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Master Thesis

# The Right to the City in the Light of the New Urban Agenda:

## The Impact of State-led Green Gentrification on the Everyday Life of Migrants through Urban Megaprojects in Türkiye


**Supervisors**

Prof. Cristiana Rossignolo

Dr. Riccardo Goivanni Bruno

**Candidate**

Nurdan Gulsever


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**Abstract**

Urbanisation is increasingly acknowledged as a central driver of contemporary planetary development, a perspective strongly endorsed by the United Nations (UN). The UN articulated its goal, as Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11), which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, and resilient. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) emphasizes the critical role of local action, participation, and community empowerment in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes of urban transformation. Drawing on the NUA reports of Türkiye, this research examines the comparatively active role and motivations of the Global South and critically assesses the reliability of the data in light of ongoing implementation practices.

Drawing on decision-making theories, the study investigates how "the right to the city" is mobilised in the domestic institutionalization of global urban development frameworks. In analyzing the limitations of the Housing Development Administration of the Republic of Türkiye (TOKI) in implementing megaprojects, the research argues that these projects undermine these principles, cause gentrification, and have particularly adverse effects on already marginalised communities.

Türkiye's demographic trajectory diverges from that of most European countries due to sustained population growth, much of it driven by successive waves of migration resulting from regional conflicts, as a key host country under various migration agreements. According to the research, this change calls for a rethinking of spatial planning approaches to achieve multicultural stakeholders.

The paper focuses on the case of the Esenler 15 July Millet (Nation) Garden in Istanbul, a part of a megaproject located near a vulnerable, migrant-dense neighborhood. It is used as a mechanism to create real estate value and reinforce socio-spatial inequalities (Pala & Acar, 2024). Relying on the research interviews, the data collected related with everyday practices of migrant visitors, the study asks: how migrants engage with and experience a large-scale urban park in their everyday life; how the planning and design processes relate to migrants' perceptions of accessibility and inclusion; and to what extent the project enables or constrains the social cohesion by the communities and for all.

The findings contribute to debates on planning justice by offering a scalable participation framework that aligns with the normative ideals of the NUA while addressing Türkiye's complex, politically charged urban reality. The paper argues that bottom-up spatial agency, particularly among migrant communities, represents a more just city and everyday resistance. It suggests that place-based, small-scale instruments like planning laboratories, transparency protocols, community-led food initiatives, and "the right to the green" practices can foster more inclusive, participatory decision-making and support the reimagining of cities for all. The paper concludes with recommendations for local implementation strategies and reflects on the potential lessons that can be derived from NUA practices in the coming decades.

Keywords: New Urban Agenda, the right to the city, decision-making, public green spaces, Millet Gardens, Türkiye.

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**Abbreviations**

AKP – Justice and Development Party

DGMM – Directorate General of Migration Management of Türkiye

Habitat III – United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

IMM – Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

ILBANK – General Directorate of Iller Bank Joint Stock Company

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IOM – International Organization for Migration

MoEU – Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change

MoD – Ministry of Development

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

NUA – New Urban Agenda

SDG11 – Sustainable Development Goal 11

TSK – Turkish Armed Forces

TUIK – Turkish Statistical Institute

TOKI – Housing Development Administration of the Republic of Türkiye

UN – United Nations

UN-DESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlement Programme

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

“The Real is a process; the latter is the widely ramified mediation

Between present, unfinished past, and above possible future.”

- Ernst Bloch, 1959, p.196

## Introduction

During the post-industrialization period, repairing and redeveloping vacant and derelict land, or locally unwanted land, into green space and building green infrastructure have become increasingly crucial for urban renewal and green transformation. Governments and citizens are increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability and the development of environmental orientation, which makes urban parks, greenways, gardens, and other green spaces among the most important priorities in urban planning. This trend is known as the urban green turn, or greening. However, urban greening not only brings multiple benefits to district ecology, economics, and politics but also leads to spatial inequalities and environmental injustices, such as the displacement of the working class and low-income families in specific areas of the city, as in gentrification.

To account for environmental factors while reshaping urban space and ensuring social equity, an increasing number of studies are combining environmental justice with urban gentrification, proposing the concept of green gentrification, and exploring the complex relationship between environment and society, particularly the role of the environment in development and transformation.

When the state takes an active role in stimulating gentrification, often in cooperation with housing associations that own a large part of the housing supply, it is called state-led gentrification. It can be considered a mode of neoliberal urbanism, since the state is used as an instrument to impose market rule and commodification.

In this study, Esenler 15 July Millet Garden, which is a state-led green gentrification project in Istanbul, Türkiye, by qualitative and quantitative research methods, aims to find the mechanism of social transformation and possible social effects under displacement with state-led green gentrification.

### i. Terminological and Conceptual Framework

Although the term "Nation Garden" is occasionally used in the articles cited and referenced in the research when referring to green spaces produced in Türkiye, the term "Millet Garden" has been consistently used throughout the study. The main reason for this word choice is that the meaning and usage of "Millet" in the Turkish language cannot be fully expressed socially or politically by the term "Nation" in English (Çelik, 2017; Şenyurt, 2018, p. 152). Furthermore, the NUA Türkiye report also explicitly uses the term "Millet Garden" for precisely this reason. As highlighted in the Literature Review, the centralized character and production of the NUA reports make this word choice even more apparent. The centralized nature attributed to the word "Millet", which is embraced by the central government of Türkiye, will be explained in more detail in later sections.

In line with the official decision made by the Turkish government in late 2021, and following the United Nations' adoption of this change in June 2022, this thesis uses the term "Türkiye" instead of "Turkey"

to refer to the country. This decision reflects a broader national effort to preserve the cultural and political authenticity of the country's name, avoiding the unintended connotations associated with the English term "Turkey." It also aligns with the shift toward using native terminology in international and academic discourse, as seen with the deliberate use of "Millet Garden" over "Nation Garden" in this study.

**ii. The Significance of the Research**

Spatial Justice - Housing crisis - Affordability

**iii. Research Questions**

**iii.a. Primary Research Question**

Therefore, the research question is: how do implementations of Millet Gardens, as a megaproject in Türkiye, reflect or challenge the principles of the NUA regarding sustainable and inclusive green space planning, given centralized decision-making processes and top-down urban development policies?

**iii.b. Supplementary Inquiries**

The sub-questions that are aimed to be addressed can be listed as follows:

- How are the main challenges in implementing the NUA creating opportunities for Türkiye to position itself as a progressing and sustainability-driven urban actor in the global context?

- How do Millet Gardens' local implementation processes impact migrants' everyday life?

- What is the role of centralized and non-transparent spatial planning practices on Millet Gardens?

- What kinds of barriers exist to social inclusion in Millet Gardens?

**iv. Methodology**

**iv.a. Quantitative Methods**

- Structured interview

**iv.b. Qualitative Methods**

- Desk research

- Case study selection

- Photographic fieldwork

- Semi-structured interview

**v. An Overview**

The thesis is divided into 7 chapters: Chapter One develops the theoretical basis of the research by tracing the intellectual history of the "right to the city" both as an analytical tool and a political demand. It starts by recalling Henri Lefebvre's original work on the "right to the city", and traces the later reinterpretations of his ideas by researchers such as David Harvey, Margit Mayer, etc. It then puts those debates in the larger context of the "Global South" and explores how different spatial planning, identity, and post-colonial dynamics influence contemporary urban realities. In addition, it addresses the issue of migration as a global phenomenon and the emergence of radical and participative movements, especially through the perspective of radical municipalism. It sees the concept as a crucial starting point to understand the worldwide transformations.

Chapter Two will turn to the theoretical debates on urban justice and planetary urbanization towards institutional and policy-oriented frameworks that determine the current global urban governance. Chapter Two will examine the structure of the NUA as the most important policy paper produced by the UN-Habitat process. The chapter starts with a historical account of a global urban agenda and describes the major conceptual and political changes that occurred during the UN-Habitat conferences. Then, it will analyze the main principles and thematic priorities of the NUA (decentralization, social inclusion, participatory governance), while critically evaluating the difficulties of implementing it in all sorts of urban contexts. Finally, Chapter Two will analyze Türkiye's National Report and discuss how global objectives meet local realities using examples such as the SDG framework and the "Millet Gardens" vision. The chapter places the NUA in a broader debate on the localization of global urban policies and the permanent gap between universal aspirations and context-specific practices.

Chapter Three will be dedicated to the way public spaces represent a strategic terrain where urban policies, neoliberal restructuring, and social conflicts meet. It demonstrates how public space discourses based on ideals of inclusiveness, sustainability, and urban revitalization can contrast with their material reality. Chapter Three will begin by explaining the rhetoric and practice of producing public spaces under neoliberal governance, stressing the way privatization and surveillance have modified access and the meaning of public spaces. Next, it will analyze the various dynamics of gentrification, focusing specifically on their social, environmental, and state-led aspects; in particular, it will show that the urban renewal projects generate, through the use of the notions of "green" or "sustainable" development, exclusions and displacements. In addition to the literature on gentrification, the research examines the Millet Gardens case study specifically through Anguelovski et al.'s (2017) definition of state-led green gentrification. Anguelovski et al. (2017) examined examples where public investment through mega-events resulted in the creation of multiple green spaces in the city, resulting in the displacement of existing residents. Using as comparative cases the Olympic Redevelopment in Barcelona and the urban greening initiatives in Canada, the analysis will

demonstrate that mega-events, through state policies, lead to new types of green gentrifications. The chapter will conclude by establishing a link between these processes and the rise of megaprojects; thus showing how large-scale urban interventions redefine public space both as a commodity and as a tool of governance.

The fourth chapter represents the empirical part of the research and consists of a case study of the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. The fourth chapter is situated within the broader political and spatial discourse of state-led green gentrification and analyzes how the Millet Gardens initiative works as an environmental urban policy embedded in neoliberal governance. By retracing the historical evolution of the concept of Millet Garden and its relation to national identity, public space politics, and sustainability discourses, the chapter will identify the ideologically and materially contradictory dimensions of these developments. In addition, the chapter will review the Gezi Park protests of 2013 as a turning point in Turkish urban history and mark the transition to alternative and transformative forms of civic engagement. Overall, the chapter will attempt to uncover the contradictions of green urban policy in Türkiye, where ecological discourses coexist with exclusionary planning practices and top-down political agendas.

The fifth chapter presents the methodology used for this research and explains how the theoretical and conceptual discussions of the previous chapters were implemented empirically. The fifth chapter begins by describing the general research design, which includes policy analysis, case study methods, and systematic spatial observation to describe the relationships among urban governance, public space, and neoliberal restructuring. The chapter then describes the data collection process and combines desk research with photographic fieldwork and interviews to address both the institutional and experiential aspects of urban transformation. Afterward, the chapter will present the data analysis techniques used in the study (content, discourse, spatial, and visual analysis), which allow a multi-scalar reading of the results of this research.

In Chapter Six, the author will conduct the complete case study analysis that links the theoretical and methodological frameworks introduced in the two previous chapters. It will investigate the Millet Gardens and explore their political, economic, and spatial impacts within the broader framework of state-led green gentrification and neoliberal urban governance. Chapter Six begins with an overview of the socioeconomic conditions of Türkiye and identifies some of the key factors (international migration, financial crisis, housing affordability) that affect recent urban policies. Subsequent sections focus on Millet Gardens as a megaproject and analyze how the discourses of sustainability, identity, and public space are used in the narratives of the State to legitimate large-scale redevelopment. The last section of Chapter Six studies the daily spatial practices, the problems of accessibility, and the symbolic representation of the power embedded in the design and the management of the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. Finally, Chapter Six will integrate the results of this case study into the NUA's policy

framework and make a critical evaluation of the compatibility of the global urban policy ambitions and their local implementation in Türkiye. It will provide both a critique of the current practices and proposals for more equitable and sustainable ways to develop public spaces.

Chapter Seven will finally summarize the research conclusions and synthesize the main theoretical insights and empirical results obtained in the research. It will revisit the central questions related to the transformation of public space, the role of megaprojects in neoliberal urban governance, and the redefinition of spatial justice in the current urban contexts. The part will start with a discussion that relates these findings to broader academic debates on alternative modes of decision-making in spatial governance, the operationalization of public space, and the multiple meanings of sustainability and territoriality. Following this discussion, it will summarize how this research contributes to current academic debates on the right to the city, planetary urbanization, and radical municipalism, and how the latter debates are positioned in relation to the realities of Turkish urban policies.

## Chapter 1. The Right to the City

The chapter will create a comprehensive theoretical framework for the right to the city through analyzing the fundamental principles and historical transformations of the concept and its academic debates, specifically through an examination of the last few years' changes and the evolving challenges of spatial planning in the Global South, along with the changing geospatial identities of those countries. It will also demonstrate that migration is a key planetary element and, finally, discuss radical planning and municipalism as transformative approaches to participatory planning at the local level. The selection of this conceptual framework is driven by its central role in the NUA, which has revitalized the discourse on urban rights. By first tracing the historical emergence of the 'right to the city,' this chapter sets the stage for a subsequent analysis of how the NUA has reshaped this ideal into a contemporary policy tool for sustainable and inclusive urbanism.

### 1.1. Foundations and Transformations of The Right to the City

The urban areas are transforming globally, and their essential role as a "living space" is now being reduced to a "commodity." The result of this process is that citizens' fundamental agency over the urban environment and its use is diminished, reducing them to passive consumers of the city. At this critical time, the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968) has become a new form of radical political activism that directly opposes the dominant forms of urban governance. While the "right to the city" refers to rights of access to urban amenities and services, it also represents the collective ability of people to shape their city according to their own desires and needs, and thus to be the main actors in decision-making (Casteels, 1978). Therefore, the research will explore the "right to the city," which is emerging as a central axis of resistance to the growing commodification of cities (in terms of the growing ownership and control by private interests), through the lens of spatial justice, social inclusion, and political participation. In addition, it will analyze the relevance of the concept in today's world, particularly as it relates to the theoretical debates surrounding the subject; therefore, this project will focus on the experiences of migrant communities during the last decade, and how they have been affected by the growth of global conflict, global financial crisis, and the increased uncertainty caused by displacement. Given that recent urban protests have developed out of a combination of factors, including socio-political conditions, as well as economic complaints, and the need for adequate housing, the research will focus on the specific case of public space to investigate the concept.

It is a significant thought, with it being the basis for numerous other researchers looking into the unequal distribution of power regarding the use of urban spaces and the exclusionary effects of modern urbanization on people's ability to utilize urban space. Although Henri Lefebvre coined the "right to the city" as a concept, its roots are based on "historically situated critique of capitalist political economy" (Kuymulu, 2013). It is based upon Karl Marx's work analyzing capitalism and the method in which urbanization through capitalism functions, and examines how urban life is shaped by the

struggle between use value and exchange value. In the Capital (1867/1990), he argues that "Labor, as the producer of use values, as useful labor, is a prerequisite of human existence, which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal, natural necessity, which mediates the metabolic process between man and nature, and therefore human life itself" (Marx, 1867/1990, p. 133). Thus, Lefebvre (1968; 1970; 1974) examined the city as a site that represents not only the economic processes that occur within it, but also where capitalist relations are produced, reproduced, and contested.

Henri Lefebvre's (1968) Le Droit à La Ville (The Right to the City) was an extension of Marx's concepts of production and value to urbanized scales. In his (1968) argument, he states that capitalistic abstraction alters both the experience of labor and the experience of urban space. Further, the generalized domination of exchange value in capitalistic society is shown by Lefebvre (1968) to undermine urban living by way of eliminating the possibility of viewing the city as an oeuvre or a collective labor process created, transforming it into a product and oppressing the user. As such, Lefebvre (1968) defined the "right to the city" based upon use value to counteract the exchange value hegemony of capital. This definition of the concept includes not only "citizens" but all inhabitants of cities that "experience the routine of daily life in the urban environment" (Purcell, 2002; pp. 100-102).

Marxist theory understood urban development as based on the exploitation of labor. Therefore, recalling the concepts of value and labor from this theory may be helpful for the current practices of the right to the city debates. Kuymulu (2014) argues that in capitalism, although it is labor that builds the city and makes it habitable by producing use values, it is also labor that is the first to be excluded from the possibility of claiming the right to the city. The city, produced through use value, is transformed into a commodity in the capitalist system. Therefore, the value of urban experience is overshadowed, and urban space is reshaped in line with the logic of the market. Against Lefebvre, who was criticized for his lack of understanding of how cities are formed, approaches that emphasized the process of collective labor began to emerge in the following periods. Immediately afterwards, David Harvey (2012), starting from Marx's (1867/1990) theory that defines labor as the basic metabolic relationship, revealed how this relationship is redefined under capitalism.

David Harvey has taken Lefebvre's ideas and used them to develop a theoretical and political analysis of the urban condition. While Lefebvre argued how the domination of exchange-value disrupts the way people live in cities and how the "right to the city" could revitalize use-value and therefore, a better way of living, Harvey expanded upon these ideas and emphasized how there are inherent political implications to such a right. In Harvey's (2008) view, the battle for control of urban space is fundamentally a struggle for collective power and social change (Castells, 1978), and a form of the concept is one possible method to achieve that. It is a collective right, as well as an individual right to access urban resources; it is a collective right because the potential for social change in urban spaces is dependent on exercising a collective power to transform the process of urbanization itself (Harvey, 2008). Therefore, it is actually the right to change oneself through changing the city. Harvey (2008)

views the city as both a medium through which social conflict plays out and the end product of such conflict, so in order to realize the idea, individuals will need to confront the structural forces that shape urbanization in capitalist societies.

Therefore, as capitalism expands its analytical model from economic production to the spatial arrangement of everyday life, so too does Marxist analysis. It is through the expansion of this framework of analysis that, following Lefebvre (1968), many Marxist urbanists have taken up the study of everyday life and urban redevelopment as key sites of political struggle (Marcuse, 2009; Mayer, 2009; De Souza, 2010). For instance, Marcelo Lopes de Souza (2010) published an article on concrete social movements not only in Europe, but in Latin America and Africa.

As cities across the globe continue to experience rapid commodification and growing displacement with the increasing social and spatial divide between the haves and have-nots, the demand for the "right to the city" is being voiced by many in response to this inequitable production of urban space and, therefore, serves as an important basis for articulating how to counteract these processes using the collective call of the "right to the city". The concept has evolved from its origins as a theoretical legacy of Marxist urban studies into a vibrant and dynamic way of expressing the desires of various urban participants for greater democratic control over urban space, greater spatial justice, and the creation of new forms of production, lifestyles, and urban transformation.

### 1.2. The Right to the City in the Last Decades

There has been increasing academic, activist, and policymaker interest in the "right to the city" over the past decade or so (Souza, 2010; Kuymulu, 2014), based upon ideas developed by Henri Lefebvre, who argued that citizens have a democratic entitlement to use their cities (Harvey, 2008; Purcell, 2002; Lefebvre, 1968). Due to political, ideological, and geographical differences, there have been various interpretations of the concept, which in turn influence activism and resistance movements (Mayer, 2009; Kuymulu, 2013). The concept has also contributed to revolutionary social change (Kuymulu, 2013; Souza, 2010). However, once the right to the city is fully incorporated into governmental policy-making processes, it will lose most of its potential for transforming society (Mayer, 2009). Therefore, some of the central debates concerning this idea remain at the heart of many contemporary debates within critical urban studies, such as “gentrification, migration, housing rights, citizenship, urban public space, and social exclusion” (Attoh, 2011, p. 669).

The concept has continued to draw attention from civil society organizations and select national governments (Turok & Scheba, 2018). Since 2001, grassroots organizations and activists have drawn international attention to the concept through the organization of several large international social forums (Kuymulu, 2014). Many countries have established laws and charters such as "’Brazil's City Statute of 2001’ (Fernandes, 2007), the World Charter for the right to the city, Mexico's Charter for

the right to the city, and the United Cities and Local Government's Global Charter-Agenda for Human rights in the city" that provide a framework for integrating the concept into urban policy (Turok & Scheba, 2018). This has also generated interest among academics and researchers in the field of urban studies and urban justice activists fighting for alternative perspectives on how urbanization should occur around the globe (Kuymulu, 2014).

The idea also gained the attention of UN agencies. The UN recognized the potential for globalizing the concept as an opportunity, and immediately after the 2001 international social forums, the UN launched the World Urban Forum. Aconsiderable amount of time was devoted to discussing the concept and developing policy related to it in the forum. As part of the effort to incorporate the concept into their agendas, UN-Habitat held conferences and developed policies in collaboration with representatives from UNESCO, World Bank, and IMF (UN-Habitat, 2016). Given the diversity of stakeholders involved in policy development processes, it is not surprising that the complexity of these multi-dimensional urban issues has become primarily economic/credit-based issues from today's perspective.

The institutionalization of the right to the city has begun to deviate from the radical theoretical foundation of the concept. According to Kuymulu (2014), regardless of the type of issue (water, sanitation, affordable housing, or slum upgrading) or the dynamic inherent in the issue, UN circles assume that the solutions will come from global financial institutions. Therefore, the concept is translated into the language of the UN by establishing, defining, and facilitating the exchange between use value and exchange value (Kuymulu, 2014). The appropriation of the idea by the UN is based on the idea that the most essential function of translating the concept into the language of the UN is to establish the relationship between use value and exchange value (Kuymulu, 2014). Some critics have argued that the way the definition of the right to the city has been extracted from academic literature and applied by central governments has removed the contextual meaning of the concept. For example, it is generally less complicated for UN agencies to discuss the concept with regard to the realization of use values in the city because the politics of use value is still confined to the realm of consumption (Kuymulu, 2014).

Furthermore, the United Nations (2016) states that the concept has had an influence on the NUA and thus guides equal urban development. Including the concept in the agenda (United Nations, 2017) indicates that it will have a considerable effect on urban policy discussions and urban planning practices across multiple layers of government (Turok & Scheba, 2018). The NUA, by adopting the idea, has removed the political and transformative implications from this idea by transforming it into a technical objective (Turok & Scheba, 2018). As such, the NUA represents a useful lens through which to study the relationship(s) between global urban ideals and the actions of governments in developing today's cities through large-scale urban developments.

### 1.3. Spatial Planning in the Global South

#### 1.3.1. Geographies of Identity & Politics

The relational nature of space has given rise to a relational understanding of place identity and a new way of conceiving how places receive their identity (Massey, 2004). A relational understanding of space has therefore brought about a reconsideration of how spaces are identified or form an identity (Massey, 2004). Relational thinking of space demonstrates that since space is constantly produced through a multiplicity of relations (at multiple scales, local/global and through practices/ movements/relationships), spatial identities like place/region/nation can similarly be seen as relationally formed (Amin, 2002). Spatial identities tend to be internally heterogeneous, non-fixed, and subject to continual change over time in response to historical events. Relational understandings of space are therefore interlinked with other theoretical reformulations, and are part of broader political agendas which have been developed from similar understandings (Amin, 2002, as cited in Massey, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, space is relational and is constructed through daily routines and responsibilities, and it is a connection between individual actions and broader social/political actions.

Ash Amin (2002) says the best way to achieve effective citizenship is not by limiting it to a community-based politics; however, he believes it can be developed in a social environment where all individuals have the opportunity to act as citizens, regardless of their rights. In the context of continuous racial/ethnic inequalities and persistent racism, minority communities and migrant communities are perceived as "second-class" citizens, and therefore the system does not function well; thus supporting an alternative type of vanguard participation, which will be explored further in this research.

Additionally, based upon the relational definition of space, Massey (2004) extends her discussion of the relationship between place identity and global connectivity to highlight how spatial relationships lead to unequal distributions of power. Space is not simply a passive recipient of economic, political, and cultural activities but rather a dynamic, complex web of interconnected relationships that produces differentiated geographies of privilege and marginalization. The relational construction of inequality entails a moral obligation and political responsibility to recognize that the prosperity of some regions is built directly off the subordination or dispossession of others (Massey, 2004).

The growing demand for different cultural identities to be visible in urban space, as well as migration, asylum, and population mobility, caused the “identity places” phenomenon (Healey, 1997; Sandercock, 2000; Germain & Gagnon, 2003; Gale, 2005, as cited in Kurtarır & Ökten, 2018). This relational, responsibility-based approach is helpful for understanding contemporary urban change, particularly where global policy frameworks are linked to local development policies. So, the disparities in the Global Divide are not considered static nor spatially distant from one another; they are continuously reproduced by flows of capital, labor, and knowledge around the world.

### 1.3.2. Global Division in Spatial Planning Discourses

Diverse geographic contexts produce differing levels of interdependence between globalization and local conditions influenced by the right to the city. Lefebvre (1970) and Zukin (2009) developed the concept of hegemonic urban processes and the forms of resistance these produce in response to their respective urbanisms. These processes and responses to them are based on the historic and structural foundations of each particular urbanism. Other scholars, including Merrifield (2013) and Brenner & Schmid (2015), have developed ways to identify the differences and develop definitions that help to understand the diverse urban spatial variations. However, developing generalizations and standardizing the terms for these definitions has resulted in criticism from other researchers because of the lack of consideration for the variability of urban realities (Harvey, 2012; Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Ren & Weinstein, 2013; Schindler, 2017); this has created new perspectives to examine. In addition, the following sections will examine planning disciplines and the United Nations' efforts to reduce the gap between these two geographies.

Globalization consists of many different phenomena; it occurs in various forms across scales and has different origins and activities (Ong, 2011). The effects of globalization vary depending on the time and place involved (Ong, 2011). In today's urban environments, the ways in which they are constructed simultaneously reflect and influence processes of globalization (Amin, 2002b). Researchers have identified how cities both resist and adapt to the forces of globalization through such mechanisms as resistance, governance, and the negotiation of tensions, conflicts, and opportunities (Amin, 2002b).

Zukin (2009) examines ongoing urban change and development in contemporary cities using both economic systems, such as neoliberalism and gentrification, and cultural systems that create legitimacy and power. Zukin (2009, p. 545) links culture, economy, and the construction of “real” identity through the concept of authenticity in the shaping of urban space. Lefebvre defines the right to the city as the right to a transformed and renewed urban life and emphasizes the right to collective use, ownership, and difference in the use of urban space (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 158). Zukin believes that Lefebvre's concept of “espace vécu” represents both the lived social practices and physical space embodied in a particular area of urban space, and a symbolic framework that allows marginalized groups to claim rights to help shape urban spaces (Lefebvre, 1974, as cited in Zukin, 2009). Authenticity is a moral claim and an analytical tool that helps frame the struggle for the right to the city. Through its mediation between capital, the state, the media, and the new middle class, it creates what Zukin (2009) calls “hegemonic global urbanism”, where global economic forces and local cultural expressions merge into a single entity. Zukin also frames authenticity as the primary lens through which to view the cultural and spatial dimensions of globalization in urban spaces. Zukin sees authenticity as a position of power and a call for inclusivity and believes that authenticity should be linked to a “right to a diverse city” (2009, p.543).

Zukin's conceptual framework (2009) allows us to understand the relationship between Lefebvre's ideas the “right to the city" (1968), "The production of space" (1974), and the processes of urban transformation in terms of cultural hegemony, identity, and authenticity. Zukin's framework is based on the political and epistemological dimensions of urban studies by Lefebvre, which creates a basis for the debate on planetary urbanization.

Andy Merrifield expands on this in a contemporary context. Merrifield (2013) revisits Lefebvre's idea of "urbanized society" from "La Revolution Urbaine" (1970). He argues that urbanization has become a global social process rather than a localized, bounded urban process. According to Merrifield (2013), the term "Planetary Urbanization" indicates a condition where boundaries are no longer able to define urbanity, and it includes the economic, political, and emotional aspects of human existence. This process should be understood as a form of "urban alienation" rather than as simply the spatial extension of capital, and warns that the abstraction of the concept will result in a "technocratic totalization." Merrifield's ideas support Lefebvre's conception of urban life as a collective and evolving process, but situate it within the global capitalist conditions of today (Merrifield, 2013).

Neil Brenner (2000) employed a political-economic and scale-based model to analyze processes of urbanization. "The Urban Question as a Scale Question" (Brenner, 2000) describes how the processes of globalization and state transformation have produced new forms of geographic rescaling, creating ways for urban governance and capital accumulation to occur outside of the limits of a traditional city. The emphasis of Brenner's (2000) research on the rescaling of urban space represents a move from Lefebvre's (1970) dialectical perspective on urban society toward an analysis of the institutional and territorial transformations occurring due to neoliberal globalization. Prior to developing the concept of “planetary urbanization” (Brenner & Schmid, 2015), Brenner and Schmid built upon their prior research to develop a systemic epistemology of cities, replacing the concept of discrete, individualized urbanities with an understanding of urbanization as a globally integrated and unequal process transforming spatial relationships between locations throughout the world.

In addition, other researchers have also critiqued Brenner (2015) for his rejection of established binary models of urbanization and proposed an overly inclusive conceptual framework. Researchers have argued that theories failing to consider the variations between the Global North and South will obscure the structural causes of urban issues. Therefore, researchers have contended that without consideration of the variations underlying the inequality of urban development between the Global North and Global South, it is impossible to fully comprehend the social inequalities within today's urban environments. In addition, many researchers (Ren & Weinstein, 2013; Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Schindler, 2017; Harvey, 2012) have argued that urban regions are a location where local, national, and global forces interact and in which people create and negotiate their identity and inequalities stemming from urban development influenced by global factors.

While the dominant urban neoliberalism literature, and many of the general assumptions about the origin of neoliberal urban policy ideas from the North (Brenner, 2000), were present during this time, both Harvey (2012), and Parnell and Robinson (2012) have put forward an alternative view with their work. Both of these papers represent a significant expansion on the geographical scope of analysis and the analytical dimensions of critique of urban neoliberalism through a set of studies focused on developing urban theories responsive to changing geographies of urbanization and dominant global urbanization trends, motivated by clear political agendas to draw attention to the growing urban inequalities, while also highlighting the numerous trajectories and paths of neoliberal policy cycles (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Harvey, 2012). While the conceptualization of urbanization as a planet-wide phenomenon is central to the framework presented by Brenner and Schmid (2015), the focus of Parnell and Robinson (2012), and Harvey (2012) is on the continued importance of geographic and socio-political differentiation between the North and South.

Parnell and Robinson (2012) argued that urban theory has primarily been produced out of perspectives on cities in the North (e.g., Brenner, 2000); thus, the Southern urban experience has been marginal in mainstream urban theoretical discussions. Therefore, they (2012) suggested a more inclusive and comparative urbanism that recognizes the diverse urban trajectories. The comparative urbanism proposed by Parnell and Robinson (2012) challenged the epistemological hierarchy within urban theory by de-localizing Northern knowledge; thereby positioning cities as active producers of theory in the Global South (Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Harvey (2012) observed that the capital accumulation and spatial restructuring processes that occur through globalization are unevenly distributed throughout the world, resulting in different types of urban inequality that cannot be sufficiently captured by homogenized approaches. Rather than assimilating the differences across the globe, the authors emphasized a contextual and locally specific understanding of the urbanization process that captures the diversity of the global urban condition (Harvey, 2012).

The division of the Global South and Global North continues to be an important analytical device for illustrating how asymmetries affect urban governance, citizenship, and resource distribution. Parnell and Robinson (2012) argue that much of contemporary urban theory is still influenced by Northern views of urbanism and fails to incorporate the lived experiences and the specificities of urban development in the South. They (2012) argued that it is essential to develop a more inclusive and credible body of knowledge about cities that includes Southern experiences and draws on local practices and the daily urban struggles of people, rather than viewing them as anomalies or exceptions to understanding global urbanization.

Ren and Weinstein (2013) point out that megaprojects are not simply tools for transforming the built environment; they are also instruments for reconfiguring scales and creating neoliberal forms of urban governance in the South, such as in China and India. Although the political regimes of China and India

differ, the spatial results of their respective megaprojects are similar. Additionally, the authors argue that global capital flows constrain citizens' ability to claim the "right to the city" because these flows redefine state power at the urban scale. Megaprojects redraw the boundaries of urban citizenship by incorporating local politics into the logic of global competition (Ren & Weinstein, 2013).

Schindler (2017) explains how Brenner and Schmid's (2015) theory of planetary urbanization describes urbanization with a globalized logic that is based on capitalist relations of production to explain all cities and therefore ignores the diversity of cities. According to Schindler (2017), urban theory today is rooted primarily in the epistemologies of the Global North, which leads to a "universality" of urban theory that is a "generalization" of the historical experience of the Global North's cities. He (2017) asserts that the cities of the Global South are not simply "missing out" or "different than normal" from a "developmental" or "modern" standpoint; they do represent new ways to think about urban theory (p. 50). Schindler (2017) claims that postcolonial urban theory does highlight the specificity of cities in the Global South; however, postcolonial urban theory also does not provide a sufficient explanation of why there are these structural distinctions. He (2017) provides the term "Southern urbanism" as an additional analytical framework to go beyond both postcolonial and neoliberal urban theory (pp. 49-58). The three central aspects of Schindler's (2017) model of Southern urbanism are: disconnections between capital and labor; discontinuous, dynamic, and contested metabolic configurations; and the co-constitution of political economy and materiality (pp. 52-58). Overall, Schindler (2017) argues that Southern urbanism differs from economic determinism by focusing on the physical structure of cities, everyday practices, and the uncertainty of the Global South.

### 1.4. Migration as a Planetary Component

Due to their complex dynamics, no two migrations or migrants are identical. Therefore, to avoid any misidentification or assumptions before beginning the discussion, the literature on migration and the publications of organizations that collect and publish the largest migration data sets were examined. The relevant findings are presented below. “There are no universally agreed definitions of a migrant, but multiple understandings depending on the policy and analytical contexts. For instance, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) defines a migrant for statistical purposes as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence” (IOM, 2019). Czaika and de Haas (2014) believe that international migration is now an integral part of how the world works in a globalized system, whereas it was once considered a rare event or a brief period of time. They also note that while there are many more people migrating internationally, this does not necessarily mean we are living in a "new age of migration." Instead, it is evolving as one of the key components of global integration. Therefore, today it is a global mechanism for adapting to and transforming our social, economic, and environmental relationships through a continued process of globalization, technological advancement, and increasing transnational connectivity (Czaika & De Haas, 2014).

As a multidimensional phenomenon, migration brings with it many economic, cultural, social, political and security-related consequences in terms of its causes and effects (Kuhlman, 1991). Dynamic factors affecting differences in migration include economic imbalances between countries and regions, inequalities and conflicts in cultural and political spheres (Vertovec, 2019, p. 126).

As a form of geographical mobility and the process of changing one's living environment for various reasons, migration brings with it many positive and negative outcomes and conditions (Vertovec, 2019). Migrants who have to leave where they live may find it difficult to re-establish the same social networks in the host society and thus try to exist in an area where they feel alienated. The act of migration, which transforms the bonds people establish with space and the relationships that develop through this bond, can affect almost every aspect of individual and social life (Amin, 2002a).

Throughout history, there have been individual and collective forced displacements, which form an integral part of the migration experience; they repeat themselves and continue to be a tragic part of the migration experience today (Kuhlmann, 1991). Forced displacement occurs when a person or group of people are displaced from their home and/or native country by force, or on their own behalf, for reasons such as, but limited to, war, ethnic cleansing, religious or political persecution, natural disaster, or poverty/financial hardship (UNHCR, 2024). Voluntary migration and forced displacement differ significantly in that voluntary one is based on a choice made by the migrant, whereas forced one is based entirely on external coercion, and often tragic circumstances (UNHCR, 2024).

By the end of 2024, the total number of people who were forcibly displaced from their homes globally increased to 123.2 million; as a result of continuous persecution, ongoing conflicts, and continued violations of human rights (UNHCR, 2024). Figure 1 includes both Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those who have fled their home countries, either to seek refuge or asylum in another country (refugees), along with other individuals who require some form of international protection. Therefore, it can be inferred that there continues to be an upward trend in global displacement (UNHCR, 2024). “123.2 million forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2024 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations (...)” (UNHCR, 2024, p. 2).

