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URBANIZATION PROCESSES OF NORTHERN ISTANBUL IN THE 2000'S: YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM BRIDGE AND THE NORTHERN MARMARA HIGHWAY (1)

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1. The first oral presentation of this research was made in the International Conference of "Architecture and Urbanism in The Age of Planetary Crisis", Ecodemia, London, October 2020. The research was then developed further under the light of the comments and discussions, evolving into this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

August 26, 2016 was a critical day for Istanbul, as well as the greater Marmara Region and Eastern Europe. This was the inauguration day of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and the Northern Marmara Highway (YSSB-NMH) (AA, 2016). YSSB-NMH was the first of the Northern Istanbul mega projects aiming to move the transportation infrastructure and the center of gravity of the city towards North, at the expense of tearing up the Northern forests of Istanbul. This project, followed by the opening of Istanbul Airport in October 2018 and the bidding of Kanal Istanbul in March 2020 could be seen as a part of the urban expansion strategy of Istanbul towards North; as well as establishing the city as a global transit transportation hub (ICA, 2018; World Profile Group, 2013).

Despite the opposition of various civil groups such as professional chambers and environmental NGO's, the projects mentioned above are carried out with top-down initiative, supported with neoliberal discourses of progress and grandiose, economic growth, political consolidation, technological and aesthetic superiority. In the case of the 21st century metropolises of developing countries such as Istanbul, this narrative is backed up with a commodified informality, where boundaries of the lack of regulation, illegality and gentrification are defined by the state (Roy 2009, 819-30).

Yet, 21st century is marked by a massive crisis of global warming, due to extensive exploitation of natural resources through human activities. As the global environmental crisis is forcing humanity's hand to challenge the so-called unshakeable narratives of neoliberal capitalism, it is crucial to question their validity. With this agenda in mind, the aim of this paper is to take YSSB-NMH as a case to investigate the realization process, affirmative discourse and estimated impacts of the project through a discursive analysis; revealing the extralegal mechanisms and neoliberal rhetoric that enable its execution. This project is taken as a case because of its initiating

Figure 1. Mega transportation projects of northern Istanbul (İSMD, n.d.).

role in the urbanization of Northern Istanbul, a booming metropolis of a developing country. The project, disrupting the Northern ecosystems and inducing urban growth towards North produces a valid example of the subversive effects of mega projects of developing countries. Moreover, top-down initiation, exclusive decision-making and state induced informality of the project provides a relevant discussion for the international literature. What are the legislative tactics and discursive tools that blur the public opposition and make possible the implementation of such a controversial project as YSSB-NMH? Are there any common patterns of neoliberal urban space production through mega projects around the globe, and if so, what are they? Could there be alternative strategies for the 21st century urban space production and if there are, what are their defining attributes? These are some of the research questions that inform the study.

In the course of the paper, firstly the theoretical framework is laid out with the discussion of neoliberal urban space production and transformation mechanisms in the 2000's through mega projects. Secondly, the geographical setting, being the Northern Istanbul area is discussed and the urban growth patterns of Istanbul starting from the second half of the 20th century with regards to the Bosporus bridges and automobilization infrastructure is reviewed. Thirdly, the YSSB-NMH project is delved into through a discursive analysis of the project. In this section, face to face interviews with the top executive officers of ICA consortium are used as well as published material related to the project such as newspaper articles and ICA promotion booklets. Lastly, conclusive remarks are given.

THEORETICAL SETTING: MEGA PROJECTS AS URBAN TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

In the 21st century, urban mega projects (UMP) have become a de facto, global strategy for urban transformation as a means for commodification

of urban land. Mega projects are associated with extremely large project scale, high cost and budget (usually over a billion dollar), singularity and complexity of design and execution, technologically and logistically demanding project scope, involvement of multi organizational enterprises, multidisciplinary input requirements and colossal social, economic and environmental impacts (Miller and Lessard, 2000; Capka, 2004; Grün, 2004; Brockmann, 2009; Zidane et al., 2013). As defined by Flyvbjerg, a mega project is "an extremely large-scale investment project, attracting excessive public attention due to major impacts on communities, environment and budgets" (2012, 95-6). A megaproject creates a nonlinear, non-proportional disturbance to a system where existing structures or rules are often uncapable of absorbing (Prosperi and Öner, 2015). Urban projects of this magnitude can be transformational on such a large scale that could alter the spatial structure of the whole metropolitan form.

Realization of UMPs require the association of large-scale investors and central and / or local governments. They are mostly imposed, top-down initiations with little, if any concern with regards to public opposition. In that sense, mega projects are spatial manifestations of the alliance of global capital and political power, teaming up for getting ahead in the race of "global city", reminding Molotch's (1976) "urban growth machine" theory of coalitions of actors and organizations that share an interest in urban growth and its effects on land values. The result is the commodification of space - urban or wilderness – through a construction boom, under the pressure of global financial capital, boosted up by political ambition and executed by private sector. As pointed out by Harvey (1989), UMPs are vessels for entrepreneurial urban policy making, enabling the exchange value of land to exceed use value, therefore creating an induced business and real estate environment.

In the last decades, UMP's have been frequently implemented all over the world as territorial restructuring strategies for the new and extravagant scales and forms of globalization. From Far Eastern cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Beijing and Shanghai to Middle Eastern cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, from European cities such as Bilbao, Budapest, Milan, Hamburg, Vienna, Stuttgart and Paris to cross Atlantic cities such as New York, Sao Paulo, Detroit, Philadelphia and Mexico City; UMP's have become the golden standard for capitalist urbanization (Santamaria, 2013). UMP's operating with similar mechanisms of top-down initiation, controversial legal and planning approaches, fast track and closed decision-making cycles and public alienation are prone to conflicts, opposition and failure, as reported in cases all over the globe from infrastructural UMPs of Mexico City, Stuttgart and Belgrade to prestige UMPs of Valencia (Dewey and Davis, 2013; Novy and Peters, 2013; Tarazona, 2017; Grubbauer and Camprag, 2019; Zekovic and Maricic, 2020). On the far Eastern part of the world, UMP's have become a widely utilized tool subserving the frantic enthusiasm of city building, often giving way to social and environmental problems, as seen in numerous cities of China, India and Pacific Asia (Shatkin, 2008; Douglas, 2010; Ren and Weinstein, 2012; Shen and Kee, 2017). On some other cases such as Riyadh and Morocco, UMPs are discussed to have devastating social implications such as poverty, population loss, social inequality, urban deprivation and decay (Ledraa and Abu-Anzeh, 2008; Bogaert, 2018).

In the 21st century, urban space production mechanisms are associated with unprecedented speed and scale, blurring the boundary between

urban and non-urban, shifting the core of urbanization from Euro-America to peripheral geographies. These geographies set the scene for new mechanisms of urbanization, transforming from modernist and state driven policies to entrepreneurial urbanism with privatization and commodification of urban fabric. The shift in the urban governance from managerialism to entrepreneurialism is closely related to the conceptualization of cities as competing nodes in a global network (Harvey, 1989). The rapid urban growth occurring especially in the developing countries of the Global South, from Middle East to Africa and Latin America is accompanied by a number of conflicts and challenges in terms of social justice, inequality and environmental mishaps; requiring a deeper understanding of these cities in their own, unique terms and conditions (Samara et al., 2013).

The unprecedented speed and scale of urban transformation via UMPs is setting the need for alternative theories for the 21st century urbanization. In the methodology section of this paper, two concepts, Roy's informality (2009) and Flyvbjerg's sublime (2014), will be discussed as enabling mechanisms for the 21st century urban space production.

