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The Impacts of Neoliberal Urban Politics on Transformation Process of Poverty; the Case of Altındag Gecekondu Neighbourhood of Ankara

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Abstract

The new understanding of poverty has brought with it new strategies to the problem. Promoting neo-liberal policies have led to an increase in poverty in slum areas such as Ankara, Hıdırlıktepe gecekondu areas. The transformation process of poverty which has shifted from rotation poverty to permanent poverty that has been observed during the last four decades. Neo-liberalism accelerated poverty that has gained importance with its increasing permanent characteristics for gecekondu's households. The process of poverty in rotation has ended and permanent poverty has settled instead.

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1.Introduction

This study discusses the impacts of neo-liberal policies on poverty in Ankara's gecekondu areas, focusing particularly on residential ownership, tenure, family solidarity, importance of social networks and future expectations etc. Providing a brief discussion of Ankara's gecekondu areas, the article focuses on significant combination of neoliberal development strategies and social welfare policies that have emerged in the Altındağ Hıdırlıktepe gecekondu neighbourhood of Ankara. In the first part of the study a brief explanation of neo-liberal policies and their impacts on poverty in general, and urban poverty in particular, is given in the context of Turkish experience. In the second part the article draws upon the empirical findings of a qualitative research conducted in Hıdırlıktepe, one of the oldest "*gecekondu"* neighbourhoods of Ankara, between 1971 and 2011. The findings and results in this part are based on the transformation process of poverty which has shifted from **rotation** poverty to **permanent** poverty that has been observed during the last four decades. In this context, an assessment of number of researches conducted in the same neighbourhood with the same questionnaire in different years (i.e. 1971, 1987, 1997, 2007 and 2011) is given.

In the last part of the article, as a conclusion, the relationship between neo-liberal policies and poverty is discussed by showing that how neo-liberalism accelerated poverty that has gained importance with its increasing permanent characteristics for many households. In this part special emphasis is given to those who are in a state of

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permanent poverty and have to deal with difficulties related to exclusion in order to indicate that the process of poverty in rotation has ended and permanent poverty has settled instead.

2. Neoliberal Policies and Their İmpact on Poverty

There is no consensus on a definition of urban poverty which can be applied to all cultures, societies, or times. There is no single 'correct' definition. Nowadays, poverty is usually defined in relation to the medium-income level of a society, and the poverty line is drawn where a family has less than 50 percent of this medium income available (Masika, 1997,2). Poverty is associated not only with insufficient income or consumption but also with insufficient outcomes with respect to health, nutrition, and literacy, and with deficient social relations, insecurity, and low self-esteem and powerlessness (Coudouel et al. 2002, 32). In urban economies with large informal sectors, income flows also may be erratic. This implies a potential difficulty for households in correctly recalling their income, in which case the information on income derived from the survey may be of low quality. (Coudouel et al. 2002, 30). Most studies attempting to describe urban poverty have focused on drawing out the characteristics of urban poverty, often by comparing rural with urban poverty. However, there is still much debate as to whether urban poverty differs from rural poverty. However, urban poverty concept describes the reflection of poverty to urban area.

Effects of economic liberalization on poverty are also addressed in the literature considerably. In fact, the hypothesis is that the liberalization process provides greater opportunities to the individuals that were initially better endowed with human and physical capital and therefore contributes to increasing inequality and poverty. Szekely (1998) shows that those individuals better endowed with human and physical capital benefited disproportionately more from the economic expansion during the reform period (Ozcan, 2003, 28). Since poverty is to a large extent a subjective concept that depends on cultural patterns, development levels, and other factors, in some sense it is natural to have a range of values. For instance, given the controversy surrounding the definition of the poverty line, it is now standard practice in the literature to use several poverty lines– which yield different poverty levels– to test the extent to which poverty rankings depend on their definitions. But what is most surprising about the wide range of estimates in the above example is precisely that they are produced with the same data and similar poverty lines (Székely et al 2000).