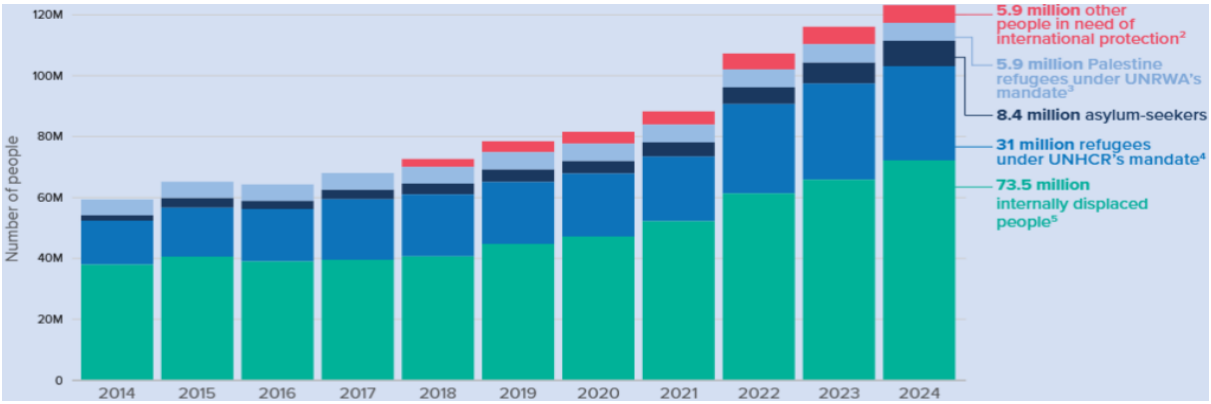



*Figure 1 Worldwide trend of forced displacement (adapted from UNHCR, 2024, p.2)*

It is acknowledged that the data in this report (see Figure 2) provided only through 2024 does not account for the most recent developments throughout the year in which the report was written; however, since this research was conducted, many additional politically-based crises have developed and remain active today in various regions of the world (Voyvoda, 2025), such as Iran. Therefore, it is also reasonable to infer that the upward trend (see Figure 1) displayed will continue into future years. For example, in Figure 2, the researcher considers that the immigrants received by Iran and a potential new wave of migration following protests could increase the number of migrants in Türkiye, a neighboring country, in 2025 and beyond.

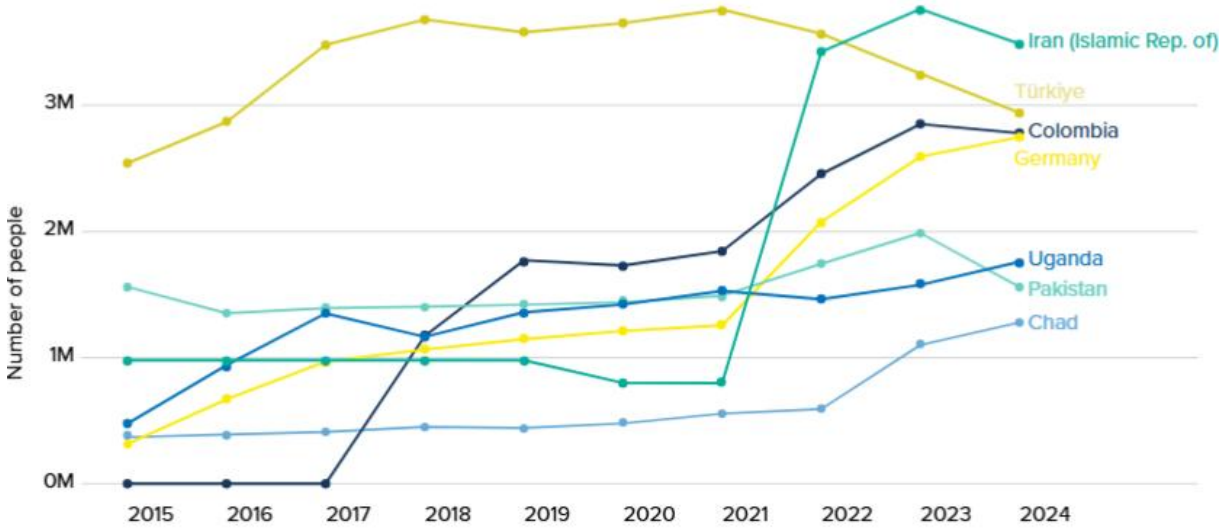



*Figure 2 Refugees, people in a refugee-like situation, and other people in need of international protection by major country of asylum between 2015-2024 (end-year) (UNHCR, 2024, p.39)*

Kuhlman (1991) states that there are two most key factors in the economic integration of migrants; first is to allow access to all products and services regardless of their income level, and second is to achieve socio-economic parity between migrants and the host country through fair distribution of migration's benefits amongst the host society's total population. This research incorporates both of these variables by measuring the degree of accessibility of public places to migrants as a means of integrating economically and socially (Saltan, 2022). Accessibility to shared public urban space is viewed not simply as a function of physical mobility, but rather as a representation of other issues of equity, inclusion, and representation within the host society.

Migration, as a form of population relocation is a worldwide occurrence (Czaika & De Haas, 2014). Migration can occur at a wide variety of points in time and in a multitude of locations across the globe. The various forms that migration takes in terms of its source and destination regions, demographic composition, levels of intensity and impacts on the destination region will help to clarify the changing nature of migration (IOM, 2024). Studies such as those referenced here provide essential information for creating effective migration policies, and defining applications of migration research. Tuncer (2024)

posits that the increasing levels of insecurity in the Global North, including the United States and Europe; coupled with conflict, political/religious persecution, and gender-based persecution in certain parts of the Global South are increasingly causing well-educated, middle aged and young migrants to seek new countries of residence.

During the last decade, there have been significant changes in volume, routes and types of migrants using both sea and land routes to reach Europe as illustrated in Figure 3. There were over one million migrants arriving by sea in 2015, primarily to Greece on the Eastern Mediterranean Route as a result of conflict in Syria and increasing instability in Afghanistan and a few other contexts. Following the development of several policies that led to declining migrant arrivals along this route (i.e., the EU-Türkiye Statement) since June 2016, more migrants began to arrive along the Central Mediterranean route; particularly those arriving from Libya to Italy in 2017. Migrant arrivals via the Western Mediterranean route; which connects primarily Morocco to Spain; reached an all-time high in 2018. In addition to lower overall numbers of migrant arrivals, the combination of stronger border controls and enhanced cooperation between European States and third country States resulted in a more volatile migrant arrival picture in subsequent years, with the lowest number of migrant arrivals occurring in 2020; in part, due to travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic (IOM, 2024).

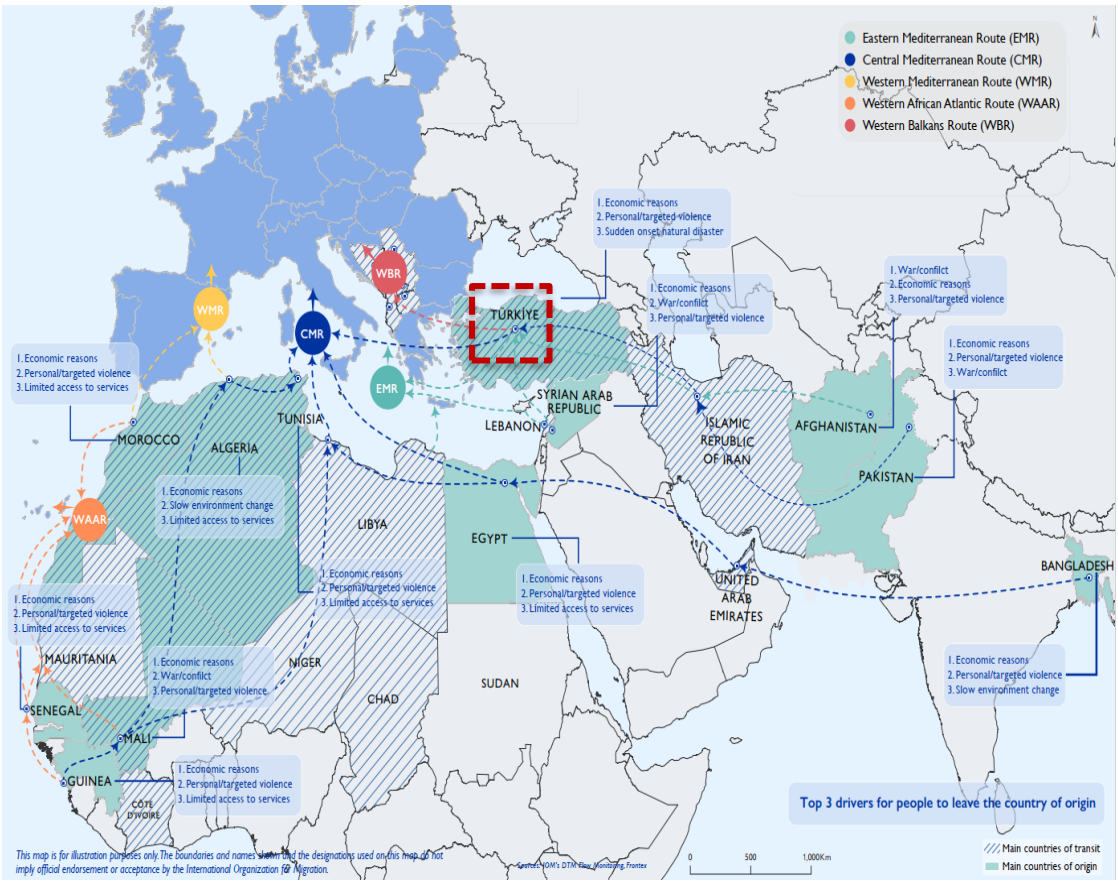



*Figure 3 Migration by sea and by land to Europe in 2024, main routes, nationalities, and drivers of migration (adapted from IOM, 2024, p. 9)*

### 1.5. Radical Planning

Faranak Miraftab introduces the idea of "insurgent planning" into radical planning theory and provides a historical basis for this method of planning based on the post-colonial history of the Global South. One of the most unique contributions of Miraftab is her classification of citizenship practices through the relationship between "invited spaces" (spaces that have been sanctioned by the state) and "invented spaces" (spaces that were invented by the oppressed to pursue their rights) (Miraftab, 2004). Miraftab (2009) expands on Holston's (1996, 2009) ideas of "insurgent citizenship" (Castells, 1978), which was originally developed through Holston's studies of informal settlements in Brazil, by deconstructing the neoliberal governmentality of "participation" and "inclusion" as methods that are used to establish the status quo and depoliticize social struggles. The article examines radical planning practices in the Global South, community-based informal movements (Holston, 1996; 2009), and their impact on planning. In the examples she uses from the Global South, Miraftab shows that insurgent planning is not simply using formal channels, but rather is also creating property and service rights on the street through the use of creative tactics such as "struggle plumbers" (Miraftab, 2009). Miraftab (2009) states that insurgent planning is characterized as "counter hegemonic" in its ability to disrupt relationships of oppression, "transgressive" in its disruption of both national and temporal boundaries, and "imaginative" in its assertion that there can be another world outside of the neoliberal illusion that "there is no alternative".

Radical planning literature, especially in the context of the Global South (Roy, 2011), argues for a redefinition of urban space as a site of political struggle. This perspective is extended by Roy (2017) in the framework of “grassroots of planning”, which emphasizes the need to shift the focus of planning theory from traditional debates on the right to the city to the unique role of urban peripheries in processes of democratization. It examines the place of the urban poor in planning processes and the planning practices that have emerged from their struggle for rights (Roy, 2017).

Several articles that offer a different perspective on this issue have revisited the topic within a Marxist framework, re-examining the discussion along with prefigurative planning. The politics of social movements can be understood as radical planning to challenge current power structures by promoting a more democratic and participatory form of urban development (Muchadenyika, 2020). Radical planning is important but the practice of grass roots movements and community organizations in the context of fragile political economies would likely be better examined through the lens of “prefigurative urbanization” (Minuchin, 2021) which challenges the monopoly of the state in transforming urban space by expanding the autonomy and agency of urban collective and developing alternative forms of urban development that coexist with the existing system (Bandauko & Arku, 2024). “The notion of prefiguration depicts the practices and interventions carried out by radical movements seeking to expand the margins of collective action by experimenting with counter-

hegemonic models of everyday experience, particularly involving marginalized population groups, including the urban poor. The notion is intricately connected with how urban spaces are transformed in many cities in the Global South, particularly those that are experiencing rapid informalization of urban development processes" (Bandauko & Arku, 2024).

Gravante (2024) analyzes in his article, named "Building real utopias: urban grassroots activism, emotions and prefigurative politics", how prefigurative politics are constructed emotionally and organizationally in cities. In addition, according to Roth et al. (2023), radical municipalism is defined as a speculative hypothesis about how systemic transformation might be wrought through coordinated action at the urban or municipal scale, understood as a strategic entry point for counter-hegemonic struggle. Roth et al. (2023, p. 2027) "We must ward against equating every effort at making a city 'livable and democratic' with a radical municipalist politics, and instead look for the conceptual overlaps in experiences that do not associate themselves with the language of radical municipalism."

However, it remains open to question whether the municipality, defined by the authors as a "strategic entry point" into systemic transformation, has the real potential to effectively challenge global capital flows and the rigid hierarchical structure of the nation-state. The idea that the local scale is inherently more democratic (which is an assumption that could lead to the "local trap"), may limit the possibilities of this approach in practice (Purcell, 2006, as cited in Roth et al., 2023). Furthermore, if national governments resist the efforts of radical municipalism (e.g., through their bureaucratic apparatuses, as described in the article) then it is possible to view radical municipalism in a more critical light in terms of how well it will succeed in "breaking the glass ceiling" (Roth, 2019, as cited in Roth et al., 2023).

### 1.5.1. Prefigurative Planning and Participation

"Participants contest power on a series of different levels, ranging from the macro-political, as with adversarial protest forms which confront governments and institutions, to the 'micropolitical', the relations of power shaping interaction among individuals, collectives, movement networks and wider society" (Yates, 2015). The methods of political action and everyday life within social movements are important because they influence the effectiveness of social change efforts and help explain how movements and structures of solidarity form (Yates, 2015). Social movements can be considered collective bodies that create and maintain themselves outside of institutional or formal frameworks. The primary goal of social movements is to challenge, modify, or preserve existing forms of political, social, or cultural authority with respect to the systems, societies, or world order in which they exist (Snow et al., 2004). Ay and Miraftab (2016), in their study on the right to the city and forms of participation, examined how spaces of activism created by citizens, so-called invented spaces (Miraftab, 2004), play a critical role in defending the right to the city and resisting exclusionary urban development projects beyond the formally invited arenas of participation. Ay and Miraftab (2016)

argue that these practices should be understood as insurgent forms of citizenship developed in response to market-driven processes of urban transformation. Cities have created the right to the city through the contradictions, promises, and limitations of urban development, and the need for the right to the city has grown even greater because the urban development process is guided by profit motives (Cihanger & Büyükcivelek, 2017).

The concept of prefigurative urbanization, which became important in the 1970s to depict strategies and tactics seeking to experience other forms of power and social relations (Yates, 2015), represents a territorial transformation process where the installation of key urban infrastructure (water, sanitation, housing) is driven by urban social movements (Minuchin, 2021). “Prefiguration involves combining the imaginative construction of ‘alternatives’, within either mobilisation-related or everyday activities, with some strategic attempt to ensure their future political relevance” (Yates, 2015). This is also based on the idea of demonstration of alternatives through experimentation and everyday activities.

According to Davoudi (2023), this process necessitates careful planning, imaginative thinking, and a transition from a techno-rational worldview to relational approaches to knowledge and practice. A significant aspect of prefigurative planning is that this policy emerges within the intervals of everyday spatial practices, adding intuition and emotion to the mind. Davoudi stresses that the politics of this form of planning is embodied in the everyday activities of ordinary individuals who shape space. Prefigurative planning endows reason “with intuition and emotion," in other words, it places value in local knowledge, emotions, and creativity along with technical rationality (Davoudi, 2023).

Prefigurative planning contrasts with "the command and control" approaches commonly used in planning today. It is flexible and accepts pluralism and conflict. Davoudi (2023) links this approach to agonistic democracy. In contrast to the forced consensus idea, prefigurative planning operates within "spaces of democratic vibrancy, agonistic spaces of disagreement and dissent." It enables the coexistence of multiple visions of the future through debate and experimentation; no single "expert" plan determines outcomes. Therefore, it views conflict and disagreement as creative forces, not as planning errors. So according to Davoudi (2023), the politics of prefigurative planning occurs in the "gaps" and at the "grassroots," counteracting the dominant practices while at the same time navigating the relationships of power and dealing with the inevitable conflicts. Therefore, planners are called upon to serve as facilitators of collective imagination and carriers of hope rather than as distant regulators (Davoudi, 2023).

The ongoing rapid urbanization in Global South cities is creating a massive housing crisis, especially in developing regions (Gillespie, 2018). Thus, urban social movements have demonstrated how the collective forms of spatial production play a role in shaping alternative imaginaries of urban change in Global South cities. The future of prefigurative urbanization is highly dependent on several factors,

such as the availability of resources, government policies, and the level of community engagement and organization“ (Bandauko & Arku, 2024).

“In a similar manner, Rigo (2011) develops the idea of ‘acts of illegal citizenship’ performed by ‘unauthorized’ migrants. She argues that the artificiality of citizenship suggests that it ‘is constantly contestable and controvertible’, so that listening to unauthorized practices means focusing ‘on the ruptures and contradictions that these inflict upon the institutional definition and codification of citizenship’ (pp. 200-210). According to Rigo (2011, p. 212), human mobility and migrant (rights) protests are political interventions that ‘produce a new conflicting order of citizenship’” (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 535).

### 1.6. Chapter Conclusion

This research project intends to illustrate through a relational approach how four central discourses currently at play in contemporary urban studies (the right to the city, planetary urbanisation, Southern urbanism, and radical municipalism) are theoretically interlinked. A diagram is used to depict where these four discourses share common conceptual ground, and where there have been historical continuities between them, as well as areas of overlap that exist across each of the four discourses — particularly around participation, the commons, and grassroots governance. Ultimately, this diagram positions participation as a dimension of urban politics that has the potential to transform, rather than simply being an instrumental tool for planners. Figure 4 illustrates the theoretical relationships between the right to the city, planetary urbanisation, Southern urbanism, and radical municipalism; in addition, it provides a visual representation of the literature from Henri Lefebvre through to current debates regarding participatory, insurgent, and prefigurative planning and its relationship to participation and the urban commons. In addition, dashed lines connecting these different approaches are intended to symbolise indirect influences/transition concepts between the four discourses.

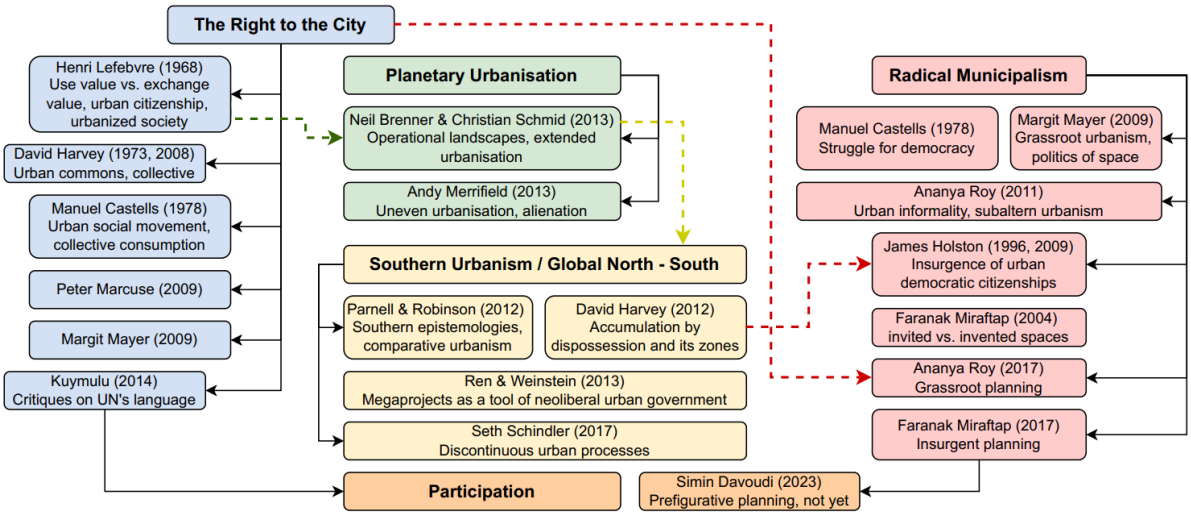



*Figure 4 Conceptual framework of the research*

## Chapter 2. International Urban Policy Frameworks - The New Urban Agenda (NUA)

The previous chapter explained an urban theory and expressed the planning discipline's perspective on how and why urban planning discourses and practices are different between the Global North and South. In this chapter, the research gives some reflections from the documents of the UN's logic about decreasing the gap between these two geographies. In addition, traces of this public green space, the case study of the research, were sought in these documents and in Turkish reports related to them.

### 2.1. The Needs and the Genesis of a Global Urban Agenda

The article "(Re)theorizing Cities from the Global South: Looking Beyond Neoliberalism" is discussed in the "Global South" section of the research and is referenced multiple times in this part of the study, as is another article by Susan Parnell published four years later. The research aimed to cover not only the current practices of the NUA, but also impressions from the period when it first emerged. For this reason, an academic who was an observer of the process while the conferences were still ongoing and the document had just been published was selected. Regarding the period before the publication of the NUA, Parnell states:

"The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focus on slum eradication is the best example of an earlier iteration of global policy that impacted directly on how cities across the world, and especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, were approached by policy makers, but which could not be thought of as a comprehensive urban policy agenda. While the definition of exactly what is a city was eluded in both the MDGs and the post 2015 development agenda documentation, SDG11 unambiguously signals UN members' acceptance of some form of devolution in governance, the imperative of an integrated vision of sustainable urban development that does not exclude social, economic, or ecological imperatives and (implicitly) a collective recognition that the spatial concentration of resources and flows that cities can act as a driver of sustainable development" (Parnell, 2016, p. 530).

Parnell (2016) has stated that despite these existing frameworks, they are insufficient for achieving better results and realizing goals today. She explained what the UN is trying to do with this new framework as follows: however, while SDG 11 represents an opportunity for cities to be included in the global development agenda by those who create policy at the UN level, it is limited in defining the scope of that agenda in terms of what the goals are and how they will be implemented beyond the identification of objectives/targets and indicators. Habitat III has the responsibility of providing additional detail about the norms and the operations of this new global urban agenda (Parnell, 2016).

"SDG11.7 aspires to offer equal access to green and public spaces that are safe, welcoming, and accessible, especially for women, children, older people, and people with disabilities" (UN General Assembly, 2015, as cited in Pala & Acar, 2024, p. 1). "On the other hand, critics contend that the pursuit of environmental remediation may inadvertently contribute to conditions of discrimination,

displacement, and social injustice within cities" (Anguelovski et al., 2017, as cited in Pala & Acar, 2024, p. 1). In this context, in theory, the NUA could encourage the practical implementation of the SDGs against gentrification.

### 2.1.1. Notable Shifts between Habitat Agreements

According to Parnell (2016), this agreement, made after 2015, states that the idea of "developmental logic" has been abandoned in favor of "a universal sustainable development imperative." It explains that "universal sustainable" means "including north and south, rich and poor." And she said:

"Just what the inclusion of the ecological lens on cities will unlock in Habitat III remains opaque, as does the developmental balance between poverty and inequality. (...) The major shift in the urban sector is that the battle to secure the universal right to housing that was achieved at Habitat II is likely to be overshadowed in 2016 as the far more ambitious claim to the "right to the city" becomes the clarion call of major southern nations led by Brazil and other Latin American nations, who are now much more prominent and powerful within the UN system than in its early years when northern powers dominated" (Parnell, 2016, pp. 532-533).

## 2.2. Guideline of The New Urban Agenda

The Agenda 2030 issued by the UN was a guide with objectives for the next 15 years, and the NUA was a global document developed in line with common goals. It aims to understand the relationships between local events that affect the whole world and global events that affect the local. The Paris Agreement, signed in the same year, was an indication of global concern and interest in climate change. The Habitat meetings and the renewal of the previous version of the SDGs are also an effort to meet in a common denominator, even if in different languages and countries, the answers sought to the question of how we can save our world by taking clearer and more accurate steps. Born in this direction, the NUA is the guiding document (see Figure 5) for urban engagements.


*Figure 5 The publication of the New Urban Agenda (UN, 2017)*

The reason why the main focus of these studies is urban areas is the increasing urbanisation. The projections also show that the current trend is that the population growth in urban areas continues at the same increasing trend. For this reason, the common main vision that The NUA has as a result of these meetings and guides produced in an effort to find solutions to the problems created by urban areas by using urban areas again: the right to the city. The idea of cities for all is a vision that points to all the inequalities and discrimination we experience today and explains the urgency of preventing this. The NUA presents a normative framework that emphasises the relationship between urbanisation, sustainability, and social inclusion. As stated in the document:

“Our shared vision - 11. We share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all. We note the efforts of some national and local governments to enshrine this vision, referred to as the "right to the city", in their legislation, political declarations, and charters” (UN, 2017, p.5).

It encourages each country to submit these reports with translation support in different languages, global meetings, and a call to action in the guide. The content details why this is important in terms of both scale and challenges.

“Call for action - 16. While the specific circumstances of cities of all sizes, towns and villages vary, we affirm that the NUA is universal in scope, participatory and people-centred, protects the planet and has a long-term vision, setting out priorities and actions at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels that Governments and other relevant stakeholders in every country can adopt based on their needs” (UN, 2017, p.9).

It is also indicated what facilitators they will have in terms of ease and accuracy of implementation. Examples include the development support needed to improve governance and partnership, or to ensure sustainable food security coordination.

“Planning and managing urban spatial development - We acknowledge the principles and strategies for urban and territorial planning contained in the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, approved by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat in its resolution 25/6 of 23 April 2015. (...) We will implement integrated planning that aims to balance short-term needs with the long-term desired outcomes of a competitive economy, high quality of life and sustainable environment. We will also strive to build flexibility into our plans in order to adjust to changing social and economic conditions over time. We will implement and systematically evaluate these plans, while making efforts to leverage innovations in technology and to produce a better living environment.” (UN, 2017, p.24)

For the National Report Submission period 2022-2026, up to the present (January 2026), only Oman, Malawi, the Czech Republic, Kenya, Cuba, Ghana, Iraq, Tunisia, Tanzania, and the Philippines have submitted reports, in order of submission (UN-Habitat, n.d.).

### 2.3. Main Concepts of the NUA

#### 2.3.1. Sense of Belonging

According to Ash Amin (2002a), a sense of belonging is closely connected to an active citizen's politics where minority voices may be represented, and new meanings may be generated through participation. As such, Amin's ideas about the connection of a sense of belonging to social structures that shape the ways in which individuals see themselves and others as citizens are hindered when there exists a societal tolerance of racial discrimination or unequal treatment of ethnic groups. To strengthen a sense of belonging, according to Amin, it is necessary to develop a public culture where minorities are not simply viewed as "visitors" and where there exist legally and institutionally sanctioned penalties against racism. With these parameters in place, a sense of belonging will become sustainable through balancing both cultural self-determination and social cohesion, and reducing wealth gaps and increasing access to high-quality public goods available to all on the basis of universal entitlements (Amin, 2002a).

This concept, in alignment with SDG11, seeks to create safe, resilient, and inclusive cities for everyone, and is expressed in the agenda as follows: the NUA (2017) addressed issues of belonging from perspectives of sustainable urbanization and inclusive governance. The NUA's approach is to monitor the inclusion of all urban residents within their communities through the submission of national progress reports by member countries. Through creating transparency and accountability mechanisms through the "Urban Agenda Platform", the NUA seeks to create a global framework for social belonging, assuring that no one is left out of the implementation of urban policy (UN, 2017).

#### 2.3.2. Social Inclusion

This part expresses the planning discipline’s perspective on how and why create inclusive public spaces to create sustainable cities. In the end, it offers reflections from the NUA on how the guide incorporates this main urban aspect.

Madanipour (2021) describes the public sphere as a "double negation" in opposition to the exclusive nature of private property, indicating the primary characteristic of the public sphere is free access for all and social solidarity. For the author, the public sphere is not just a decorative element of the social order; it is an instrument for transforming society; however, in contemporary times, these public spheres are threatened by the economic and political forces that seek to utilize them. As governments and public authorities in globalized economies continue to adopt a market-oriented perspective, they

may convert public spaces into experiential components of the "experience economy" and as tools for enhancing the value of real estate, purportedly inclusive but, in fact, exclusionary mechanisms designed to promote gentrification. The author indicates that democratic governance is undermined in this process, and that the increasing use of control and surveillance functions will eliminate the public space's status as a staging area for democracy, converting it into a symbolic representation of either economic or authoritarian interest (Madanipour, 2021).

The NUA (UN, 2017) has framed social inclusion not simply as a desired outcome for development; rather, it presents social inclusion as a necessary, transformative right to sustainably develop urban areas. The its guiding principle to "leaving no one behind" requires all cities to provide equitable access to all their residents (including especially marginalized populations such as the poor, migrants, people with disabilities, and women) to physical and economic resources and decision-making processes. By linking social inclusion to the concept of the right to the city, the NUA suggests creating socially inclusive urban environments where spatial segregation is eliminated and residents have equitable access to public spaces, affordable housing, and public transportation systems. Additionally, the NUA has bridged the gap between economic and spatial inclusion by promoting the formalization of the informal economy, providing decent work, and framing social inclusion as a required element for achieving urban prosperity, social cohesion, and democratic governance (UN, 2017).

### 2.3.3. Equitable and Affordable Access to Basic Resources for All

“Cities have become a central object of a range of global development and environmental policy debates in the last decade. There is now a consensus about the importance, perhaps even the centrality, of urban processes to securing sustainable futures in a range of fields, including climate change, economic growth, poverty eradication, public health, and food security. The assertion of a ‘new urban agenda’ in global policy reflects a long campaign to locate cities at the centre of development debates” (Barnett & Parnell, 2016, p. 87). “As the focus of policy arguments pivots away from the SDG process towards UN-Habitat’s major global summit in 2016, Habitat III, it is evident that there is greater receptiveness to the more holistic idea that sustainable development issues, such as energy futures or food security, are shaped by dynamics of urbanization, and that urban processes in turn require much closer scrutiny as sustainable development agendas are shaped. But Habitat III will need to be more specific about how and why cities are important than was necessary in reaching the SDG agreement (Barnett & Parnell, 2016, pp. 88-89).

In line with the inferences drawn by these authors from global policy meetings, it is emphasized that a significant pillar of the NUA will be ensuring equal access to safe food. Today, diverse geographies face multifaceted challenges in food accessibility, ranging from food safety concerns to escalating price volatilities. The NUA, however, recognizes the criticality of this issue and prioritizes it within its strategic framework. For instance, the NUA incorporates the following: “34. We commit ourselves to

promoting equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health care and family planning, education, culture, and information and communications technologies. We further commit ourselves to ensuring that these services are responsive to the rights and needs of women, children and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate, and to those of others in vulnerable situations. In this regard, we encourage the elimination of legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers" (UN, 2017, pp. 12-13). Moreover, "123. We will promote the integration of food security and the nutritional needs of urban residents, particularly the urban poor, in urban and territorial planning, in order to end hunger and malnutrition. We will promote coordination of sustainable food security and agriculture policies across urban, peri-urban and rural areas to facilitate the production, storage, transport and marketing of food to consumers in adequate and affordable ways in order to reduce food losses and prevent and reuse food waste" (UN, 2017, p.32).

Consistent with the global objectives outlined in the NUA, the issue of food accessibility has been examined under a dedicated heading in this research, drawing on insights from interviews with participants. Within this context, it is observed that Millet Gardens are not merely passive green spaces; rather, they function as multi-character urban parks. Specifically, regarding the Millet Garden selected for this study, interview responses from migrants revealed that the urban agriculture zone within the park has a significant impact on their everyday life and practices.

### 2.3.4. Engagement

In the agenda, there are traces of support for participatory planning at all levels and across all types of urban areas, down to the lowest levels. This guide offers many suggestions for local participation, with articles that support local actions and practices. "We envisage cities and human settlements that (...) are participatory, promote civic engagement, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces that are friendly for families, enhance social and intergenerational interactions, cultural expressions and political participation, as appropriate, and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, recognizing the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations" (UN, 2017, p.5).

According to Kaika (2017), radical social movements empower individuals to move beyond being powerless objects of debt, enabling them to assert control over basic resources through alternative management models that prioritize the commons. Kaika (2017) examines numerous successful social movements that, despite their positive outcomes, often fail to align with existing global agendas.

These mainstream debates are frequently dominated by the design of quantitative indicators and monitoring technologies aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, as Kaika (2017) argues, if the objective is to attain genuine social innovation and 'smart' solutions, the focus should shift away from rigid smart city indicators. Instead, these solutions are to be found within the unique methods, grassroots practices, and narratives instituted by such movements, as well as in the alternative frameworks they establish for the collective management of the commons.

#### 2.3.5. Prevent Gentrification and Displacement

The agenda addresses one of the biggest problems of today's urbanization, housing, with many different housing types and stakeholder proposals. “We will encourage the development of policies, tools, mechanisms and financing models that promote access to a wide range of affordable, sustainable housing options, including rental and other tenure options, as well as cooperative solutions such as co-housing, community land trusts and other forms of collective tenure that would address the evolving needs of persons and communities, in order to improve the supply of housing (especially for low-income groups), prevent segregation and arbitrary forced evictions and displacements and provide dignified and adequate reallocation. This will include support to incremental housing and self-build schemes, with special attention to programmes for upgrading slums and informal settlements” (UN, 2017, pp. 27-28).

This problem arises with different causes and consequences in each country. For example, the issue of ‘slum upgrading’ and the NUA's handling of this issue can be a topic of discussion in itself. Although it will not be elaborated as the subject of this research, in Türkiye, closely related to the case study of this research, TOKI's housing units are produced as an alternative to ‘gecekondu’ settlements in the Turkish case (Özdemir Sarı et al., 2022). The relationship between TOKI and gentrification in the Türkiye report will be analyzed in detail in the following sections.

### 2.4. Main Challenges of Implementing the NUA

Some scholars have reflected on the inherent difficulties of the NUA in achieving some desired impact. Prior to assessments of current practices and country reports, this research examined three articles published in some early years (within two years of the NUA's publication).

#### 2.4.1. Global Ambitions vs. Local Realities

“The emergence of city standards as a new norm as well as new planning and practice tools raises several pertinent questions that deserve close attention and critical interrogation. For one thing, while there may be an obvious logic behind codifying and standardizing information and knowledge about urban development (to enable shared practice learning, scale up innovation and improve benchmarking), at the same time this comes at the risk of decontextualizing and devaluing the

intrinsically local and social urban realities. Furthermore, standardization as a technical process risks rendering urban governance issues seemingly benign, when otherwise these can be expected to be inherently normative and occasionally contentious. In addition, while the case for urban standardization is typically advanced in the name of science and rational governance, the question of whose interests drive this approach deserves to be scrutinized. Again, there is no coincidence that the impetus for urban standards has to date mainly come from the business innovation side of government. Therefore, the promotion of standardization could be partly motivated by attempts to open up urban governance to greater business involvement and to render it compatible with international trade agreements" (Caprotti et al., 2017, p. 370).

"This paper raises questions around the potential for reductionism in this new agenda, and argues for the reflexive need to be aware of the types of urban space that are potentially sidelined by the new trends in global urban policy" (Caprotti et al., 2017, p. 367).