This study aims to investigate the execution process and estimated impacts of YSSB-NMH through adapting discursive analysis as the methodology in order to unfold the neoliberal rhetoric behind the project. Discursive analysis is a qualitative research method that is used as a phenomenological and critical approach in design research (Kümbetoğlu, 2008; Groat and Wang, 2002). YSSB-NMH is taken as a case study because of its paramount, precursor and facilitating role as an infrastructural mega project in the urbanization of the Northern Istanbul. Also, the project provides a consistent example to the fierce neoliberal urbanization of land via mega projects in the developing countries around the globe; providing similar accounts of lack of transparency, legal ambiguity, top-down initiation and environmental devastation.

In every society, production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a number of procedures of exclusion in order to defuse its powers and dangers (Foucault, 1981). The execution of YSSB - NMH provides an example of this, as 94.5 percent of the inhabitants of the project area stated that they were not provided with any information related to the project and their information sources about the project were very limited and irregular (AECOM, 2013, 12-40). In neoliberal societies, discourse producing machines such as mass media, advertisement and political propaganda tools almost always favor economic growth and consumerism. Discourse analysis is a method to understand how different stakeholders use language to promote their agenda, deciphering hidden meanings and power relations beneath their statements (Kolat, 2014). Through discourse analysis, the actors, power relations, historical and cultural context underlying the production of meaning could be revealed and conflicting interests between different actors such as decision makers, politicians, investors, environmentalists, NGO's and citizens could be brought to light. Through discursive analysis, this study expects to reveal the neoliberal agenda and the rhetorical tools enabling the execution of YSSB - NMH.

In this paper, discourse analysis of the case study will be made through the concepts of informality (Roy, 2009) and sublime (Flyvbjerg, 2014) as they are quite relevant in terms of explaining the dynamics of space production through mega projects in the developing countries as well

as Northern Istanbul. Roy lays out a refreshing perspective to articulate new geographies of urban theory; displacing the Euro-American center of theoretical production and drawing attention to the 3rd world cities or the "global south" (Roy, 2009). In her article *The 21st-Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory*, she highlights a key concept with regards to the production of space in the emerging urban areas of the 3rd world, being "informality". Roy underlines that First World urban and metropolitan theory is "silent on informality", tending to imagine the informal as a sphere of unregulated, marginalized, illegal activity outside the scope of the state, often wiped out by gentrification and redevelopment.

Quite the contrary, 3rd world urbanization embodies a rather different understanding of informality. First of all, informality is incorporated within the state apparatus, not outside of it. It is often the state authority that determines the limits of informality (Portes et al., 1989). Moreover, informality is an adopted state strategy to gain flexibility, otherwise unavailable in formal mechanisms of accumulation and legitimation. As seen in many examples of the 3rd world UMP implementations stated above, informalized urbanization often goes hand in hand with state induced violation of master plans and legal norms. This does not imply that informality is not an unregulated domain; quite the contrary it is "structured through various forms of extra-legal, social, and discursive regulation" as pointed out by Roy (2009).

As a mode of production of space, informality generates an uneven geography of spatial value by enabling creative destruction as a strategy (Alsayyad, 2003, 7-33). Thus, the key features of the 21st century, 3rd world urbanism become the extralegal territoriality and flexibility of the state; producing spatial value through social and discursive regulation, bringing informality at the core of the capitalist urban space production.

The second key concept in terms of understanding the execution and legitimization of the 21st century, 3rd world urbanism through UMPs is "sublime", as discussed by Flyvbjerg (2014). Sublime, with its transcending quality, overrides all other topics of discussion such as environmental and social concerns, providing justification of a mega project in its own right. Flyvbjerg defines four categories of sublime with regards to mega project management being; technological sublime, political sublime, economic sublime and aesthetic sublime. Technological sublime is the exuberance with regards to the technological, engineering and innovative advancements of a mega project; often promoted with adjectives such as "the tallest, the longest, the fastest, the first" (Frick, 2008, 245-8). Aesthetic sublime is the gratification of an iconic object in XL scale, categorizing it as aesthetically beautiful. Political sublime is the exuberance of politicians while erecting a monument in their names or for their cause; not only manifesting their political power and grandeur but also gaining public attention and visibility. Lastly, economic sublime is the rapture of investors and business people with enormous profit margins and creation of jobs in all sorts of sectors such as architects, engineers, consultants, contractors, construction workers, bankers, investors, developers and speculators (Flyvbjerg, 2014, 6-8). It is safe to say that UMPs create a massive economy, becoming a motor function of many developing countries.

All of these categories are discursively used to market and legitimize UMPs all over the world. Moreover, they provide the mortar between the neoliberal coalitions of global finance and political power that promote UMPs. They bring forth such loud arguments that any counter position

becomes virtually invisible. As a result, the rhetoric of sublime, together with the state machine of informality become an invincible mechanism of advocating and executing UMPs, regardless of their irreversible affects to the social, urban and natural systems.

METHODOLOGY

The YSSB-NMH project provides an apparent example of this situation. First of all, the execution mechanisms of the project involve a great deal of state induced informality, as discussed in depth in the fifth chapter. A number of rules and regulations, including 1/100.000 scale planning decisions of Istanbul metropolitan area were disregarded during the decision making and execution of the projects. In doing so, the four categories of sublime were highly instrumental rhetorical tools, utilized by both the central government and the contractors. The aim of the discursive analysis adopted in this paper is to uncover this legitimizing rhetoric through in depth interviews with high rank project officials and analysis of the published promotion material.

On 19 June, 2019, a structured, open-ended, in-depth interview was conducted by the author with Serhat Soğukpınar, the General Director of ICA; Gülçin Kozan, the Traffic and Maintenance Director of ICA and Burak Akdemir, the Finance officer of ICA. In course of the paper, interviewees are referred as interviewee 1, interviewee 2 and interviewee 3 respectively. Interviewees, being high rank officials of the contractor firm were selected with regards to their close affiliation and liability to the YSSB - NMH project in various stages from bidding, design, execution and management.

Interview questions are structured to a certain extend; leading to an open-ended conversation; giving space for the interviewee to express his/her genuine opinions as well as the official discourse. Data gathered in the interview is processed and used in the study and presented as appendix. Promotion documents such as pamphlets, booklets and the web site prepared by the contractor firm are also used, in order to decipher the rhetorical tools used in the public presentation of the project.

Before delving into the discursive analysis of YSSB - NMH, it is crucial to discuss the geographical significance of the project site. In the following chapter, first the geographical setting of the NİMP will be discussed, then an account on the urban growth patterns of the city with regards to large scale motorways will be given, in order to reveal the impacts of YSSB - NMH.