At the end of 1980s, with the end of the cold war Turkish government began to adopt neo-liberal policies. While the implementation of the government's liberal policies, increase unemployment in urban areas, led to migrations in rural areas. These attempts shook society deeply and thereby created social discontent. The lower-level jobs in the public sector, which once provided favourable employment opportunities for the gecekondu people, became competitive. The job opportunities in the private sector also became very competitive as companies reduced their workforce and as some small businesses went into bankruptcy. The increasing layoffs in the private sector and the shrinking of the public sector led to high unemployment rates and acute poverty in the gecekondu population. The widening economic gap between the rich and the poor further incensed discontent in the economically disadvantaged strata, particularly among rural migrants in the city (Erman, 2001, 987)

3. Informal Settlements Upgrading: the Gecekondus in Ankara

Ankara, the capital of the new republic, was seen as the symbol of Turkish modernisation, Squatter housing in Ankara has been subject to one of the most impressive transformations in metropolitan settlements during the second half of the 20th century. In the past 60 years the *gecekondu* phenomenon has been effective on the urban quality of life. Gecekondu in Turkish means "house built over night". It has come to refer to spontaneous housing developments generally. Squatter zone (gecekondu) often lack critical facilities like running water, sewerage, electricity and garbage disposal, and amenities like paved streets, play grounds, park, health care and cultural services.

They are a coping mechanism of the less affluent and a response to the rising land prices which often accompany rapid urbanization, placing legal buildable lots outside of the reach of many families. Turkey began to urbanize rapidly between 1940 and 1950, National demographics were dramatically altered as people fled their rural villages, were economic conditions for farmer had become intolerable. The move to the big cities in the western part of country was not accompanied by job creation, however (Keleş, Geray, 1995). For governments under the influence of modernization trends, cities of the West were models for Turkish cities. In this context interest resifted to the type

of shelter which seemed to be '*the problem*'. Now that those who had arrived so far were to stay, if they could be moved to regular urban housing types and if further migration to the cities could be controlled, the problem would be solved. Governments issued series of laws to fulfil this aim (Şenyapılı, 2004). During the post World War II years (1945-1950) the first official attempts to deal with the informal settlement problem were directed at preventing further construction altogether. The aim of the first law (no: 5218, 1948) was improve living conditions in Ankara's existing gecekondu builders to attract them to areas where they could have legal tittle (Keleş, Geray, 1995). In 1948, law number 5218 was enacted, the first laws that regarding the slums. Slums were for the first time spatially and formally recognized, although it was intended primarily as a one-time recognition

Hıdırlıktepe was in the I. Zone. More in 1948, I. Zone is covered with gecekondus. In allocating land, priority was given to people who did not already own an apartment in Ankara but were employed there and had lived there a long time, and were poor enough to be eligible of official assistance. They were required to pay back the cost of land ten instalments over ten years.

Table 1: Properties of 5218 of the Law the Scope

Zone number	Name	Empty Areas (ha)	Gecekondu area (ha)	Total (ha)
I	Altındağ, Atıf Bey, Yenidoğan, Telsizler	150	310	460
II	Mamak, Balkeriz	300	210	510
III	Seyran, Incesu, Topraklık		130	130
IV	Dikmen, Karabiber Farm	380	0	380
V	Pat of Etlik	40	*	85
VI	Cerci creek, Ivedik	46	0	46
	Total	916	650	1611