The relation between "international trade agreement" explained by Caprotti, and the case study of this research thesis will be discussed in depth at the end of the article.

### 2.4.2. Institutional and Governance Fragmentation

About notable shifts between the Habitat agreements, Parnell (2016, p. 533) said, "In order to lobby nation states and to secure their endorsement of the New Urban Agenda at Habitat III, non-state actors (including academics) have to work very hard behind the scenes to define their message and package it for national states' endorsement".

About the process of setting a global urban agenda, Parnell (2016, p. 533) said, "Reflection of the Habitat I and II Conference deliberations and agreements suggest for example that there has been a long-standing engagement with urban environmental issues, decentralization, and civil society participation, suggesting that the international community recognized, but was not able to fully action these issues and that implementation might usefully be given more attention in 2016" (Parnell, 2016, p. 533).

### 2.4.3. Social and Spatial Inequalities

The main issue that the NUA is facing is how it will address issues of social and spatial inequalities, largely because it is becoming increasingly reliant upon technocratic and data driven approaches to urban development that threaten to exacerbate current urban divides.

"There are obvious connections between the two concerns, especially given the current drive to ensure the UN's traction in rich and poor contexts, a point affirmed by the SDGs' universal reach. Implied in this is the imperative to design a single urban agenda to have legitimacy everywhere and in all cities. The Habitat III agenda has to embody a universal value base for cities and be signed off by all

parties who agree to dedicate the global resources of the UN to its implementation. Where the academic literature is useful is in highlighting the compromises (and sometimes contradictions) that underpin and are contained in this global consensus. Understanding how these differences of starting point, interpretation, and ideology among stakeholders might play out in the deliberations of Habitat III forums is made simpler not only with a better intellectual grasp of the urban issues, but also when the institutional arrangements of nonstate engagement with the UN system are spelled out" (Parnell, 2016, p. 535).

On the other hand, according to Caprotti et al. (2017), the "neo-cybernetic urbanism" promoted by the NUA and SDG 11, an emphasis upon indicators, big data, and smart technologies, may also lead to "pragmatic marginalization" of rights-based approaches to urban development. In this developmental framework, measurable entities are given priority, often at the expense of the lived experiences of the most marginalized populations, whose experiences cannot be easily captured by standardized measures. Moreover, "smart citizenship" fantasies (as evident in the Indian Smart Cities Challenge) create definitions of "smart people" as being digitally literate and having access to digital platforms, thus potentially creating a new digital divide and excluding those without sufficient financial means to use them (Caprotti et al., 2017).

Thus, although the NUA has aspirations for inclusion, the technical and market orientation of it may unintentionally favor vanity or real estate valuations, over the social determinants of inequality, resulting in gentrification and further spatial segregation, rather than authentic social justice.

### 2.4.4. Resource and Capacity Limitations

According to Caprotti et al. (2017), the NUA will likely be difficult to implement due to the 'power fragmentation' amongst local governments. The institutional challenges of power fragmentation have been amplified by the 'scientific-practical gap' (i.e. the gap between what is needed to measure the performance of cities and how cities are managed politically). Business innovation has also been cited as one of the driving forces behind the drive to develop 'standardized city standards'. As such, it is possible that this trend could open up Urban Governance to further levels of business influence and compliance with international trade agreements, as opposed to purely addressing local needs. In the Global South, the constraints of the NUA will be even greater as an expert-defined technocratic-plan oriented approach does not take into consideration the necessary financing and institutional capability to successfully manage rapid urban development. As a result, there is a risk that data-driven governance could sideline the social factors that underpin urban issues in favour of 'expert'-defined metrics and private sector partnerships.(Caprotti et al., 2017).

### 2.4.5. Data and Knowledge Gaps

Caprotti et al. (2017) The authors suggest the "neo-cybernetic urbanism" promoted by both the NUA

and SDG11 represents a way of viewing cities through a lens of measurement, and therefore as entities that can be reduced to data flows. As such, this form of urbanism results in an "epidemiology of the urban", in that the focus on metrics and causal relationships of urban problems can result in a reliance on data at the expense of theoretical considerations. An important challenge still lies in how to disaggregate data so that the specific needs of the urban poor and other issues like localized malnutrition are brought to light. Similarly, when there is a reliance on the "expert" to determine and measure well-being, then there is a potential to replicate the exceptionality of the expert and thus suppress local voices and values in order to accommodate standardized and technocratic indicator frameworks (Caprotti et al., 2017).

Garschagen et al. (2018) point out that although the NUA is a large policy document, the "fuzziness" of its agenda and the lack of a clear hierarchy of objectives pose challenges for guiding decision-makers' actions. They also state that it is reliant on "old methodological tools" and techno-managerial approaches to guide urban development, particularly indicator based management, which has consistently demonstrated limited effectiveness in changing urban development towards sustainable pathways. They further indicate that there is a considerable gap in our current understanding of the risks and hazards that exist at all scales, as the NUA tends to view these risks as discrete managerial problems rather than as integrated, cascading systems. Finally, they point out that the lack of a concrete plan to implement the goals outlined in the NUA and measurable indicators to allow local practitioners to assess their progress or to translate aspirations into actionable policy paths creates additional barriers to achieving the goals articulated in the document (Garschagen et al., 2018).

### 2.4.6. Monitoring and Accountability

“The complex interactions between the SDGs are difficult to map out, but these must be taken into consideration to align the SDGs and the NUA in an effective way” (Caprotti et al., 2017, pp. 371-372). Garschagen et al. (2018), who support this perspective, also emphasized that in addition to lacking a specific action plan, the NUA has limited number of measurable indicators that will allow the 2030 Agenda to be implemented. In particular, the old methods used in this document and the use of a techno-managerial framework, especially indicator-based management, often cannot capture the systemic aspects of urban risk and transition. Since the NUA is based on voluntary reporting and non-binding review process, there are concerns about the "softness" of the objectives of the document and the lack of a hierarchical structure for the objectives of it. Therefore, the lack of a defined monitoring system for NUA will limit the ability of local and national governments to develop from an aspirational vision to a formalized plan for transparency and accountability for sustainable urban development (Garschagen et al., 2018).

Maria Kaika (2017, p. 89) describes the NUA as a tool of “immunology”, because rather than fundamentally solving urban crises, the strategy aims to “vaccinate” citizens and the environment,

making them resilient to future doses of more severe inequality and degradation. Instead of curing urban pathologies, this approach establishes a buffer mechanism that makes the effects of global socio-environmental injustices manageable and bearable. The NUA maintains a methodological path dependence on “old methodological tools” such as indicators from the failed paradigm of “ecological modernization” and techno-managerial solutions such as “smart cities”. Existing accountability mechanisms are dominated by monitoring and management technologies designed to track the SDGs and focus on building institutional consensus. In contrast, Kaika (2017) argues that true social innovation and accountability is only possible by breaking this imposed path dependency. According to the author, practices of disagreement that reveal exactly what and where urgently needs to be addressed function as “living indicators” that reflect the real needs of society, as opposed to rigid institutional indicators (Kaika, 2017).

### 2.5. Republic of Türkiye, The National Report of Implementation of the NUA

This article is about a report issued by MoEU (2021) which assesses and evaluates the implementation and accomplishment of NUA directives in Türkiye. The report is based upon all of the activities, actions, and successes that occurred between 2015 and 2020. This time frame was selected in order to reflect the four year cycle for reporting required by the General Assembly for the assessment of the NUA (MoEU, 2021). In this report, the strategies Türkiye for addressing NUA goals at both the national and regional/local levels are illustrated as part of a comprehensive plan to integrate the goals with those of the international community (MoEU, 2021). Additionally, the report highlights Türkiye’s commitment to engage multiple stakeholders in the assessment process through an open, inclusive and participatory method; including government agencies at the national and regional/local level as well as civil society (MoEU, 2021). Furthermore, the report presents both qualitative and quantitative assessments of success of Türkiye in achieving the goals of sustainable urbanization and human settlement using statistics and case studies. As such, the report illustrates the ways in which Türkiye has developed partnerships and promoted the sharing of urban solutions across different cities and countries, promoting the idea of mutual learning and collaboration with other stakeholders that share similar or comparable SDG indicators (MoEU, 2021). Lastly, the report illustrates several examples of successful urban projects and initiatives in Türkiye and describes the challenges encountered and the ways in which they were addressed. Through these methods, the report demonstrates the transparency and accountability of the implementation of the NUA and how Türkiye contributes to the goals of sustainable urban development (MoEU, 2021).

#### 2.5.1. The SDG Rates of Türkiye

Although investments are made to solve some problems and some programs are implemented (MoD, 2016), overall values may be in decline. This decline is also supported in the presentation with SDGs data, as included in the NUA. Thanks to the SDGs data allowing comparisons between different years

(see Figure 6), it is observed that there is a decline in some values and that data is not available in some data where a decline is expected in Türkiye and also for other countries (Sachs et al., 2024; 2025). This shows that, for example, in the Türkiye's report, although we see many steps implemented for SDG 11, it can be said that these values have a decline in general.


*Figure 6 SDG dashboard and trends of Türkiye in 2024 (Sachs, Lafortune, & Fuller, 2024)*


*Figure 7 SDG dashboard and trends of Türkiye in 2025 (Sachs, Lafortune, & Fuller, 2025)*

### 2.5.2. Millet Gardens in the National Report of Türkiye on the Implementation of the NUA

The purpose of these country final reports, which have been published more than once by different countries, is to positively transform each other's good practices between countries. By publishing the projects they have implemented locally and their details in this report, countries aim both to report the improvements they have made and to achieve a worldwide sustainable development with local practices from other countries in the future. The approximate content template of the report has been determined by the NUA. According to Kurtarır and Ökten (2018), the framework presented at the UN-Habitat meeting contains positive indications regarding the steps that need to be taken for Türkiye's

planning system to achieve an inclusive, fair, and equitable urban goal.

The various chapters are divided under headings according to the topics and SDGs to which they relate. Millet Gardens is mentioned under many different headings in the Türkiye report. However, before mentioning Millet Gardens, there will be quotations from an institution (TOKI) that will be mentioned in the research. For this reason, the NUA's Türkiye report was chosen for this. The headings related to TOKI are as follows: develop systems to reduce the impact of natural and human-made disasters, and integrate housing into urban development plans.

#### 2.5.2.1. The Relation between Accessing Affordable Housing Problems and Millet Gardens

The report part is under the title “Develop systems to reduce the impact of natural and human-made disasters”:

“Established in order to produce social housing and to meet the need for housing financing in Türkiye, the Presidency of Mass Housing Administration (TOKI), constructs high quality new housing and new settlements, along with the accompanying roads, infrastructures, trade centers, parks, social facilities and landscaping arrangements, in order to further strengthen the cities, local administrations and communities. Accordingly, the institution constantly produces new projects and contributes to sustainable urban development. Out of the 853,123 houses, which TOKI started to construct starting from 2003, 743,196 were completed by late September 2019, including the social and technical facilities, and 86% of the houses produced qualified as social housing” (MoEU, 2021, p.81).

The report part is under the title “Integrate housing into urban development plans”:

“Working with Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, TOKI is the institution that is authorized to make land development plans in the slum areas and to ensure that the slum areas are renewed or improved under the applicable legislation. In addition to transformation the slum areas through urban transformation, TOKI practices also include Millet Gardens, recreational areas, city parks, city squares and trade centers” (MoEU, 2021, p.122).

The report part is under the title “Integrate housing into urban development plans”:

“The proportion of the people living in illegal and inadequate housing and slum areas is determined as an indicator. However, it is not possible to gather by such level in Türkiye. The social housing produced on an annual basis under the above-mentioned policies and the estimation for 2023 can be taken as important indicators. $20,802$ social houses were produced in 2018 within this framework. The target figure for 2023 is $270,802$, with the implementation of the policies. TOKI’s target of $500,000$ houses was achieved as of 2011, and a new target is set for another $700,000$ houses by 2023, the goal being to reach total $1,200,000$ houses” (MoEU, 2021, p.122).

#### 2.5.2.2. The Relation between Green Accessibility and Millet Gardens

The headings related to Millet Gardens are as follows: establish slum upgrading programs, minimize urban sprawl and loss of biodiversity, and strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources in urban areas.

The report part is under the title “Establish slum upgrading programmes”:

“Apart from the newly developed green areas that TOKI has built together with the housing areas, it also carries out the transformation of old industrial areas, stadiums, and old large-scale areas into urban parks, namely "Millet Gardens", upon requests from local governments” (MoEU, 2021, p.32).

In the Türkiye report, it was stated that the areas where Millet Gardens were built were run-down areas. As will be shown later in the research, although this is also stated in the Millet Gardens Guide (see Figure 39), the research part (see Figure 37) has shown that there are areas that do not meet this definition.

The report part is under the title “Minimize urban sprawl and loss of biodiversity”:

“It is intended to spread the Millet Gardens throughout 81 cities in order to create healthy living spaces in our cities, to enhance the standards of urban green spaces and the quality of living, and by 2023, Millet Gardens efforts will be completed in a manner to cover an area of 81 million sqm with financing by the MoEU, TOKI, ILBANK, and municipalities. Millet Gardens will be built in 38 cities, with due consideration of the population density and the size of each respective city. The MoEU started efforts on Millet Gardens in 2018 and worked on 32 Millet Gardens in 18 cities. Within the scope of the goal to "spread Millet Gardens in 81 cities" as included in the Strategic Plan (2019-2023), 64 Millet Gardens projects were implemented in 34 cities in 2019; and as of September 2020, total of 269 Millet Gardens covering a surface area of 49,435,645.44 square meters were being implemented in 77 cities. As of late 2020, on the other hand, total of 285 Millet Gardens projects were being implemented on a surface area of 50,846,728.46 square meters in 78 cities” (MoEU, 2021, p. 75).

Although ‘megaproject’ is not used in the NUA, the content of the AKP government's vision of megaprojects is mentioned. In general, the content of Millet Gardens was mentioned, producers were listed and it was stated that it would be produced in all provinces. Even though all these data have been conveyed in detail, it is seen that the targets have not been completed and budget problems (Flyvbjerg, 2014) have emerged from 2021 to the present day. In an agenda that is meant to be an implementation report, there are incomplete targets and incomplete or inaccurate information that does not apply to every park. The lack of a feedback system for the NUA country reports is seen here. It is therefore suggested by the research that an audit mechanism should be in place so that real cross-country, mutual, and reliable learning can take place.

The report parts are under the title “Strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources in

urban areas":

"In order to create healthy living spaces, to increase urban green space standards and quality of life in cities, Millet Gardens will be expanded to 81 provinces, and formation of Millet Gardens in 81 million square meters will be carried out until 2023. Millet Gardens will be built in 38 cities, with due consideration of the population density and the size of each respective city. Efforts on Millet Gardens started in 2018 and works on 32 Millet Gardens in 18 cities have been carried. Within the scope of "spreading Millet Gardens in 81 cities" goal, as included in the Strategic Plan (2019-2023), 64 Millet Gardens projects were implemented in 34 cities in 2019; and as of late 2020, totally 285 Millet Gardens projects were being implemented on a surface area of 50,846,728.46 square meters in 78 cities" (MoEU, 2021, pp.85-86).

"Per capita green space is also directly associated with sustainable management of natural resources in urban areas. With the legal arrangements of year 2017, standard per capita green space in spatial plans is raised from 10m² to 15m². When making such arrangement, a distinction was made in green spaces locally and on urban level; and an approach was adapted to make the green spaces more accessible for the urban population. In order to meet such standard, "Millet Gardens" are created in our country in urban areas. With the Millet Gardens to be opened by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization by 2023, per capita green space will reach 15m² in Türkiye" (MoEU, 2021, pp.86-87).

## Chapter 3. Public Space

### 3.1. Public Space Rhetoric and Reality

According to Qi et al. (2024) in the definition of public space, different emphases such as ownership, functionality, and management stand out. Among the various approaches (see Table 1) presented in this study (Qi et al., 2024), the definition by Madanipour (1996) has been adopted. Madanipour defines public space as a "space that allows all the people to have access to it and the activities within it, which is controlled by a public agency, and which is provided and managed in the public interest". The reason for choosing this approach is that the definition treats public space not merely as a physical setting or a matter of legal ownership, but through an inclusive and holistic perspective that simultaneously addresses functionality, ownership, and management. The emphasis on the management of space for the public interest and its accessibility to everyone aligns directly with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Qi et al. (2024, p. 154) also said that "Public space serves opportunities for everyday engagement, including cultural activities and social interactions."

*Table 1 Definitions of public space and their distinguishing emphases (Qi et al., 2024, p. 158)*

| Reference | Definitions of Public Space | Emphasis (as interpreted by reading the paper) |
|---|---|---|
| Mitchell and Staeheli (2009) | *"Public space is property open to public use. It can be privately or publicly owned."* | Ownership |
| Carr et al. (1993) | *"Public spaces as open, publicly accessible places where people go for group or individual activities."* | Functionality |
| Madanipour (1996) | *"Space that allows all the people to have access to it and the activities within it, which is controlled by a public agency, and which is provided and managed in the public interest."* | Functionality, ownership, and management |
| Low and Smith (2006) | *"Public space is traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behaviour sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use."* | Management, ownership |
| Miller (2007) | *"We tend to think public spaces as having certain essential and obvious characteristics. We believe it is publicly owned, the opposite of private space. We believe it is open and accessible to everyone, where no one can be turned away. We imagine it as the setting for important civic events, where large groups of people come to celebrate, protests, and mourn. We see it as somehow part of democratic life – a place for speaking out and being heard."* | Ownership and functionality |
| Parkinson (2013) | *"Spaces and places can have all, some, or just one of the features that we generally label public and yet therefore still be considered 'public space'."* | Functionality |
| UN-Habitat (2018) | *"All places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without profit motive."* | Ownership |

Ali Madanipour (2019) argues that the discussion about public space has evolved from a critical response to neoliberal urbanism to an orthodoxy accepted by both policymakers and professionals, and by private actors. As part of this evolution, the "rhetoric" of public space as a place of multiple interactions and social-political-cultural activities has increasingly been coopted into projects that work less like common spaces for all people and more as "spaces of attraction" to generate investment, consumption and symbolic value. These changes reflect the larger political, economic and cultural changes in how cities are governed, and thus they create a large chasm between what is said and what actually happens, "reality" (Madanipour, 2019).

Specifically, Madanipour (2021) identifies three key areas of how public spaces may foster inclusion or exclusion: economically, politically, and culturally (see Figure 8). Public spaces now function economically in terms of advancing the interests of real estate developers and increasing the

competitiveness of cities, that is, parks are valued more for their potential to generate income and increase property values than for their contribution to society (Madanipour, 2019; McCord et al., 2014). Politically, the creation and maintenance of public space is increasingly based on entrepreneurial models, the use of private-sector approaches and practices, and public-private partnerships for the creation and delivery of public goods. The increasing adoption of these models erodes the distinction between public and private realms, and reduces public engagement in the development of public spaces (London Assembly, 2011, as cited in Madanipour, 2003). Culturally, while public space has traditionally represented "diversity and pluralism", many urban spaces today are commercialized, standardization landscapes, "cloned towns", that suppress difference rather than allow for it (Madanipour, 2010).

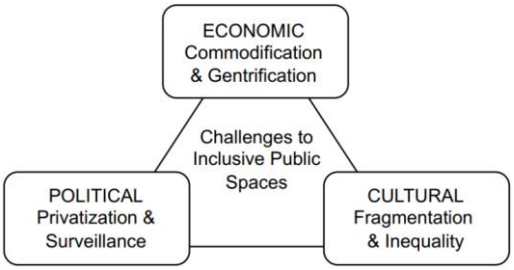



*Figure 8 Challenges to inclusive public spaces (adapted from Madanipour, 2021)*

Madanipour (2021) has argued that the inclusivity of public space can be understood through three interrelated dimensions: economic, political, and cultural (see Figure 9). According to him, social exclusion manifests itself in these three spheres, while public space offers a vital arena for overcoming such exclusion and fostering a more equal society. Economic inclusion entails the fair distribution of public infrastructure and services such as housing and transportation, while also addressing the risks of commodification and green gentrification that often accompany large-scale urban projects. Political inclusion requires that public spaces function as democratic arenas where all individuals can participate equally, voice their concerns, and exercise their freedom of assembly and expression. Cultural inclusion, meanwhile, involves recognizing and embracing diverse identities, narratives, and symbols, resisting homogenization, and safeguarding pluralism. As he notes, “the meaning of space is not fixed; it finds meaning through a continually changing process of designation,” underlining the dynamic and contested nature of public space (Madanipour, 2021).

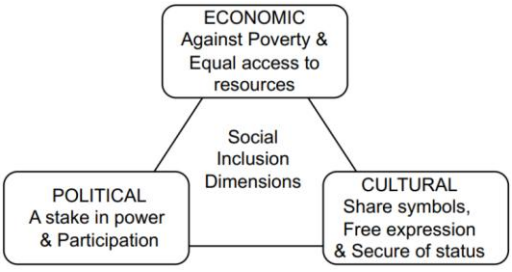



*Figure 9 Social inclusion dimensions (adapted from Madanipour, 2021)*

### 3.2. Gentrification

Since the case study of the research is a park that caused the gentrification process to take place (Pala & Acar, 2024), the researcher sought to provide a broad overview of gentrification. The term "gentrification" was originally defined by Ruth Glass (1964), a British sociologist, and it refers to a type of transition that takes place in low-cost residential areas that are converted to luxury areas based upon initial investment by real estate developers and subsequent migration of wealthier individuals. This transition results in both socio-demographic and physical changes in the neighborhoods involved. “Gentrification is a product of political economic shifts in local and global markets (...)” (Smith, 1996, p. 89), and the impacts of gentrification can be significant; for example, the displacement of long-time residents, who had previously been able to afford housing in the area, and a socially transformative impact on those residents.

#### 3.2.1. Social Transformation & Displacement as a Result of Gentrification

The two most direct outcomes of gentrification are the social transformation of the population, and the displacement of low-income families from their former homes. In addition to the increased costs associated with rents, property taxes, and cost of living in the area due to the influx of higher-priced housing and workplaces, low-income families cannot afford to pay the increasingly high prices for housing in the gentrifying area (Newman & Wyly, 2006). For instance, Newman and Wyly (2006) discuss how rent increases, property tax increases, and increases in the cost of living in the area are directly caused by the increase in the number of higher-priced houses and worksites in the area. Neil Smith (1996) describes social transformation by using data that illustrates the emergence of a new middle class in areas where gentrification is taking place. He (2006) further explains that since this new middle class does not consist of the lower income segments of the working class, that it will cause an “revolution in identity” among its members, and it will also create a new urban experience that is consistent with the social identity of its members. A recent trend is the phenomenon of green gentrification. It introduces a new level of complexity to the gentrification process.

#### 3.2.2. Green Gentrification

In addition to providing many ecological benefits to residents, urban green spaces provide several specific ones, such as health benefits. Studies conducted in recent years have shown that a greater level of access to green space is positively related to the probability of experiencing better physical and mental health, and fewer symptoms of illness. (Triguero-Mas et al., 2015) Green space planning has been at the center of some of the earliest and most well-known "environmental justice" campaigns in the United States. These include Love Canal in 1978 and Warren County in 1982, which focused on environmental pollution and its impact on human health (Anguelovski, 2015). Green space planning also creates a number of problems as it can create uneven social changes and will result in

the displacement of long-time residents, specifically low-income residents (Anguelovski et al., 2017).

Green gentrification can be defined as the creation of green space by public or private investments in the city, resulting in the displacement of existing residents and their replacement by more wealthy, powerful, and educated residents living around the area (Anguelovski, Connolly, & Brand, 2018; Gould & Lewis, 2016; Immergluck & Balan, 2018; Sharifi, Nygaard, Stone, & Levin, 2021, as cited in Pala & Acar, 2024). It occurs when urban greening projects are created and completed in a neighborhood and subsequently increases the property value of homes in that area. Over time, these increases in property values drive up housing costs and eventually force low-income residents to leave their homes and neighborhoods, as they cannot afford to continue living there. As previously stated, similar effects occurred after the redevelopment of London's central business district and after the conversion of an abandoned railroad line in New York City into the High Line Park, where the redevelopment improved the quality of living in the area through the development of green spaces, commercial activity, and overall increased the vibrancy of the area (Littke et al., 2016). Additionally, the redevelopment of the High Line Park gave local residents more recreational opportunities than before, but it also created affordable housing options in the area. Rather than being able to maintain affordable housing options in the area, the redevelopment of the High Line Park increased the rental prices in the area to the point that low-income residents could no longer afford to live in the area, therefore they were displaced from the area. So, middle-income residents then moved into the area, and were essentially replaced by the low-income residents. Therefore, the High Line Park can be viewed as one of the first examples of green space planning that led to the displacement of local or longtime residents.

### 3.2.3. State-led Green Gentrification

The paradox of green gentrification is that environmental enhancements, meant to benefit all city dwellers, end up spiking property values and displacing the very people who need the most green space (Curran & Hamilton, 2012). This process is often led by authorities and implemented through large-scale projects or megaprojects, which further exacerbate the displacement of low-income communities.

State-led gentrification is a type of gentrification that is planned, commanded, or promoted by state agencies at the national, regional, metropolitan, or municipal levels as part of a nationwide or local-level restructuring agenda, with the goal of creating specific urban and land conditions conducive to gentrification (Curran & Hamilton, 2012).

#### 3.2.3.1. Example of Barcelona State-led Green Gentrification with Development for Olympic Games as an Mega Events

The public health imperative, one study estimated that 116 deaths per year would be preventable if Barcelona met minimum established goals for green space access (Mueller, 2016) “Yet, the benefits

of new or restored urban green amenities seem to be unevenly distributed." (Anguelovski et. al. 2017). In 1986, when Barcelona was awarded the 1992 Olympic Games, a new stage of urban redevelopment began (Anguelovski, 2014). Barcelona's public green spaces shifted almost entirely toward the mega event demands of the Olympics (see Figure 10).

*Figure 10 Port Olympic Park (Anguelovski et. al., 2017, p. 465).*

The case study examines how green spaces provided in desirable spaces and others have different rates of green gentrification (see Table 2). For this purpose, socially vulnerable neighborhoods were selected and the creation was addressed in its context, environment, and context with the general built environment.

*Table 2 Green gentrification indicator scores for parks within the study area (Anguelovski et. al., 2017, p.483)*

| Park Name (Year Built) | District | Bachelor's Degree | 65 or Older Living Alone | Global North | Income | Home Sales | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jardins de Sant Pau del Camp (1992) | Ciutat Vella | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Parc de la Barceloneta (1996) | Ciutat Vella | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Jardins Princep de Girona (1995) | Horta-Guinardó | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | **3** |
| Jardins de Rosa de Luxemburg (1999) | Horta-Guinardó | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Parc de Can Dragó (1993) | Nou Barris | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Parc Josep M. Serra i Martí (1994) | Nou Barris | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Parc de Nou Barris (1999) | Nou Barris | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Parc de la Trinitat (1993) | Sant Andreu | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Parc de la Maquinista (2000) | Sant Andreu | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Parc de Sant Martí (1992) | Sant Martí | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Parc del Poblenou (1992) | Sant Martí | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | **4** |
| Parc de Diagonal Mar (2002) | Sant Martí | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | **3** |
| Parc del Port Olimpic[1] (1992) | Sant Martí | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | **4** |

It found that green gentrification was occurring in parks located in former industrial and waterfront areas in the Sant Martí and Ciutat Vella areas or in more desirable neighborhoods, such as the southern district of Horta Guinardó. It found that parks that were smaller in scale and located in highly dense, distressed neighborhoods, such as Raval in Ciutat Vella, or in neighborhoods with semi-obsolete building stock, resulted in less gentrification (see Figure 11) (Anguelovski et. al., 2017).

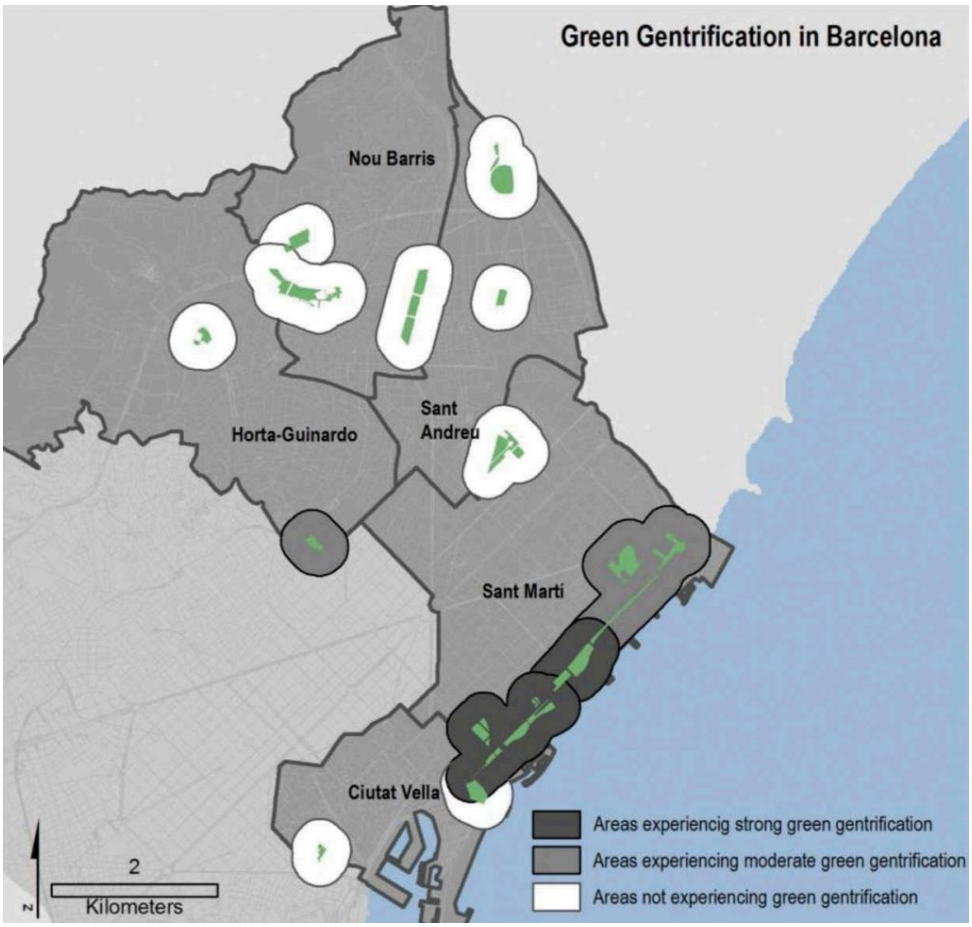



*Figure 11 Green gentrification in Barcelona (Anguelovski et. al., 2017, p. 484).*

### 3.2.3.2. Example of Canada State-led Green Gentrification with Urban Greening

By analyzing Jessica Quinton's article (2024), which explores the various aspects and causes of green gentrification and examines the relationships between urban greening and gentrification through interviews with authorities, we gain insight into policymakers' perspectives and roles. This article studies the cities of Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, investigating the authorities' knowledge of gentrification and the power dynamics among stakeholders, including municipal/regional government employees, environmental NGOs, and conservation authorities. Differences in authority levels limit control over greening locations and their resulting social impacts, mirroring the issues in our case study. The four main themes identified from the interviews are shown in Figure 12.

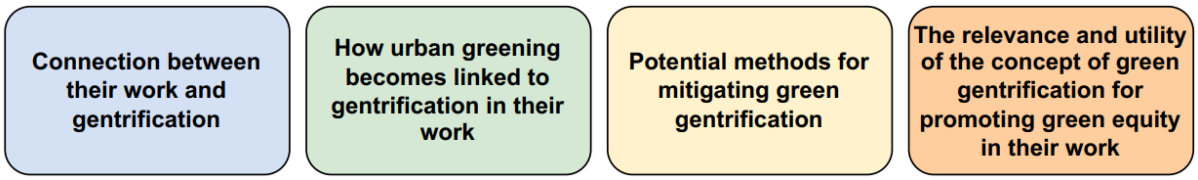



*Figure 12 Main objectives to understand stakeholders' perspectives (Quinton et al., 2024, p. 4).*

The interviews revealed four major themes: what (and who) is driving gentrification; (ii) the close connection between urban greening and development; (iii) a focus on addressing current inequities over limiting future gentrification, (iv) the necessity of collaboration, policy, and community engagement to mitigate adverse outcomes, especially physical displacement. Numerous interrelated sub-themes were identified, emphasizing the need for policy and the limited power felt by interviewees. These themes and sub-themes were confirmed by focus-group participants (Quinton et al., 2024) (see Figure 13).

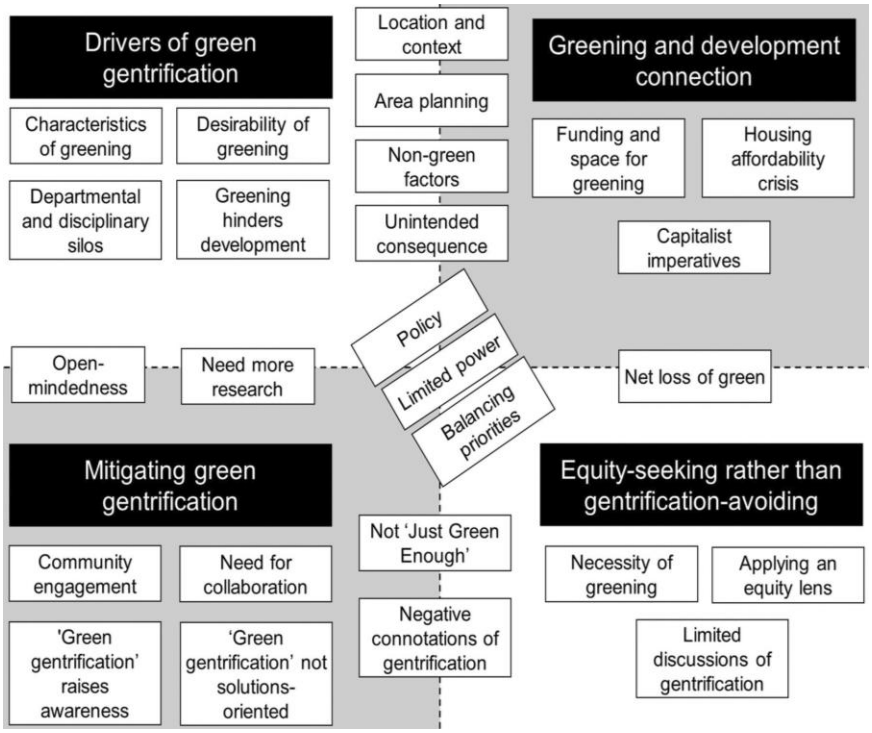



*Figure 13 Major themes (black) and sub-themes/codes were identified through interviews (adapted from Quinton et al., 2024, p. 6)*

To better understand the experience of migrant visitors at the Millet Gardens through an interview process, prior to interviewing migrant visitors regarding their experiences at the megaproject, the researchers analyzed the concept of green gentrification globally and related it to a broader conceptual framework. Two case studies, while not formally defined as megaprojects, were identified due to their convergence toward a state-led form of green gentrification and used as bases of development for the current research project. The first case study (Barcelona) used quantitative methods to examine the impact of green transformations on residents by illustrating the spatial and dimensional differences between residents impacted by those transformations. The second case study (Canada) was used to illustrate the actor based dimensionality of the green gentrification processes in addition to the first case study. As a whole, both cases provide a valuable lens through which to interpret the Turkish context and examine how the preconditions that create such dynamics influence the daily lives of migrant residents in the transformed urban environment.