	Name	Position	Experience
Interviewee 1	Serhat Soğukpınar	General Director of ICA	16 years in ICA as chairman of the board and director in bridge and highway construction and management projects.
Interviewee 2	Gülçin Kozan	Traffic and Maintenance Director of ICA	9 years in ICA is director in bridge and highway construction and management projects.
Interviewee 3	Burak Akdemir	Finance officer of ICA	4 years in ICA as finance executive and assistant of chairman

Table 1. Interviewees

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: NORTHERN ISTANBUL FORESTS

In order to comprehend the impacts of the Northern Istanbul Mega Projects (NIMP), ecological significance of the Northern Istanbul forests should be discussed. Northern Istanbul ecosystem is an integrated ecological corridor of major importance between Black Sea and the urbanized areas of Istanbul. As a transitory threshold between East Europe and Asia Minor, Northern Istanbul provides a unique ecosystem that connects European and Anatolian flora and fauna as well as Mediterranean and Black Sea regimes. This climatic and geographic clash result in an extraordinary diversity of natural habitats, consisting of forests, longos forests, sand dunes, wetlands, heathlands, meadows as well as natural parks and protection sites (Çalışkan, 2010, 23-30). Northern Istanbul ecosystem is claimed to be one of the 200 important ecological regions in the world and one of the 100 forests to be urgently protected in Europe (KOS, 2015, 23-42). Before being ruptured by NIMP, this region embodied a relatively unfragmented ecosystem inhabiting a significant amount of wildlife with;

- forests of mainly broadleaved trees such as oak, beech, hornbeam, chestnut, linden, willow, redwood, maple;
- floral diversity with around 2000 strains of flowery plants, 270 of them endemic;
- a globally significant flyway of migratory birds, inhabiting hundreds of thousands of aquatic, raptor and song birds in time of migration (Çalışkan, 2010, 23-30).

Northern Istanbul ecosystem is also of vital importance when the city scale is considered, being a crucial source of clean air, fresh water and climatic balance for Istanbul. Northern winds bring clean and cool forest air upon the city while northern wetlands and water basins such as Istranca Terkos, Ömerli, Büyükçekmece, Alibeyköy, Sazlıdere, (on the European side) Ömerli, Elmalı and Darlık (on the Anatolian side) and their habitats provide clean water for the city. In short, Northern ecological corridor with its vast biodiversity is imperative for reducing the effects of global warming.

As the natural reserves of the city, Northern Istanbul have never been densely populated in the history of the city. The urban development axis has always been towards East – West direction while growth towards North was avoided. The 1:100.000 scale Istanbul Upper Level Land Use Plan (IULLUP) approved in 2009, regarded as the constitution of the urban development of Istanbul, suggests similar urban growth principles. In that plan, it is clearly stated that;

- Most of the natural resources of the city such as forests, water basins, agricultural lands are located at the Northern ecological corridor, therefore the city should not grow towards North. The city should grow along the east-west axis.
- A land use – transportation relation that minimizes the Bosporus crossings should be established. This indicates a multicentered urban structure that reduces the interdependence of Anatolian – European peninsulas (IBB, 2009).

Northern Istanbul mega projects did not exist in the 2009 IULLUP. Yet, despite the necessity of protecting the area from the pressure of urbanization and against the rulings of the 1/100.000 IULLUP, the projects

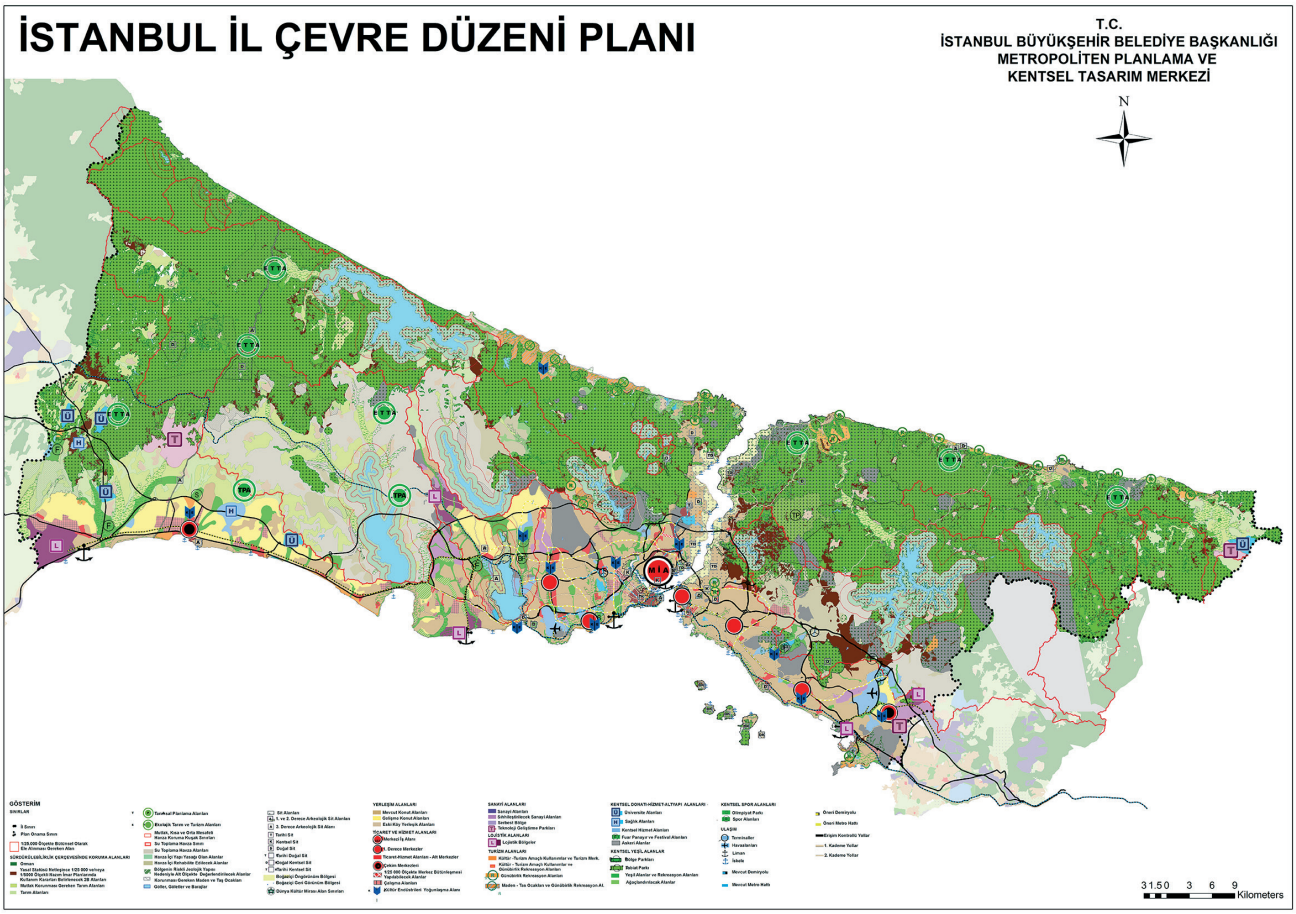

Figure 2. The 1:100.000 scale Istanbul Upper Level Land Use Plan (Istanbul Greater Municipality, 2009).

were initiated and executed subsequently in the last decade, starting with the YSSB – NMH, with top down and non-transparent decision-making processes.

As the initiatory mega project constituting the main transportation infrastructure triggering the urbanization of Northern Istanbul, YSSB – NMH had a major impact on the ecosystem of the area. As underlined in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the Third Bosporus Bridge and the Connection Roads Final Report, the majority of the NMH route - nearly 35 km - passes through the Bosporus Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) with several vulnerable habitats supporting rare plant species; lying along the length of the Bosporus strait from European side to Asian side (AECOM, 2013, 2-5). In the ESIA report, it is stated that construction and operation of the project could result in loss of habitats of significant ecological value. Important plant areas such as Ağaçlı Dunes, Upper Bosporus, Kilyos Dunes and Ömerli Basin, together with the trees, vegetation, endemic species, animals and the habitats upon which they depend are compromised.

