aspirations of the groups that do not belong to the majority. Certain values and norms were being imposed by the state in the past and this attitude continues.”*

On the other hand, the interviewee, who belonged to Istanbul Chamber of Architects, expressed that *“the state has a clear assimilationist policy and this policy has become even more noticeable in recent years”* (Respondent I, 11 October 2013). The examples of such attitude are mostly related to religious practices, such as the courses on religion in schools, the increasing numbers of new and very huge mosques in Istanbul, the attempts to open up certain places to religious practices, etc. He claimed that all of them reflect the attempts of the current government striving for re-engineering the conservative value systems in Turkey. According to him, the urban clearance and renewal projects are mainly concentrated on neighbourhoods with a high diversity. The main aim of these projects is to get rid of certain groups that were living in the central but deprived areas of Istanbul, push them to the outskirts of the city and make them almost invisible.

*“These projects are a big threat towards cultural accumulation and the diversity of Istanbul and show the lower tolerance of the existing policymakers in Turkey and Istanbul to diversity, more than the previous ones”* (Respondent I, 11 October 2013)

Both of them expressed that the main responsibility of the professional organisations of architects and planners is to initiate studies that will enhance the awareness of the society in protecting the rights of the different groups and minorities. The participatory practices of professional organisations, in the form of meetings, forums and workshops up to now were able to bring the different stakeholders together, such as NGOs, universities and business organisations and to pinpoint important issues on urban problems related to urban diversity. Moreover, they have presented their views on the important urban infrastructure and redevelopment projects, most of which were not considered by the local policy makers. The reports produced had limited impact or

no change in policies and practice. Therefore, they had to go to courts, since legal adjudication became the last resort to voice contentions and resolve disputes.

Both interviewees also claimed that in Istanbul there are no policies for LGBT groups, who are living in deprived areas. They have been abused and neglected. They also argued that women comprise a disadvantaged group, although certain support schemes have been initiated. However, still in the urban way of life women belonging to lower segments of the society are often mistreated. They finally added that there are some new studies on ethnic and religious diversity, but without any policy implications yet.

#### NGOs

In the interviews, we tried to approach NGOs in our study area: the Beyoğlu Municipality of Istanbul. The NGOs interviewed have different interests with reference to diversity, ranging from the social and cultural issues to protection of human rights. Two main areas of interest can be defined: first, the ones that aim to upgrade the built environment while protecting the existing urban fabric and second, the ones that provide support to the disadvantaged groups living in deprived areas of Beyoğlu.

The interviews showed one of the aims of these NGOs is to overcome the deterioration of this area by working with the people surviving in this area. The decay of this historical part of the city is believed to trigger problems for the people living in several neighbourhoods in Beyoğlu. Therefore, one of the NGOs involved in projects for improving infrastructure, such as lightening systems, operating the *Nostalgic Tram* and placing new urban furniture in order to attract people from other parts of the city. These projects are expected to catch the attention of new businesses and create new employment and income opportunities to the existing inhabitants. Besides the projects related to the built environment, the other NGO interviewed has been organising cultural events and exhibitions and providing support to existing art galleries and revival of the cultural activities of diverse groups living in different parts of Beyoğlu. In its activities, two main partners exist: the Municipality and the Universities. One of the NGOs (Galata Derneği) has been organising a festival each year, which enables people with different cultural background, to exhibit their music, culture etc. with the help of concerts, exhibitions and street activities. It aimed to enhance the contact between diverse groups and provide a place of interaction.

Although they have different concerns, each representative of the NGOs interviewed was frustrated by the lack of policies and measures towards diversity. They say that most of the policymakers are not interested in enhancing and protecting the cultural and ethnic diversity, although Istanbul was one of the centres of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity of the world in the past. According to them, the legislation on the exchange of population with the Balkan countries and the outmigration of people with Greek origin to Greece following the violence against the minorities on 6-7 September 1955 reduced the numbers of non-Muslim citizens of Istanbul. Although Jews, Greeks and Armenians constituted large segments of population in Istanbul before the 1950s, due to negative incidents and policies their number has declined considerably. The NGOs emphasised the importance of these minorities in urban culture and defined them as the richness of Turkey.