### 3.3. Megaprojects

While Peter Hall did not use the phrase “megaproject,” in his research, he laid the groundwork for the idea of what we now call a “megaproject,” by defining “large scale public investment” within a very similar definition used today. He studied many pioneering European projects, providing a foundational base for what would eventually be known as megaprojects in his book Great Planning Disasters (1982). Later, Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodríguez (2002; p. 543), conceptualized them as symbolic representations of neoliberal urbanization in post-industrial Europe, and therefore spatial manifestations of the restructuring of neoliberalism, as well as a paradigmatic shift toward entrepreneurial urban governmentality. These projects reflect a change from distributive urban policies toward entrepreneurial forms of governance (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). As part of this new paradigm, city governments transition from being guarantors of social welfare to being facilitators of market-driven growth. In addition, these large-scale public investments are created with public-private partnerships and competitive place-making strategies to attract foreign investment (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez (2002; p. 545), however argue that this new urban policy paradigm creates significant socio-spatial inequality as the benefits of this paradigm are concentrated among elites, while disadvantageous groups are displaced and excluded.

Megaprojects should therefore be concerned with more than just the technical aspects of their design and engineering, but also with the political processes and the power relationships involved in their development. Altshuler and Luberoff (2004), argue that they can function as powerful instruments of political and economic intervention, however, they profoundly alter the urban landscape. Furthermore, Altshuler and Luberoff (2004), stress that unlike traditional approaches to infrastructure planning, megaprojects, involve the large-scale distribution of public funds toward specific urban developments, and are typically accomplished through either “bottom-up” pressures, or “top-down” executive decisions that circumvent the normal democratic processes for urban planning. Therefore, for urban planners, they are not only defined by its physical characteristics, but also by the potential of those characteristics to act as agents of urban transformation and to redefine the relationship between the state, the market, and public spaces.

Megaprojects are defined within the urban planning body of knowledge as more than just size, but also by the complexity of their governance and the systemic risks they present to society. Bent Flyvbjerg, who has been instrumental in the study of megaprojects as the “new political and physical animals” of today’s modern world (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). As such, one of the foundational concepts that Flyvbjerg has added to the megaproject literature is called the “iron law of megaprojects.” This law states that nearly all these projects will fail in at least one way, either by being over budget, taking longer to complete than planned, or doing so repeatedly (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Thus, they do not deliver the public good that was promised by the government(s) that funded them (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Flyvbjerg

(2014, p.6) defines what he means by “megaprojects” as follows: “(...) disease or poverty eradication programs, hospitals, national health or pension ICT systems, national border control, national broadband, the Olympics, large-scale signature architecture, dams, wind farms, offshore oil and gas extraction, aluminum smelters, the development of new aircrafts (...)” are considered to be megaprojects if they exceed $1 billion in cost, take several years to develop, and have major impacts on substantial segments of society.

The research indicates that the reason for the failure of them is not the result of random technical errors as could occur in any project, but are the result of a mechanism that involves social and political processes as well as psychological factors, such as intentionally underestimating costs and intentionally overestimating returns to get a project approved, and "optimism bias" (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2014). From an urban planning standpoint, megaprojects are viewed not only as engineering feats, but as complex and uncertain phenomena with the risk of "survival of the unfittest" in the allocation of urban resources (Flyvbjerg, 2017).

All authors mentioned above (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2017), see megaprojects as both indicators and drivers of neoliberal hegemony (Swyngedouw et al., 2002, p. 565), which serve to strengthen capital accumulation, and simultaneously de-politicize urban decision-making.

The views of these authors, Altshuler and Luberoff (2004); Flyvbjerg (2014; 2017), describe these megaprojects, as both symptoms of and drivers of the neoliberal hegemony (Swyngedouw et al., 2002, p. 565) and as mechanisms for the consolidation of capital accumulation by way of the depoliticization of urban decision-making processes. These authors ultimately argue that they are an example of a post-democratic form of urban condition, where the visible spectacle of progress hides the loss of social justice (Swyngedouw et al., 2002, p. 574) and democratic participation.

Ren and Weinstein (2013) further extend their analysis of megaprojects to the Global South and find that they have become major instruments of neoliberal governance and state restructuring in developing countries. Their study finds that, regardless of political regime type in the Global South, similar forms of spatial organization result from such urban development, e.g., the prioritization of global economic competitiveness at the expense of local well-being and the redefinition of citizenship through exclusionary planning practices (Weinstein & Ren, 2009). In addition, the authors also emphasize that, in the Global South, they act as places of intersection between global capital, national policies, and local policies, which can often exacerbate pre-existing socio-spatial inequalities and place these developments within the uneven geographies of urbanization that exist globally (Weinstein & Ren, 2009).

### 3.3.1. Megaprojects in Türkiye and Millet Gardens

Can (2025) states that with the start of the 1980s, neoliberal economic policies of the Turkish government and the goal of integrating Türkiye further into the world economy provided the foundation for the emergence of the so-called urban growth machine. “Urban politics and construction have been central to its hegemonic project as the making of “new” Türkiye” (Batuman, 2017; Bayırbağ et al., 2023; Çavuşoğlu & Erbatur, 2014; Tansel, 2019; Tuğal, 2023; Yeşilbağ, 2022, as cited in Serdar, 2025, p. 1), to create a new image for Türkiye. In many cases, the real estate and construction sectors fostered gentrification, state-induced removals, forced eviction and increasing class divisions (Can, 2025). The growth of the construction and real estate sectors have become one of the main drivers of both economic growth and urbanization in Istanbul (Can, 2025). These projects, like the third airport, were implemented “as a monumental achievement, an embodiment of the 'new' Türkiye’s economic and technical competence and a symbol for national pride” (Serdar, 2025, p. 1).

The new urban regime in Türkiye, with AKP, pushed for a dedicated and comprehensive policy agenda to market Istanbul as a desirable destination for business as an aspiring global city (Erensü & Karaman 2017, pp. 25-26). The aspirations of developing and marketing Istanbul as a global city transformed urban space into a playground for large-scale infrastructure investments, luxury real estate development, and the production of new spaces of consumption (Ay, 2021). Ay & Demires Ozkul (2021) argue that large-scale urban regeneration projects have reshaped the city's economic and physical landscape with a neoliberal urbanism approach in the last decade in Istanbul, a city with intense socioeconomic and political conflicts. In addition, these urban megaprojects (the Third Bosphorus Bridge (see Figure 14), the Third Airport, and Kanal Istanbul projects) of the AKP government were also expected to cause great environmental damage (Erensü & Karaman 2017, p. 27). So these multibillion-dollar investments in Istanbul's built environment are developed, delivered, and funded internationally through loans and credits as complex ventures (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003, as cited in Ay & Demires Ozkul, 2021).

*Figure 14 Istanbul’s Third Bosphorus Bridge and connecting roads under construction, April 2015 (photo by Ayşe Adanalı, as cited in Erensü & Karaman, 2017, p.25)*

This research examines the various protests of citizens that have emerged in Türkiye through the AKP government's megaproject visions as described in Ayşegül Can (2025). It views the Gezi Protests as a legacy of collective action in Türkiye, as will be examined in the next part of the research, and examines the link with urban regeneration spaces across Türkiye through the Millet Gardens megaproject vision. It examines the distinct character of these parks and their impact on migrants' everyday life. In this context, Can's (2025) perspective on this issue is as follows:

“Tilly (1986, p. 176) defines this as ‘repertoires of collective action’, which is an ‘accumulated experience that alters continuously as a result of previous action’. (...) In this regard, following the footsteps of Halvorsen (2015, p. 404) and Ozduzen (2019), the activism and tactics of resistance I analyse in this study are informed by the previous social unrests (particularly Gezi Park Protests) and signpost a continuous series of everyday practices that facilitate the transformation toward post-capitalist futures.” (Can, 2025, p. 415). Thus, it is possible to see today's social movements in response to megaprojects as responses with a legacy of freedom from the Gezi period.

According to the Environmental Impact Report of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (2017), the canal was set to be 45 kilometres long (Can, 2022, as cited in Can, 2025). In her research, Can (2025) describes the Canal Istanbul project (see Figure 15) as a new (dis)utopian megaproject of the AKP government. She describes it as a project that involves the destruction of Istanbul, and is “a form of (slow) violence on the present and future well-being and livelihoods of Istanbulites” (Can, 2025, p. 415).

*Figure 15 The planned route of Kanal Istanbul (adapted by Can, 2025 from Environmental Impact Report, 2017)*

“The resistance against Kanal Istanbul can be seen as a continuation and another moment of resistance after Gezi, not least because it is organised with the experiences and knowledge under the umbrella of the ‘Gezi spirit’” (Can, 2025, p. 424) (see Figure 16). The main areas of intervention from which this resistance emerges include housing struggles, dispossession, displacement, large-scale urban transformations, and gentrification.


*Figure 16 The impromptu protest in the centre of Istanbul (Can, 2025, p. 432)*

According to Tuğal (2023, as cited in Serdar, 2025), the AKP’s megaprojects function as politically charged instruments of state-led economic expansion, designed to generate employment opportunities and maintain public support. According to Atak Çobanoğlu (2023), the Millet Gardens project, which was initiated as a state project with the transition to the “Presidential System” in Türkiye, was included in the open spaces and necessary amendments were made to the legislation in 2019. These open spaces are carbon sink centers, free of charge to the public and can be used as gathering areas in times of disaster, supporting family-based social structures and strengthening these activities of low- and middle-income families (Atak Çobanoğlu, 2023). Due to this strong connection between today's megaprojects and the Gezi Protests, the next stage of the research examines the socio-political developments during this period and the connection of these events with Millet Gardens, which was selected as a case study.

## Chapter 4. Research on Case Study: Esenler 15 July Millet Garden as a case study in Istanbul, Türkiye

### 4.1. Example of Türkiye State-led Green Gentrification with Development of Millet Gardens as a Megaproject

#### 4.1.1. Historical Value and Background of Millet Gardens

Although the construction of the Millet Gardens started 8 years ago (2018) with vision of AKP government, the first park with this name actually dates back to the Ottoman period (see Figure 17). The first Millet Garden was designed by the Ottoman sultan in 1870 in the Pre-Republican period in Taksim, the city center, with a team of Germans and French, adopting the principles of fine arts. This information is important for three reasons: the first is the ideological line that the president of Türkiye takes as an example and embraces the Ottoman Empire (see Figure 18) (İncekaş, 2021). The second is that only 5 years before the production of the first Millet Garden (see Figure 19), the president of Türkiye offered to demolish the historical park in Taksim and replace it with a shopping mall, but was unable to do so due to protests (see Figure 25) (İncekaş, 2021). Finally, in contrast to the historical example, the new Millet Gardens focus more on housing development than on the quality of green space in collaboration with the TOKI. These Millet Gardens projects do not include dimensions and uses appropriate to the character of the area and host ideological uses.

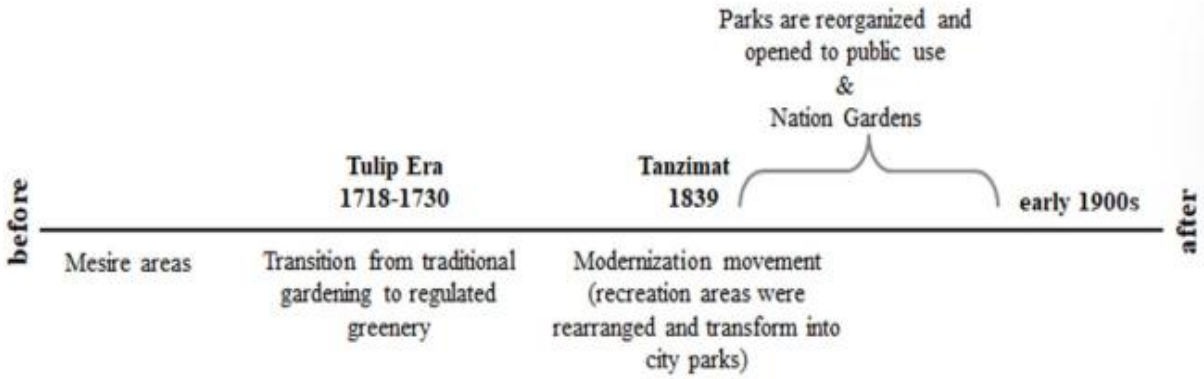



*Figure 17 Historical development of urban green spaces in the Ottoman Period (İncekaş, 2021, p. 51)*

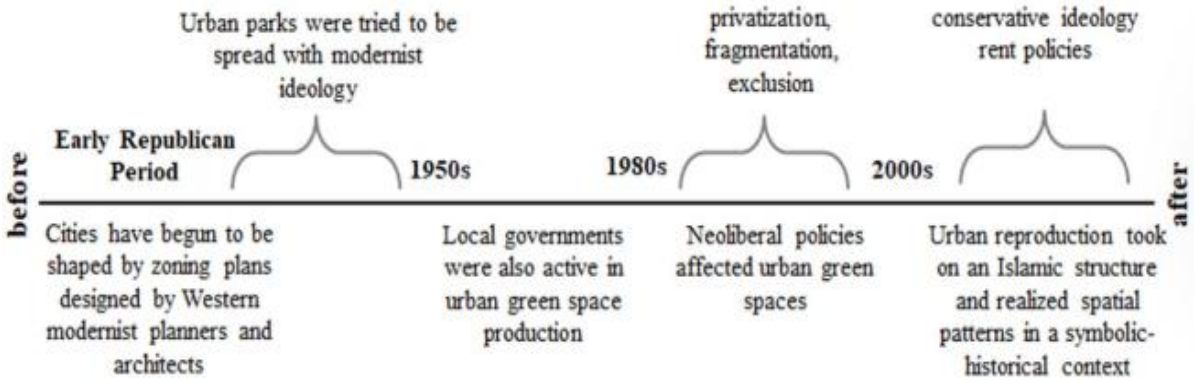



*Figure 18 Historical development of urban green spaces in the Republican Period (İncekaş, 2021, p.56)*

“To Çelik, the construction of the Taksim Millet Garden, the first of its kind in the capital of Ottoman, was completed in 1869 after a five-year period. It describes a rectangular garden with arrangements in accordance with the stylistic Beaux-arts principles in its center and more flexible picturesque forms on the edges” (Çelik, 1998, p. 57, as cited in İncekaş, 2021, p. 57) (see Figure 19).

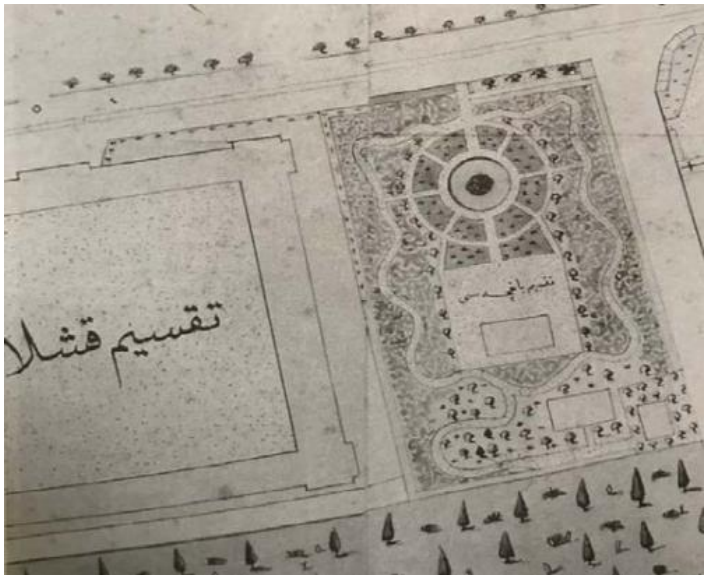


*Figure 19 The Taksim Millet Garden, and Taksim Artillery Barracks located to the left (Çelik, 1998, as cited in İncekaş, 2021, p. 58)*

The article “Istanbul's Taksim Square and Gezi Park: the place of protest and the ideology of place” by Murat Gül, John Dee, and Cahide Nur Cünük (2014) is excerpted to provide a chronological framework. It reveals how the regeneration of a public space and the ideological traces behind it paved the way for the Taksim Gezi protests. In the context drawn by these academics, the AKP's mentality in urban regeneration and placemaking in Türkiye can be clearly seen. The rest of this research will revisit the AKP's projects in the transformation of Millet Gardens.

“While the monument made Taksim Square one of the most important public places in modern Türkiye, Kemalist recognition of Istanbul had to wait for many years. This finally came with the appointment of Henri Prost, a French urban designer, as the Chief Planner for Istanbul in the mid-1930s. Prost prepared a master plan for the city in 1939 and stayed in his position until 1950 (Gül, 2012). (…) The first major project in Taksim by Prost was the demolition of the Artillery Barracks (see Figure 20) to create a public promenade (see Figure 21). In the 1930s, the derelict barracks and their huge courtyard were used as a football field, which eventually made way for the construction of a modern park and promenade named after Ismet Inonu, who became the president of Türkiye on Atatürk’s death in 1938” (Gül et al., 2014, p. 65).

*Figure 20 Artillery Barracks in Taksim in the 1930s. (Reproduced from Guzellesen Istanbul, IMM, 1943, as cited in Gül et al., 2014, p. 65)*

"Inonu Gezisi (Inonu Promenade) occupied an area of 62,000 sqm and represented a truly modern western style park with tree-lined walking routes, grassed areas, seating benches and kiosks for recitals of the Municipality's Philharmonic Orchestra (Gül, 2012). (…) Taksim, therefore, became the most important urban space in Istanbul for official celebrations and the display of Republican urban planning principles" (Gül et al., 2014, p. 66).


*Figure 21 Aerial photo of Taksim Square and Gezi Park before the pedestrianisation project in 2002 (Gül et al., 2014, p. 66)*

“The general elections of 2002 brought to power the social-conservative AKP led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the former mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998. (…) This, in effect, brought an end to the political hegemony of Kemalist ideology, representing a radical shift in power relations that impacted Istanbul’s urban expansion, particularly in Taksim. (…) The reconstruction of the former Artillery Barracks (see Figure 20) demolished in the early 1940s to create Inonu Promenade known as Gezi Park, was a major part of the project and required the removal of many mature trees and green areas. (…) The government also wanted to demolish the AKM (see Figure 21) and construct a new opera house in the ‘baroque’ style, which recalled the relevance of Roman Jakobson’s semiotic mode in relation to understanding aesthetic representation” (Gül et al., 2014, p. 67)

*Figure 22 An illustration of the Taksim pedestrianisation project by Istanbul Municipality (Gül et al., 2014, p. 67)*

Historically, neo-Ottomanism has roots in Turkish politics extending before the AKP government (Ghulyan, 2019). A large-scale manifestation of neo-Ottomanism in contemporary Türkiye can be seen in expansionist policies and dominant state policies with specific religious characteristics (Batuman, 2022). Examples include megaprojects by the AKP government. The Millet Gardens are an example. The Millet Gardens megaproject shares many characteristics with previous regime the in terms of both size and naming, but also in the motifs and propaganda tools included in the spatial design of those gardens, as will be demonstrated in photographs in the research. As shown in Figure 19, while the first garden was demolished in 2013, the idea has been embraced by the government, blended into neo-Ottomanism, and is still being implemented by the government. However, it becomes apparent that the final product was designed with opposing characteristics to the old Ottoman concept. When the term "millet" was used in the past, it was to describe the unity of different cultures (i.e., Muslims and non-Muslims) (Çelik, 2018), whereas it is currently referring to the political character of the central government of the Republic of Türkiye, i.e., neo-Ottomanism. Additionally, as shown in Şenyurt (2018, p. 152), the artificial areas within the parks were primarily comprised of cultural and important public buildings. Currently, however, they contain a significant amount of religious structures and uses.

#### 4.1.2. Taksim Gezi Park Protests in 2013 in Istanbul, Türkiye

“The Gezi Protest was established as a response to the radical urban restructuring initiatives and the privatisation of urban space” (Kuymulu 2013, as cited in Can, 2025). According to Kuymulu (2014, p. 23), it was a modest “occupy style" sit-down protest, involving about 25 people in early May of 2013, protesting the building of a shopping mall on top of a public park, which led to the outbreak of the social unrest that would develop into an unprecedented wave of demonstrations. Following the use of extreme force by the police against the protesters and the governments labeling them as a group of rioters, city centers were transformed into a massive scale social rebellion involving millions of Turkish citizens (Kuymulu, 2014, p. 23). A new form of mass spontaneous social mobilization began in Istanbul with the intent to protect a public park from being demolished by the government, and this mobilization has come to be known as the Gezi protests. “Analyzing the path of this social mobilization flowing from Gezi Park to larger geographical scales of the urban, the national, and beyond, this article situates the urban uprisings in Türkiye in the conceptual background of the right to the city, coined by Lefebvre (...)” (Kuymulu, 2013, p. 274).

According to Cihanger & Büyükcivelek (2017), the Gezi Movement in Türkiye in May 2013 and its subsequent actions represented a direct example of the desire for rights in the city, and the profit-driven urban transformation process in Türkiye generated a significant amount of social opposition seeking an alternative and just way to produce urban space. Although there are many accumulated economic and political reasons for the emergence of this movement, the Gezi Movement has a dominant social character and a common demand for social inclusion.

Ay & Miraftab (2016) describe how, when citizens are ignored or excluded from formal and institutionalized participation processes in cities, citizens will create their own "invented spaces" (Miraftab, 2004) for participation. Ay & Miraftab (2016) define these invented spaces as informal, self-organized spaces where citizens and communities can reclaim the ability to shape urban space and reaffirm their identity and sense of belonging in the city. Through the use of invented spaces for participation, participation can take on a creative and rebellious nature; citizens may begin to create new alternatives to formal participation processes and to ways of making decisions that exclude them (see Figure 23). These practices also function as a form of collective resistance, and transform participation into a mechanism for reclaiming the physical and symbolic ownership of the city (Ay & Miraftab, 2016).

*Figure 23 "Protestors set up tents where bulldozers previously entered the park to block the next attempt. Image by Nazim Serhat Firat" (Kuymulu, 2014, p. 149)*

The authors Ay & Miraftab (2016), discuss how, even though residents in Istanbul are officially recognized as having the right to reside within the city boundaries under current neoliberal urbanism, they are still continually denied this right by the relationships between state entities and private developers who use the power of capital to remove long term residents and the public spaces where those residents can carry out their daily activities as part of their urban living experience. The removal of residents, because of these urban changes, is referred to as modernization and development; however, it is these same changes that limit the rights of residents to utilize the urban space to live, interact, and travel through. Therefore, the authors conclude that the fight for the right to the city in the case of Istanbul, is not simply a political/legal battle to gain the right to be within the city limits, but rather an attempt to defend the forms of spatial practice that allow individuals to live together, meet one another, and travel through the city (Ay & Miraftab, 2016).

When the Taksim protests occurred, the phrase the "right to the city," was widely adopted and displayed as a rally point throughout the protests in Turkish (see Figure 24) and used by multiple protest groups. While the phrase was utilized to express outrage over the planned destruction of Gezi Park, the phrase represented a much broader call for democratic access to urban space and decision-making processes. As noted by Kuymulu (2014), while there was a great deal of diversity among the protesters, there was a common right to the city agenda and therefore a commonality among all of the diverse social actors involved in the protest to protect the public park. By utilizing the phrase the right to the city, the protesters could convey their collective dissatisfaction with the neoliberal transformation of the city and the exclusionary policies of the central government. "This classed language, that defines the problem as capital, indicates that the park activists viewed their struggle as a struggle for the right to the city as defined in Lefebvre's concept" (see Figure 24)(Kuymulu, 2014).


*Figure 24 "The graffiti reads "Claim your right to the city..." The photograph was taken by Esen Kara a few streets away from Taksim Square on 1 June 2013, the day Taksim Square was claimed by the protestors "(Kuymulu, 2014, p. 153)*

The trajectory of social mobilization from Gezi Park to broader geographical scales (the urban, national, and beyond) is analyzed by Mehmet Barış Kuymulu (2013) (see Figure 25). Kuymulu (2013) frames the Gezi Park protests through the lens of the right to the city, as originally articulated by Lefebvre in 1968 (see Figure 24).

*Figure 25 "The banner mocks the authoritarian tendencies of PM Erdogan referring to him as the 'Sultan', the absolute Ottoman monarch. It reads, "Even if the absolute authority belongs to the Sultan, the parks still belong to us!" This is an adaptation of famous proverb from the Ottoman times that has "the mountains" instead of "the parks" in the original, which refers to the widespread guerilla activity at the time. Image by Mehmet Baris Kuymulu" (Kuymulu, 2014, p. 165)*

"The right to the city claim of the uprising and the novel social, economic and political experiment that unfolded in public parks of urban Türkiye embodies the seeds of a politics of value, that is, a politics of establishing the critical nexus between use value and value, by appropriating space in production through autonomous channels of transformative participation" (Kuymulu, 2014). The Gezi movement originated from a series of actions taken by organized civil society as well as concerned citizens organized into such groups; these actions were further developed into a greater collective network of solidarity, first as Taksim Gezi Commune and later as Taksim Solidarity (Ay & Miraftab, 2016). The solidarity movement initiated and developed by the aforementioned civil society group, as well as its expansion and strengthening through the involvement of political parties, labor unions, and environmental organizations, generated an impact on other urban centers in Türkiye (see Figure 26).


*Figure 26 "The image by Saygun Gokariksel shows Atuturk Kultur Merkezi at Taksim Square completely appropriated by protestors and covered with flags and slogans of Leftist factions" (Kuymulu, 2014, p. 196)*

#### 4.1.2.1. Alternative Transformative Participation in Türkiye

The true significance of the Gezi movement, according to Erensü and Karaman (2017, p. 36), lies not merely in its brief disruption of the existing order, but in its ability to reveal alternative modes of living and spatial production, "providing real channels for participating in the production of space" with direct and visible outcomes. The notion of "life space, as a spatial political imaginary" played a vital role in framing political demands around shared urban and rural commons, spaces of livelihood, and "the real possibility of another life." This concept also enabled new connections among previously divided political movements and ultimately contributed to "the widespread de-localization of Gezi" across both rural and urban contexts (Erensü & Karaman, 2017, p. 36). Activists employ strategic spatial activities and place-based tactics to resist exclusionary, aggressively market-based urban development projects, as during the Gezi Occupy movement in Taksim (Ay & Miraftab, 2016).

In terms of understanding how people are engaged in the struggle for "the right to the city," Kuymulu (2014) considers participation at two different levels: "reproductive participation and transformative participation". Reproductive participation refers to the engagement of city-dwellers in current governance mechanisms in cities; however, the processes involved do not result in anything other than continuing with the reproduction of the current social and spatial structure of society. As such, this form of participation has limited potential for creating positive social change. Even though individuals or groups engage in the governance of cities, this form of participation maintains the status quo of the systems involved, and does not alter the operational functions of the systems themselves. On the other hand, transformative participation involves residents engaging in the creation of new social and spatial needs, while actively participating in the creation of those new needs. In this regard,

transformative participation is viewed by Kuymulu not only as a political process, but also as a mechanism through which social transformations occur as well as through the production of space. As such, transformative participation represents a transition from "consumption" based appropriation to "production" based appropriation (Kuymulu, 2014).

Kuymulu (2014) states that, however, in the case of Türkiye, especially with respect to the Gezi Movement, this type of transformation did not occur to the extent of "massive transformative participation". In other words, while the movement resulted in a significant degree of spatial ownership in the short-term, it could not transform this spatial ownership into sustainable, and organized forms of political action. Based on the analysis, the inability of the Gezi Movement to achieve transformative participation represented the "Achilles heel" of the political potential of the movement. Thus, transformative participation represents a form of democratic participation for Kuymulu, as well as a form of political mobilization that can enable the reconstruction of urban life and relations of production (Kuymulu, 2014). He also said that “Only the long-term sustained political organizing and activism might lead the way to producing new needs, new urban spaces, new urbanism, and revolutionary cities that the notion of the right to the city I attempted to establish here promises” (Kuymulu, 2014).

In the article about the Millet Gardens and Gezi Park in Taksim, Erensü et al. (2022) said that, “(...) one of the major criticisms of urban opposition in Türkiye in the past decade has been the lack of participation in urban governance, and the environmental legacy of the Gezi protests still motivates and inspires the opposition. The new municipal cadres now include Gezi veterans alongside experts, activists, and academics who have been active in urban-environmental opposition in Istanbul for the last two decades”. So, as can be understood, it can be said that there is a struggle for the right to the city that has been carried over from the Gezi Movement to the present day, and this focus also exists for urban public green spaces.

#### 4.1.2.2. Participation in Millet Gardens

The case study of the Millet Garden is analyzed by Küçükyazıcı et al. (2022), "University as an Actor in the Participatory Design Implementation of Bahcelievler Millet Garden: An Evaluation through the Ladder of Participation" in terms of the level of participation, which was implemented by means of Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation" model. This study was carried out in cooperation with the Istanbul Kultur University Department of Architecture and the Bahcelievler Municipality. The university was presented as a neutral actor in this process, whereas, the stakeholders were the municipality, the park users and the students. Even though the planned participatory design process included surveying, joint workshops, exhibitions, and voting, it was not possible for all these practices to take place in reality due to the hesitations of the local government and the COVID-19 pandemic. User surveys showed that the public wanted to get involved in the design process of the park but did not have the ability to do

so because they lacked information. Therefore, the Bahcelievler Millet Garden process took place between non-participation and tokenism. In addition, the authors emphasize that universities can act as a “neutral mediator”, which can take part in participatory design processes in Türkiye, but they also state that the hesitations of local governments regarding participation are the most significant obstacles to the realization of true participation (Küçükyazıcı et al., 2022).

## Chapter 5. Methodology

This research aims to examine how migrants engage with and experience a large-scale urban park in their everyday life; how the planning and design processes of such megaprojects relate to migrants' perceptions of accessibility and inclusion; and to what extent the planning and governance arrangements of the projects enable or constrain the inclusive use of these spaces by migrant communities and for all.

A field study was conducted to examine the everyday practices of migrants in the public space. In this context, urban parks frequently used by migrants were selected to analyze the relationship between public space and migrants and to determine how migrants' perceptions and uses of public space are shaped by the spatial characteristics of the physical environment in which they live. Within the methodological framework, evaluations were conducted using parameters designed to measure spatial perception and behavior. The findings are expected to contribute to fostering harmonious coexistence among diverse social groups and to enabling users to come together on equal terms. On the other hand, it will enable social diversity to be considered in urban landscape design and planning.

### 5.1. Research Design

This research is structured around the four main components: policy analysis, a case study, a systematic spatial observation, and an interview.

#### 5.1.1. Policy Analysis

To understand how state-led megaprojects are conceptualized and implemented in Türkiye, this study conducts a policy analysis of the national planning framework that enables and legitimizes large-scale urban interventions, such as the centrally coordinated Millet Gardens projects. It examines how Türkiye positions itself within international urban policy frameworks, particularly through its engagement with global urban development agendas such as the NUA. By analysing national reports submitted to the UN and domestic policy documents, the study seeks to identify the extent to which global discourses on inclusivity, sustainability, and participatory planning are incorporated, translated, or selectively mobilised within Türkiye's highly centralised planning system. It provides the foundation for understanding the institutional logics shaping megaproject implementation and sets the context for the empirical investigation of migrant everyday experiences in the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. The policy framework analysis is presented in Annex 1 at the end (see Table 9 & Table 10).

#### 5.1.2. Case Studies

As the subject of this study, one of Türkiye's major megaprojects of the last two decades, Millet Gardens, was selected. Based on Pala and Acar's (2024) article, a specific Millet Garden identified by as experiencing the highest level of gentrification was chosen. Given that the planned neighborhood

has been completed and residents have begun moving into their new homes, it is expected that gentrification will continue and intensify here relative to other areas. With this preliminary assumption, the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden was selected as the case study. As part of the fieldwork, surveys were administered to visitors to the park.

### 5.1.3. Systematic Spatial Observation

It was adopted as a qualitative technique to analyze the interaction between the physical environment and user behavior within the selected case study area. This method involves the methodical recording of spatial elements to gain an in-depth understanding of the public space. Its primary purpose was to move beyond official planning documentation by providing empirical data on how the space is actively utilized by different user groups.

### 5.1.4. Interview

The interview utilizes a mixed-methods approach. The structured components comprise a fixed set of questions primarily used to record personal and demographic information. These questions are generally closed-ended (e.g., yes/no or multiple-choice), which makes the interview process easier to complete and ensures quick, straightforward responses from the interviewees. This structured component enables the efficient collection of standardized data. The semi-structured components consist of open-ended sections that allow to collect detailed narratives.

This technique efficiently meets the research's need to both identify general trends using standardized data from a broad range of users and to gather rich, contextual, and in-depth qualitative narratives about users' complex experiences.

## 5.2. Data Collection

Data collection has been managed using four methodologies: desk research, case study selection, photographic fieldwork, and structured and semi-structured interviews.

### 5.2.1. Desk Research for Policy Analysis

The comprehensive desk research served as the foundation for establishing the policy context relevant to the current investigation. It focused on the systematic collection and review of secondary data sources, which included official government documentation, legislative frameworks, and national strategies. The review of the collected documents served two primary objectives: mapping the historical trajectory and the current regulatory framework governing the policy under investigation, and identifying the official policy goals and the specific roles of key institutional actors as articulated in public reports. This analysis provides the contextual background against which the findings from the subsequent primary data collection (e.g., case study and interview) are interpreted.

### 5.2.2. Case Study Selection

The case study for the present research was selected from a published article to align directly with the literature review and to focus specifically on the theme of gentrification. This selection utilized a previous study conducted by Pala and Acar (2024), which assessed various parks in Istanbul with respect to their gentrification dynamics. The appropriate case study was identified through a focused selection process among the parks analyzed in the study.

### 5.2.3. Photographic Fieldwork

This method was employed to analyse the spatial organisation, accessibility patterns, and everyday practices within the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. It was conducted, enabling the researcher to identify temporal variations in park use, mobility patterns, and migrant engagement with the public space across the day (morning and evening) and on weekdays and weekends.

It was used as a complementary tool to record spatial conditions, user activities, circulation flows, and areas perceived as having limited accessibility. The photographs were systematically categorised according to thematic criteria to support the interpretation of qualitative interview data and to illustrate the contrast between official planning narratives and the lived experiences of migrant communities.

### 5.2.4. Structured and Semi-structured Interviews

In the study, individual interviews were conducted with all participants at the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. Open-ended interviews were recorded via voice record, QR codes, or printed interview documents. Given the variety of languages spoken by the interviewees, they used their smartphones to translate the questions and their answers into their preferred languages before translation into English. Secondary data were used to provide background information for the case study and to understand the participants' perspectives, as presented in the literature review.

Given the inherent power dynamics between researcher and participants, particularly migrants, care was taken to create a safe and inclusive environment in which participants felt comfortable expressing themselves freely.

The combination of structured and semi-structured interviews was chosen to balance consistency across participants with the flexibility to explore context-specific insights. While structured questions ensured comparability, open-ended components allowed participants to elaborate on their lived experiences in their own terms.

Participants were selected through theoretical sampling, yielding a sample comprising individuals with diverse attitudes toward the urban park. Although the theoretical sample is not numerically representative, it encompasses a wide variety of views and values. In the sampling process,

participants are included as long as their responses extend the defined range of views and values. The process is terminated when no further views on the topic are obtainable, or when only a few remain. further views related to the topic can be obtained, or when only a few remain

In this process, interviews were conducted with park visitors in December 2025 and January 2026. This study examined 25 interviewees mostly from Syria, Iran, and Libya (see Table 3). Their ages ranged from 15 to 70. Interviewees came from various professions (students, city planners, teachers, real estate managers, retailers, and babysitters) and had diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from no formal education to doctoral studies. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviewees who had visited the park at least twice before were selected for analysis. The interviewer was Turkish and had lived in Türkiye for over 25 years. Interviewees were identified by numbers (see Table 11) to preserve anonymity and to enable quotation in the research sections.