Yet, the urbanization pressure the project brings to the area exceeds its immediate destructive impact. As underlined in the ESIA report, the main threat to the KBA is the rapid expansion of Istanbul towards North and the YSSB - NMH is the first mega project to trigger an irrecoverable spread in terms of uncontrolled in-migration movement to the region. As stated in the report, "the impact of any unplanned settlement will be permanent. The 1:100.000 master plan has stated not to let the city grow into the northern

areas. However, it may be impossible to apply the master plan following the construction of the Project" (AECOM, 2013, 5-12).

In order to understand the threat of uncontrolled urban spread towards North, triggered by YSSB - NMH, it is imperative to take a look at the urban growth patterns of Istanbul in relation to the development of transportation infrastructure, especially the Bosporus bridges and their connection highways. Three motorway bridges in fifty years demonstrate the dominant urban transportation policy of the city, focusing on highways and motorways instead of sea and rail transportation systems, promoting private vehicle ownership against public transportation, depending on fossil fuels instead of alternative energies. These choices had significant consequences with regards to urban sprawl and land use patterns. Looking at the effects of the first two Bosporus bridges and their highway systems on the macroform of Istanbul, it is possible to comment on the possible impacts of the third bridge in terms of urban sprawl.

The Urban Growth of Istanbul Through Bosporus Bridges

The two Bosporus bridges, 15 Temmuz (Boğaziçi) Bridge inaugurated in 1973 and Fatih Sultan Mehmet (FSM) Bridge in 1988, had major and irreversible impacts on the land use, urban development and transportation patterns of Istanbul. Each bridge carried the city further towards North, triggering urban density with regards to population and land use. The bridges, built with the purpose of transit transportation became the primary spine of the inner-city transportation network in a very short period of time, altering the population and employment balance of the Anatolian and European sides of the city.

The major function of the Bosporus bridges became the transportation of vehicles, more than passengers. The second bridge (FSM) and its connection road network (TEM) further induced the pressure of urbanization towards North. Within a decade, entire neighborhoods such as Gaziosmanpaşa (population increase: 360.000), Ümraniye (population increase: 305.000), Sultanbeyli (population increase 93.000) emerged from scratch, sweeping the unurbanized land that was now accessible via TEM (Çalışkan, 2010, 14-20). it could be claimed that the basic impacts of the Bosporus bridges to the inner-city traffic were the increase in private car ownership and the degrading of public transportation in commuting between the two sides of the city as the bridges create their own traffic in a vicious cycle.

Transit traffic, which is used as a justification to build the third bridge is only two-three percent of the cross Bosporus traffic, which is a rather questionable percentage for such a costly investment. Moreover, FSM bridge, built with the same justification of handling transit traffic became a major trigger of the urban sprawl towards North; providing a clear example of the impacts of Bosporus bridges on the urbanization patterns of Istanbul. It is certain that the third bridge will trigger the population increase and unplanned urbanization towards the Northern ecological corridor, up to the shores of the Black Sea, against the basic planning principles of the initial 1:100.000 IULLUP plan.

Numerous environmental organizations, urban planners and Istanbulites have raised serious concerns about the YSSB - NMH, claiming that the project will damage the city's remaining green areas, make traffic even worse and lead to a boom in the already dense population. Many NGO's, such as the Chamber of Architects, Chamber of City Planners, Nature

Association (Doğa Derneği), The Turkish Foundation for Reforestation, Protection of Natural Habitats and Combating Soil Erosion (TEMA), Northern Forests Defense (KOS) voiced criticisms that the third bridge will not solve the problems of Istanbul but add new, unsolvable problems in terms of traffic congestion, contamination of water resources, environmental collapse and urban density (Guardian, 2012; KOS, 2019).

The question then becomes why and how such a controversial project, opposing the basic planning principles of the city could be issued and through which mechanisms could it be promoted and legitimized? In the next chapter, answers to these questions will be investigated through a discursive analysis of the project.

PROJECT: YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM BRIDGE AND THE NORTHERN MARMARA HIGHWAY

YSSB is posited at the Black Sea edge of Bosporus, crossing between Garipçe village on the European side and Poyraz village on the Asian side. The bridge is designed to carry a 2 x 4 lane motorway and two high speed railway tracks, although the railway system is not established as of today. The contract to build the Odayeri-Paşaköy section of Northern Marmara Motorway, including 1,3 km long bridge construction was assigned to ICA (Ibrahim Çeçen – Astaldi Consortium), a Turkish-Italian joint venture as the leading contractor firm of the project.

Project Name	Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and Northern Marmara Highway
Project Site	At the Black Sea end of the Bosphorus, Northern Istanbul YSM Bridge: between Garipçe (Sarıyer) and Poyrazköy (Beykoz) villages. NMH: Between Kurtköy & Paşaköy (Asian side) and Odayeri (European side) + junctions and connection roads at Ümraniye, Çamlık and Mahmutbey.
Project scope	95 km long main high way and following connection roads (250 km in total), 39 viaducts, highway bridges, 4 tunnels and 3rd Bosphorus Bridge
Ground breaking date	29 May 2013
Completion date	26 August 2016
Project cost	3.25 Billion USD
Project Dimensions	Bridge span: 1408 Meters, Bridge Length: 2164 meters, Tower height: 330 meters, Bridge Width: 59 meters, Lanes: 2X4 highway lanes, 2X1 railroad lanes
Project Material	Steel and concrete
Project model	Build-Operate-Transfer model - investment + operation period of 10 years 2 months 20 days
İnterview	Serhat Soğukpınar (General Director, ICA), Gülçin Kozan (Traffic and Maintenance Director, ICA) Burak Akdemir (Corporate Finance, ICA)
Actors	
Employer	General Directorate of Highways / Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure
Contractor	IC İçtaş Construction Industry & Trading INC. and Astaldi S.P.A Partnership
Project Designer	Michel Virlogeux
Project Engineer	T-Engineering, Jean Francois Klein, Greisch, Temelsu
Sub Contractors	HDSK Consortium (Hyundai, SK E&C)
Opposing civil actors	KOS – Northern Istanbul Defense, TMMOB

Table 2. Project Details: Bidding, Execution, Actors

Figure 3. Istanbul highway map (KGM, n.d.)

In the ESIA report, it was anticipated that 135,000 vehicles will use the bridge in each direction per day. It is stated by interviewee 3 that 480,000 vehicles are currently using the NMH route, mainly the link roads, on a daily basis. The aim of the project is stated as to "provide a new crossing of the Bosporus well away from the main conurbation of Istanbul", with the justification that the two existing bridges across the Bosporus are located within the city and are often heavily congested (AECOM, 2013; ICA, 2018). This new crossing is meant to take the transit traffic weight off the FSM bridge, therefore decrease the inner-city traffic. Yet, as discussed in the previous section, it is expected that the project will add up to the traffic of the city, triggering uncontrolled urban growth towards north.

At this point, it is important to take a closer look at the mechanisms that produce the affirmative discourse around the project; as it is not the actual vitality of the mega projects but the careful advocacy around them that manipulates their public perception towards helpless acceptance, dismissing opposing voices. Through deciphering the affirmative discourse around the project, it can be possible to deliver a viable critique of the developmentalist agenda behind it.