Interestingly, the respondents were more optimistic about the new attitude of government towards minority groups and diversity in general. They pointed to the importance of the EU accession

process and the change in the existing legislation in order to fulfil European Union rules and regulations. The return of property that once belonged to minorities is defined as one of the important steps toward accepting the significance of diversity. Nonetheless, the interviewees complained about the conflicting attitudes of policymakers indicating the big gap between the discourse, policies and practice, as the other respondents did. Besides, they were annoyed by the existing social norms dominant in the society that ignore or reject people with different ethnic and cultural background.

The interviewees have indicated several points, which negatively affected the transformation of policies into practice:

- They pinpointed the limited concerns of the policy makers to support diversity and the social mobility of the truly disadvantaged. They claimed that quantitative targets are more important for policy makers than bringing measures to address main social issues -how many new housing units are provided, how many families received financial support etc. are more important than the enhancement of social mobility.
- In the planning preparation process of urban renewal projects, only the views of property owners have been taken into consideration, while the interests of the tenants and users of the existing housing stocks are not represented well.
- The critical views and reactions of non-owners of housing (such as tenants) on urban transformation projects are not taken into account even by the courts. If a person is not directly affected by the projects, his/her objection or disapproval is not respected by the court. This attitude creates negative outcomes for not only specific groups, but also the existing social networks in the neighbourhoods.
- The participatory processes on urban issues are limited and they are not oriented to make the stakeholders to contribute to the decision making process.

#### *Consultancy Services - Mediation between Local Government and Neighbourhood Associations*

In Beyoğlu, in certain projects professional services, including several consultancy companies and NGOs are used to facilitate and organise the participation of people that were affected by the different redevelopment projects, such as Tarlabası. They act as mediators between the inhabitants of project areas and the municipality. Among the interviewees, we incorporated one of these mediators, who had experience in mediating conflicts between different stakeholders in the Tarlabası project. According to this mediator, existing urban policies and practice have paid limited attention to the different types of diversity, which makes it difficult to introduce plans and measures that can enable to sustain the diversity of certain parts of the city. He stated, “*Existing urban projects do not pay enough attention to either socio-demographic or cultural diversity*”. (Respondent N, 10 October 2013). Based on his experience he argued that the projects have recognised the needs and demands of different groups to a certain extent, although the diversity of the project areas was not the central issue. In the Tarlabası Rehabilitation Project in order to integrate the diverse groups, a 6-stage approach was used with the participation of three main stakeholders, namely municipality, investors/developers and citizens. These six stages were providing information, awareness raising, meeting each other, expressing expectations, overcoming uncertainties and adopting outcomes. The whole process aimed at consensus generation among stakeholders and at enabling the people living in the project area to stay in the neighbourhood. The outcome was unfortunately far from achieving this objective.

According to him, NGOs should be more active in Tarlabaşı and should help finding solutions that can be accepted by all stakeholders. In the meantime, NGOs are not very active and the ones involved in the redevelopment and rehabilitation processes are quite critical towards these projects, since the practice usually has a negative impact on the areas of diversity: *“The non-governmental voices were weak in front of the loss of diversity”*, as he emphasised. Interestingly, he was not sure whether his companies’ work would contribute to the protection of social, ethnic and cultural diversity of the neighbourhood in which the project is taking place.

*The difference between the non-governmental and local government views on diversity*

The interviews conducted with different urban stakeholders show that the perceptions of local government officials on diversity are not considerably different from the non-government representatives.

First, it is clear that the notion of *“diversity”* is not appreciated by most of them. They think that *cultural mosaic*, *heterogeneity* or *cultural differences* are better terms, since the term *diversity* may be misinterpreted by many people due its historical connotations in Turkey, namely separatist movements in the late Ottoman period. The interviews clearly showed that socio-economic differences are not considered as diversity, but labelled as differences in income levels, although the existing literature on diversity does not follow this argument (Fincher and Iveson, 2011). Cultural difference is the term used by all interviewees, but with a strong emphasis on the different characteristics of the immigrants, including the norms, habits, the way of living, etc., from different regions of Turkey. In general, the interviewees stressed the multiculturalism of Istanbul in the past and indicate that the city still has a multicultural character. On the other hand, ethnic diversity is an issue, which many of the interviewees still do not want to talk about. One of the respondents even suggested not using this term, by emphasising that it is not a concept suitable to understand Turkish society (Interviewee J). The multicultural character of Istanbul is defined as an asset by some respondents; however, they were not sure about the positive sides of cultural diversity, since they pointed mostly the problems of increasing diversity in Istanbul, more than its contributions.