*Table 3 Main characteristics of the interviewees of the research*

| Characteristics | Category | Number of Interviewee | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 14 | 56 |
| | Male | 11 | 44 |
| Age | 15-25 | 5 | 20.8 |
| | 26-35 | 7 | 29.2 |
| | 36-45 | 8 | 33.3 |
| | 46-60 | 3 | 12.5 |
| | More than 60 | 1 | 4.2 |
| How long has been living in İstanbul | Less than 1 | 4 | 16 |
| | Between 1-3 | 4 | 16 |
| | Between 4-5 | 9 | 36 |
| | Between 6-10 | 4 | 16 |
| | 11 and more | 4 | 16 |

| Characteristics | Category | Number of Interviewee | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nationality | Syria | 5 | 20 |
| | Iran | 4 | 16 |
| | Libya | 3 | 12 |
| | Palestine | 2 | 8 |
| | Russia | 2 | 8 |
| | Ukraine | 2 | 8 |
| | Yemen | 2 | 8 |
| | Lebanon | 1 | 4 |
| | Morocco | 1 | 4 |
| | Tunusia | 1 | 4 |
| | Turkmenistan | 1 | 4 |
| | Uzbekistan | 1 | 4 |

Interviews were either recorded on audio or taken as notes for transcription; they were then manually listened to repeatedly and used to inform the authors' own words and perceptions of the participants. To provide clear insights for the analysis of the interviews.

The consent form, signed by interviewees, is provided in Annex 2 at the end of the document (see Table 11). The main characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Annex 3 at the end of the document. The questions are provided in Annex 4 at the end of the document.

To conclude, the ideas and comments of the participants under each central theme were analysed and provided a connection and conclusion of the main themes and topics discussed in the rest of the research.

### 5.3. Data Analysis

To interpret the diverse forms of data collected, this study employed various analytical methods.

#### 5.3.1. Content Analysis

The national policy documents, legislative frameworks, strategic and international reports were used which enabled the systematic examination of textual material to identify recurring themes, and policy

orientations embedded within Türkiye's planning discourse. This method involved categorizing documents and coding textual segments based on their relevance to the research questions. Through analysis, the study identified how key concepts were expressed, how frequently they occurred, and the coherence or contradictions across different policy sources. This strategy provided a structured basis for understanding the transformation of frameworks and their alignment with or divergence from global agendas. The results informed the interpretation of discourse findings and helped establish the institutional and regulatory context within which the Millet Garden project was developed and operationalised.

*Table 4 Coding themes for the analysis*

| # | Main Theme | Sub-theme | Subtopic |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Community Planning | Decision-making | Participation |
| | | | Decentralization |
| | | | Community |
| | | | Migrants |
| | | | Local Action |
| | | Rights | The right to the city |
| | | | Human rights |
| | | | Adequate Housing |
| | | | Ownership |
| 2 | Environmental Planning | Public Green Spaces | Parks |
| | | | Green |
| | | | Garden |
| | | | Millet (Nation) Garden |
| | | Management | Security |
| | | | Monitoring |
| | | | Privatization |
| | | Spatial Justice | Sustainability |
| | | | Inclusion |
| | | | Accessibility |

### 5.3.2. Discourse Analysis

This analytical approach focused on identifying how key concepts such as inclusion, sustainability, publicness, and participation are mobilised within national frameworks and government reports. Particular attention was paid to how these discourses frame migrants, describe urban transformation, and legitimise state-led interventions through visionary claims. The study aimed to uncover discrepancies between the official rhetoric of inclusive urbanism and the everyday spatial realities observed by analysing both explicit statements and implicit assumptions embedded in the texts. Findings from the analysis provided a critical contextual basis for interpreting empirical data and explained how state narratives and power dynamics influence the planning and management of urban megaprojects.

### 5.3.3. Visual Content Analysis

Each photograph was coded according to predefined thematic categories to examine materials, identify spatial patterns, user behaviours, and contextual features of the physical environment. This allowed the visual data to be interpreted not only as descriptive records but as analytical evidence revealing how visitors interact with the park space. It enabled a deeper understanding of discrepancies between planning narratives and lived spatial realities.

### 5.3.4. Coding Analysis on Interviews

The semi-structured interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). It enables the systematic identification, organisation, and interpretation of patterns of meaning within qualitative data, while retaining the depth and complexity of visitors' narratives. The analysis began with the interview transcripts to note initial insights. Open coding was applied to segment them into meaningful units, which were then grouped into categories based on similarities. The codes formed the basis for preliminary themes that captured recurring ideas related to migrants' perceptions, spatial practices, and experiences of inclusion within the park. It allowed contributing to a deeper understanding of how different factors shape everyday practices in the park.

## 5.4. Scope and Limitations

### 5.4.1. Research and Data Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of the research is the high diversity of participants. Due to time constraints in recruiting such a large number of participants with a sufficiently narrow range of personalities, no selection process was applied among the interviewees. No restrictions were imposed on the basis of education, profession, age, gender, or other characteristics. The only criterion was non-citizenship of the country in which the park is located. For the other criteria, care was taken to maintain diversity. Research conducted through a longer analysis and interview process, guided by criteria such as comparisons between Turkish and Syrian groups, highly skilled migrants, or women migrants, can yield more certain and reliable results and evaluations of cause-and-effect relationships.

An important circumstantial factor is that the face-to-face interviews were conducted in December and January, months that are colder and wetter than other months in Türkiye. Therefore, interviews were conducted with individuals who preferred to visit the park during these weather conditions. Weather conditions significantly affect the experience of public spaces. To address this deficiency, interviews were conducted with individuals who had visited the park multiple times and at different times. Surveys were not administered to first-time visitors or to those who had visited the park within the last month.

### 5.4.2. Positionality and Biases

As a Turkish researcher, I shaped the study's framework in light of my academic background and enriched it through an extensive literature review and the incorporation of diverse perspectives. Information obtained from multiple perspectives directly influenced both the research design and the formulation of interview questions. To mitigate the risk of researcher bias, the case studies were analyzed through multiple lenses and interpreted from diverse perspectives.

Although the fieldwork was conducted face-to-face with migrants in Türkiye, potential biases arising from language differences were anticipated. To minimize misinterpretation when translating research findings into English, support was sought from native English speakers whenever uncertainties arose, thereby reducing the risk of bias and mistranslation. To avoid bias arising from visitor order, interview locations were varied, and interviews began away from the areas where the expected results were expected.

During interactions between the researcher and participants, efforts were made to avoid physical or socially expressed cultural labeling. No participants were excluded or included based on the basis of appearance; instead, all individuals were asked whether they considered themselves eligible for the survey in the study area. Given the inherent power dynamics between researcher and participants, particularly given the migrant status of many respondents, care was taken to create a safe and inclusive environment in which participants felt comfortable expressing themselves freely.

### 5.4.3. Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles were carefully followed throughout all stages of the interview process: before, during, and after the interviews. Participants were clearly informed about the researcher, the aim, and the scope of the study. Their consent was obtained in advance, either verbally or in writing, as documented in “Consent Form” (Annex 2). To ensure anonymity and given the politically sensitive nature of the topic, all participant information has been kept strictly confidential in accordance with the agreed-upon protocols.

Additionally, during the writing process, artificial intelligence tools were used to support the organization and refinement of the thesis's language. These tools served only to improve clarity and coherence, without influencing the originality or integrity of the research findings or analysis. All academic decisions were made solely by the author, in alignment with established ethical standards.

## Chapter 6. Case Study

### 6.1. Background Information About Türkiye

#### 6.1.1. International Migration of Foreigners in Türkiye

As DGMM (2025c) stated that, Anatolia has historically hosted diverse religions and ethnic groups and has generally functioned as a region of settlement, while also serving as a bridge between continents. Migration waves that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and led to profound ethnic transformations across Anatolia played a crucial role in shaping present-day Türkiye and its foundational structures. Over the past two centuries, approximately six million migrants have settled within the borders of the Republic of Türkiye (DGMM, 2025b).

*Table 5 Migration waves to Türkiye (adapted from DGMM, 2025b)*

| Migration Period | Migration Wave |
|---|---|
| 1922 - 1938 | 384,000 people from Greece during Turkish-Greek population exchange |
| 1923 - 1945 | 800,000 people from Balkans |
| 1933 - 1945 | 800 people from Germany |
| 1988 | 51,542 people from Iraq following the Halabja massacre |
| Till 1989 | ~ 345,000 people from Bulgaria forced migration of Turks and Muslims |
| 1991 | 467,489 people from Iraq after the First Gulf War |
| 1992 - 1998 | 20,000 people from Bosnia due to Bosna War |
| 1999 | 17,746 people following the events in Kosovo |
| 2001 | 10,500 people from Macedonia |
| April 2011 - March 2019 | ~ 3,6 million people from Syria due to the civil conflict |

According to DGMM (2025c), migrants enter Türkiye by land via Hatay, Kilis, Sanliurfa, Silopi, Cukurca, Semdinli, Baskale, Agri, Dogubeyazit, or by air using the airports in Istanbul, Antalya, and Ankara. Known exit routes are usually by sea via Cesme, Ayvalik, Didim, Bodrum, Kucukkuyu, and by land via Edirne, Kirklareli, and by air via the airports in Istanbul (IOM, 2022, p. 2). As seen in Figure 22, Türkiye is a characteristic transit country (IOM, 2022) (see Figure 3). The main reason for this migration flow in Türkiye, migration flows originate from the east, mainly from Syria and Iraq, and try to flow in the west direction (see Figure 27).


*Figure 27 Migration routes for entry into and exit from Türkiye (IOM, 2022)*

Given its geographical position, the large number of migrants passing through Türkiye to reach other destinations, and its proximity to conflict zones, Türkiye is among the most affected by migration trends. Migration brings about many-sided consequences, although the majority of research in international literature focuses on how migration is a challenge for society and systemically, it also represents a possible solution for several issues. Alongside its intrinsic humanitarian value, which provides life-changing opportunities to people in need, migration enables countries to address demographic shortfalls and labour gaps. Therefore, migration has multilayered consequences across social, political, and economic dimensions that can be harmful or beneficial (Öztürk Terzi, 2025).

The intersection of these global and local dynamics transforms migration from a mere demographic shift into a continuous process of negotiating urban space and social fabric. As Türkiye faces both a structural challenge and a transformative opportunity stemming from its strategic position, the economic and cultural impacts of migration have become a central focus of state governance. This management extends beyond border control, necessitating strategic interventions in areas ranging from education and health to economic stability and identity construction. The state-led programs and communication tools developed to address these complex outcomes constitute a concerted effort to establish institutional infrastructure for social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society.

To aid in the social inclusion of migrant populations, the Turkish state has undertaken many projects, both at national and local levels to provide services for migrant children and adult migrants regarding education and health, but also psychological and socio-economical help. These include “Studies on Local Integration,” “Social Inclusion Programs” and “Child Protection Programs” (DGMM, 2025). Nonetheless, there are also some negative effects of the burden of migration, such as demographic changes beyond traditional boundaries, macroeconomic instability and increasing unemployment rates despite decreasing labor costs. Also, the erosion of culture and the perception of identity based threats are significant negative consequences. As far as management and communication is concerned, the Presidency of Migration Management divides its tools for the integration of migrants into digital and printed media; the latter includes publications such as brochures, the "Kırlangıc" (Swallow) magazine and the "Life in Türkiye Guide" (Öztürk Terzi, 2025).

Brochures for EU-funded projects are based on the life guide concept and were prepared in five different languages: Turkish, English, Russian, Arabic, and Persian by DGMM.


*Figure 28 Examples of brochures for EU-funded projects (DGMM, 2025)*

As a service of DGMM, brochures for EU-funded projects are based on the life guide concept and were prepared in English and Turkish.


*Figure 29 Examples of brochures for EU-funded projects are based on the "life guide concept" (DGMM, 2025)*

“Türkiye has recently been characterised as an ‘easy-to-enter, democratic, safe haven’ at the intersection of the Global South and North (Solarz, 2020; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2018) for skilled people while mostly considered privileged (Fechter & Walsh, 2010; Favell et al., 2007; Waters & Brooks, 2011; Beaverstock, 2002; Sklair, 2000) who have been forced to flee their countries due to conflicts and crises such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, anti-government protests in Iran, repression and fear in Afghanistan, and the devastating portexplosion in Beirut, Lebanon” (Tuncer, 2025).

“Türkiye’s geographical proximity, in addition to higher wages, a flexible visa system, and existing networks together with the rigid visa regulations of the European Union (Toksöz, 2020) has made the country accessible to labour migrants, causing migration patterns to become circular. According to the Foreign Work Permit Statistics (2020) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the total number of regular migrants in Türkiye is 123,574 and 41.853 of them are women” (Tuncer, 2025).

The total number of Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye reached its highest level in 2021, with approximately 3.74 million people, and despite a gradual decline thereafter, it still stood at around 2.37 million by the end of 2025 (DGGM, 2025). With nearly 3.3 million Syrians displaced within its borders by August 2023, Türkiye holds the position of the world’s leading host country for refugees (Presidency of Migration Management, 2023). Within the country, Istanbul hosts the largest Syrian population, with approximately 415,800 individuals living under temporary protection (DGGM, 2025c). Consequently, it has been observed that with the recent government agendas in Syria, this number has slowly begun to decrease in Türkiye.

In recent years, Türkiye has increasingly functioned as a critical node in global migration routes (IOM, 2024), particularly those extending from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa toward Europe. Its geographic positioning has made it both a destination and a transit country, attracting migrants with

diverse legal statuses and motivations. Irregular flows often originate from countries such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Somali and Congo, while regular migrants commonly arrive from Bulgaria, Iraq, Syria, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan, China, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Kirgizia and Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (İçduygu & Aksel, 2013; Sağıroğlu, 2015; Arman & Gürsoy, 2022). This distinction reflects the contrast between individuals arriving through formal legal procedures and those entering without official authorization.

In addition, growing economic and social insecurity, combined with war and political, religious and gender-based constraints in some of Global South countries, has compelled many educated migrants to seek mobility elsewhere. Regarding her research on skilled migrants, Tuncer (2024) stated that Istanbul has become an important temporary location for international journalists to follow the anti-government protests that began in Iran in September 2022, as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine. This study, however, shifts the focus from such temporary professional mobility to the industrial peripheries like Esenler, where a dense population of migrant laborers has become a permanent and defining element of the city's social fabric. Indeed, Istanbul has the highest foreign population (562,806) among Turkish cities and also the number of foreign nationals who migrated to Istanbul between 2023 and 2024 was 82,635 (TUIK, 2025).

According to the article of Tuncer (2024), on migrants in Türkiye demonstrate that “everyday urban practices” are shaped by exclusionary and discriminatory dynamics across both Global North-South and Global South-South migration trajectories. The daily unpleasant experiences of migrants reveal how transnational urbanization produces political conflicts through practices that embed them in daily routines, and how it makes structural inequalities visible in public space in Istanbul. These conflicts are embedded in mundane interactions, shaping how migrants navigate the city, engage with others, and access to opportunities. Socio-cultural differences limit opportunities to form meaningful connections with others, reinforcing social distance and patterns of exclusion. In response, migrants develop everyday tactics such as not spending time in some spaces they find unsafe, not returning home alone late at night, not speaking in their native language on the street, and creating self-restricting dress codes, to manage vulnerability and negotiate belonging in the city. Despite persistent political and economic instability and exclusionary behaviours that vary according to their identity and origin, Istanbul continues to function as a relatively "safe haven" for many migrants and offers opportunities for mobility in both directions of some migration, positioning the city as a significant site for understanding transnational urban life beyond rigid Global North-South binaries (Tuncer, 2024).

In this sense, discriminatory practices operate socially and spatially, as both public and private spaces are continuously reproduced through inequalities linked to origins and identities of migrants. These everyday tactics illustrate how migrants respond to exclusion not passively, but by strategically adjusting their spatial practices in ways that both reproduce and challenge existing urban inequalities.

### 6.1.2. Financial Crisis

Voyvada (2025) states that the global economy, particularly compared to the period preceding the global economic recession of 2008-09, is now characterized by lower growth rates, accompanied by weaker productivity gains, reduced real investment, persistently high unemployment, declining real wages, and a long-term fall in the labor share of income. Under the deepening contradictions of today's world, marked by wars across different regions, escalating geopolitical tensions, a global order shifting from multilateralism toward multipolarity and fragmentation, and increasing uncertainty, globalization itself has become a frequent subject of debate. At the same time, significant challenges in meeting basic needs across vast geographies, such as food security, energy security, social protection, and resilience to climate change, underscore the constraints of a system that not only reinforces existing inequalities but also generates new ones (Voyvoda, 2025).

Looking at Türkiye's economic indicators, it is clear that inflation has risen sharply in recent years. Especially during the 2021–2023 period, inflation surged to nearly 80%, and as of 2025 it still remains very high, around 36% (see Figure 30). In contrast, real GDP growth did not fall into negative territory during this period and remained around 2–3% (see Figure 30). This shows that despite high inflation, growth was supported by domestic demand, credit expansion, and government spending. However, IMF projections for the coming years suggest that inflation will gradually decline, while growth will remain lower and more limited. In other words, although short-term imbalances caused by high inflation are evident, a downward trend toward price stability is expected in the longer term (IMF, 2025).

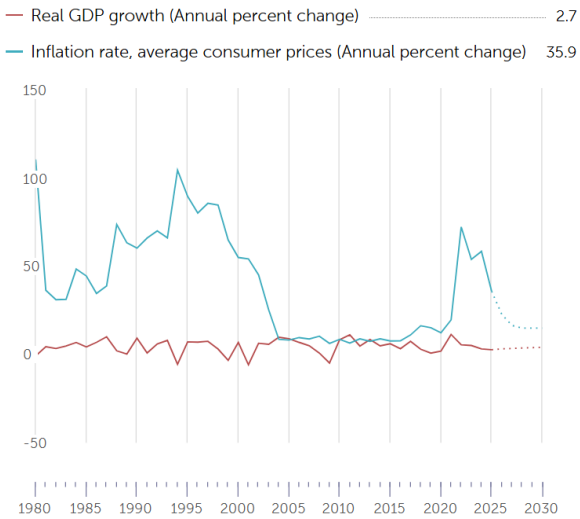



*Figure 30 Real GDP growth rates and inflation rates of Türkiye (IMF, 2025)*

The economy grew by 5.3% in 2022 and 5.1% in 2023, driven by expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. These boosted consumer spending growth to record levels. However, these policies also led to significant imbalances, including rising inflation, a widening current account deficit, negative net

international reserves, and a large depreciation of the Turkish lira (OECD,2025).

“Global growth is projected at 3.0 percent for 2025 and 3.1 percent in 2026 (Table 6), an upward revision from the April 2025 World Economic Outlook. This reflects front-loading ahead of tariffs, lower effective tariff rates, better financial conditions, and fiscal expansion in some major jurisdictions. Global inflation is expected to fall, but US inflation is predicted to stay above target. Downside risks from potentially higher tariffs, elevated uncertainty, and geopolitical tensions persist. Restoring confidence, predictability, and sustainability remains a key policy priority” (IMF, 2025).

Although Türkiye is not explicitly listed in the first table, according to the same IMF World Economic Outlook report (2025), Türkiye’s projected real GDP growth is 3.1% in 2024, 3.0% in 2025, and 3.3% in 2026. These figures and tables indicate a moderate but steady growth path compared to many advanced economies, where growth is expected to remain below 2%. However, Türkiye’s projected growth also falls short of the dynamic expansion observed in other large emerging economies such as India.

*Table 6 World economic outlook growth projections for selected countries (IMF, 2025)*

| | | PROJECTIONS | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (Real GDP, annual percent change) | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
| World Output | 3.3 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| Advanced Economies | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| United States | 2.8 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| Euro Area | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Germany | -0.2 | 0.1 | 0.9 |
| France | 1.1 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| Italy | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.8 |
| Spain | 3.2 | 2.5 | 1.8 |
| Japan | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| United Kingdom | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Canada | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| Other Advanced Economies | 2.2 | 1.6 | 2.1 |
| Emerging Market and Developing Economies | 4.3 | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| Emerging and Developing Asia | 5.3 | 5.1 | 4.7 |
| China | 5.0 | 4.8 | 4.2 |
| India | 6.5 | 6.4 | 6.4 |
| Emerging and Developing Europe | 3.5 | 1.8 | 2.2 |
| Russia | 4.3 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.4 |
| Brazil | 3.4 | 2.3 | 2.1 |
| Mexico | 1.4 | 0.2 | 1.4 |
| Middle East and Central Asia | 2.4 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| Saudi Arabia | 2.0 | 3.6 | 3.9 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.3 |
| Nigeria | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 |
| South Africa | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| ***Memorandum*** | | | |
| Emerging Market and Middle-Income Economies | 4.3 | 4.0 | 3.9 |
| Low-Income Developing Countries | 4.0 | 4.4 | 5.0 |

Table 6 presents the IMF's projections for selected economic indicators of Türkiye between 2019 and 2029. The data highlight key aspects of the real sector, including growth, inflation, and unemployment trends, as well as memorandum items such as GDP, exchange rates, and population figures. According to these projections, Türkiye's economy is expected to grow at a moderate pace in the medium term, with real GDP growth rates stabilizing around 3-4 percent after 2025. Inflation, however, remains a major challenge: while period-average inflation is projected to gradually decline from extraordinarily high levels observed in 2022-2023, it is still expected to remain in double digits until the end of the decade. Similarly, the unemployment rate, though projected to decline slightly from the early 2020s, is expected to remain above 9 percent. On the structural side, the country's GDP in both nominal USD and Turkish lira terms shows a significant upward trend, reflecting both population growth and nominal price effects. These indicators illustrate the dual dynamics of Türkiye's economy: a resilient growth trajectory on one hand, and persistent macroeconomic vulnerabilities on the other.

*Table 7 Selected economic indicators of Türkiye, 2019-2029 (IMF, 2024)*

| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | Proj. | | | |
| Real sector | | | | | | *(Percent)* | | | | | |
| Real GDP growth rate | 0.8 | 1.9 | 11.4 | 5.5 | 5.1 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.9 |
| Inflation (period-average) | 15.2 | 12.3 | 19.6 | 72.3 | 53.9 | 60.9 | 33.0 | 19.2 | 16.0 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| Inflation (end-year) | 11.8 | 14.6 | 36.1 | 64.3 | 64.8 | 43.0 | 24.0 | 17.2 | 15.3 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| Unemployment rate | 13.7 | 13.1 | 12.0 | 10.4 | 9.4 | 9.3 | 9.9 | 9.6 | 9.5 | 9.3 | 9.2 |
| *Memorandum items* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GDP (billions of U.S. dollars) | 760 | 717 | 808 | 906 | 1130 | 1344 | 1455 | 1477 | 1566 | 1661 | 1764 |
| GDP (billions of Turkish lira) | 4,318 | 5,049 | 7,256 | 15,012 | 26,546 | 43,758 | 59,036 | 73,392 | 88,474 | 105,827 | 126,700 |
| Real effective exchange rate | -2.7 | -10.4 | -10.2 | -10.0 | 2.4 | 13.4 | 5.1 | -4.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| GDP per capita US$ | 9,208 | 8,600 | 9,601 | 10,659 | 13,243 | 15,666 | 16,877 | 17,049 | 17,983 | 18,989 | 20,088 |
| Population (million) | 83.2 | 83.6 | 84.7 | 85.3 | 85.4 | 85.8 | 86.2 | 86.7 | 87.1 | 87.4 | 87.8 |

Sources: Turkish authorities; and IMF staff estimates and projections.

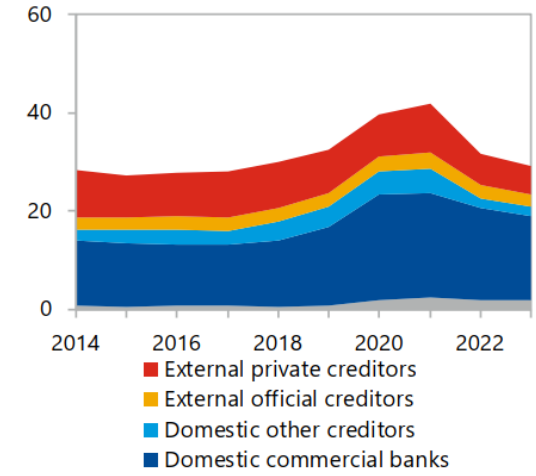
### 6.1.3. External Funding from the European Union

Türkiye, which was considered a middle-income country after the 2018 economic crisis (OECD, 2025), continued to experience significant economic shifts that reshaped its position within global mobility dynamics (Tuncer, 2025), even the runaway inflation caused by the sudden collapse of the Turkish lira in 2021 (Orhangazi & Yeldan, 2021).

The United Nations Executive Committee, Conclusion No. 100 (2004), characterizes a mass influx as a situation in which a substantial number of individuals cross an international border within a short period, resulting in rapid arrivals and rendering the host state temporarily unable to implement its regular individual asylum procedures. When these conditions persist, the provision of temporary protection becomes applicable. Temporary protection is a protection mechanism specifically designed to address emergency situations arising from large-scale population movements. In line with states' obligations under the principle of non-refoulement, it provides a swift and pragmatic solution that

enables protection to be extended to groups of arrivals without the need to conduct individual refugee status determination processes (DGMM, 2025a).

The young population in Türkiye, along with the influx of migrants, explained in the previous chapter, has increased domestic demand and contributed to economic growth through consumption and the service sectors. The high rate of real growth alongside elevated inflation (Table 3) can largely be explained by credit and demand incentives, export growth supported by exchange rate advantages, population effects stemming from migration, and base effects. However, this growth is neither high-quality nor sustainable, as the benefits of growth diminish when price stability is compromised. According to Orhangazi and Yeldan (2021), the economic model, adopted after the 2001 reforms in Türkiye, focused heavily on a "foreign capital inflow-dependent, debt-led and construction-centered economic growth model" (Figure 31) and led to serious economic imbalances and made the country more fragile, contributing to the 2018 financial downturn.




Note: The perimeter shown is general government.

*Figure 31 Public debt by holder graph of Türkiye (Percent of GDP) (IMF, 2024)*

Eurostat (2016) reports that in 2015, the EU faced a historically high level of asylum applications (1.26 million), which exposed the structural limitations of the EU asylum and migration regime at the time. The emergence of severe humanitarian and administrative challenges in external border states, combined with the fact that the majority of asylum seekers did not intend to remain in these countries, triggered a chain reaction across the Balkans. The inability of EU member states to develop a common approach to key issues, such as the reintroduction of border controls and mandatory relocation mechanisms, made the adoption of a comprehensive internal EU solution increasingly difficult. As the external dimension of migration management gained prominence, Türkiye became a key "strategic partner" as a "crucial transit country" for irregular migration towards Europe (Reiners & Tekin, 2020).

This shift toward externalized migration governance culminated in the 2016 EU–Türkiye Statement, which institutionalized Türkiye's role as both a buffer zone and humanitarian host. While EU member

states failed to agree on an equitable relocation system, they increasingly relied on Türkiye to control irregular migration flows along the Balkan route. As Erden and Özçürümez (2025) note, Türkiye's hosting capacity became central to the EU's crisis response framework, yet the partnership remained heavily asymmetrical, shaped more by containment priorities than genuine burden-sharing.

After the joint action plan was adopted in October, the EU-Türkiye statement issued in November 2015 constituted the first steps towards managing migration flows. However, as these measures proved insufficient, the statement was adopted in March 2016. This arrangement introduced the return of all irregular migrants arriving on the Greek islands to Türkiye and established a mechanism, whereby one Syrian refugee would be resettled from Türkiye to the EU for each Syrian returned from Greece. The provision of financial assistance for refugees in Türkiye, the acceleration of the visa liberalisation process, and progress in EU accession negotiations were also included as core elements of the agreement (Reiners & Tekin, 2020).

As outlined in official EU documents, the EU-Türkiye Statement emerged as a crisis management instrument that partially externalised migration management due to the limitations of the EU's internal solidarity mechanisms, aiming to reduce irregular crossings and to safeguard the functioning of the Schengen system (European Commission, 2015; European Commission, 2016).

To stabilize its economic after-pandemic condition, Türkiye has strategically engaged in both international migration agreements and environmental sustainability projects. In 2016, Türkiye entered into the EU-Türkiye Statement, an agreement aimed at curbing irregular migration flows to Europe. In exchange for Türkiye's cooperation in managing migration, the European Union committed to providing €6 billion in humanitarian assistance, education, healthcare, municipal infrastructure, and socioeconomic support for Syrian refugees in Türkiye between 2016 and 2019. This financial support was intended to alleviate the burden on Türkiye's public services and contribute to the integration of refugees into Turkish society (Saltan, 2022). The agreement also included provisions for the resettlement of refugees to the EU, with the goal of reducing irregular migration routes and enhancing border security (European Parliament, 2015).

Concurrently, Türkiye has leveraged environmental sustainability initiatives to attract EU funding. Through programs such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), Türkiye has secured financial support for various environmental projects. Notably, under the IPA III period (2021-2027), the European Commission adopted a rural development programme worth €430 million, focusing on areas like agriculture, rural development, and environmental protection. This funding aims to align Türkiye's environmental practices with EU standards, promoting sustainable development and enhancing the country's resilience to climate change.

These international agreements and environmental projects have not only provided Türkiye with financial resources but have also facilitated the implementation of large-scale urban transformation

initiatives. One such initiative is the establishment of Millet Gardens, which serve as urban green spaces promoting environmental sustainability, public health, and social cohesion. These projects exemplify Türkiye's multifaceted approach to economic stabilization, integrating migration management and environmental sustainability to foster long-term development.

### 6.1.4. Unaffordable Housing in Türkiye

“The proportion of people living in illegal and inadequate housing and slum areas is determined as an indicator. However, it is not possible to gather at such a level in Türkiye. The social housing produced on an annual basis under the above-mentioned policies and the estimation for 2023 can be taken as important indicators. 20,802 social houses were produced in 2018 within this framework. The target figure for 2023 is 270,802, with the implementation of the policies. TOKI’s target of 500,000 houses was achieved as of 2011; and a new target is set for another 700,000 houses by 2023, the goal being to reach a total of 1,200,000 houses” (MET, 2021, p. 122).

TOKI’s housing program, though officially classified in Turkish policy discourse as “sosyal konut” (social housing), departs markedly from the European social-rental model by structuring dwellings as subsidized sale units rather than cost-rent stock (Özdemir Sarı et al., 2022). As edited by Özdemir Sarı et al. (2022), the program channels public resources to underwrite low-down-payment, low-interest mortgages, often below 1 percent, to families in the lower- and middle-income brackets, thereby transferring ownership immediately upon completion rather than maintaining public ownership as long-term rental housing. Consequently, TOKI’s output emphasizes quantitative expansion of homeownership over the income-targeted, rent-regulated tenure typical of social housing in Europe, resulting in unit prices that, despite subsidies, frequently approach or exceed conventional market levels (Özdemir Sarı et al., 2022).

“(...) crisis ordinariness is both, as major disruptions (i.e. global pandemics, financial crises, climate disruptions) become interwoven with ordinary life in terms of activities, life events and affects. Foregoing this duality opens up new ways of reading the ambiguous politics of everyday crisis” (Dimitrakou & Ren, 2025). This conceptualization of 'crisis ordinariness' finds a stark and tangible reflection in the current socio-spatial landscape of the Global South, where systemic instabilities are no longer episodic but have become embedded in the fabric of daily survival. In the Turkish context, this duality is most acutely manifested through the deepening housing insecurity that reshapes the ordinary life of urban inhabitants. According to the IMF report (2022), in the fourth quarter of 2021, Türkiye ranked among the world’s leaders in annual real house-price growth, registering an increase of roughly 25–30% (see Figure 32). In recent years, the housing crisis in Türkiye has become even more intractable. Reasons for this include the increasing population and resulting demand for housing, the devastating earthquakes of recent years, the economic crisis, and housing policies.

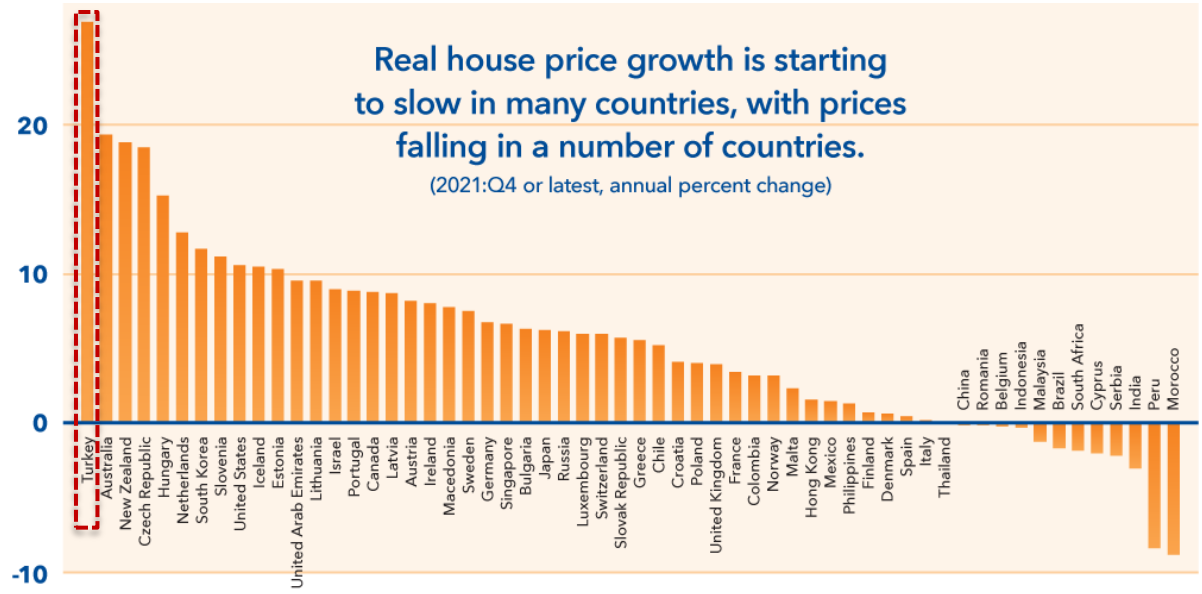



*Figure 32 Real house prices in 2021 (adapted from IMF,2022)*

Over the same period, average household income growth was considerably lower, generally around 15–20% (IMF, 2022) (see Figure 33). Accordingly, it is observed that in Türkiye during the specified years, salary increases exceeded the increase in housing prices.