Informality

When looked from the legal perspective, construction of the third Bosporus bridge and Northern Marmara Highway is against a number of national and international laws and treaties such as;

- **The 1:100.000 scale IULLUP:** as discussed in detail in section 4.
- **9th National Development Plan Dwelling and Urbanization Criteria:** The 9th National Development Plan is based on reducing developmental differences between regions by transference of resources, investment and population movement towards mid-size cities (Resmi Gazete, 2006). Yet, vast resources and investment devoted to YSSB – NMH as well as the population growth and new settlement areas triggered by the project will ramp up the socio-economical imbalance between Istanbul and the rest of the country; producing a conflict between the criteria stated above.
- **Istanbul and Bosporus Zoning Laws and Codes**: In Reconstruction Law no: 3194, it is stated that "every plan has to conform to the principals and decisions of the upper scale plans". Yet YSSB – NMH was implemented in lower scale (1/25.000 and 1/5000) plans before its implementation on 1/100.000 plan, despite its clear contradictions

towards major decisions of the 1/100.000 plan. The way YSSB – NMH is forged on lower scale plans before the 1/100.000 plan creates a contradiction to the Zoning Law. The project, bringing immense destruction towards the area is also contradicting with the Bosporus Law no:2960, stating very clear boundaries regarding the protection of cultural and natural values of the Bosporus area.

- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations:** The purpose of EIA is to protect environmental values by assessing probable negative environmental impacts of a given project and taking necessary measures accordingly. In the EIA Regulations, it is clearly stated that grand infrastructural projects such as highways and motorways are subjected to EIA. Moreover, forest areas, natural and wildlife protection reserves are classified as "Sensitive Zones", requiring protection according to the legislation (Resmi Gazete, 2014). Yet, YSSB – NMH was deliberately excluded from EIA through a consensus between Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Environment and Forestry, regardless of many oppositions from NGO's and scientific circles. The legal pretense underneath the exclusion was stated as the decision of building a 3rd Bosporus bridge has been taken before 1993. This provides a questionable legal basis as neither the location nor the route of the project was determined at the time. In fact, the initial 3rd bridge discussions were focused on Arnavutköy neighborhood, but then left unexecuted due to intense public opposition. Therefore, the project's exclusion from EIA has ambiguous legal foundations and produces a clear violation of EIA regulations.
- **Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration (İSKİ) Regulations:** Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration Regulations state that "no construction under any circumstances can be built within the absolute protection areas of watercourses and water basins", constituting a 0-300 meters periphery along the water courses (İSKİ, 2011). On the contrary, NMH trespasses the Northern part of the absolute protection area of Büyükçekmece water basin, creating an explicit contradiction to the regulations.
- **Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage No. 2863:** This law states that no construction or physical interference is allowed within cultural and natural heritage / protection sites (Resmi Gazete, 1983). YSSB – NMH route effects natural protection sites, natural parks and forest areas as discussed above; producing a conflict with the law.
- **Bern Convention**: Bern Convention, opened for signature on 1979 is a treaty on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats which Turkey is a committed party (COE, n.d). The YSSB – NMH route passes through the habitat of seventy-three bird species that are under protection due to the Bern Convention, producing a violation to the conditions of the Convention.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Criteria:** There are fourteen wildlife species under global extinction threat and thirty wildlife species under national extinction threat within the boundaries of Bosporus natural reserve area (IUCN, 2012), (Çalışkan, 2010, 33). The construction and utilization of the 3rd bridge and the connection roads of YSSB – NMH will inevitably have a ravaging

effect on the natural habitat of these species, contradicting with the IUCN criteria.

- **European Urban Charter Criteria:** European Urban Charter Criteria, established in 1992, states that the balance between cities and automobiles should be reshaped in favor of the cities, meaning urban development should not be based on encouraging private car ownership (EUC, 2009). Building a mega highway infrastructure project is a clear discrepancy with charter's principles.

As indicated above, the project route exhibits a major problem as it is not compatible with greater city urban plans and environmental regulations. Still, the execution of the project is somehow legitimized through regulatory revisions of planning documents (Doğan and Stupar, 2017, 281–8). It is stated by interviewee 2 that the reason beneath the route choice of the project was to "decrease the confiscation amount of private land and increase the incorporation of publicly owned forest area", in order to reduce the expropriation costs and potential law suits from land owners. It could be argued that cost reduction was prioritized over protection of natural reserves of the city.

Moreover, despite the fact that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval is a legal obligation in Turkey; especially for mega projects that could induce massive adverse effects on vulnerable natural and social fabric; YSSB - NMH project was excluded from EIA procedure for implicit reasons. Later an American company employed by ICA namely AECOM (Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations and Maintenance) conducted ESIA for the construction of YSSB - NMH, on "volunteering" principles, as stated by interviewee 2. In conclusion ICA, the main contractor of the project, became the client of the ESIA report that is supposed to state the final assessment with regards to the environmental and social impacts of the project. The fact that the ESIA report that is supposed to determine whether or not the project should be built is financed by the main contractor, after the initiation of the construction process, is another indicator of the informality mechanisms and legitimization tactics.

As discussed above, the project has been legally problematic from the beginning. During the execution process of the project, a number of law suits addressing these legal discrepancies were filed by a number of NGOs such as professional chambers affiliated with the Union of Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects; TEMA Foundation and political parties, demanding the termination of the project (CNNTURK, 2015), (Mimarist, 2011), (Cumhuriyet, 2010), (T24, 2015). Yet the execution of the project continued, despite opposing statements of legal expert reports and court orders (Arkitera, 2016; Diken, 2014; İSMD n.d.). It is safe to claim that laws, regulations and court orders have been repeatedly bypassed by the government throughout the execution of the project, indicating a state induced mechanism of commodified informality, as stated by Roy (2009). Here, informality is no longer associated with the unregulated real estate market of squatter settlements and shanty towns but the hyper-flexible state machine that legitimizes its actions via political and capital power.

Istanbul is a global city under construction. To induce this transformation and stimulate economic growth, central government promotes mega projects as key interventions at any cost. Therefore, urban space production mechanisms in Istanbul are shifting away from integrative urban plans to

the execution of individual mega projects that define the spatial structure of the city. In this fragmented planning structure, legality becomes a mere formality to be wangled through mechanisms of state instigated informality.

Four categories of sublime: Technological, aesthetic, political and economic sublime

The primary aim of mega projects is to capture global capital and the quantitative attributes of a project are frequently underlined for promotion. The scale of a project therefore becomes an indicative feature with regards to attaining global attention, status and distinction (Doğan and Stupar, 2017, 281-8). Mega projects are often promoted through their sheer size, scale or volume, referred and publicized as being the "tallest, biggest, longest or fastest", as if the size or amount is a valid indicator of quality (Flyvbjerg, 2014, 6-8). This emphasis on bigness surpasses all other issues and arguments such as ecological or social concerns, repressing essential conversations.

YSSB - NMH project follows the same logic. The quantitative features are a huge part of the affirmative discourse built around the project as highlighted in the promotional books and brochures, inauguration speeches as well as stated in the interviews. In the official web site of ICA, the project is presented as the "largest suspension bridge of the world with fifty-nine meters width, having the longest railway suspension bridge of the world with 1408 meters length and the highest towered suspension bridge of the world with 322 meters height" (ICA 2020). This is a typical example of the technological sublime as discussed by Flyvbjerg with its recurrent emphasis on scale and use of adjectives such as "the biggest, highest, largest, first, a unique example of engineering, a monumental project, the project of firsts and mosts" as commented by interviewee 1 and pointed out in the promotion materials (ICA 2018, ICA 2019). In the promotion materials, YSSB - NMH is frequently depicted with terms of bravura and grandeur as well as irrelevant quantitative comparisons to soccer fields or airplanes.