Second, the interviewed local government officials stated that urban regeneration projects could be successful attempts to solve the problems of disadvantaged groups. They indicated the importance of *consensus generation* to be reached in the implementation process and the possible problems if the project will push the existing residents out of the project areas. The quotes below explain the view of the interviewee from Beyoğlu Municipality (Respondent F, 10 October 2013) on the negative impacts of redevelopment and rehabilitation projects on diversity:

*“This area (Tarlabaşı) is a special place. Each street has a different culture. When the Tarlabaşı Project is completed, the people will stroll in this area as if they visit a museum. Tarlabaşı will not be a place where the problems are generated anymore.”*

Another quote of him almost replicates the first one;

*“Urban transformation helps the upgrade the deprived areas. Cibangir is a nice example. Now, the unemployed and drug addicted people left this area, while the middle upper class began to move in. When the project on Tarlabaşı will be completed, the same things may happen.”*

Another interviewee (Respondent D) also indicated the negative aspects of urban transformation projects on diversity. According to him, diversity is an issue that is not really accepted or embraced by the policy makers. Nevertheless, Interviewee J stated that diversity is going to be heard more often after the attempts at democratising society, and some steps towards religious and ethnic diversity will be initiated in the near future.

Third, most of the respondents, such as Interviewee C, gave examples of the strategies developed for poor, old, disabled, children, youth, immigrants and other disadvantaged groups, indicating that these policies were not only supporting disadvantaged groups, but also the diversity of the society as a whole. The specific policies for women are also defined as important attempts connected to diversity. However, almost all of the interviewees agree that what is achieved is very limited and do not really upgrade the conditions of disadvantaged groups. They indicated the need for a new legislation and policies at the national level that should focus on support participatory decision making for defining the needs and demands of the disadvantaged. The local government representatives did not refer to concrete projects as their successful activities on diversity. Instead, symposiums, joint meetings with NGOs, universities and local departments of different ministries are addressed as the medium of joint activities. One of these regular meetings is Social Inclusion Workshops initiated by the Istanbul Development Agency, together with the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and several NGOs.

Fourth, the interviewees from local governments were more optimistic compared to the other respondents. They usually declared that specific projects would be developed in the future. The concept of *inclusive growth* was especially repeated during the interviews (Interviewee I, J); “*We have to do something that will not exclude any of the groups*”. However, the interviewees of local government criticised the limited contribution of NGOs and universities in their activities on diversity issues. Especially there is a strong criticism to universities pointing their limited involvement in the practice of different projects (Respondent F, 10 October 2013).

*“Universities are mainly interested in theoretical issues. This is not enough. They have to be on the field. For example when they talk about gentrification, they are only referring to written material. Diversity is not something on the paper.”*

The professional associations also blamed universities for not being supportive to ongoing projects. They criticised universities for not delivering their views on such projects, but only raising their negative aspects.

#### 4. Conclusions

In general, we observed a cautious language and reluctance of not only policy documents but also the interviewees in relation to diversity issues, especially ethnic diversity. Most of the policymakers are far from recognising diversity in urban areas, except in terms of disadvantaged groups. When they have to refer to ethnic and cultural diversity, their approach is not more than “*openness*” and “*tolerance*”, which still reflects a patronizing attitude of the major actors of urban governance as discussed by Fainstein (2010: 67).

Policy makers are mainly interested in issues related to material inequalities between socio-demographic and socio-economic groups. They are interested not only in the equal distribution of

existing facilities, but also in overcoming existing material differences. According to interviewees and the documents reviewed, the main principle underpinning the formulation of such policies is “equity”. The terms *social cohesion*, the provision of support for *disadvantaged groups*, overcoming *income inequalities* are used often without a clear reference to policy measures. Obviously, the real meaning of policies for equity in an era of neoliberal economic policies and entrepreneurial governance is a matter of discussion, as we tried to discuss with the help of figures on the resource allocation of different government departments. As the figures devoted to disadvantaged shows, there is an obvious gap between discourse and practice adopted by both local and central governments, except the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, which was established to support women and poor families.