*There are military zone (45 ha) in V. Zone

During the first years of rapid urbanization, gecekondus were built for use by owner. However, after the 1960s some owners started building additional units to rent, and some moved to belter parts of the city with money made from the rental. A as result, a substantial portion of gecekondu household rent illegally constructed buildings they live in. An important break for the squatter population came with the 1960's as developing countries adopted planned development models. The previous liberalization model had failed to achieve equal distribution of benefits of development and had resulted in serious unemployment problems due to slow industrialization. The most significant step was passage of the gecekondu Law (no:775) whish replaced all previous legislation in many respects. The Gecekondu Law (Act 775) of 1966 recognized the existence of squatters. It adopted the previous policy objectives of upgrading, demolition and preventation (Keleş, 1995, Eke 1981) Gecekondu Law No. 775 is still in effect. The radical break came in the 1980's along with three important impacts : a) the new privatisation-based, export-oriented economic model adopted by developing countries which had deep, disrupting impacts on the urban labour markets, b) the slowing and finally closing down of worker migration channels to Europe and c) the forced migration from the east and south-east regions of Turkey due to political unrest (Şenyapılı,2004) After 1980, Laws No 2805, 2981, 3366, 3290, 3414. Laws 2981 and 2805 are amnesty laws opening gecekondu areas.

Since 90s, how more effective and more sustainable urban regeneration process could be achieved has become the primary concern to understand wider requirements of a distressed urban locality. Further from above statements, the most important addition of the latest revisions made in "Municipalities Law" (in 2005 Act no: 5393) is that the municipalities of districts with a population of 50.000 and above has obtained the power to delineate areas which are deteriorated within the current urban context and designate those areas for the preparation of 'urban regeneration and development projects' and for the purposes of risk reduction as well. Altindag Hıdırlıktepe has been declared the urban regeneration area by the decision of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Assembly (Resolution 484), Hıdırlıktepe the period until 2011, the combined neighbourhoods. Urban regeneration area all the surveyed spaces. There are 3680 gecekondu houses in the area. .There are 250 private party parcel (100 ha), 3 municipal parcel (6ha), 20 units that belong to the treasury of the parcel (10 ha)

4. The Transformation Process of Poverty in Hıdırlıktepe

In this section, survey was conducted in Hıdırlıktepe, one of the oldest "*gecekondu"* neighbourhoods of Ankara, between 1971 and 2011. Survey provided data to construct framework (on residential ownership, tenure, family solidarity, importance of social networks and future expectations). There are four surveys made on different dates. The first survey conducted in 1971 by Emre Kongar. The second survey is based on master's thesis. The other surveys are carried out by the students and D.Erol (in 1997, 2007 and 2011) Household size is changed between 1971 and 2011. While a large extended family in 1971, began to decline in 2011.

Table 2. Household Size

Person	1971 (1)		1987 (2)		1997(3)		2007(4)		2011(5)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 person	27	6,2	1	1,0	20	3,7	1	0,7	3	1,2
2 person	42	9,7	8	7,7	54	10,1	12	7,8	17	10,9
3 person	61	14,1	18	17,3	79	14,8	36	23,5	41	21,9
4 person	64	14,7	24	23,1	156	29,2	53	34,6	62	32,0
5 person	52	12,0	20	19,2	98	18,3	27	17,6	38	22,3
6 person	68	15,7	17	16,3	53	9,9	12	7,8	13	5,3
7 + *	117	27,0	13	12,5	73	13,6	10	6,5	11	4,5
No answer	3	0,7	3	2,9	2	0,4	2	1,3	5	2,0
Total	434	100,0	104	100,0	535	100	153	100,0	247	

(1)The Kongar E. 1986 "Türkiye Üzerine Araştırmalar" Remzi Kitapevi İstanbul
(2) Şahinyılmaz Erol D. (1988)Altındağ Hıdırlıktepe Gecekondu Toplumunun Sosyo-ekonomik Yapısının Mekana Yansıyan Özelliklerinin ve Kentlileşme Düzeyinin İrdelenmesi, Y.T.Ü. Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Anabilim Dalı, Basılmamış Master Tezi
(3) Erol D. The survey was conducted on total 535 sample households between 20 – 31 October 1997 by Gazi University, Faculty of Architecture, City and Regional Planning Department's students and Demet Erol
(4) Erol D. The survey was conducted on total 153 sample households between 03 –12 November 2007 by Gazi University, Faculty of Architecture, City and Regional Planning Department's students and Demet Erol
(5) Erol D. The survey was conducted on total 247 sample households by Demet Erol

The survey shows that only 3, 24 % of migrant population is literature in 2011.However; this ratio is very worrisome in 1971. In 1971, household heads were lower level of education than the household heads of all other dates.