Technological sublime goes hand in hand with another category, being the aesthetic sublime, in terms of establishing symbolic value and

Figure 4. Records set by Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge: A bridge of firsts (ICA, 2018; ICA, UDH, KGM n.d).

global prestige of a mega project. "Beauty" in its relativity becomes an incontestable argument frequently utilized as an affirmative attribute. The aesthetic experience of YSSB is often underlined by the contractors and government officials. YSS bridge is frequently referred as the "third pearl / necklace of the Bosporus, a beautiful artefact, a new symbol for Istanbul, an opportunity to discover the hidden beauties of the city" (ICA, 2019). To underline the symbolic value imputed to the YSS bridge, it is compared by interviewee 1 to the Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco or the Eiffel Tower of Paris; as a landmark and a touristic attraction that brings prestige and visibility to Istanbul.

Mega projects are also tools for political propaganda, as manifestations of power and grandeur and vessels for public attention and visibility, addressing to the political sublime (Flyvbjerg 2014). For right wing neoliberal politicians of Turkey, it has almost been a trade mark to erect a Bosporus bridge at Istanbul; the historical imperial capital and current economical capital; as a sign of their administrative performance. Süleyman Demirel inaugurated the First Bridge (Boğaziçi – 15 Temmuz) in 1973, Turgut Özal inaugurated the second Bridge (FSM) in 1989 and Tayyip Erdoğan inaugurated the third Bridge (Yavuz Sultan Selim) in 2019. All of these bridges were utilized as signs of administrative effectivity and political leverage as grand gestures of prestige. The speeches given by Erdoğan during the groundbreaking and inauguration ceremonies are examples of how YSSB - NMH is instrumentalized as a statement of political rhetoric (ICA, 2018, 47). The groundbreaking ceremony took place on May 29, 2013, marking the anniversary of Istanbul's conquest by the Ottomans. Erdoğan used the phrase "we continue to write history", drawing a parallel between the performance of his administration and the glorified Empyreal past of the Ottomans (ICA, 2018, 47). Similarly, the inauguration ceremony took place on August 26, marking two significant dates in the glorified historical narrative of the Turkish nation, one being the Malazgirt battle that opened up the doors of Anatolia to Turks (26 August 1071), and the Great Offensive (Büyük Taarruz) of Turkish War of

Figure 5. Everything about the New Pearl of Bosporus: A Landmark of Modern Turkey (ICA, n.d.).

Figure 6. The 3rd bridge press coverage (ICA, 2018).

Independence (26 August 1922). Erdoğan deliberately mentioned these two dates, again drawing a parallel with the past glories of the nation to his government.

More than any other category, economic sublime is instrumentalized for the justification of mega projects with promises of profitability, capital flow and economic rejuvenation. Mega projects trigger economic activity, create new jobs in every scale from contractors to designers, from investors to construction workers; feeding the construction sector which is the leading economic sector of Turkey. Turkey's Vision 2023 consists of a set of goals to be reached by the centennial of the Republic of Turkey. There, the importance of urban infrastructure investments is highlighted for further economic growth, urban and global development (World Profile Group, 2013, 3). Istanbul gets the lion's share of the global investments for UMP's and the North Istanbul mega projects, YSSB - NMH, 3rd Airport and Kanal Istanbul are specifically associated with the 2023 objectives. The global city discourse is evident in the promotion of these projects with a new international transportation network reinforced with touristic, recreational, cultural and commercial facilities. The aim of setting Istanbul as a junction point of transit transport and a center for global trade by establishing transit connection of Europe and Asia is stated by Binali Yıldırım, the former Minister of Transport and Communication and Prime Minister (ICA 2018, 48).

As the initiating project of the Northern Istanbul mega projects, YSSB - NMH carries the flag of setting Istanbul as a global finance center and a hub of connectivity. It is stated by interviewee 1 that the project aims to re-establish Istanbul as an important transition point with regards to local and global transportation of goods and passengers with no limitations on freight vehicles and lower import – export costs, enlivening the economy of the whole region (ICA, 2018; ICA, UDH, KGM 2019). Interviewee 1 claims that YSSB - NMH intends to set a local junction point of land, rail and air transportation by connecting three airports of Istanbul and Kanal Istanbul to the city center, also becoming a regional hub by connecting a number of national highway ring roads such as Gebze – İzmir Highway and Çanakkale Highway (to be built in the future), connecting Istanbul and Marmara region to Aegean and Mediterranean territories, easing the flow of goods and services (ICA 2018). In the larger picture, YSSB - NMH route is meant to connect Europe to Caucasus and the Caspian Sea on the Northern part and Middle and far East, all the way to China on the southern part.

Interviewee 1underlines the economic contribution and efficiency of this regional and international transit route; stating that "the goods and passengers, inner city or transit, are given a faster alternative to commute". Yet, the understated truth is that the cost of this faster and efficient alternative is the devastation of Northern Istanbul forests.

As pointed out by interviewee 1, master plan decisions to move the logistic hubs such as customs (Erenköy and Halkalı), bus terminals (Esenler) and market places (Hal) towards North are also parts of the expansion strategy of Istanbul. All these moves, together with the infrastructural mega projects will inevitably affect the real estate market, raising demand and creating centers of attraction at the small Northern Istanbul settlements such as Kilyos, Uskumruköy, Poyrazköy; bringing constant population increase to the area. This expansion strategy is defined by interviewee 1 as "necessary and inevitable" as Istanbul; the giant metropolis holding forty percent of the country's economy is claimed to be congested and needs to grow; and the only place left to grow is towards the Northern forests. In fact, the actual problem is this logic of centralization and continuous growth of one pioneer city, Istanbul. This policy of over accumulation is bound to create governmental and ecological problems. Even interviewee 1 queries this policy, stating that;

> "Unfortunately, all the eggs are placed in the same basket. As long as we put everything here (Istanbul), this place is going to grow. We need to change this strategy… We have created a center of attraction (via mega projects). If we could create this attraction elsewhere, maybe this population would go there, (Çorlu, Edirne…) and that area will develop. We need to make sure people earning their livelihood here (in Istanbul) could continue to earn their lives in another location. Otherwise, we do not have a chance to grow and develop by cutting trees and building roads. "

Economic rejuvenation and rise in employment rates are assertions frequently used to promote the project. The major economic impact of the project is without doubt the rent value of the land that will be zoned for construction, following the execution of the mega projects, as discussed above. It is estimated that around 500,000 decares of land, formerly forest areas or natural protection zones will be opened for development, having a land value of around thirty-five billion USD. With the construction of infrastructural facilities and real estate investments, the estimated value of the emerging real estate market is ten times the size of the sheer land value, around 350 billion USD, being almost double the size of Turkey's annual budget of 200 Billion USD (Çalışkan, 2010, 37-41). In short, through these mega projects, a 350 billion USD worth of real estate market is created from scratch, at a part of the city where urban development is mostly prohibited. This calculation clearly displays the indispensability of these projects for the government in power for overcoming the deepening financial crisis and maintaining its continuation. It is evident that the issue is far more than improving the transportation network; it is to create artificial needs to attract global capital investment by opening up the Northern ecological corridor to urbanization, therefore sacrificing natural resources of Istanbul.