There are two important points that deserve further discussion in relation to the policies related to disadvantaged groups. First, there is a need to define the real meaning of redistributive policies in the neoliberal economic agenda of the country. Is it possible to reduce the income differentials in an urban economy, which has adopted the principle of competition and an entrepreneurial mode of urban governance? Are the policies and measures defined for specific groups aimed to suppress the deprivation of the disadvantaged? In fact, there is little evidence indicating that existing public support programs were able to reduce the income differentials in Istanbul. On the contrary, the official figures (TUIK, 2014) show an increase in the Gini coefficients from 2006 to 2012 in Istanbul. Moreover, according to certain studies, during the 1980s, while the urban land dynamics created some opportunities for immigrants living in *gecekondu* areas (Eraydin, 2008), the recent urban transformation projects and the projects for dilapidated historical areas began to work against the deprived groups, making them feel even more marginalised (Türkün 2011). In the initial years of transformation of *gecekondu* areas, the transformation process triggered by the market dynamics was able to create mixed neighbourhoods. However, in recent years the new types of urban transformation, namely state-initiated and state-led urban transformation projects, has caused gentrification and the displacement of the existing residents to distant places in the periphery of urban areas. The changing spatial distribution of the population enhances exclusion of different groups. The difference between the discourse and the outcomes is more than the *gap* between policy and practice; the current urban strategy is focused on safeguarding the use of the urban land and property market as a source of financing for economic growth. In other words, as said earlier, it aims to attract globally circulating capital, stimulate the influx of foreign investment and induce construction activities, which have all been quite effective in accelerating economic growth since the early 1980s in Turkey (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok, 2013). Second, as Fincher and Iveson (2011) put forward, even some of the existing policies, which aim to reduce the difference between rich and poor by providing the means of wealth transfer in the urban land markets through the regularisation of *gecekondu* areas, work to reduce the other concerns of poor, such as free expression of their identities.

The review of the outcomes of the previous and current urban policies shows that the provision of facilities and support to disadvantaged groups disregards their other characteristics, although most of the disadvantaged groups have different identities and cultural background than the majority population. Actually, in Turkey most of the urban policies, plans and projects have not been sensitive to the existing needs of the diverse groups living in urban areas. The interest of both the central and local governments from the 1950s to the 1970s was focused on the provision of basic needs, infrastructure and services at affordable levels to urban dwellers. The urban policies that aimed to provide modern urban infrastructure endeavoured to generate a society with less

differences in terms of socio-economic conditions. The general attitude was the persistence of devaluing and stigmatisation of the existing cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, which led to a process of masking and concealing the ethnic identities, usually by the groups themselves. As discussed earlier, this situation has changed substantially beginning from the 1980s onwards; following the significance of identity and ethnic politics. However, the *recognition of diversity* still is a matter of debate in Turkish society.

Although there is an emerging discourse that defines diversity as a positive aspect of the social order, there is almost no policy to avoid the negative outcomes of increasing fragmentation and hostility between certain groups. In this report, we briefly tried to pinpoint the scepticism of many actors of urban governance to *recognise* ethnic and cultural diversity. The review of the government policies shows that the policies that seek to combat discrimination are rather limited. Not only foreign migrants and local minorities, but also immigrants from different parts of the country with different ethnic and cultural background face different forms of discrimination. In the last decade, special democratic rights and services are provided for these groups; Kurds being the largest groups gained several rights. Different ethnic groups and minorities, who faced different forms of oppression namely exploitation, marginalisation, cultural dominance and sometimes violence have improved their living conditions. The TV and radio stations in their mother tongue, language courses, authorisation to use their native language in public service departments and in courts, are some of the measures introduced in this regard. However, some of the ethnic groups, such as Kurds, are not satisfied by the ongoing changes. They ask for a change in the Constitution's emphasis on Turkish ethnicity. This claim, however, is still not shared by the other ethnic groups. There are conflicting views both among the different ethnic groups and among the actors of the political system on policies to be introduced with regard to ethnic diversity.

