The Urban Transformation in Kadifekale, İzmir: The Crossroads of Neo-Liberalism and Internal Displacement (Neslihan Demirtaş & Cenk Saraçoğlu)

The large-scale urban renewal projects, which included the demolition of the inner-city low-income settlements and the resettlement of the displaced migrants in the outer districts composed of “formal” apartments mark the latest stage of the neoliberal urban politics practiced in the last two decades in Turkey. The way these projects have been carried out by officials and their negative consequences particularly for the “ethnically other” migrant communities who generally constitute the poorest of the poor have led to a skepticism towards the merits of these projects and their claims to be for public good among intellectuals, scholars and activists in recent years.

By carrying such skepticism, we intend to conduct a qualitative research on Konak Urban Renewal Project, which includes the total transformation of the district traditionally known as Kadifekale, the oldest inner city gecekondu settlement of İzmir that inhabit mainly Kurdish migrants. Our main objective will be to understand the processes through which the neighborhood residents participate or resist the project on unequal terms on the one hand, and to examine the discourses of state officials in dealing with this compromise or resistance, on the other. As the transformation of Kadifekale bears the traces of the Kurdish question and concomitant internal displacement as well as the neoliberal transformation of Turkish economy, our research project will aim to relate these processes to this particular urban transformation project. In other words, the originality of our project lies in its endeavor to situate Kurdish question within neoliberal urban governance through a close analysis of Kadifekale case.