Turkey, similar to many developing countries, rely too much on construction with regards to economic growth. The economical triggering effect of construction has become so dominant that all other means of production have been repressed. Yet, a growth model relying on land speculation is neither economically, nor ecologically sustainable. This fact is admitted by interviewee 1 with the words below:

> "There are no other groups in the world that are building mega projects of this scale in such a short period of time. We have achieved so much. From now on we need production, to produce goods that will be transported through these roads. We need to do different things. Construction sector could only do so much".

As a mega infrastructure project of a metropolis in a developing country, mechanisms of informality are vastly operated to realize YSSB – NMH, while categories of sublime are frequently utilized to legitimize the scale and scope of the project. Table 3 summarizes the discussion above; demonstrating how the mechanisms of informality were put into action and how they are supported by repetitive claims of technological, aesthetic, political and economic sublime.

Informality	• against a number of national and international laws and treaties • against the 1:100.000 scale Istanbul EMP (IBB, 2006), • project was excluded from EIA procedure – EIA conducted after the initiation of the project, financed by the contractor
Technological Sublime	Project largely promoted with quantitative aspects: • "largest suspension bridge of the world with fifty-nine meters width" • "longest railway suspension bridge of the world with 1408 meters length" • "highest towered suspension bridge of the world with 322 meters height" • "the biggest, highest, largest, first, a unique example of engineering, a monumental project the project of firsts and mosts"
Aesthetic Sublime	Project largely promoted with aesthetic aspects: • "third pearl / necklace of the Bosporus" • "a beautiful artefact" • "a new symbol for Istanbul" • "an opportunity to discover the hidden beauties of the city" • "a landmark and a touristic attraction that brings prestige and visibility to Istanbul"
Political Sublime	Project used as a political propaganda tool: • "we continue to write history" • project compared to Istanbul's conquest by the Ottomans, Malazgirt battle and the Great Offensive (Büyük Taarruz) of Turkish War of Independence
Economic Sublime	Economic rejuvenation and rise in employment rates are used to promote the project: • setting Istanbul as a junction point of transit transport and a center for global trade by establishing transit connection of Europe and Asia • enlivening the economy of the region • easing the flow of goods and services • a faster alternative to commute - efficiency • expansion strategy of the city towards North

Table 3. Discourse Analysis: Informality and the Four Categories of Sublime

CONCLUSION: MEGA PROJECTS IN THE AGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

In his book *Three Ecologies*, Guattari states that in the era of machines of image and artificial intelligence, we need to rethink and relink our social and individual practices under the umbrella of social, mental and environmental ecology. This reassessment is crucial as the collapse of these three realms could result in "ignorance and fatalistic passivity", with devastating outcomes such as "destruction and neutralization of democracy" (Guattari, 2000, 23-70). Looking from the 21st century, this prediction seems to be alarmingly accurate as in the past two decades, we are globally facing the consequences of the rupture of the three ecologies in terms of authoritarianism, deterioration of political institutions and environmental collapse. At this point, it is important to understand that this "fatalistic passivity" towards the systemic decline of our planet is neither due to blind-sidedness nor ignorance, but a result of careful and repetitive discursive propaganda of neoliberal capitalism, devouring any viable opposition. As human communities, we are neither impotent subjects nor innocent bystanders; we are merely pacified by neoliberal narrations of false prioritization, necessity and inevitability.

In this paper, the legitimization and persuasion mechanisms of Northern Istanbul mega projects are revealed through the discursive analysis of YSSB-NMH project. The answer of interviewee 1 to the question about the downfalls of the YSSB-NMH project provides a striking example of the false narration stated above: "What did it (YSS-NMH) take away? Trees were cut down. Instead, more trees were planted. Unfortunately, this happens where technology, civilization arrives. It makes you sad. But it happens".

These words represent the dilemma of our century; being the creation of endless demands that are impossible to be met by limited resources and prioritization of the demands of capitalist economy over everything else, including our environmental resources. In the case above, "technology and civilization" is used as synonym to construction, real estate market and creative destruction with their superiority and indispensability accepted without questioning. The unchallenged belief behind the phrase "it happens" is the main problem. The fact is, cut down trees of the Northern Istanbul Forest cannot be compensated with planting more trees, as it is an entire ecosystem with multiple layers of living and co-depending organisms that is devastated, which cannot be replaced by monocultural plantation. The fact is, Istanbul did not need a third Bosporus bridge and a highway right through its ecological corridor, compromising its clean air, water and natural habitats. Instead, it needed a human oriented transportation system that;

- did not endanger the ecologic integrity of the Northern forests,
- would support the linear urban development strategy of the IULLUP, along east – west axis, keeping the employment and residential functions of Anatolian and European sides in balance and discouraging unnecessary Bosporus crossings,
- created an integrated public transport network with railway systems as the main spine, with enhanced sea transportation and improved motorways,

- would not radically shift the population density to ecologically vulnerable areas of the city by creating artificial centers of attraction.

Yet, despite the obvious facts and oppositions from various NGO's, the execution of YSS-NMH was completed in three and a half years, a record completion time for a mega project of this scale. This was done through the utilization of the concepts of informality, as discussed by Roy (2009) and four categories of sublime, as discussed by Flyvbjerg (2014).

Informality, being the state driven manipulation and violation of laws and regulations, has been a very instrumental mechanism in terms of the realization of YSS-NMH. From the route selection to the execution of the project, numerous laws and regulations were deliberately trespassed, as explained in the previous chapter. Most importantly, the 1/100.000 IULLUP and the EIA Regulations were officially disregarded. In the face of the extra legality of the process, a number of law suits were issued by civil initiatives such as professional chambers, yet the juridical procedures were bypassed and the civil opposition was ignored. Moreover, four categories of sublime have been a widely adapted strategy for the promotion, justification and discursive imposition of YSS-NMH, blurring opposing discussions of legitimacy. From the discourses of high rank officials to public speeches of politicians, newspaper articles and promotion booklets, the rhetoric of technological, aesthetic, political and economic sublime have been the primary means of official communication of the project.

Far from being a unique case, similar mechanisms of informality and discourse of sublime; operational in the YSS-NMH have been widely used in the implementation of mega projects of many developing countries, creating similar outcomes. Mega projects are special kinds of beasts, generating disruptive and contentious results with their sheer and suppressive scale all over the world, especially from the rapidly urbanizing global south. From New Mexico to Shanghai, from Sao-Paolo to Delhi, many booming metropolises are facing similar problems of rapid urbanization, top-down initiation, non-transparent decision-making processes, legal obscurity, gentrification, social inequity and environmental devastation, blurred by neoliberal discourses of political grandeur, economic development, aesthetic and technological superiority.

Today, we are facing a discrepancy between the capitalist demands of neoliberal urbanism and the needs of cities with ever growing population, inequality and pressing environmental concerns. Cities can no longer be conceptualized as cultural commodities for capital accumulation and growth. Much more than that, cities are the foreground of the most urgent problems of the 21st century such as the environmental crisis and social injustice; currently generating the problem yet potentially bearing the solution within. Hence, there is an urgent call for alternative approaches to urbanism that recognizes the complexity and transdisciplinarity of cities. Santamaria, advocating a transdisciplinary paradigm in urbanization, suggests the reconciliation of theory and practice, social and exact sciences, governing structures and civil initiatives, arts, design and communities to transparently renegotiate power structures in order to create open ended, non-compartmentalized knowledge production translating into just, ecologic, efficient outcomes in urban space production (2020). More than the scale of the project, it is the agenda of the initiating actors that sets the success criteria of an urban mega project. Hence it is crucial that the agenda of the citizens, communities and the ecological imperative find voice and

agency within and beyond the hyper capitalist mechanisms of urban space production.