How can we assess ongoing changes in the legislation? In fact, we argue that they show increasing recognition and tolerance to ethnic groups. The policies, however, are far from celebrating the difference, as it is clear from the attitude of the central government to *Alevi*s. Although the places of worship for Sunni Islam (*cami*) have been built and looked after by the governments and the salaries of personnel (*imam*) are paid by the central government, the places of worship of other religions and Islam sects, such as *Alevi*s, do not benefit from the privileges provided to Sunni Islam. Although this distinction has been protested against quite often in the recent past, there is no change in the attitude of the government, the legislation and the practice.

Moreover, existing practice shows a limited effort to create spaces of encounter between different groups. The new public spaces, which can foster the interactions, stayed limited, while the urban areas experienced a radical increase in consumption spaces. However, the consumption spaces, which are used by different groups reinforce the fragmentation of the population, since the neighbourhoods with different socio-economic status tend to use their own consumption spaces. The decreasing importance of city centres as a place of retail and recreation obviously accelerates this process. In Turkey, the institutions engaged in planning and practice unfortunately have not been concerned with introducing planning principles to enhance diversity, to provide special urban spaces for different groups and create spaces of interaction. While socio-economic and socio-demographic differences are taken into account in the planning of urban areas and districts, the distinct needs of ethnic groups and groups with different cultural backgrounds are not respected in creating new spaces, except in the certain projects of historical and cultural heritage. As the interviews with different NGOs indicate, most of the projects initiated by the Mass Housing

Administration (TOKI) in historical parts of the urban areas have negative consequence on minority groups, immigrants and marginal groups that were previously able to sustain their living in the deprived areas of city centres.

In summary, the analysis of the policies of both central government and local governments can be categorised as policies for equity, which aim at the (re)distribution of resources via assisting disadvantaged groups, although the outcomes are debatable. The limited contribution of such policies to the well-being of the disadvantaged groups, besides the lack of policies and measures granting special rights and opportunities for different ethnic and cultural groups, led to the emergence of different types of governance arrangements and a mushrooming of voluntary groups.

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## Appendix A: List of Interviewees

### Central Government

1. Expert, Social Sectors and Coordination General Directorate, Ministry of Development (Sosyal Sektörler ve Koordinasyon Genel Müdürlüğü) (A1)
2. Expert, Regional Development and Structural Adjustment General Directorate, Ministry of Development (Bölgesel Gelişme ve Yapısal Uyum Genel Müdürlüğü, Kalkınma Bakanlığı) (A2)
3. Head of Division, Spatial Strategies and Strategies Plans Division, Directorate of Spatial Planning Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation (Mekânsal Planlama Müdürlüğü, Mekânsal Stratejiler ve Çevre Düzeni Planları Dairesi Başkanlığı, Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı) (B1)
4. Expert, Spatial Strategies Division, Directorate of Spatial Planning, Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation (Mekânsal Stratejiler Şube Müdürlüğü, Mekânsal Planlama Müdürlüğü, Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı) (B2)

### Metropolitan/Provincial Government

1. Expert (Management) İstanbul Development Agency (İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı) (C1)
2. Expert (Sociologist) İstanbul Development Agency (İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı) (C2)
3. Head of Social Services Department, İstanbul Provincial Special Organisation (İl Özel İdaresi) (D)
4. The Coordinator of Cultural and Social Affairs, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi) (E)
5. Vice-Mayor of Beyoğlu, Beyoğlu Municipality (Beyoğlu Belediyesi) (F)

**Non- Governmental Organisations***Academics*

1. Academic , Bilgi University (G)
2. Academic , Yıldız Technical University, Department of City and Regional Planning (H)

*Professional Organisations*

3. General Secretary of Istanbul Branch, Chamber of Architects (I)
4. Chair of Istanbul Branch, Chamber of City Planners (J)

*NGOs*

5. Researcher, The Society for Protection and Beautification of Istanbul (Beyoğlu Güzelleştirme ve Koruma Derneği ) (K)
6. Executive Member, Galata Association, Galata Derneği An association that aims to improve the physical and living conditions in Galata-Beyoğlu (L)
7. Secretary, Helsinki Citizens Assembly (Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği) (M)

*Professionals (Mediators)*

8. Director, Tasarım Atölyesi, A company specialised in mediating between local governments and people in the urban transformation projects (N)