Table 3. Educational Level (% House heads)

Level	1971		1987		1997		2007		2011	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illiterature	143	32,9	17	16,3	64	11,96	6	3,9	8	3,24
Literate without diploma	65	15,0	9	8,7	29	5,42	8	5,2	11	4,86
Primary school graduate	210	48,4	68	65,4	326	60,93	63	41,2	113	45,34
Secondary school	8	1,8	7	6,7	96	17,94	71	46,4	101	40,89
Vocational high school	2	0,5	1	1,0	9	1,68	5	3,3	14	5,67
Higher education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	434	100,0	104	100.0	535	100,0	153	100,0	247	100

The 1971 survey, the number of employees in the public sector employee or officer is higher than in other years. Despite the low level of education than those who in 1971 found a secure/regular job. Household heads that cannot began to find regular jobs in time. The most important problem awaiting newcomers after that of accommodation was that of employment. The urban poor who had previously worked for the state or local authority in official jobs

with low wage salaries but job security began gradually to disappear. In the framework of neo-liberal policies, the downsizing of the state in the economy has been one of the reasons for the increase in unemployment since the 1980s. When the state has downsized, employment in the public sector has been restricted and real wages have decreased, causing general economic slowdowns, often with crises, resulting in rises in unemployment. Those that did manage to find employment have been disadvantaged by low wages. One of the main reasons for the lower wages was the impairment of the labour unions, again in line with the basic tenets of neo-liberalism. After 1971, labour unions have lost their effectiveness after 1980.

Table 4. Occupational Categories (% Household heads)

Categories	**1971**		**1987**		**1997**		**2007**		**2011**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Regular employee (public)*	0	0,0	15	14,4	48	9,0	12	7,8	16	6,48
Casual employee (public)	160	36,9	11	10,6	36	6,7	9	5,9	11	4,45
Regular employee, minor service employee (private sector)	71	16,4	19	18,3	118	22,1	35	22,9	70	28,34
Self employed	104	24,0	28	26,9	158	29,5	33	21,6	52	21,05
Unqualified workers	17	3,9	16	15,4	87	16,3	59	38,6	89	36,03
Retired, unemployed and others	82	18,9	15	14,4	88	16,4	5	3,3	9	3,64
Total	434	100,0	104	100,0	535	100	153	100,0	247	100.0

*In Emre Kongar's survey, regular employee and causal employee was together

In 2006, the prominent growth sectors in the expanding Turkish economy mostly operated in the exports market, meeting demand fluctuations with flexible production systems. Employment practices in these sectors depended on the use of informal labour. So, even though the economy grew, it did not offer sufficient opportunities for people to escape poverty.

Table 5 Zone of Occupation (%House heads)

Zones	**1971**		**1987**		**1997**		**2007**		**2011**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In the same zone	74	17,1	19	18,3	94	17,6	23	15,0	34	13,7
In the neighbouring zone	76	17,5	19	18,3	87	16,3	15	9,8	21	8,50
5 km radius of the circle	82	18,9	11	10,5	43	8,1	13	8,5	24	9,72
10 km radius of the circle	29	6,7	12	11,5	54	10,11	20	13,1	39	15,79
15 km radius of the circle	23	5,3	10	9,6	66	12,3	15	9,8	23	9,31
20 km radius of the circle	0	0	0	0	15	2,8	4	2,6	6	2,43
Work Location Changing, Non-Fixed, Mobile	147	33,9	31	29,8	175	32,7	61	39,9	95	36,26
No answer	3	0,7	2	1,9	1	0,2	2	1,3	5	2,02
Total	434	100,0	104	100,0	535	100,0	153	100,0	247	100,0