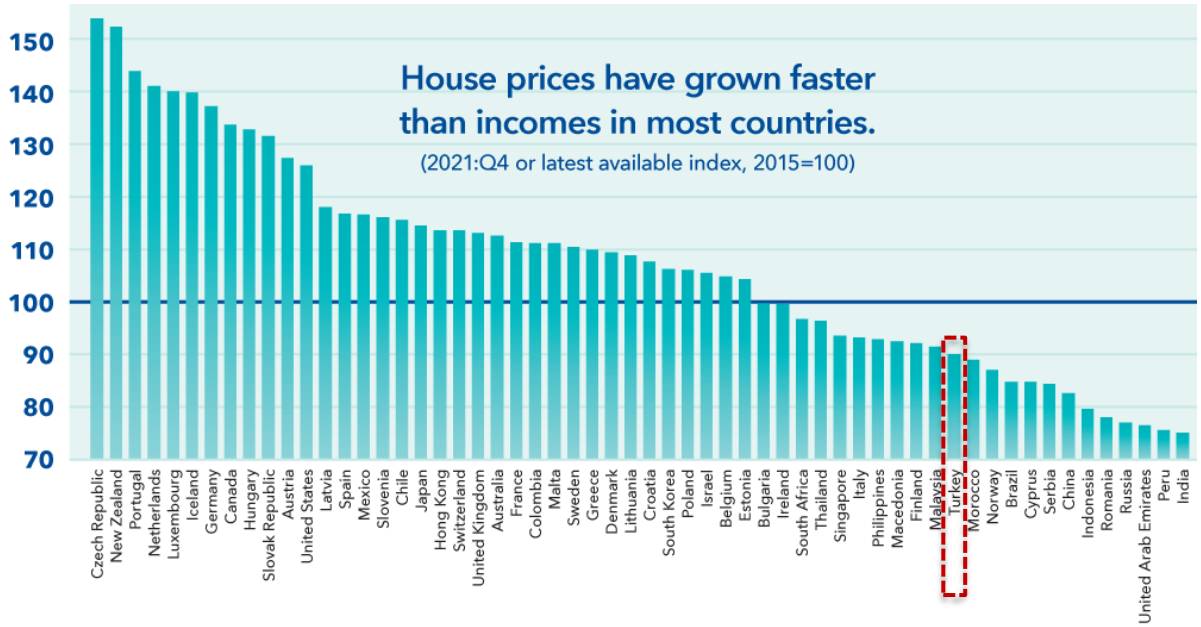



*Figure 33 House price-to-income ratio in 2021 (adapted from IMF,2022)*

When the research topic is considered, it is possible to think that migrants' access to affordable housing has become more difficult. Considering that the most suitable location and condition of the houses in a country are chosen by those who are not immigrants of that country, the choice of housing becomes a factor that negatively affects the everyday life of newly-arrived migrants. As in most

economic, social, and cultural issues, migrant groups, who face more negative scenarios than the average, are thought to be negatively affected by the increase in housing prices in Türkiye. Although this issue does not directly affect the research topic, it should not be forgotten that housing conditions are certainly factors that affect the use of public green space and everyday life.

### 6.1.5. Unaffordable Food in Türkiye

There is a significant difference in the percentage increases of food prices in Türkiye compared with the other country groups. According to the Figure 34, food price inflation in Türkiye was significantly higher in 2022 than it was in 2020, as measured against the percentage increase experienced by OECD countries by 2.84, OECD/EU countries by 4.77, and EU countries by 3.76. According to FAO (2024, as cited in Akın & Demirkol ,2024), Türkiye currently ranks fourth on the list of countries for nominal food inflation rates behind Argentina, Lebanon, and Venezuela.

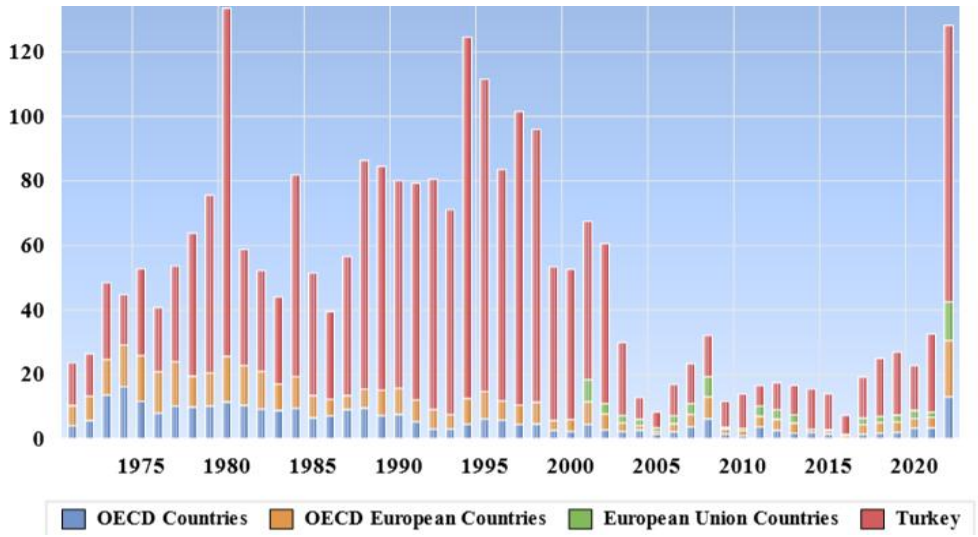



*Figure 34 Food inflation rate of OECD-EU, EU, and Türkiye (1971-2000, 2001-2022) (Akın & Demirkol, 2024)*

Not only food, but also other factors affecting the everyday life in Türkiye have seen price increases. As shown in Figure 35, this increase has been higher than the government's reported inflation figures.

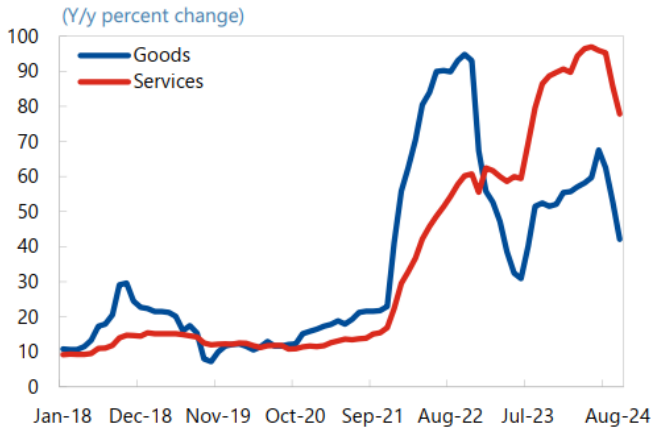



*Figure 35 Inflation rates of goods and services in Türkiye (IMF, 2024, p. 33)*

In addition to housing, these tables show the increase in the prices of a number of expenditures that have a direct impact on citizens' everyday life from constant prices in the 2010s to 2020 and beyond. Although these are also periods of rising inflation, the increase is larger than the inflation rate, thus reducing purchasing power. In addition, given that low-income migrants, and especially newly arrived migrants, have less access to affordable food (see 2.3.3. Equitable and Affordable Access to Basic Resources for All), beverages, and other services, it is these groups that have been most adversely affected.

### 6.2. Millet Gardens as a Megaproject Vision

TOKI is the national agency responsible for mass housing projects across Türkiye. Working in coordination with the MoEU, TOKI is the institution that is authorized to make land development plans in the slum areas. In addition to transforming the slum areas through urban transformation, TOKI practices also include Millet Gardens, recreational areas, city parks, city squares, and trade centres.

The relevant key sections from the national report of Türkiye on implementation of the NUA, based on policy analysis, have been selected. The document includes a clause stating that TOKI also plays a role in the production of public green spaces. “Working with MoEU, TOKI is the institution that is authorized to make land development plans in the slum areas and to ensure that the slum areas are renewed or improved under the applicable legislation. In addition to transforming the slum areas through urban transformation, TOKI practices also include Millet Gardens, recreational areas, city parks, city squares, and trade centres” (MoEU, 2021, p. 122).

It also includes a clause regarding the central government's vision. “In order to create healthy living spaces, to increase urban green space standards and quality of life in cities, Millet Gardens will be expanded to 81 provinces, and formation of Millet Gardens in 81 million square meters will be carried out until 2023. Millet Gardens will be built in 38 cities, with due consideration of the population density and the size of each respective city. Efforts on Millet Gardens started in 2018 (…) and as of late 2020, totally 285 Millet Gardens projects were being implemented on a surface area of 50,846,728.46 square meters in 78 cities” (MoEU, 2021, pp. 85-86).

The square meter figures reported only reflect the total boundaries of the parks and do not indicate the creation of new green space. One of the main reasons for this is that some of the parks are merely existing parks that have undergone a name change. It should also be noted that the park boundaries include large areas of concrete surfaces and built structures. Both of these points apply to the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden, which was selected as a case study. Traditional wide asphalt roads and multiple large structures serving various public functions are located within these park boundaries. Additionally, prior to its conversion, this area was a wooded land with military status, without changes in land use. Therefore, unlike Millet Gardens created entirely from scratch, this site already contains

a significant amount of shaded areas.


*Figure 36 Timeline for important turns for public green policies in Türkiye*

Based on the policy framework analysis, Table 9 and Table 10 have been prepared. This analysis examined transnational (The NUA), national (Türkiye National Reports, Development Plans, and Ministry Strategic Plans), metropolitan (IMM Strategic Plan), and local (Esenler Municipality Strategic Plan) documents. The results of the analysis are as follows:

An examination of spatial production and urban governance strategies in Türkiye reveals a distinct shift in focus across hierarchical levels. At the transnational level, the NUA serves as a foundational guide, advocating for inclusive urban rights and social integration at the highest normative level. However, as these global principles are translated to the national level, rights-based discourse is largely replaced by spatial standardization and the institutionalization of the government's vision for "Millet Gardens"; this demonstrates that national intent is concentrated on tangible, top-down megaprojects rather than abstract rights. At the metropolitan scale, the strongest encouraging language regarding participatory planning and democratic governance processes is found within IMM documents; the metropolitan vision adopts social inclusivity and the urban presence of migrant populations with a much more explicit intent compared to local administrations. Conversely, at the local level, specifically within the Esenler Municipality documents, the declaration of intent regarding migrant rights or participation in decision-making processes reaches its weakest point, despite the district's high migrant density. While local documents align with the national rhetoric of Millet Gardens, they remain silent on managing these spaces in a way that ensures social justice. Ultimately, the analysis reveals that the intentions of "participation" and "inclusivity" championed globally become diluted as they descend into local implementation documents, showing that spatial policy in Türkiye focuses on property-oriented and project-based development rather than radical inclusivity.

### 6.2.1. Millet Gardens with the Perspective of Public Space Between Rhetoric and Reality

The Millet Gardens project can be seen as a prime example of the contradictions identified in the previous section by applying the framework to the Turkish context. The economic focus of the project as "green lungs" for Istanbul is contradicted by the fact that land prices around the project sites are increasing and could ultimately become another form of green gentrification. Similarly, the political focus of the project is also contradictory, in that the top-down planning approach led by MoEU and TOKI will limit citizen participation and provide evidence for how the entrepreneurial state utilizes public space rhetoric to support its agenda. Finally, the utilization of political symbols within the naming and design of the parks (for example, the 15 July Millet Garden), reinforces the national identity at the expense of culturally diverse identities. Therefore, they illustrate Madanipour's assertion that while public space discourse is focused on "interactivity", the practice of creating public space places a greater emphasis on "attractiveness" and the symbolic control of the space (Madanipour, 2019).

According to Madanipour (2021), public spaces are not fixed or permanent in nature, but rather they are dynamic, relational spaces in which social, political, and cultural processes occur. Public spaces are defined as inclusive orders of coexistence, where accessibility and openness are key components of their definition (Madanipour, 2021). The Millet Gardens represent one of the largest state-led urban planning initiatives in the past decade as part of a larger urban renewal program initiated by the AKP government. Therefore, public spaces created through the Millet Gardens initiative are being constructed as green, accessible, and democratic public spaces. Therefore, the roles of the state in defining what it means to be public, and the tension between symbolic, political and commercial interests in the creation of public space, need to be critically examined.

The construction of them exemplifies the contradictory role of current public space governance. On the one side, these are presented as inclusive environments to contrast with the last few decades of urbanization, the degradation of the environment, and the loss of green areas. On the other side, the top down creation of such spaces, the symbolic naming of the spaces, and the political discourses that accompany the creation of these spaces demonstrate a type of spatial politics that defines the "urban commons" (Köpper & Müller, 2020) through an extension of state authority. The creation of these spaces creates conflicting battles for access, representation, and identity regarding: who the public is; whose voice is included in decision-making; and which social group will be the ultimate beneficiary. This struggle echoes his assertion that all public space is subject to competing forces including: private vs. public interests; democracy vs. authoritarianism; lived experience vs. state symbolism.

In addition, the design and usage of Millet Gardens demonstrates the socially-exclusionary aspects of the social structures of its development. Typically large asphalt roads, monumental architecture and large-scale infrastructure projects are designed into these spaces, thus reducing their potential

ecological and social inclusiveness. In addition, these spaces are frequently developed out of organic common-places created by the inhabitants of a city, but instead are developed from former military or government owned land, thereby reinforcing the image of state authority in the urban environment. Furthermore, these spaces may also function as tools of control and spectacle, and therefore cannot provide the same opportunities for everyday encounters as the critics of public authorities under neoliberal and semi-authoritarian regimes contend that they do, when they "act like private corporations," and prioritize the creation of revenue and their own political visibility over the development of inclusive spaces.

In order to shift from Millet Gardens and similar large-scale to more inclusive, community-focused practices, urban projects need to be re-designed as fully participatory and community-focused spaces. Therefore, the redesign of Millet Gardens and similar large-scale, urban projects require extensive engagement with the local community, transparency in the planning process, and design that prioritizes accessibility for all social groups, particularly women, youth, migrants, and marginalized communities. The inclusion of different social groups should extend beyond using names that reflect the community, and should include consideration of ecological sensitivity, affordability, and flexibility in the use of the spaces for different social and cultural uses. These should no longer be used as vehicles for political branding, but instead as "commons" that blur the lines between the state, society and nature and provide the opportunity for citizens to participate democratically and experience sociality on a daily basis. Public space, as Madanipour notes, should be viewed as a dynamic process or an ongoing project rather than a static, completed product, and therefore, the struggle to create and maintain an inclusive, shared space will continue (Köpper & Müller, 2020).

This conceptualization also allows us to examine the Millet Gardens initiative in Türkiye. From an economic perspective, they are presented as a means of developing accessible and sustainable “urban commons” (Köpper & Müller, 2020), yet, in reality, these developments contribute to the increased value of properties and the pressure to displace lower-income individuals, leading to forms of “gentrification” that restrict access for lower-income populations. From a political perspective, the development of Millet Gardens has been led from the top down by the national government, and there has been minimal input from local communities, civil society, and professional organizations. Therefore, the Millet Gardens function as a tool for the expression of state authority and control, and do not serve as a mechanism for citizen deliberation. From a cultural perspective, the naming and symbolism of parks (for example, the 15 July Millet Garden) serves to promote specific political ideologies and can exclude other social groups, thereby reducing the ability of parks to act as inclusive spaces of collective memory. While they offer a great deal of promise in addressing the lack of green space in many Turkish cities, the realization of this promise will depend upon the inclusion of considerations related to economic justice, political inclusion, and cultural diversity in both the planning and implementation of the project.

### 6.2.2. Implementation of Millet Gardens as a State-led Gentrification Tool

The Millet Gardens' vision across 81 provinces and square meters has been completed; therefore, an assessment of how Millet Gardens have been implemented at each province level, and how the respective administrations of each province relate to the administration of the city residents impacted by the Millet Gardens, would enhance the research. Since local governments, as well as their authority and budgets are distributed differently across the provinces and each Millet Garden, it can be assumed that the experience of city residents will also be distributed differently. With regards to the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden, the park is currently being managed and maintained by the Esenler Municipality. However, the local government structure differs greatly throughout the nation with respect to municipalities which are controlled by different political parties in other provinces, metropolitan municipalities, and MoEU controlled municipalities. Therefore, there are at least three interesting cases that should be examined with regard to Millet Gardens site location, the right to the city protests, and the development and operation of the Millet Gardens project: two such examples include a Millet Garden located on the grounds of a state university in Istanbul, Türkiye and another Millet Garden located between two lakes near Ankara, Türkiye.

Nakkastepe is a strategic area in Uskudar, Istanbul, with views of the Bosphorus. The area had been used for decades as a military facility owned and operated by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). It was subsequently confiscated and opened to the public as a Millet Garden (see Figure 37) in 2018. This is an important example of the conversion of military areas into public open space. Although this area was already heavily wooded prior to the establishment of the public park, the conversion from private to public did not alter the potential for green space.


*Figure 37 Nakkastepe Millet Garden Google Imagery in 2007, 2015, 2025 (Google Earth Pro, 2025)*

As shown in satellite images (Figure 29), the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden (see Figure 38) already contained both wetlands and green areas within its boundaries, even before the Millet Garden plan (2018). The area planned to encompass the initial park boundaries is shown in the image. The current park boundaries cover a much smaller portion of this area and are located in the southern region,

which had more greenery than in 2007 and 2015 (Figure 38). However, as shown in the initial satellite image, there were green spaces in those years that were later converted to TOKI housing. While some of the green areas in the north were preserved within the project, others were completely redesigned. The wetland, rather than being reclaimed, was redesigned using reinforced concrete in a fundamentally different form. It covers a much smaller area than was planned in the initial plan (Figure 42).

*Figure 38 Esenler 15 July Millet Garden Google Imagery in 2007, 2015, 2025 (Google Earth Pro, 2025)*

### 6.2.3. Millet Gardens as a Policy

In Türkiye following the Republican period, the traditional concept of the garden was replaced by the notion of the park; within the transforming urban fabric, open and green spaces were redefined for public use, and cemeteries remaining within city boundaries were either relocated or converted into municipal parks (Tekeli, 1985). After this period, Aksoy (2014, p.4), who analyzes the green space standards in Türkiye within the historical process, states that firstly, the per capita standard of green areas was set as 4 m² in the Law No. 2290. Although there are some criticisms regarding the distribution according to certain scales, the amount of green space per capita was set as 7 m² between 1956 and 1985 (Aksoy, 2014, p. 4). In 1985, the green area standard of 7 m²/person was maintained, and in 1999, with the new regulation numbered 23804, the green standard was increased to 10 m² (Aksoy, 2014, p.5).

Özdemir and Gerdan (2019, as cited in Kuşkonmaz, 2020) stated that, under the coordination of the MoEU, the Millet Gardens project was initiated with the aim of revitalizing neighborhood culture, targeting the development of 41 Millet Gardens across 30 provinces, covering a total area of 7.35 million m². In subsequent years, this idea would evolve into a vision and its content would be expanded. Following this change in the law, it has become a subject produced by the MoEU and studied by some academics. Before the implementation phase was completed, when the first plans and the first visualizations were written and drawn, examples from around the world at similar scales and the historical Millet Gardens in the Ottoman period were used as examples (Çelik, 2018; MoEU, 2019b; Sağlık et al., 2019). In these studies, it has been stated that it will make a positive contribution to urban life both in terms of its dimensional character and the green diversity and variety of uses in

the plans (Çelik, 2018; MoEU, 2019b; Sağlık et al., 2019). Sağlık (2019) mentions the importance of its inclusion in the Turkish planning system, but says that the identity of the city where these Millet Gardens are located and the values of the city should also be reflected in their design. He underlines that they have an important potential in terms of recreation, but that these areas should be designed in a way that respects nature in a balance of protection (Sağlık, 2019).

Kuşkonmaz (2020) stated that the Millet Gardens, the construction of which started in 2018, did not have a guide that includes features such as legislation, methodological content, and criteria for site selection in 2018. In 2019, the concept of Millet Gardens started to be included in the Spatial Plans Construction Regulation (Republic of Türkiye Official Gazette, 1990), Planned Areas Construction Regulation (Republic of Türkiye Official Gazette, 2014), Coastal Law (Republic of Türkiye Official Gazette, 2017), and Bicycle Roads Regulation (Republic of Türkiye Official Gazette, 2019). In May 2020, the Millet Gardens' Guide (see Figure 39) was prepared by MoEU (Kuşkonmaz, 2020).

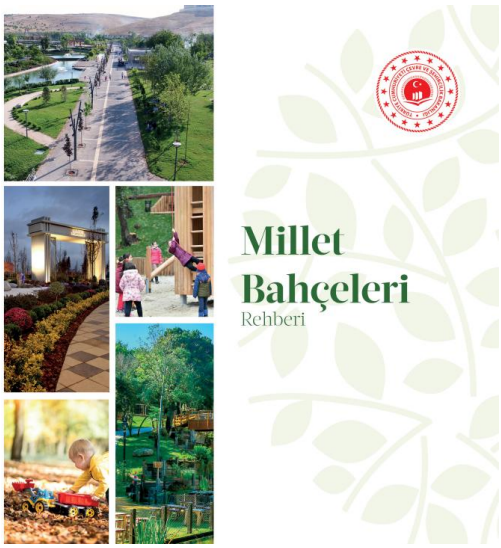



*Figure 39 Millet Gardens' Guide (MoEU, 2020)*

Today, this guide is available online on the MoEU page. This guide contains information and photographs of the examples that have been completed so far. Some Millet Gardens can be accessed online from the pages of the municipalities where they are located.

In the context of the categories in the existing literatures, Millet Gardens have been evaluated as urban parks in the context of categories such as its place in the open-green space system due to the functions it contains and the population it serves (Şahin, 2008; Onsekiz, 2008, as cited in Kuşkonmaz, 2020). However, when we come to the present day within this megaproject, we can talk about Millet Gardens with many different criteria. Parks that do not meet the criteria specified in the Millet Gardens Guide and thus do not have the status and use of urban parks are located in different cities today.

### 6.2.4. Administrative Structure of Millet Gardens

The planning, design, and management of Millet Gardens occur as part of a complex and multilayered governance system. The governance system has multiple layers, such as the NUA which is a voluntary framework at the international or supranational level. “Millet Gardens, the most ambitious iteration of AKP’s urban greening frenzy, in which the central government plans, subsidizes, finances, and builds ornate city parks, bypassing local administrations” (Erensü et al., 2022, p. 111). At the national level, the MoEU is the main body responsible for managing Millet Gardens. However, at the metropolitan level in Istanbul (see Figure 40), there is a fractured system among district municipalities and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) in terms of authority, responsibilities and political affiliation. As an example, the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden is managed by the Esenler Municipality (the management of the park is expected to be transferred to the Ministry) and the Atatürk Airport Millet Garden is managed directly by the Ministry. The fractured system can lead to conflicts between the central government and the municipal government in terms of legal and political issues, including the principles of planning, public interest and the use of the land, especially when the central government and the metropolitan government (IMM) are controlled by different political parties; some of the projects have gone to court because they violate the urban planning principles. Therefore, Millet Gardens in Istanbul provide not only spaces for green space, but they are also a place for contested multi-level urban governance. The next section of the study will address how the governance system affects the residents in their everyday life.

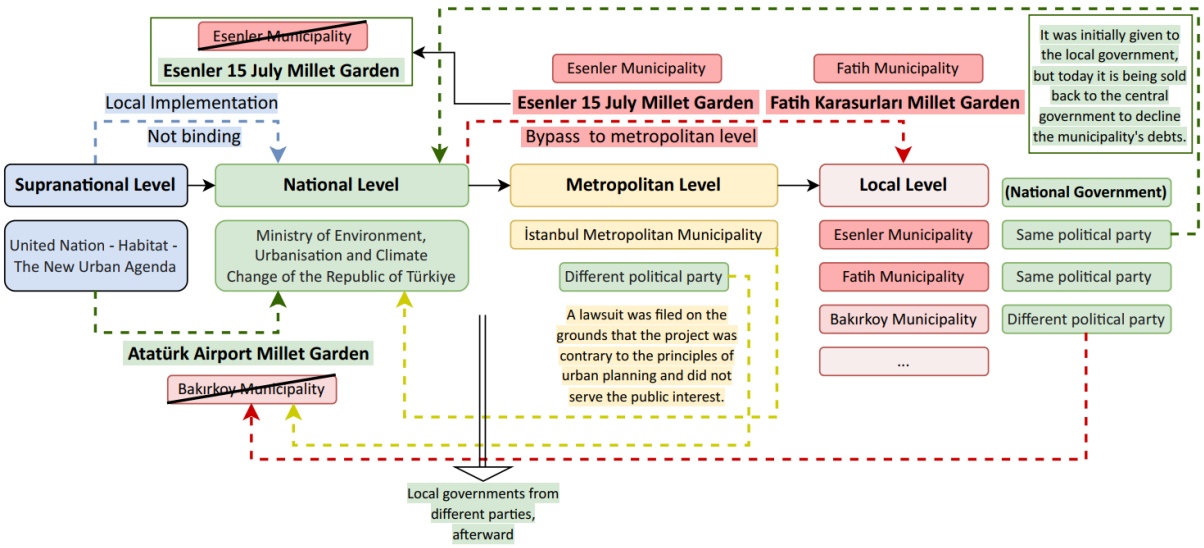



*Figure 40 Relation between administrative levels in Istanbul, Türkiye (author’s own elaboration)*

At the other end of Türkiye, the governance of the Millet Gardens in Gaziantep (see Figure 41) differs from the governance of the Millet Gardens in Istanbul. Specifically, with regard to Kamil Ocak Millet Garden in Gaziantep, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change has a significant role at the national level and the differences come from the fact that the metropolitan and local

governments, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and Sehitkamil Municipality are run by different political parties than the central government. The structure in Gaziantep creates a more centralized governance model that creates fewer opportunities for conflict with the central government and a more centralized model of governance in terms of the planning and management of the park and the daily lives of its citizens.

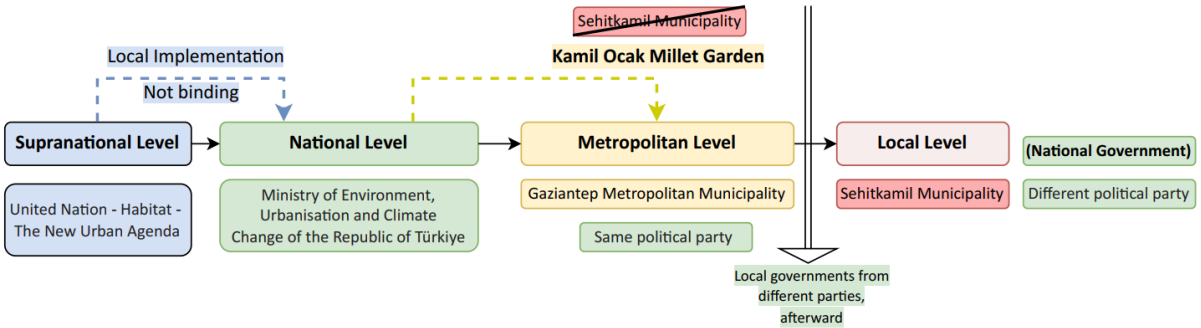



*Figure 41 Relation between administrative levels in Gaziantep, Türkiye (author's own elaboration)*

Both examples show that the governance of Millet Gardens varies widely, not just depending on whether they have been legally established as Millet Gardens, but also in terms of where they are located and the political party or parties that govern their surrounding municipality. Regardless of the political party that governs the metropolitan and/or district municipality, the central government has significant influence on how these parks operate (in terms of access to the general public and planning), and whether the parks will reflect the planning principles used in each of the cities. The fragmented and conflict-ridden nature of municipal government in Istanbul transforms Millet Gardens into politically contested and negotiated spaces (Erensü et al., 2022); whereas, the political cohesion found in Gaziantep (a city on the eastern side of Türkiye) creates a much more hierarchical and top-down form of park administration. These examples suggest that Millet Gardens cannot be thought of as an overall "urban green space" policy, but instead as context-dependent spaces that are formed through local political relationships and multi-level governance processes.

A similar schematic model can include examples from other parts of Türkiye (i.e., Diyarbakır (another city on the eastern side of Türkiye) or others). Millet Gardens managed by local government, and governed by political parties at the municipal level different than those governing the central government, generally appear to be smaller in size and, therefore, less capable of creating additional rental income. On the other hand, Millet Gardens that do not fit within the system appear to provide a better opportunity for a more comprehensive study by allowing researchers to establish clear causal links between the underlying political dynamics of the governing body and the resultant governance outcomes. However, there exists little to no empirical evidence or documented cases to support such a conclusion or imply such implications till this research.

"The logos of TOKI as well as the MoEU are clearly marked at the gates, giving the central

administration the bragging rights and the publicity opportunity" (Erensü et al., 2022) (see Figure 65). However, since many of these gardens are administered by local municipalities, the conflicts arise between central and local governments, particularly when the latter is controlled by the opposition (Erensü et al., 2022). They used a case study from Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye, to navigate such disputes, the central government in Ankara typically bypasses the metropolitan municipality by partnering with a politically aligned district municipality or, alternatively, intervenes directly by reclassifying the land through top-down administrative measures.

### 6.3. Gentrification Analysis by Pala & Acar (2024) on Millet Gardens in Istanbul

The Millet Gardens project is chosen by the author as a case study to evaluate the mechanisms of state-led green gentrification in Türkiye. The Millet Gardens project (see Table 8), which includes the creation of large-scale parks and recreation areas through the efforts of the national government instead of municipalities (Pala & Acar, 2024), provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate the potential for social inequality and displacement that may occur during the transformation of the neighborhoods in the Millet Gardens project. As such, Pala and Acar's (2024) quantitative data on the degree of gentrification of each district of the Millet Garden in Istanbul has been selected as the focus of this research (see Figure 42); it will then analyze the causal and dynamic factors of the social change experienced in the selected district.

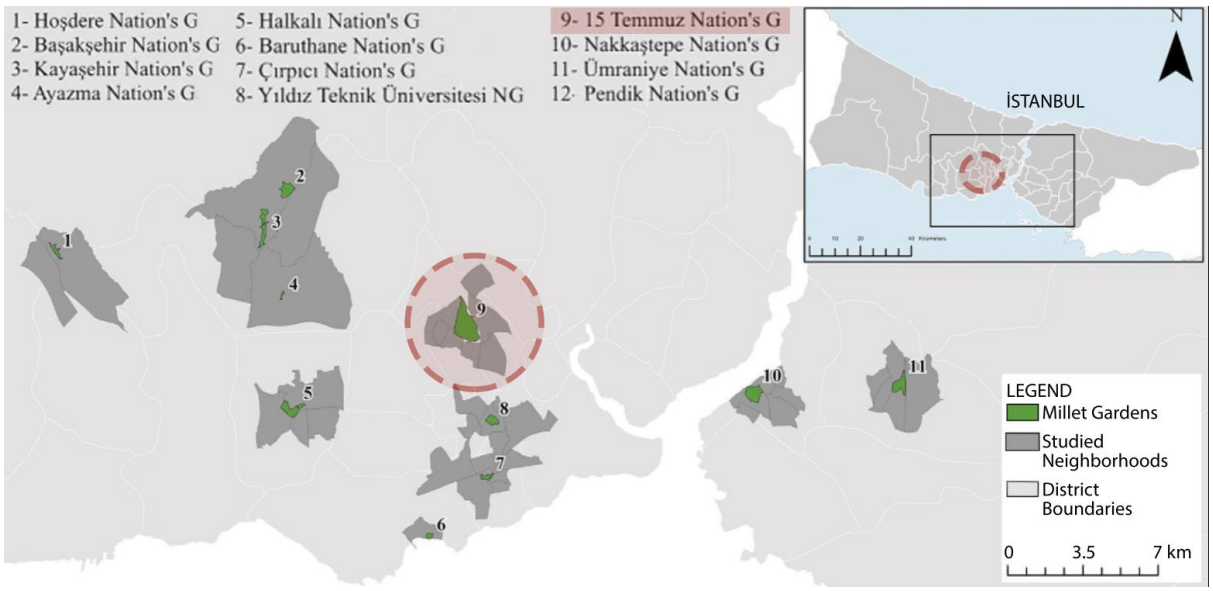



*Figure 42 The locations of the Millet Gardens in Istanbul and the neighborhoods determined as the study area (adapted from Pala & Acar, 2024, p. 6)*

Pala & Acar (2024) demonstrate the different aspects and degrees of gentrification within the neighborhoods of the selected Millet Gardens in Istanbul, based on indicators of age, education, and property prices. "Compared to other gardens, the number of neighborhoods experiencing change is the highest around the Yıldız Teknik University, Halkalı, and 15 July Millet Gardens (see Table 8). Such

gentrification is not desirable in Istanbul, not only because of over-curation and hyper-regulation of natural areas but also because of wealth accumulation around the Millet Gardens that further distorts wealth distribution in the city" (Pala & Acar, 2024, p. 10). It is planned to investigate further how the gentrification process, which was already existing in the neighborhood at the beginning of the years of the park (Pala & Acar, 2024), accelerated with time and became significantly more serious in the case of Esenler in the research.

*Table 8 Green gentrification composite scoreboard of gentrification status of neighborhoods around Millet Gardens in Istanbul (adapted from Pala & Acar, 2024, p. 9)*

| | | Age | | Educational Attainment | | Residential Property Prices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Park Name | Neighborhoods | % Change | Score | % Change | Score | % Change | Score | Total Score | Gentrification Status |
| Ayazma Nation's Garden | ZİYA GÖKALP | 35.67 | 0 | 36.29 | 1 | 119.95 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| Başakşehir Nation's Garden | KAYABAŞI | 62.22 | 0 | 70.30 | 1 | 109.32 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | TURGUT REİS | 15.52 | 1 | 28.57 | 1 | 54.34 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| | HAVAALANI | 12.18 | 1 | 65.09 | 1 | 140.32 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| | ORUÇREİS | 13.36 | 1 | −2.12 | 0 | 45.86 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | KEMER | 9.29 | 1 | 9.91 | 0 | 37.73 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| Esenler 15 Temmuz Nation's Garden | KOCATEPE | 14.23 | 1 | 7.26 | 0 | 47.90 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | CEVATPAŞA | 11.31 | 1 | 43.65 | 1 | 28.89 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| | YILDIRIM | 16.02 | 1 | 17.98 | 0 | 31.64 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | KARADENİZ | 14.98 | 1 | 10.71 | 0 | −0.34 | 0 | 1 | Potentially Gentrifying |
| | İSTASYON | 16.58 | 1 | 28.41 | 1 | 46.00 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| | İNÖNÜ | 15.79 | 1 | 46.23 | 1 | 36.59 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| Halkalı Nation's Garden | HALKALI MERKEZ | 22.36 | 0 | 24.11 | 0 | 16.26 | 1 | 1 | Potentially Gentrifying |
| | SÖĞÜTLÜ ÇEŞME | 7.32 | 1 | 23.33 | 0 | 35.78 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| Hoşdere Nation's Garden | BAHÇEŞEHİR 2. KISIM | 36.61 | 0 | 28.73 | 1 | 64.46 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| Kayaşehir Nation's Garden | ORHAN GAZİ | 38.69 | 0 | 36.84 | 1 | 47.05 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | GÜVERCİNTEPE | 38.05 | 0 | 46.32 | 1 | 55.83 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| Pendik Nation's Garden | FEVZİ ÇAKMAK | 21.30 | 0 | 49.36 | 1 | 19.47 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | DUMLUPINAR | 15.45 | 1 | 28.35 | 1 | 27.33 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| | KAYNARCA | 16.11 | 1 | 16.51 | 0 | 0.60 | 0 | 1 | Potentially Gentrifying |
| Ümraniye Hekimbaşı Nation's Garden | İNKILAP | 18.04 | 0 | 38.21 | 1 | 25.06 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | KAZIM KARABEKİR | 22.71 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 9.04 | 0 | 0 | Non-Gentrifying |
| Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi Nation's Garden | GENÇOSMAN | 3.032 | 1 | 13.18 | 0 | 23.12 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | NAMIK KEMAL | 7.35 | 1 | 46.75 | 1 | 12.84 | 0 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | SANAYİ | 13.64 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 22.82 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | ÇİFTE HAVUZLAR* | 13.15 | 1 | No data | No data | 70.95 | 1 | 2 | Gentrifying |
| | VELİEFENDİ | 9.64 | 1 | 33.33 | 1 | 21.94 | 1 | 3 | Gentrifying |
| Zeytinburnu Çırpıcı Nation's Garden | ÇIRPICI | 6.32 | 1 | 9.33 | 0 | 15.08 | 0 | 1 | Potentially Gentrifying |

### 6.4. Expected Research Outcomes on the Site caused by Displacement and Gentrification

This section of the research includes some of the prior knowledge and prejudices the researcher had at the time of the research, and also while conducting the preliminary literature review for the research. These prior knowledge and prejudices are believed to have contributed to how the researcher approached the research, how the research focused on particular topics, and what the researcher used as an interview guide. Although the researcher avoided any incorrect prejudices, they are being included here so that the reader can see the researcher's biases as clearly as possible.