As the physical limits of Istanbul continue to expand through piecemeal interventions where mega projects constitute the primary tool for urban space production, tolerance limits of the city in terms of natural resources, land supply and livability are dramatically strained. This model of unconstrained growth through mega projects, executed by many urban administrations of developing economies as well as the economic giants of the non-western world is socially, ecologically and economically unsustainable. At this point, it becomes crucial to decipher and challenge the pacifying neoliberal discourse that preaches infinite economic growth at all costs, transforming our developmentalist, anthropocentric existential perspective in order to shift to a less detrimental, nourishing human existence on earth.

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

YSSB-NMH: Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and Northern Marmara Highway

ICA: Ibrahim Çeçen – İçtaş - Astaldi Consortium

UMP: Urban Mega Projects

NIMP: Northern Istanbul Mega Projects

IULLUP: Istanbul Upper Level Land Use Plan

TMMOB: Türkiye Mimarlar ve Mühendisler Odası Birliği (Turkish Chamber of Architects and Engineers)

KOS: Kuzey Ormanları Savunması

ESIA: Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Report

KBA: Bosporus Key Biodiversity Area

FSM: Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge

TEM: Trans European Motorway

KGM: Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğü (General Directorate of Highways)

EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

AECOM: Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations and Maintenance

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Kentsel mekan üretimi; neoliberal kentleşme politikaları; küresel kent; kuzey İstanbul; mega projeler

2000'LERDE KUZEY İSTANBUL'UN KENTLEŞME SÜREÇLERİ: YAVUZ SULTAN SELİM KÖPRÜSÜ VE KUZEY MARMARA OTOYOLU

2000'lerin İstanbul'u mega projeler yoluyla kentleşmenin çarpıcı bir örneğini oluşturmaktadır. Özellikle geçtiğimiz on yılda İstanbul'un Kuzey'inde gündeme gelen mega altyapı projelerinin, kentin ekolojik sistemlerine ve büyüme dinamiklerine büyük çaplı ve geri dönüşsüz etkileri olacağı açıktır. Bu çalışma, Kuzey ormanlarının içinden geçerek İstanbul'un ulaşım altyapısını ve ağırlık merkezini Kuzey'e taşımayı hedefleyen mega projelerin ilki olan Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü ve Kuzey Marmara Otoyolu'na (YSS-KMO) odaklanmaktadır. YSS-KMO ve ardından gelen İstanbul Havaalanı ile Kanal İstanbul projeleri, kenti Kuzey'e doğru genişleterek küresel bir ulaşım merkezi haline getirme stratejisinin parçaları olarak görülebilir. Bu makalede, 2000'lerin neoliberal kentsel mekân üretim mekanizmalarının sorunsallaştırılması üzerinden projenin eleştirel bir okuması yapılmıştır. Bu okuma yapılırken Ananya Roy'un (2009, 819-30) "kayıtdışılık" (informality) ve Bent Flyvbjerg'in (2014, 6-19) "süblimin dört kategorisi" (four categories of sublime) kavramları, kuramsal çerçeveyi oluşturan anahtar kavramlar olarak ele alınmıştır.

Çalışma, niteliksel bir araştırma yöntemi olan söylem analizini benimser. Öncelikle projenin ortaya çıkış ve uygulama süreçlerindeki yasal

tutarsızlıklar Roy'un "kayıt dışılık" kavramı üzerinden tartışılmıştır. Ardından projenin üst düzey yürütücüleriyle yapılan yapılandırılmış açık uçlu görüşmeler, projenin tanıtım materyalleri ve gazete haberleri üzerinden toplanan veri incelenerek projenin kamuya sunumundaki neoliberal söylem, Flyvbjerg'in "süblimin dört kategorisi" üzerinden okunmuştur. Kanun ve yönetmeliklerin yönetsel otorite tarafından manipule ve ihlal edilmesi anlamına gelen "kayıt dışılık", YSS-KMO projesinin gerçekleşme sürecinde araçsal bir mekanizma olmuştur. Proje güzergahının seçiminden projenin inşasına kadar geçen süreçte, başta 1/100.000 İstanbul Çevre Düzeni Planı ve Çevre Etki Değerlendirme Yönetmeliği olmak üzere bir dizi kanun ve yönetmelik devre dışı kalmıştır. Ayrıca, "süblimin dört kategorisi" olan teknolojik, estetik, politik ve ekonomik yüceltme söylemleri de projenin tanıtım, meşrulaştırma ve uygulama süreçlerinde sıklıkla başvurulan bir söylemsel strateji olmuştur.

Bu ikili analiz sonucunda, YSS-KMO projesinin ortaya çıkış, uygulama ve kamuya sunuluş aşamalarındaki neoliberal icra ve olumlama mekanizmalarının açığa çıkarılması hedeflenmiştir. Çalışma, YSS-KMO üzerinden gelişmekte olan ülkelerin metropol şehirlerinde benzerleri yaşanmakta olan, mega projeler üzerinden neoliberal kentleşme dinamiklerine eleştirel bir bakış getirmeyi amaçlar.

URBANIZATION PROCESSES OF NORTHERN ISTANBUL IN THE 2000'S: YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM BRIDGE AND THE NORTHERN MARMARA HIGHWAY

Istanbul of the 2000's is a striking example of urbanization through mega projects. It is clear that the mega infrastructure projects that have come to the fore in the North of Istanbul, especially in the last decade, will have large-scale and irreversible effects on the ecological systems and growth dynamics of the city. This study focuses on Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and Northern Marmara Highway (YSS-NMH), being the first of the mega projects aiming to move the transportation infrastructure and center of gravity of Istanbul towards North, passing through the Northern forests. YSS-NMH and the subsequent mega projects, being the Istanbul Airport and Kanal Istanbul can be seen as parts of a strategy to expand the city towards North and transform it into a global transportation hub. In this article, a critical reading of the project is provided through the problematization of neoliberal urban space production mechanisms of the 2000's. While doing this reading, Ananya Roy's (2009, 819-30) "informality" and Bent Flyvbjerg's (2014, 6-19) "four categories of sublime" are taken as key concepts forming the theoretical framework.

The study adopts discoursive analysis as a qualitative research method. First of all, the legal inconsistencies in the emergence and implementation processes of the project are discussed through Roy's concept of "informality". Then, through the processing of structured open-ended interviews with the senior executives of the project and the examination of promotional project materials and related newspaper articles; the neoliberal discourse in the public presentation of the project is analyzed through Flyvbjerg's "four categories of sublime". "Informality", meaning the manipulation and violation of laws and regulations by the administrative authority, has been an instrumental mechanism in the realization process of the YSS-NMH project. During the execution process, starting from the selection of the project route to the construction stages, a number of laws and regulations, especially the 1/100,000 Istanbul Upper Level Land

Use Plan and the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, were inactivated. Moreover, the technological, aesthetic, political and economic sublimation discourses, which are the "four categories of sublime", have been a discursive strategy frequently used in the promotion, legitimation and implementation processes of the project.

The aim of this dual analysis is to reveal the neoliberal execution and affirmation mechanisms of the YSS-NMH project during the emergence, implementation and public presentation stages. Through the dual analysis of YSS-NMH, this study intends to bring a critical account to the dynamics of neoliberal urbanization through mega projects in general, drawing parallels between similar processes that are experienced in many of the metropolitan cities of developing countries in the 21st century.

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