In the mid-1970s the Keynesian impulse went into reverse, to be replaced by neoliberalism. This reversal piggybacked on the social and economic dislocations associated with the Vietnam War era and the OPEC oil price shocks, which dominated the 1970s. However, these dislocations only provided an entry point. The ultimate spark of neoliberal dynamism is to be found in the intellectual divisions of Keynesianism and its failure to develop public understandings of the economy that could compete with the neoliberal rhetoric of "free markets." New paradigm is "the decline of Keynesianism and the rise of neoliberalism". In spite of the new paradigm, there have been no high-income slum's residents in the area. Over half of the households interviewed earn below the minimum wage per month

Table 6. House head İncome (Monthly /Minimum Wage)

Minimum wage	**1971**		**1987 ***		**1997**		**2007**		**2011**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%

Below the minimum wage	139	32,3	-	-	199	37,2	61	39,9	97	39,92
Limit of the minimum wage	224	52,1	-	-	266	49,7	77	50,3	120	49,38
Above the minimum wage	51	11,9	-	-	53	9,9	10	6,5	17	7.00
Uncertain by monthly	16	3,7	-	-	17	3,2	5	3,3	9	3,70
Total	430	100,0	-	-	535	100	153	100,0	243	100,0

Not: There is lack of database on minimum wages in 1971. However, minimum wages was reached in 1969 and 1972. Minimum wage is 475 liras in 01/07/1969; the minimum wage is 620 liras in 01/11/1972. 547.5 liras which was the average of these two years was taken as the minimum wage. In order Kongar's intervals determined by the minimum wage limit in 1971, according to the study, collected and placed in the table above. 17.01 million liras was minimum wage for adults 16 years of age is between 01.08.1996-31.07.1997. Minimum wage is 562.50 liras between 01/01/2007-30/06/2007 and minimum wage is 585, 00 liras between 01.07.2007-31.12.2007. Range limit was determined as the minimum wage, + - 3 digits are used. Minimum wage was 796.50 TL gross (629.96 TL net) for workers over the age of 16 starting from January 1, 2011. Minimum wage was 837 TL gross (655.57 TL net) for those over the age of 16 in the second half of 2011.
*In 1987, this question wasn't asked

Household head's employment method has been changed sharply. More recent years, the effectiveness of the political parties has increased.

Table 7. Household Head's Employment Method

Methods	1971		1987 *		1997		2007		2011	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
By themselves	228	63,87	-	-	250	52,19	69	47,6	84	34,85
By family	45	12,61	-	-	74	15,44	15	10,3	21	8,71
By the labour exchange (public)	0	0	-	-	10	2,08	8	5,5	24	9,96
By friends	84	23,53	-	-	145	30,27	39	26,9	39	16,8
By Political Relationships	0	0	-	-	0	0	14	9,7	73	30,39
Total	357	100	-	-	479	100	145	100,0	241	100

* Not asked method of finding a job in 1987 survey.

Period of entry table indicates that the largest migration to Ankara was between 1968-1977. The earliest gecekondu settlements started in the central areas (Hıdırlıktepe) and spread towards the periphery. The second migration was between 1978-1997

Table 8. Period of Entry (%Households)

Years	1971		1987		1997		2007		2011	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1937-1947	25	5,8	8	7,7	29	5,4	9	5,9	4	1,62
1948-1957	120	27,6	18	17,3	92	17,2	7	4,6	9	3,64
1958-1967	96	22,1	30	28,8	54	10,1	13	8,5	11	4,45
1968-1977	184	42,4	40	38,5	197	36,8	39	25,5	61	24,70
1978-1987	0	0,0	8	7,7	103	19,3	23	15,0	47	19,03
1988-1997	0	0,0	0	0,0	55	10,3	35	22,9	64	25,91
1997-2007	0	0	0	0	0	0,0	25	16,3	41	16,60
No answer	9	2,1	0	0,0	5	0,9	2	1,3	10	4,05
Total	434	100,0	104	100,0	535	100,0	153	100,0	247	100,00