Some of the anticipated consequences from the large-scale construction of the Millet Gardens (as a megaproject) (Ay & Miraftab, 2016) include the potential for problems during the implementation phase of the project and when integrating the project into the local community due to the large-scale nature of the Millet Gardens. Although the their construction is now complete, the large-scale nature

of the Millet Gardens would suggest that there will be some of the typical governance issues associated with megaprojects that typically occur post-construction, including ongoing maintenance work and budget management.

The anticipated outcomes of this research suggest that displacement and gentrification processes (Pala & Acar, 2024) may have a major impact on changing the study area's socio-spatial structure. Gentrification may also cause changes to the local business activities, and how people use the public spaces within the study area, causing changes to people' everyday life and community cohesion (Madanipour, 2019). As housing areas that were developed as reserve areas and caused urban sprawl (Esenler Municipality, n.d.c.), the housing rights owners have sold their homes to new tenants. Additionally, as a result of the urban regeneration projects around this public green space, which was chosen as the focus of this research, and the new 15 July Neighborhood (Esenler Municipality, n.d.c.) that was added to this project after the park plan was completed; additional state-led green gentrification occurred.

As an additional consideration to the analysis of the impact of TOKI's urban renewal initiatives on the lives of city dwellers (Özdemir Sarı et al., 2022), it is assumed by the researchers that, as a result of the production of the park and the availability of green space; many of the users of the park will be the residents of the TOKI urban renewal projects. Therefore, it can be anticipated that a spatial conflict will occur when thinking about who will make up the visitor group to the park and if they will represent a larger group than the typical resident of Esenler. As an additional consideration to the expected visitor population to the park, the commercial activities which are planned for the urban renewal projects (Esenler Municipality, n.d.d.) (see Figure 43) will likely bring people with higher incomes to the neighborhood and therefore to the park.


*Figure 43 Commercial activities in the first floor of the 15 July Neighborhood buildings*

The fact that the only residential areas easily accessible to the park are the three adjacent neighborhoods, the fact that these three neighborhoods have already undergone gentrification (Pala & Acar, 2024) and the fact that other parks with the same size and quality are located in other neighborhoods; it is expected that visitors to this park will have less familiarity with the park and its surroundings than other park visitors. It is expected that visitors to this park will have higher incomes

than the average income level in Esenler. It is expected that due to the proximity and relationship of the 15 July Neighborhood project with the park (Esenler Municipality, n.d.d); that the percentage of usage of the park by the residents of this neighborhood will be greater than the other neighborhoods. The social characteristics of the park, the dynamics of the park, and the everyday experiences of the park will be formed according to the residents of this neighborhood.

Since each public park has its own character and way of implementation, not all green spaces can be evaluated equally in terms of even the most basic characteristics such as inclusivity, aesthetics and environmental benefits (Madanipour, 2019). Considering the TOKI housing projects implemented by the central government in the neighborhood and their relationship with the park (Esenler Municipality, n.d.d.), a green space quality that truly integrates different groups and produces positive practices in daily life is not expected.

Finally, in the study on the negative aspects of the park in the questionnaires, some environmental pollution responses were expected due to the construction of simultaneous housing projects in the neighborhood. Due to the weather conditions during the period when the interview part of the research was conducted face-to-face in the park, it is expected that fewer people will be encountered in the park than usual.

### 6.5. Esenler 15 July Millet Garden

In the early years of the construction of Millet Gardens, a study examining how decision-making processes worked (Kuşkonmaz, 2020) was reviewed, and information regarding the Esenler Millet Garden was added to this research. The findings of this study, which examined fundamental green space selection criteria such as per capita green space and population, are presented here.

A comparison was made between the number of parks planned to open as of 2019 and the existing district populations (see Figure 44) (Kuşkonmaz, 2020). This comparison revealed that population was not considered as a criterion in the decision-making process for Millet Garden locations, thus creating a planning problem. As will be explained in later stages of the study (see Figure 51), it should be noted that this park plan includes an increase in the population projected for 2025 (see Figure 55).

| District | Pending | Done | Total Number | Population of 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bağcılar | 1 | 0 | 1 | 745125 |
| Bakırköy | 1 | 1 | 2 | 229239 |
| Başakşehir | 1 | 3 | 4 | 460259 |
| Esenler | 2 | 1 | 3 | 450344 |
| Küçükçekmece | 1 | 2 | 3 | 792821 |
| Pendik | 1 | 1 | 2 | 711894 |
| Sultangazi | 0 | 1 | 1 | 534565 |
| Ümraniye | 0 | 1 | 1 | 710280 |
| Üsküdar | 2 (One is cancelled) | 1 | 2 | 531825 |
| Zeytinburnu | 1 | 0 | 1 | 293574 |

*Figure 44 Number of Millet Gardens in the districts of Istanbul and population of the districts in 2019 (TUIK, 2019) (adapted from Kuşkonmaz, 2020)*

Before the central government put forward the vision of "Millet Gardens," data obtained from a 2015 workshop showing the per capita green space in districts was used to examine the relationship between green space needs and the selection of Millet Garden locations by 2020, by identifying the districts that already had Millet Gardens. Esenler was found to have the lowest per capita green (0.2 m² per capita) space, while a similar cause-and-effect relationship could not be established for other districts. Although the lack of public green space appears to be a significant criterion in Esenler district, it was not seen as a criterion in the location selection of other districts. It should not be forgotten that the TOKI housing units, which were later included in the plan within the park area, have brought additional population to the district; this will be explained in later sections of this study (see Figure 53).

| District | Population of 2015 | Population Density (persons/ha) | Green Space per Capita (m²/person) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adalar | 16000 | 47 | 3.7 |
| Arnavutköy | 226000 | 82 | 1.7 |
| Ataşehir | 409000 | 217 | 0.8 |
| Avcılar | 418000 | 349 | 1.4 |
| Bağcılar | 755000 | 549 | 0.3 |
| Bahçelievler | 599000 | 598 | 0.3 |
| Bakırköy | 222000 | 247 | 7.2 |
| Başakşehir | 342000 | 164 | 2.6 |
| Bayrampaşa | 270000 | 591 | 1.7 |
| Beşiktaş | 189000 | 181 | 4.1 |
| Beylikdüzü | 262000 | 160 | 0.9 |
| Beykoz | 248000 | 72 | 2.6 |
| Beyoğlu | 242000 | 470 | 1.9 |
| Büyükçekmece | 223000 | 68 | 1.5 |
| Çatalca | 68000 | 37 | 1.3 |
| Çekmeköy | 221000 | 149 | 0.7 |
| Esenler | 459000 | 809 | 0.2 |
| Esenyurt | 687000 | 359 | 0.7 |
| Eyüpsultan | 368000 | 252 | 2.4 |
| Fatih | 419000 | 505 | 3.7 |

| District | Population of 2015 | Population Density (persons/ha) | Green Space per Capita (m²/person) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gaziosmanpaşa | 498000 | 592 | 0.4 |
| Güngören | 303000 | 620 | 0.5 |
| Kadıköy | 483000 | 256 | 2.3 |
| Kağıthane | 432000 | 505 | 1.3 |
| Kartal | 450000 | 242 | 1.8 |
| Küçükçekmece | 748000 | 370 | 0.9 |
| Maltepe | 476000 | 273 | 3.2 |
| Pendik | 664000 | 256 | 1.4 |
| Sancaktepe | 330000 | 199 | 0.6 |
| Sarıyer | 338000 | 122 | 1.8 |
| Silivri | 161000 | 50 | 1.4 |
| Sultanbeyli | 315000 | 190 | 0.5 |
| Sultangazi | 513000 | 465 | 0.8 |
| Şile | 33000 | 22 | 2 |
| Şişli | 272000 | 418 | 1.1 |
| Tuzla | 222000 | 156 | 1 |
| Ümraniye | 674000 | 267 | 0.6 |
| Üsküdar | 535000 | 227 | 3.5 |
| Zeytinburnu | 287000 | 744 | 1.7 |

*Figure 45 Population, density, and green area per capita in Istanbul districts in 2015 (adapted from Kuşkonmaz, 2020)*

At the time of this analysis (see Figure 46), the Esenler Millet Garden covered 1,800,000 m², and the research revealed dimensional differences among the Millet Gardens (Kuşkonmaz, 2020). It is unknown what criteria were used to select and define the park boundaries. Furthermore, the initially planned boundaries of the Millet Garden in the Esenler district differ from its current boundaries. The park's boundaries were redrawn to accommodate a housing development plot included in TOKI's plan (see Figure 47).

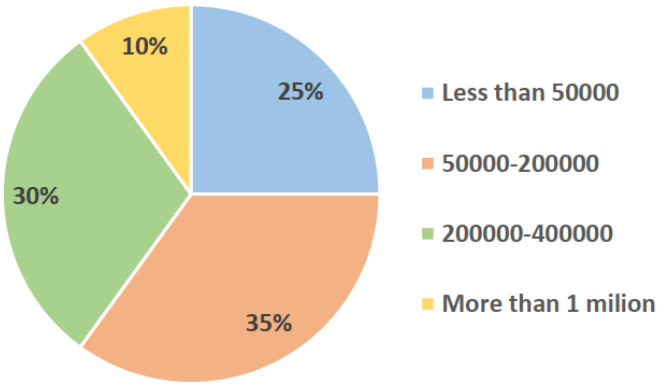



*Figure 46 Area size of the Millet Gardens in m² in Istanbul (adapted from Kuşkonmaz, 2020)*

*Figure 47 Initial plan of the park, front view of the green area considered to be built in the military area, published in a newspaper in 2016 (adapted from Angın, 2017)*

One of the key discussions surrounding the selection of locations for Millet Gardens concerns the previous function of the land. While it is known that during the Ottoman period, cemeteries, waste areas, and unused parts of the city were converted into Millet Gardens, today this practice has expanded to include not only vacant and idle lands but also military zones, green areas, airports, and former mining sites (see Figure 48) (Kuşkonmaz, 2020).

The Esenler 15 July Millet Garden is among the parks on this list that were converted from military areas. As previously explained in this study (see Figure 36), following the coup attempt in Türkiye in 2016, a number of changes occurred in military areas and their uses. This expropriation and the decision to choose green spaces, and the subsequent name change, clearly bear the traces of this political decision. In this context, Esenler Millet Garden was planned by expropriating the Metris Barracks and transforming it into a public green space.

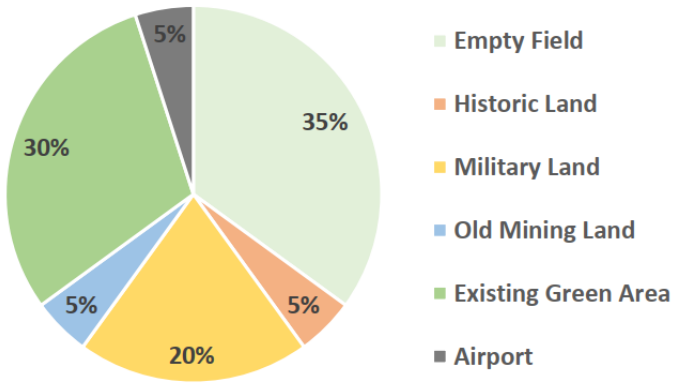



*Figure 48 Former functions of the Millet Garden lands (adapted from Kuşkonmaz, 2020)*

As is the case of Türkiye, when we look at Istanbul, we see that the institution responsible for constructing Millet Gardens is TOKI (see Figure 49). Besides TOKI (43%), MoEU is also involved in the construction process of Millet Gardens with a rate of 19% in Istanbul. However, it is observed that municipalities are predominantly involved in the transformation process of Millet Gardens, built on vacant lands or existing green areas (see Figure 40).

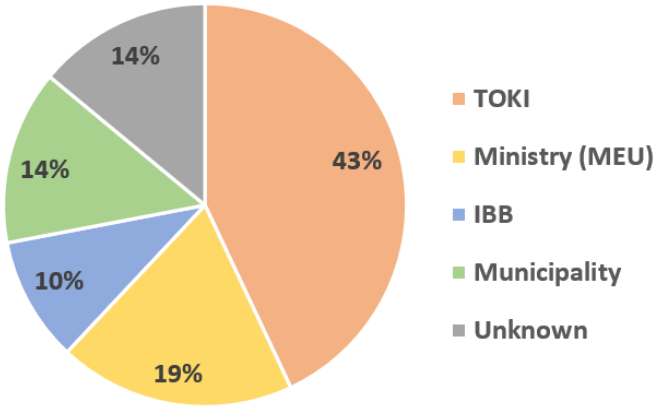



*Figure 49 Different actors involved in the construction of Millet Gardens in Istanbul at different government levels (adapted from Kuşkonmaz, 2020)*

### 6.5.1. Different Residential Urban Regeneration Projects Around the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden

According to Angın (2017), Esenler is a district of Istanbul with a population of 446,000 in 2017, located near the historical center. This district, which has a predominantly low-income workforce, has been a

focus of megaprojects and urban transformation initiatives over the past 10 years. In line with the political power and ideology that changed fundamentally with the presidential election in 2014 (see Figure 40), Esenler (see Figure 50) was used as a pilot project region (see Figure 51)(Angın, 2017).


*Figure 50 Neighborhoods around Esenler Millet Gardens (a), bird's eye view of the project area(b) (adapted from Angın, 2017)*

*Figure 51 One of the urban regeneration projects in Havaalanı Neighborhood around the Esenler 15 July Millet Gardens (adapted from Angın, 2017)*

Megaprojects (such as 303 Millet Garden in Türkiye) have been initiated in Türkiye, which has been governed by a conservative democracy (AKP); therefore, in Istanbul (see Figure 36) (Esenler Municipality, n.d.b). One of the biggest strategies is to advertise on a large scale and stay in power, instead of focusing on real problems on a local scale. The main reason why projects create problems for the low-income working class is the inconsistency in the decisions taken (see Figure 52). The reasons on which the projects are based are contradictory.

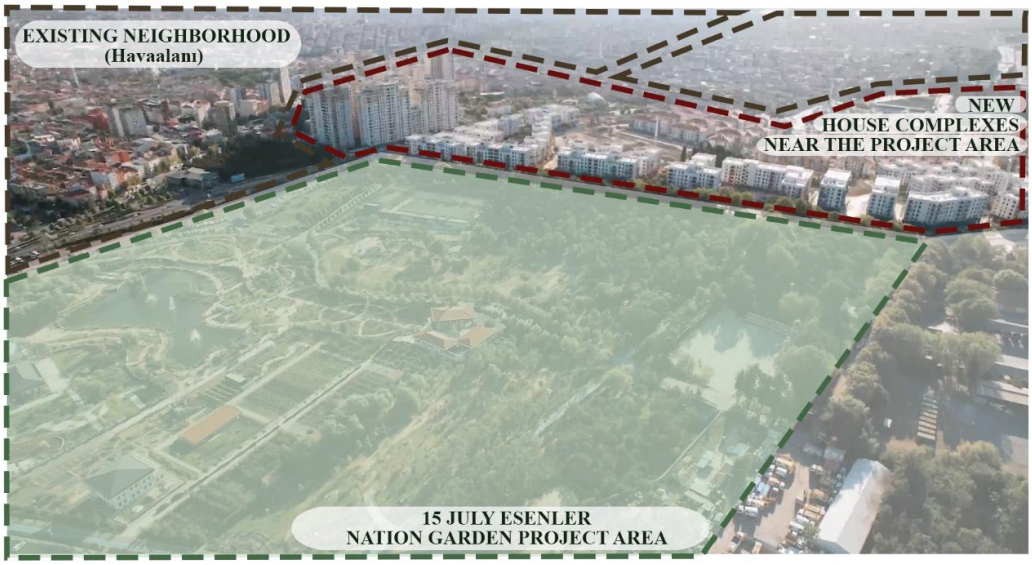



*Figure 52 Esenler 15 July Millet Garden and the relation between existing and new residential areas (adapted from Esenler Municipality, n.d.b.)*

You can see in Figure 53 view from the multi-storey houses symbolizing the new high lifestyle and the wrecker interventions used on the exterior walls of the low-quality houses in Havaalanı (Airport in English) Neighborhood which are close to the park. Their only common point is the benefit provided by high-income groups.

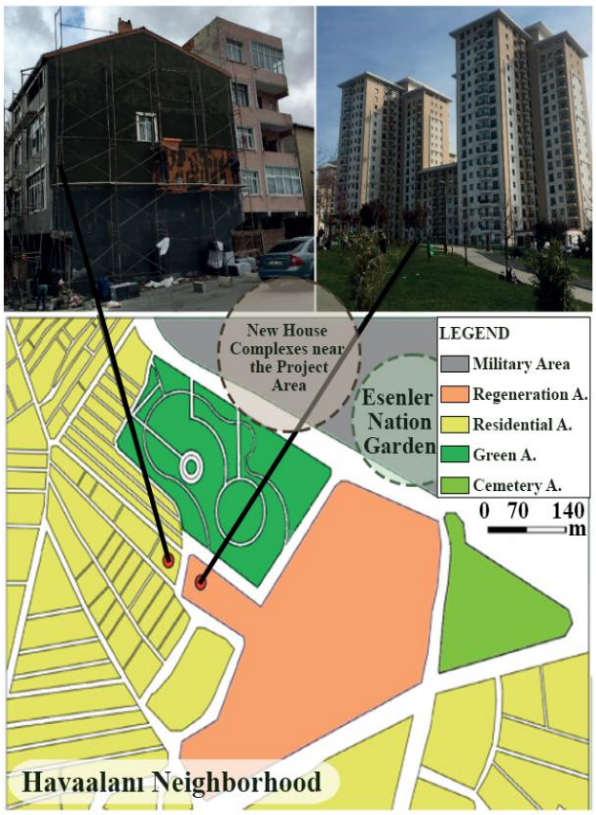



*Figure 53 Havaalani (airport in English) Neighborhood urban regeneration project (adapted from İncekaş, 2021)*

*Figure 54 The urban regeneration area around the park in the Atısalanı Neighborhood. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3, 2025.*

As can be seen on the municipality's website, 15 July Neighborhood (Esenler Municipality, n.d.d.) (see Figure 55) and Northern Reserve Construction Area (Esenler Municipality, n.d.e.), for which project plans have been made and executed by the Ministry, are being designed together with the Millet Gardens next to them. The northern one has not yet completed the residences and the park area. For the 15 July Neighborhood, the process worked differently due to project changes and the prior completion of the construction of the park. The project boundaries of this neighborhood were first included in the park plan, and then the residential area was expanded. It is noteworthy that the residential area (see Figure 55a), which was included in this plan later, is close to the park.

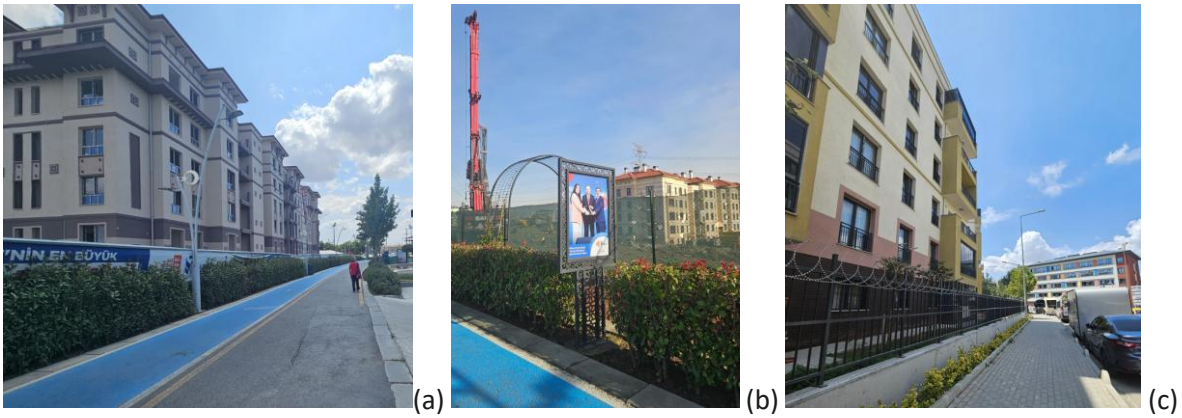



*Figure 55 The regeneration area in the 15 July Neighborhood on the western (a) and eastern (b) side of the park (in the park boundaries according to the previous plan). Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and December 10, 2025.*

### 6.5.2. Main Characteristics of the Park Visitors (Interviewees)

Following a literature review and desk research, the necessary data analyses were conducted after on-site data collection in this study. As explained in the methodology part of the study (see 5.2.4. Structured and Semi-structured Interviews), interviews were conducted with 25 migrants in the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. As a result of analyzing the responses to the questions, the following groups were formed and supported with photographs.

The interviewees' experiences were evaluated based on the neighborhoods they lived in and the distance to the park. For example, more data were collected from people living in nearby neighborhoods on walkability and safety. It was found that more data was obtained from visitors from distant neighborhoods regarding the park's opening and closing hours and car parking facilities.

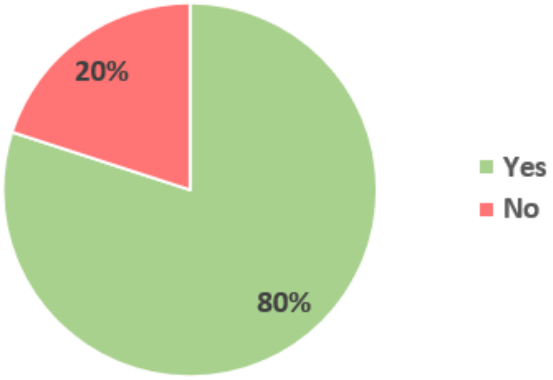



*Figure 56 Responses to the question "Is your home in the Esenler district of Istanbul?". Note: Created by the author based on the interview data collected for this study.*

As a result, it was observed that the interviewees came only from the northern half of Esenler (see Figure 50a), and most of them came from the near three neighborhoods (15 July, Kemer, and Havaalanı Neighborhoods). While the data yielded the desired diversity, it also confirmed the expected findings regarding the character of this park and its accessibility issues.

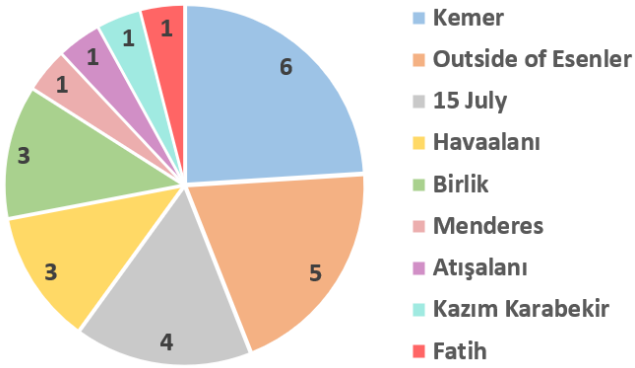



*Figure 57 Responses to the question "Which neighborhood do you live in?". Note: Created by the author based on the interview data collected for this study.*

### 6.5.3. Main Components of the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden and Everyday Practices in It

Some of the park features mentioned by the interviewees are listed with the information of the numbers of interviewees: there are an artificial lake (I4, I10, I15, I16, I25) (#1), a library to study (I1, I15, I24) (#4), a mosque (I5, I13) (#6), toilets (I11, I19) (#7), picnic tables (I3, I6, I7, I11, I12, I13, I14, I16, I17, I18, I19, I21, I23, I25) (#8), benches (I4, I14, I16, I17, I25) (#8), outside events (I12, I14, I20, I23) (#8), playgrounds (I2, I9, I10, I11, I15, I19, I21, I25) (#9), cafes (I10, I14, I15, I16) (#10 and #27), an open library for reading (I1, I4, I7, I19, I20) (#11), sport equipments (I1, I14) (#13), an animal section

(I1, I7, I10, I15) (#16), an agriculture section (I15) (#21), a restaurant (I16, I20) (#24), youth centers (I12, I23, I24) (#24), walking and cycling route (I1, I2, I10, I12, I14, I16, I17, I18, I19, I20, I24) (#26), football fields (I15, I19, I20, I24) (#27), sports centers (I14, I23) (#27), car parking (I11, I13, I14, I16, I20) (#30) (see Figure 58).


*Figure 58 Map of the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden (Esenler Municipality, n.d.b.)*

Many of the interviewees spoke positively about the areas where they interacted with nature. The areas in Figure 59 are among the most frequently and highly praised areas. The interviewees stated that they used the bike path for sports purposes, spent time in the open library to enjoy the tranquility and observe animals, and sat around the lake.


(a)

(b)

*Figure 59 The artificial lake (a), the cycling route, and the open library (b) in the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on November 6 and December 14, 2025.*

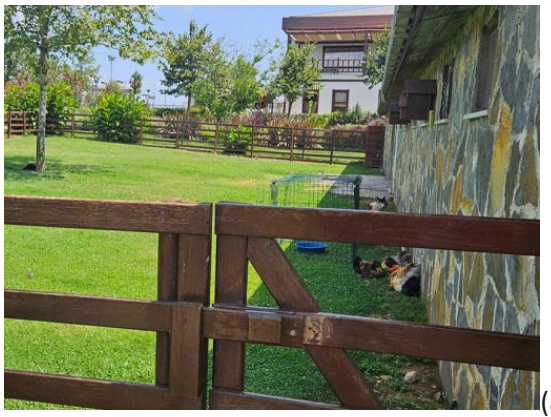
The skateboard park and the open area in front of the youth center for events (see Figure 60), which are mentioned more by young people, are a few of the areas that enable young people to socialize in the open air. Various free activities, film screenings, and free refreshments by Esenler Municipality are held and published monthly in the monthly program. These events are organized by groups within the youth center. The system operates in this way, although the interviewees indicated that they had difficulty participating due to language barriers. However, the areas shown in Figure 60 are effectively used to create social cohesion. Both the young and older interviewees agree that these events should be increased.


(a)

(b)

*Figure 60 The skateboard park (a) and the open area in front of the youth center for events (b) in the park. . Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025, and January 3, 2026.*

Although Esenler 15 July Millet Garden has more difficult access than neighborhood parks, one of the reasons why it is preferred by visitors from different neighborhoods is that there are different activity areas suitable for children. Figure 61shows two park areas that attracted the attention of children, which were frequently mentioned by participants with children or child caregivers. The animal section with various animals and the children's area with different features from normal playgrounds attract many visitors to the park, especially on weekends.

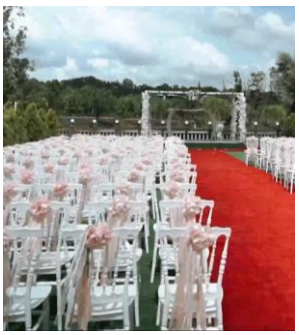

(a)

(b)

*Figure 61 An animal section (a) and a playground (b) in the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author August 3, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.1. Privatization of the Land to Gain Rent from the Public Green Area

The accessibility of green spaces and their designation as shared environments play a crucial role in achieving urban sustainability (UN-Habitat, 2019). Nonetheless, the concept of "publicness" exists on a spectrum; public spaces may still contain elements of privatization or may not be fully accessible to all at all times (Madanipour, 2019). A prominent illustration of this complexity is evident in the case study. There are many fee-based areas within the park, and some cannot be accessed without a membership or by purchasing a service. Wedding halls (see Figure 62b), cafes (see Figure 62c), and sports facilities are among them. As mentioned, while some interviewees indicated that they used these services, others did not mention them during the interview, and still others expressed their dissatisfaction with them. These were generally categorized under topics such as environmental discomfort (smell and noise) and inaccessibility. Figure 62 shows that for some private events, the walking paths along the artificial lake were closed to the public, expanding the event area. It has been observed that these privatizations are not limited to rented areas but also extend into public spaces.


(a)

(b)

(c)

*Figure 62 Park walkways closed for private events such as weddings(a) (Surname, n.d.), non-public areas and building of a private company for weddings (b) (Esenler Municipality, n.d.b.), and a cafe (c). Note: Photograph taken by the author on September 10, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.2. Hegemony of Non-shared Symbols

There are public Islamic religious structures within the park. Located in the center of the park, these structures, which include a mosque (see Figure 63a) and other facilities (see Figure 63b), also feature a central courtyard.


(a)

(b)

*Figure 63 Religious facilities (mosques(a), Quran course building (b)) included in the project area within the borders of Esenler Millet Garden (Esenler Municipality, n.d.b.).*

This area is also close to the market, the library, and the agricultural and livestock center. Therefore, it also serves as a stopping point for accessing these other areas. Beyond this area, there are also spaces for certain religious activities within specialized event buildings along the park's perimeter. For example, the area shown in Figure 64b, located within the youth center and marked by a sign at the entrance, is noteworthy. Such a visible signage system suggests an intent to establish religious hegemony. In addition to the various presidential and ministerial symbols in the surrounding area, the abundance of signs directing people to these religious uses makes the space an exclusionary space for those who do not use it for these purposes.

On this subject, interviewee 16 (Female, 22) said to the question “If you wanted to take action, what would your first action be?”, “I didn't take any action. If I could, I would remove all the strange symbols and signs I see around. There are always advertisements, banners, and religious symbols around. I find this very disturbing. My friend forced me to attend their events a few times, but I didn't like either the environment or the events themselves. Having such colorful signs and loud monitors in a park seems very strange to me. If I could, I would remove them all.”


(a)


(b)

*Figure 64 Religious facilities (mosque and courtyard(a) and prayer room in the youth center (b)). Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and September 10, 2025.*

Another issue mentioned by the interviewee is that this public space is subject to intense political propaganda (see Figure 65). It is evident that the central government demonstrates its influence in this area through various means, using names, colors, and symbols. This situation illustrates how a space is used as a site of encounter and is governed under neoliberalism (Madanipour, 2019).

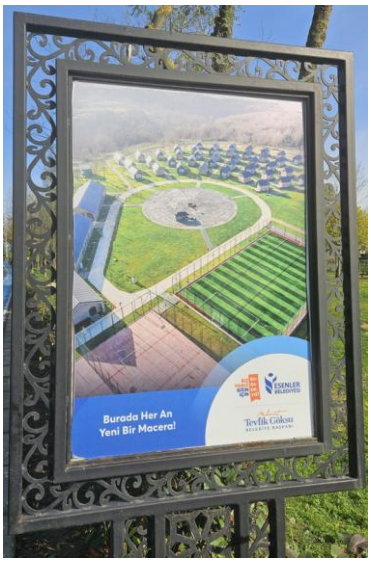

(a)

(b)

(c)

*Figure 65 Political propaganda tools of a single political party: flags (a), monuments containing a letter of thanks from the mayor of Esenler Municipality to the President (AKP chairman) (b), and (c). . Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

Sometimes, events organized by certain groups are even announced at regular intervals through loudspeakers (Figure 69a). There are different types of billboards along the entire walking path within the park. The entire park is decorated with photos of political leaders shaking hands and images of the close relationship with the central government, as well as other projects of the Esenler Municipality. So, these billboards are used entirely as a means of political propaganda.

(a)


(b)

(c)

*Figure 66 A loud monitor (a) and a billboard (b) about projects of the central government and the municipality, and a tactical urbanism street with the municipality symbol on the walkpath (a). Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 10, 2025.*

The name of the park, 15 July, refers to the day of the coup attempt. The central government has named various new projects and even existing areas after it. This pavilion, located in the center of Esenler 15 July Millet Garden, tells the story of a car and lets people stop and read it. The story recounts how, during the coup attempt, a citizen's car was crushed by a tank used by the coup plotters,

and how the citizens survived by chance. It is intended to remind people of this attempt, which was thwarted by the central government through bridges, squares, and parks, and to create a city memory.

(a)


(b)

*Figure 67 Emphasis on the name "July 15" on infrastructure materials, and a glass display pavilion about 15 July coup attempt legacy (b). Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

These political leaders are faces that a person walking through the park repeatedly encounters throughout their life. Therefore, this research reveals that, through megaprojects, public green spaces are used as a tool for political advertising rather than for improving social encounters.

#### 6.5.3.3. Unequal Access to the Affordable Food Sharing and Social Activities

In urban areas, not all users have the same experience and access to certain uses. In some areas, this difference may be more obvious and against the person's demand. This is exactly what the literature on spatial exclusion focuses on. It is possible for people to exclude certain segments of society due to certain socio-cultural characteristics. In public space, this situation can be more visible. This case study examines how migrants have different levels of access to certain public park uses through their own experiences.

The response from I15 (Female, 30) critiques the practical limitations of urban rights, particularly in children's education and the equitable distribution of urban resources. While the park's physical infrastructure includes educational and recreational facilities, the participant highlights a significant gap between "access" and "usability." As I15 reflects on her child's experience:

“(...) There are many activity areas that interest my child, but he can only watch. He wanted to join the teams, he wanted to pick things from the garden, we looked at the books in the library but we couldn't make use of any of them. There could be many different reasons for this, but I wish the staff's behavior and activities were tailored to suit us as well.”

This observation of a child who "can only watch" signifies a state of passive presence, which stands in

direct opposition to the NUA goals of fostering inclusive learning environments. In this context, the library and sports teams, intended as public goods, function as exclusionary spaces for those lacking the specific linguistic or cultural capital required to navigate them. This exclusion prevents the migrant child from exercising their fundamental right to play and informal education, which are essential components of urban citizenship (see Figure 68).

Figure 62 shows a possible example of local action. Migrants, who are socially and economically excluded from participating in social activities, try to exist in the social area by using the space and its potential. While there are many alternatives considering the size of the park and the space required, the choice of location is also seen as a tactic. Proximity to existing social spaces reveals an image that is currently taking action to meet social needs in the future.

*Figure 68 Children who play football in an empty spot between the sports fields. Note: Photograph taken by the author on January 3, 2026.*

Moreover, the participant's desire for her child to "pick things from the garden" (see Figure 69) addresses critical issues of food security and affordable access to food. Within the right to the city framework (Lefebvre, 1968), urban gardens are envisioned as democratic "commons" (Köpper & Müller, 2020) that provide residents with a direct connection to food production and nutritional education. However, the inability to participate in these gardening activities suggests that these spaces are managed through a restrictive institutional lens rather than a participatory one. When public staff and programming are not "tailored" to a diverse population, the park ceases to be an inclusive resource and instead reinforces social hierarchies. This lack of institutional adaptability essentially denies migrant families the right to "appropriate" the city's resources, transforming potential sites of food sovereignty and community education into visible reminders of their marginalization.


*Figure 69 Urban agriculture areas in the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.4. Critiques about Publicness Related to Closing Day

The interviewees raised criticisms regarding the periodic closure of a public park. Some interviewees (I7, I10, I15) argued that the park should remain open at all times. While the closures were at times perceived as related to security concerns and at other times attributed to maintenance work, the interviewees considered how park management addressed these two issues to be unreasonable. When evaluating management's approaches to resolving security and maintenance problems in everyday use, the interviewees found neither approach convincing.

Interviewee 10 (I10, Female, 25) said about the topic, "I don't understand why they closed a public park. There are always a lot of employees around. Security guards are constantly patrolling in cars. I think it would be more beneficial if it stayed open and the security continued like this. Not that I find their security measures logical, of course. I think it's ridiculous to spend so much gasoline on security for a green space. But personally, I would definitely come more often if the park were open all the time." Some interviewees (I1, I2, I5, I13, I14) were unaware of the park's opening and closing times, said that a change in these times wouldn't affect them, and therefore wanted the times to remain unchanged. I14 stated that the times were perfectly reasonable, while Interviewee 13 (I13, Female, 42) mentioned that their children also visit the park and they were concerned about their children's safety, therefore the times should not be changed.

*Figure 70 Fences around and between the sections of the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and December 27, 2025.*

It is bordered by continuous fences and barbed wire that rise above human height. It is completely inaccessible at designated closing times, when the entrance gates are also locked (see Figure 70). Some interviewees (I7, I11) have also explained that the park's closure at certain times is a security concern. For example, when asked "How would you like these opening hours to change?", the interviewee responded, "It should open at the same hours on Mondays," and then added the following explanation: “The park should be open everyday. For security reasons, it may be closed at night.”