In the literature about urban squatter's economic security, social security and secure ownership of shelter are cited as prerequisites for the migrant's absorbation into the city fabric. Corollaries to this general argument are that economic security in form of modern, formal sector jobs, and secure ownership of a shelter in the form of a legal title. While this general statement is accepted, the validity of the corollaries are questioned, and the effected of

legality of tenure on pace and degree of absorption has therefore been specifically examined. The assumption is that one element regulating the process of absorption is owning or renting one's dwelling. The type of ownership is not important; that is, the precise legal status of the title is less significant than is being an owner-occupier rather than a leaseholder. The first arrivals of having a house to get the chance but later arrivals are still tenants, and this situation wll change very difficult.

Table 9. Ownership of Dwellings

	1971		1987		1997		2007		2011	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Tenant	181	41,7	47	45,2	254	47,5	82	53,6	145	58,70
Owner	246	56,7	57	54,8	281	52,5	71	46,4	102	41,30
Total	427	98,4	104	100,0	535	100,0	153	100,0	247	100,00

The first settlers didn't live in Hıdırlıktepe. They have been moved to different parts of the city and rented homes to the new arrivals. 28 % of the owners have been lived in zone where the middle-income groups lived in the neighbourhood.

Table 10. Owner of the House Lived In the Neighbourhood

Zones	**1971**		**1987**	**%**	**1997**		**2007**		**2011**	
	N	**%**	**N**		**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Same zone	-	-	-	-	81	31,9	21	25,6	35	24,1
The upper income of the group lived in the neighbourhood	-	-	-	-	2	0,8	1	1,2	2	1,4
The upper-middle income of the group lived in the neighbourhood	-	-	-	-	19	7,5	6	7,3	9	6,21
The middle-income groups lived in the neighbourhood	-	-	-	-	87	34,3	23	28,0	41	28,3
The middle-lower income of the group lived in the neighbourhood	-	-	-	-	31	12,6	22	26,9	37	25,5
The lower income of the group lived in the neighbourhood	-	-	-	-	4	1,6	3	3,6	7	4,8
Out of Ankara, other cities and unclassified answers	-	-	-	-	15	5,9	2	,4	7	9,7
Total	-	-	-	-	254	100,0	82	100,0	14 5	100,00

Note: in 1971 and 1987 surveys, this question wasn't asked

5. Conclusion

In the context of poverty and neo-liberalism, it is necessary to establish the issues well. Poverty existed before neo-liberalism with income, house ownership, wage, and so on. However, with neo-liberalism, poverty has become more serious and gained permanent characteristics. By the 1980s, *gecekondu* land had attained value and the owners of these houses had acquired, in essence, property. The *gecekondu* house-owners were receiving urban ground rents. These rentable areas started to attract more attention than in the past, from municipalities, private construction companies and investment companies, and the state developed policies which would prevent further

As time passed, the *gecekondu* population increased and this increase that made the occupants an important swing voter group. This group was also able to penetrate political parties and municipalities to some extent through various connections. The concept has been termed as '***cycles of poverty***' by some researchers, indicating that poverty may be shifted through exploitation after suffering it for a time. In place of rotation poverty some researchers have been preferred cycles of poverty in place of rotation poverty. This situation both gave the idea that poverty was temporary and offered hope to those following. And as the earlier arrivals started to prosper, or

at least maintain themselves, and be replaced at the bottom of the ladder by the newcomers, to whom they passed on their poverty, as it were, term was coined, '**rotation poverty**'. They are the most prominent '***absolute poverty***' group in the cities.

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