According to interviewee 18 (I18, Male, 52), events are still held in the park on Mondays, but the park is not open to the public. He said, “The park is closed on Mondays. But I still don't understand why certain events are held inside. It's not just weddings or anything like that. I've heard that on Mondays, groups of people enter and leave the park by bus. I think such a large and public park should be open all the time. Holding secret, closed events is a problem for everyone, in my opinion. Besides, the staff are constantly doing maintenance and cleaning work throughout the day. I don't think it's normal for it to be closed on Mondays.“


*Figure 71 A billboard about the day the park was closed (Mondays) (We are continuing our maintenance and repair work to better serve you.). Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.5. Lack of Access to Public Spaces from Different Neighborhoods

Due to the choices made regarding its use and size, the park contains many wide roads. Asphalt-based roads have generally been used as road material, rather than innovative solutions. In addition, both the free (for employees) (see Figure 72) and paid (for visitors) car parking areas within the park further increase these impervious surfaces. Considering the park's previous permeable surface, this situation raises concerns regarding sustainability and future climate issues in terms of park design. A design that creates car dependency and covers the soil with impermeable materials has been preferred.

*Figure 72 Car parking areas in the park for the workers. Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 14, 2025.*

Car parking areas are a negative factor for parks, not only because they restrict the surroundings, but also because they restrict accessibility. The problem of insufficient car parking in the neighborhoods surrounding the park is increasing every year. This creates pressure on the pedestrian paths between the park and the neighborhood (see Figure 73) and reduces the walkability of the park.

*Figure 73 Sidewalks near the entrance of the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and January 3, 2026.*

Interviewee 10 (I10, Female, 25) said, “Because the road in front of the stadium is a bit uphill and there are always cars on the sidewalks, I generally do not like driving through my own neighborhood to get to the park. That road makes me uneasy. So I take a longer route and enter from the other entrance. Since that road is on the highway, I feel uneasy walking on the sidewalks amidst the car traffic. I especially think the road on the stadium side urgently needs improvement. The road is actually very wide, and the sidewalks are wide too, but there are so many parking problems in Esenler that people park on those wide sidewalks.”

The pedestrian sidewalks at the entrance to the Esenler Stadium, extending towards the Kemer Neighborhood, are very wide, as shown in Figure 73. These sidewalks, approximately 3 meters wide, are wider in some areas. However, in the Esenler district, which suffers from insufficient vehicle parking, this situation further complicates walkability. Vehicles parked on the sidewalks (see Figure 74) make them unusable, despite their width. Therefore, there are serious accessibility problems for disabled people and for all pedestrians between the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden and the Kemer Neighborhood.


*Figure 74 Sidewalks occupied by cars between the park and the Kemer Neighborhood. Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

Not only the occupation, but also the damage to the sidewalks (see Figure 75) caused by construction

and cars makes access to the park difficult and reduces its walkability. This situation negatively affects park usage and poses a risk to public health.


*Figure 75 Lack of sidewalk quality between the park and the Kemer Neighborhood. Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.6. Different Levels of Governance Discourses as Maintenance Problems

Figure 40 explains that some problems arise from the role of different and variable levels of management in the implementation of parks and the urban regeneration area (the 15 July Neighborhood). One of these problems is the sidewalk application seen in Figure 76. Several problems have been encountered during the implementation of this sidewalk pattern, a fundamental feature of accessibility for people with disabilities. This situation negatively affects the walkability of the neighborhood and the park surroundings.

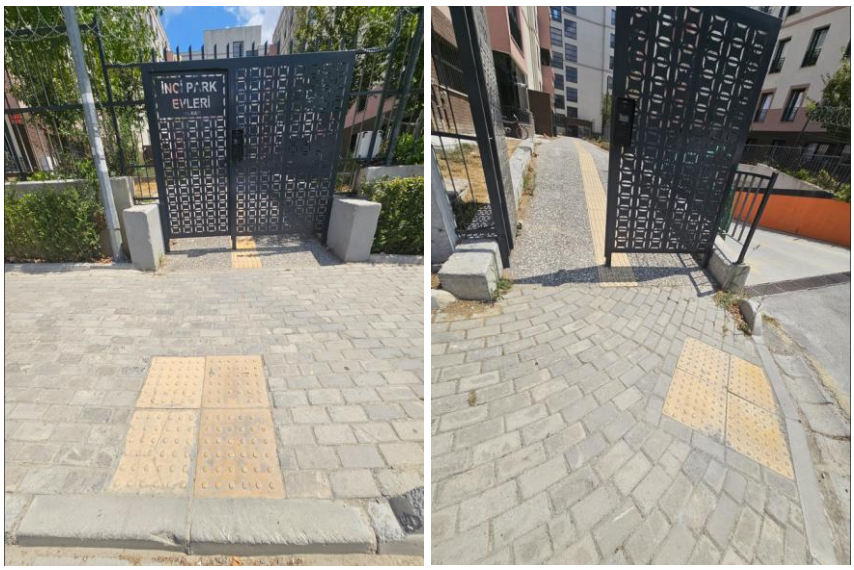



*Figure 76 Different pavement materials for disabled access in the 15 July Neighborhood. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3, 2025.*

### 6.5.3.7. The Reclaiming of Acquired Rights

Following complaints from the surrounding neighborhood (see Figure 55), a referendum was held on the barbecue areas (see Figure 77a), and the decision was made to keep them. However, during the pandemic, these areas were removed due to social distancing rules. They have not been reinstated, and such activities are now observed informally on the lawns in everyday use. In this area, a fountain was added to the existing ones (see Figure 77b).

Interviewees 3 and 4 (I3, Male, 31; and I4, Female, 27) answered the questions “What other public services should be provided?” and “Are there any public services in the park that you were previously able to use but are no longer eligible for? Please explain” with "providing a barbecue area".

Interviewee 17 (I17, Male, 55) shared his experience about the barbecue area as “I heard there used to be a barbecue area here. I wish they would bring it back. Other areas close to homes aren't allowed, so at least this park could have that option” (see Figure 77).


(a)

(b)

*Figure 77 Referendum for barbecue (currently removed) (a) (Esenler Municipality, n.d.a.) replaced fountain (b). Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 27, 2025.*

Interviewee 24 (I24, Male, 45) also expressed a concern as follows: "The lack of a barbecue area encourages such activities to be done secretly on the grass. I think it's more dangerous, and because there is no separate area for it, someone can come up to you at any time. I would prefer to have a separate picnic area."

### 6.5.3.8. Location Choices & Isolation

When the responses to the question "Where do you prefer to spend time in the park during these hours (before 6 p.m./after 6 p.m.)? Please explain why, if there is any specific reason?" posed to participants in the study were examined, it was observed that a number of common mobility patterns had developed in the use of the park.

Regarding this situation, interviewee 15 (I15, Female, 30) stated the following:

“In the evenings, we usually have 2-3 picnic tables that are dimly lit and sheltered from the wind. If they're empty, we go to them. (...) In winter, it's impossible to find a sheltered area without a draft,

and all the benches are wet, so we don't use them late at night. (...) In summer, the lights are too bright, so there are a lot of flies. We sometimes have to circle around 2-3 times to find benches that are far from the pool and dimly lit. The lighting is very disturbing. It's probably for security, but we try to find secluded spots as much as possible" (see Figure 78).

*Figure 78 Secluded spots in the park to avoid spatial park design that makes overcontrol possible. Note: Photograph taken by the author on January 3, 2026.*

Interviewee 16 (I16, Female, 22) said, "This park gets very bright at night. The different lighting effects are very distracting. I don't know why, why there needs to be so much light. When the benches are fully lit, I feel like people are constantly watching me. It's like all the spotlights are on me. There are very few nice spots, and they're usually full. That's why we prefer to sit in the cafe."

*Figure 79 Self-isolation as an action because of the overlightening (there are some people on the left part). Note: Photograph taken by the author on December 14, 2025.*

This statement highlights how technical urban elements, such as lighting and microclimate control, define the boundaries of the right to the city. It appears that the park's current spatial organization does not intuitively meet the diverse needs of its users, forcing them to engage in "spatial tactical maneuvers" (Bandauko & Arku, 2024). From the perspective of the NUA, which advocates for "safe, inclusive, and accessible green public spaces" (UN-Habitat, 2017), excessive lighting and a lack of

sheltered areas represent a failure in human-centered design (see Figure 80).

*Figure 80 Self-isolation as an action because of the overcontrol and overlightening (there are some people on the left part). Note: Photograph taken by the author on September 21, 2025.*

Furthermore, the participant's preference for 'isolated' and 'dim' locations in response to bright security lighting (see Figure 81) indicates a tension between institutional security measures and the user's need for psychological comfort and privacy. Within the framework of the right to the city, this implies that while the city provides a 'functional' space (security/lighting), it fails to provide a 'lived' space (appropriation/comfort) that invites long-term residency in the public sphere. This mismatch essentially marginalizes certain users, like I15, who are physically present in the park but are excluded from its intended use during specific hours or seasons.

*Figure 81 Overcontrol and overlightening areas. Note: Photograph taken by the author on September 10 and December 11, 2025.*

#### 6.5.3.9. Fight for Exclusion and Limits with Vandalism

The public nature of green spaces and their accessibility to everyone are important criteria for sustainable cities (UN-Habitat, 2017). However, there are different levels of publicness; public spaces are not always areas where private spaces do not exist or are entirely open to the public (Madanipour, 2019). One of the clearest examples of this situation at this park is that it is sometimes closed to the public and surrounded by fences much larger than human scale.

Interviewee 8 (I8, Female, 45) stated the question about this topic, “Please explain your reasoning behind your answer regarding parking usage hours”, as “It is not a specific reason, but since it is a modern public park, it should be open all the time.”

Interviewee 12 (I12, Female, 18) explained that after witnessing how park rangers treated them, she and her friends developed a tactic that affected their daily lives, saying: “One summer evening, while sitting and chatting with friends in the park, we had to leave because of closing time. Unlike other groups, we took the extra warnings personally because we were a mixed group of migrants. After that day, we left the park well before late at night. (...)”.

As seen in Figure 82, the park's opening and closing times have changed multiple times. During daily use, different billboards display different time intervals simultaneously. Some interviewees stated that they experienced tension regarding the closing time and the process, and that they had witnessed others experiencing similar tension before them.

According to interviewee 17 (I17, Male, 55)’s statement, “The opening/closing hours are bad. They keep changing the hours. One door has different hours written on it, the website has different hours, and another door has different hours. I'd prefer it to stay open all the time. (Once, I witnessed the tension of another group of migrants being removed from the park. Before closing time, the staff forced this group to disperse. We later noticed that the opening and closing times were different at the two gates. I think the fact that they were migrants made it easy for them to turn the situation into tension. They hadn't bothered other groups in the area to this extent.)”

In light of all these observations, it can be assumed that the scratches on the park's entrance gates during opening/closing hours are an expression of this “tension” (Bandauko & Arku, 2024). It appears that these actions were taken in response to these situations, although it is unclear who was responsible. During the research period, it was observed that these defaced billboards were replaced at least twice. At the end of the interview process, billboards displaying different opening and closing hours remain posted at the entrances (see Figure 82).

Some interviewees were unaware of the park's opening and closing times, said that a change in these times wouldn't affect them, and therefore wanted the times to remain unchanged. For example, interviewee 15 (I15, Female, 42) stated that the times were perfectly reasonable, while interviewee 13 (I13, Female, 40) mentioned that their children also visit the park, and they were concerned about their children's safety; the times should not be changed.


*Figure 82 Fences and billboards about opening/closing hours and park rules at the different entrances of the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and December 27, 2025.*

The researcher observed that some barriers were knocked down more than once during the interviews in the park. Considering the survey results, it was thought that the tension in the space could be a reason for this. Although it is not known how it fell and the reason is not known, according to the results of the research, this situation was thought to be related and defined as a local action. It is known that a number of visitors enter this area by jumping on various days. During peak periods, there are visitors who prefer to sit in this blocked area instead of sitting in crowded areas. Although their nationality is unknown and they were not photographed for security reasons, it was deemed important to include this information in the research in terms of context.

*Figure 83 Overturned barriers. Note: Photograph taken by the author on January 3, 2026.*

### 6.5.3.10. Request for Use of the Public Buildings in the Daytime and Nights

When the responses to the questions "What factors might encourage you to visit the park more frequently?" and “Are there any features of the park that make it "easier or more difficult" for you to meet new people when you visit? If so, what are they? Please explain.” posed to participants in the study were examined, it was determined that the park functions not only as a green space but also as a place for social networking. The vast majority of participants stated that the park's influence on

social connections was both its strongest and weakest feature. Participants in the retired group described the park as "a meeting point that alleviates loneliness." Some participants also used the phrase "a place where the visibility of migrants increases."

Regarding this situation, interviewee 15 (I15, Female, 30) stated the following:

“(...) But I prefer this park more for being with different people. You can meet people from different neighborhoods. Sometimes we come across different events. I would like to say that I would come more often if there were more events, but I don't come more often because there aren't many events that I can participate in. Although Turkish people are hospitable, I find it difficult to participate in these events. All the participants are Turkish, and since we have no common language or religion, I find it difficult to participate. I just watch from afar. There are many activity areas that interest my child, but he can only watch. (...) There could be many different reasons for this, but I wish the staff's behavior and activities were tailored to suit us as well.”

The statement of Interviewee 4 (I4, Female, 27) highlights a critical gap between physical access to urban public spaces and the right to the city. Although the interviewee physically occupies the park, she remains a “spatial outsider” due to cultural and linguistic barriers (see Figure 84). This phenomenon illustrates that the right to the city, as conceptualized by Lefebvre (1968), is not merely the right to visit a space, but the right to transform it and participate in its social fabric. I4’s remark, 'I just watch from afar,' signifies a lack of 'appropriation' and 'participation,' which are the two pillars of urban rights.


*Figure 84 Underused buildings in the park. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3 and September 10, 2025.*

### 6.5.4. Additional Features of the Park

In addition to these features, some services and characteristics that were cited as additional advantages and disadvantages by the interviewees are listed below:

Additional advantages: Interviewees (I6, I9, I21, I25) who affirmed the park's size were those who

visited only briefly and reported that the park's quiet, peaceful nature was beneficial to them; some interviewees (I1, I12, I14) appreciated the park for recharging, meditating, and observing nature.

Additional disadvantages include: no internet connection (I5, I10, I14, I23); picnic table shortage on weekends (I7); garbage around (I7, I9); lack of shaded space (I14, I22, I24); and crowding on weekends (I14, I20, I22).

*Figure 85 Spatial tactical maneuvers to find a shaded space. Note: Photograph taken by the author on August 3, 2025.*

It was observed that residents of the 15 July Neighborhood adopted different approaches than other interviewees. Some of these are as follows:

They mentioned the park's cleanliness and littering (I7). When asked, "Considering all these questions, what positive features of the park can you mention?", they responded, "We are happy to have 'our park' close to our home." To the question, "In light of all these questions, do you believe that other people have taken, or should take, action (small or large scale) regarding the park?", they responded, "Sometimes people litter. This situation makes 'the people living here' very angry." The noteworthy point here is the way the park is perceived. Instead of reacting with a sense of environmental damage, these word choices were made because this behavior occurred in a park located near their own homes. Other interviewees did not comment on this issue.

Although they want the park to be open on Mondays, they do not want it to be open too early or too late (I7). Other interviewees either preferred it to be completely transparent or indicated they did not want any changes.

### 6.6. Critical Thinking about the NUA and Millet Gardens

In the National Report of Türkiye, Millet Gardens are presented as important urban development projects that reflect the country’s progress toward sustainable and inclusive urban goals. The report highlights measurable achievements such as the number and total area of these parks, but it does not provide information on key issues like previous land uses, the criteria for choosing locations, or the

social impacts of these developments. Although the NUA emphasizes inclusiveness, public participation, and spatial justice (Swyngedouw et al., 2002), in practice, some of these parks have been linked to gentrification, the displacement of existing communities, and integration with commercial developments. The absence of public consultation and transparency suggests that these projects are shaped through a top-down planning approach that prioritizes national-level image-building rather than addressing local needs. In this context, Türkiye uses the flexible and broad language of the NUA to promote itself as a country committed to sustainable urban development, even if the on-the-ground outcomes do not fully reflect this narrative.

One of the main reasons Türkiye emphasizes a progressive and sustainable image in international reports is to strengthen its position within global development and policy circles. By aligning itself with the NUA, Türkiye aims to demonstrate that it is a responsible, forward-looking actor capable of implementing global standards at the national level. This portrayal not only contributes to diplomatic credibility but also serves important economic purposes. In particular, by highlighting progress and downplaying domestic challenges, such as economic instability, spatial inequality, or governance limitations, the government can present the country as a stable and attractive destination for foreign investors. Framing urban development as sustainable and modern allows Türkiye to maintain international confidence and continue to attract investment, even in periods marked by internal financial or political strain. In this way, the image of progress becomes both a diplomatic strategy and an economic tool.

### 6.7. Recommendations for Future Implementation of the NUA and Spatial Planning

#### 6.7.1. Participation and Transparency

The preparation processes of national reports should ensure more active involvement of civil society organizations and academic circles. Increasing transparency in decision-making processes will strengthen public trust and enhance the effectiveness of urban policies. Moreover, UN-Habitat meetings, involving ongoing mutual learning processes with African communities, for now by the UN, at different local levels, should be held with a broader perspective to gain real outcomes.

#### 6.7.2. Social and Spatial Justice

Urban regeneration projects should be planned in a way that includes all segments of society and ensures spatial justice. Equitable access to urban resources and services is essential to prevent socio-economic disparities from deepening.

#### 6.7.3. Sustainability

To achieve SDGs, concrete steps must be taken in protecting green areas, improving energy efficiency, and combating climate change. Sustainable urban policies should prioritize resilience against natural

disasters and long-term environmental protection. However, achieving true sustainability requires a fundamental shift in governance: a framework must be established where global agendas can no longer be used as a justification for top-down megaprojects imposed by central governments. By their nature, such megaprojects generate a multitude of both environmental and social conflicts, often leading to the degradation of local ecosystems and the displacement of vulnerable communities. Furthermore, instead of fostering resilience, these large-scale interventions frequently complicate everyday urban life, making cities less navigable and more exclusionary for their inhabitants. Therefore, sustainability cannot be decoupled from local spatial agency; it must resist the 'green-washed' narratives of megaprojects that prioritize political gain over the socio-ecological well-being of the city.

### 6.8. Data Limitations

Most of those interviewed were unaware of Millet Garden and the central government's vision for it. For example, in response to the last question, “Do you know of any other Millet Garden besides the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden? What would you like to say about Millet Garden in general?”, Interviewee 11 replied, “Yes. I think that is true for most green spaces. The user profile is similar throughout Istanbul.” The assessments were generally made by comparing it to other parks, or parks of similar size. While this may not allow for a critically contextualized view, it does allow for a commentary free from political bias. Therefore, evaluating and comparing the impact on the real daily lives of any user through these experiences is also important for the research.

## Chapter 7. Conclusions

### 7.1. Discussion

#### 7.1.1. Alternative Decision-making in Spatial Governance

The findings of this study suggest that contemporary municipal governance in Türkiye remains largely characterized by a state-centric and top-down decision-making structure. Local authorities function primarily as extensions of the central government rather than autonomous democratic actors. Municipal administrations that politically align with the ruling party tend to be incorporated into national policy framework, whereas opposition-led municipalities often encounter legal, fiscal, or administrative bypass mechanisms (Erensü et al., 2022, p. 111) that restrict their decision-making autonomy. This asymmetric power distribution highlights the fragility of local self-governance and the dependence of municipal capacities on national political dynamics.

In this sense, Turkish municipalism resonates more closely with what Roth, Russell, and Thompson (2023) define as pragmatic or state-centric municipalism, a form of local governance that emphasizes administrative efficiency and service delivery but rarely challenges the hierarchical, patriarchal, and capitalist logics of the nation-state. Within this model, municipalities are conceived less as democratic spaces for citizen participation and more as managerial units responsible for implementing centrally defined development agendas. Consequently, participatory democracy remains procedural rather than transformative, and local citizens are positioned as service users rather than political co-producers.

However, the same authors propose a contrasting vision under the framework of radical municipalism, which may serve as a conceptual and normative alternative for the Turkish context. Radical municipalism, as articulated by Roth et al. (2023), is not merely a set of progressive urban policies but rather a strategic hypothesis for systemic transformation that uses the municipal scale as an entry point for counter-hegemonic struggle. It seeks to politicize proximity, that is, to transform everyday local relationships of encounter and assembly into democratic and collective processes of decision-making. This approach aspires to reconfigure power from a hierarchical “power-over” model to a collaborative “power-with” model, emphasizing prefigurative practices, participatory institutions, and feminist, ecological, and economic reorganization at the local level. Applying this perspective to Türkiye, radical municipalism could offer an avenue for reimagining municipal governance as a site of democratic renewal rather than administrative subordination. It implies strengthening citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting mechanisms, and community-based economies that operate beyond partisan boundaries. Moreover, it would entail a feminization of politics, embedding care, cooperation, and mutual responsibility into local political culture, and a deeper ecological transformation that prioritizes social reproduction and environmental justice (Swyngedouw et al.,

2002) over growth-oriented urban policies. In short, radical municipalism provides not a blueprint but a critical hypothesis that invites municipalities and communities to prefigure alternative forms of democracy and collective life.

Rather than allowing central authorities or private investors to determine the future of urban spaces, participatory urban planning models aim to restore the social meaning of place by engaging local communities in decision-making. While the implementation of such an approach in Türkiye would undoubtedly face structural and political constraints, it nonetheless highlights a crucial analytical and normative possibility: that municipalities can be more than administrative instruments of the state; they can become laboratories of democratic experimentation. By engaging with Roth et al.'s (2023) framework, this research contributes to the ongoing debate on the future of local governance in crisis-prone and centralized political contexts, suggesting that the politicization of proximity could constitute a meaningful path toward transformative, participatory, and emancipatory municipal politics in Türkiye.

Unlike conventional resilience, which is often about returning to a damaged status quo, radical resilience describes practices that refuse such a turn (Trovato & El Ariss, 2025). The local actions in Millet Gardens' cases exemplify this refusal: they are not merely stopgaps but attempts to invent alternatives. In this sense, radical resilience is not only descriptive of the present but also diagnostic of how crises can catalyse new imaginaries of urban life.

### 7.1.2. Operationalization of Public Spaces

A more recent agenda in Türkiye is the change of the ownership of the park. Although no academic article has been published on it to date, past experiences (Batuman, 2022) recall the usual discussions about the park's management and future. It was announced that the park would be put up for sale to pay off debts, and the council approved it. Esenler Municipality statement: This is done within the framework of legislation that allows municipalities to pay off their debts by offsetting them against public institutions. This situation recalls the debate over use value and exchange value that Kuymulu (2014) puts forward regarding public open spaces. In the face of this situation, it is important to remember the following: in 2013, the resistance in Gezi Park succeeded in claiming the right to the city for the citizens, based on the use value of the city, and to assert it above all other capitalist aspirations to reshape it as a center of exchange value and capital accumulation. This very recent achievement is a reminder to the central government and others who seek to profit from state-owned land that the direct privatization of public spaces for profit-making can meet with citizen resistance, and that this can quickly turn into collective support in Türkiye. While this change of ownership may not function as a form of privatization for the time being, it is important to monitor how the central government will use it in the future.

### 7.1.3. Role of Territorial Programmes

The incorporation of radical concepts into institutional structures often leads to a softening of their initial political meaning. As Kuymulu (2014) notes, “it is not possible to comment on the ‘motivations’ of political actors; one can only talk about their practices.” Kuymulu (2014, p. 25) ultimately concludes that the interest of UN agencies in the concept of the right to the city, whether intentional or not, has resulted in its appropriation and the dilution of its radical potential. This observation suggests that the institutional appropriation of radical urban concepts reduces their political content to a technical or administrative framework, thus circulating a transformed version of the concept.

### 7.1.4. Megaprojects as Urban Conflict

Millet Garden as a green space as part of an urban environment, rather than being determined by a top-down approach to land use, is available for experimentation based on its potential for change in accordance with the spatial nature of a park and its size and distance, according to Davoudi (2023), as polyphony. Therefore, it offers an alternative to making one-time decisions or making permanent decisions. Unlike the current situation, the use of buildings and the names and purposes of use of certain restricted areas can be changed through experimentation, more than once. It encourages planners to reflect on their diminishing role as a discipline in practice today and to consider the possibilities of alternative ways to envision the planning process.

Millet Gardens, as a megaproject, fails for several reasons concerning the aspects of locality and identity. As a concept, it was developed as something that varied only because of a few dimensional problems, and when there are no dimensional problems, the city will know what to expect. For immigrant groups and urban residents from unknown countries, public space is an opportunity to have a voice. With regards to explaining urbanism today as “planetary urbanization” (Brenner & Schmid, 2015), cities require a multicultural sense of belonging. From such a perspective, local action, such as that of the NUA can take place. There is a need for a forward-looking “prefigurative participation” (Davoudi, 2023) and not a traditional participation as with all of the levels in the hierarchical order of the country.

Although ‘megaproject’ is not used in the NUA, the content of the AKP government's vision of megaprojects (Can, 2025) is mentioned. In general, the content of Millet Gardens was mentioned, producers were listed and it was stated that it would be produced in all provinces. Even though all these data have been conveyed in detail, it is seen that the targets have not been completed and budget problems (Flyvbjerg, 2014) have emerged from 2021 to the present day. In an agenda that is meant to be an implementation report, there are incomplete targets and incomplete or inaccurate information that does not apply to every park. The lack of a feedback system for the NUA country reports is seen here. It is therefore suggested by the research that an audit mechanism should be in

place so that real cross-country, mutual, and reliable learning can take place.

While the specific term ‘megaproject’ is absent from the official terminology of the NUA, the strategic vision of the AKP government regarding large-scale urban interventions is explicitly mirrored in the National Report. The state’s commitment to proliferating Millet Gardens across all provinces constitutes a national megaproject logic that prioritizes top-down implementation. However, the empirical data suggests a stark divergence between these ambitious targets and their practical realization; since 2021, persistent budget deficits and incomplete objectives, consistent with Flyvbjerg’s (2014) theories on megaproject failures, have undermined the credibility of this urban vision.

In the context of urban conflict, this research argues that the NUA country reports suffer from a critical lack of a feedback and audit mechanism, leading to the dissemination of inaccurate or localized information that does not reflect the reality of every park. These projects become sites of conflict not only through financial mismanagement but through the presentation of incomplete achievements as 'global successes'. Consequently, for the NUA to facilitate genuine, reliable, and cross-country learning, there is an urgent need to replace this unilateral reporting style with a rigorous auditing system that can account for the socio-spatial frictions and governance gaps inherent in such large-scale urban transformations.

### 7.2. Future Perspectives

The most significant limitation of this research was the inability to fully capture and present this diversity, considering the context-dependent nature and individually specific character of everyday life and practices. Although the research was conducted in a country where the researcher's native language is spoken, Türkiye’s high volume of migration flows posed additional challenges, particularly in communication with many migrants.

Research conducted through a more extended analysis and interview process, guided by comparative criteria such as differences between Turkish citizens and specific migrant groups, including highly skilled or women migrants, could yield more precise and reliable results and enable a better evaluation of cause-and-effect relationships. For future research, a valuable direction is to adopt an approach that includes megaproject implementers and other stakeholders. Such an approach may contribute to a deeper, more accurate understanding of the findings and to stronger research.

### 7.3. Conclusion

While the New Urban Agenda (NUA) serves as a vehicle for integrating 'the right to the city' into global policy, this research argues that the concept has undergone depoliticization, which limits its capacity for genuine local mobilization. Although the concept remains a fundamental intellectual heritage, the literature review demonstrates that its contemporary application has deviated significantly from its original, transformative essence. From a modern perspective, the concept has become ambiguous, validating the anxieties of scholars such as Harvey regarding its potential for misinterpretation and co-optation.

This research suggests that, in an era defined by the hegemony of neoliberalism, widespread conflict, and the emergence of migration as a planetary phenomenon, the NUA's emphasis on local action is necessary; however, the institutionalized version of this concept often fails to embody the transformative agency explored in this study. The discourse for contemporary planners and geographers has shifted from the traditional concept toward prefigurative alternative actions and radical planning. Ultimately, these global frameworks, while strategically significant, are increasingly inadequate to meet the urgent, multifaceted demands of the Global South to overcome urban problems or crises.

A "crisis" is now an ubiquitous, taken-for-granted narrative across many social and political spheres. The ubiquity of this type of narrative could diminish the term's political value and meaning, and create a global geography that equally distributes crisis. The collection of papers provides insight into the diverse socio-geographic contexts of everyday life and offers an understanding of how crisis experiences are interdependent. Crisis in everyday life challenges the ability to eventually define crisis so that we can better understand the specific spatial and temporal aspects of current crises and the inequality of power relations that exist in them (Dimitrakou & Ren, 2025).

Beginning with this theoretical approach to understanding migrants' experiences, the findings from in-depth interviews with migrants at the Millet Garden, a part of a megaproject in Türkiye, show how macro-level "crises" are both represented and manifested in migrants' everyday life practices. For migrants, the Millet Garden is not simply an outdoor recreational area; it is an everyday life for negotiating on a daily basis their crises of being excluded from the city and their feelings of belonging to it. The interviews also showed that migrants do not experience a uniform or homogeneous geography of crisis; rather, the power dynamics that exist in the public space create a direct system of control, determining whether, how, and when migrants can occupy the space. Therefore, the experience of migrants in the Millet Garden shows that migrants' crises are not singular events but rather ongoing, spatiotemporal continuities created by power asymmetries and embedded into the fabric of the urban everyday.

While the NUA aims to enhance urban life for all through core principles such as fostering a sense of

belonging, ensuring social inclusion, providing equitable access to basic resources, and preventing gentrification and displacement, its framework has faced significant academic scrutiny since its adoption in 2016. Scholars have critically approached the NUA's implementation, highlighting persistent challenges such as the friction between global ambitions and local realities, institutional and governance fragmentation, deep-seated social and spatial inequalities, resource and capacity limitations, alongside critical data and knowledge gaps, and problems related to effective monitoring and accountability. As the Republic of Türkiye approaches its second national report on the implementation of the agenda period, this research demonstrates that these concerns remain acutely relevant.

The results of the policy framework analysis indicate a deepening contradiction between transnational norms and local practices in Türkiye's urban spatial production. The ideals of "the right to the city" and "social inclusion" championed at the transnational level lose their manifest intent as they descend through administrative tiers, eventually being replaced by technical spatial standardization at the local level. On a national scale, it is observed that the "Millet Gardens" project, driven by a megaproject logic, overshadows rights-based discourses, reducing sustainability to mere green space metrics. While there is a strong declaration of intent regarding participation and migrant presence at the metropolitan level, this discourse fails to find a spatial equivalent at the local level, where exclusionary decision-making processes persist. The policy framework utilizes global agendas as a facade while institutionalizing top-down, property-oriented spatial production in local practice, which constitutes the primary barrier to radical inclusivity.

The research, conducted through desk research for policy analysis, case study selection, photographic fieldwork, and semi-structured interviews with 25 migrants, reveals a profound disconnect between the high-level promises of the agenda, the central government's vision, and the lived experiences in the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden. Rather than acting as a strictly public 'green' commons, the research identifies a process of land privatization aimed at extracting rent from public green areas, which fundamentally undermines the concept of a shared urban resource. This spatial strategy is further complicated by the hegemony of non-shared symbols, which creates a cultural barrier rather than fostering the 'sense of belonging' envisioned by the NUA.

The everyday practices within the park expose systemic inequalities, particularly through unequal access to affordable food and social activities, which disproportionately affect the migrant population. Furthermore, the park's operational policies, such as the closing day protocols and maintenance problems arising from fragmented governance discourses, effectively limit its 'publicness'. The spatial analysis also highlights a significant lack of access from different neighborhoods, exacerbated by location choices that lead to isolation, effectively cutting off the park from the very urban fabric it is meant to serve.

Ultimately, the park has become a site of friction where the reclaiming of acquired rights clashes with a visible fight for exclusion and limits manifested through vandalism. The migrants' demand for the use of public buildings during both daytime and nighttime underscores a need for more flexible, inclusive management that is currently absent. These findings suggest that the Millet Garden, despite its scale, functions as a site of spatial and social exclusion, where the NUA's ideals of social inclusion and engagement are replaced by a reality of institutionalized isolation and fragmented publicness.

In this context, the research contributes to debates on planning justice by offering a scalable participation framework that aligns with the normative ideals of the NUA while directly addressing Türkiye's complex and politically charged urban reality. The study concludes that the pursuit of a 'more just city' is no longer found in abstract rights, but in the bottom-up spatial agency and everyday resistance practices of marginalized groups, particularly migrant communities. Place-based, small-scale instruments, such as planning laboratories, transparency protocols, community-led food initiatives, and 'the right to the green' practices, offer a tangible pathway to bypass the neutralized rhetoric of global discourses. For global practices to remain relevant in the coming decades, they must evolve beyond institutionalized narratives and embrace the radicalism necessitated by the unique struggles of the Global South.

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## Annex

## Annex 1: Policy Framework Analysis

*Table 9 Policy framework analysis – Community planning*

| | Planning | Keyterms | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Main Theme | Community Planning | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-theme | Decision-making | | | | | Rights | | | |
| Year | Document & Page # / Subtopics | Participation /participatory | Local Government /Decentralization | Community /City Council | Migrants | Local Action | The Right to the city /right for all / everyone | Children/ Human Rights | Housing, Shelter / Adequate Housing | Economic resources / Land development / Ownership |
| 2014 | Türkiye Habitat III National Report (65 pages) | 23 | 40 | 26 | 2 (immigrant) | 0 | 2 | 35 | 58 | 1 |
| 2016 | Habitat III Issue Papers Report (180 pages) | 108 | 171 | 122 | 66 | 6 | 5 | 52 | 181 | 203 |
| 2017 | The New Urban Agenda (102 pages) | 27 | 36 | 22 | 13 | 7 | 17 | 19 | 26 | 34 |
| 2019 | Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023) of Türkiye (124 pages) | 54 | 51 | 18 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 10 |
| 2019 | Strategy Plan of Ministry EU of Türkiye (2019-2023) (165 pages) | 32 | 108 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 16 | 3 | 7 | 32 |
| 2020 | Strategy Plan of IBB (2020-2024) (156 pages) | 111 | 32 | 32 | 16 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 4 |
| 2020 | Strategy Plan of Esenler M. (2020-2024) (90 pages) | 20 | 150 | 45 | 12 | 100 | 18 | 60 | 40 | 85 |
| 2021 | Türkiye National Report on the Implementation of the NUA (221 pages) | 29 | 42 | 11 | 8 | 4 | 60 | 6 | 18 | 14 |
| 2024 | Twelfth Development Plan (2024-2028) of Türkiye (253 pages) | 2 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 45 | 140 | 210 | 180 |

*Table 10 Policy framework analysis – Environmental Planning*

| | Planning | Keyterms | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Main Theme | Environmental Planning | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-theme | Public Green Spaces | | | | Management | | | Spatial Justice | | |
| Year | Document & Page # / Subtopics | Parks | Green | Garden | Millet Garden | Security | Monitoring | Privatization | Sustainability | Inclusive/ Inclusion / Inclusivity | Accessibility |
| 2014 | Türkiye Habitat III National Report (65 pages) | 2 | 2 | 1 + 4 (hobby garden) | 0 | 65 | 32 | 2 | 44 | 14 | 28 |
| 2016 | Habitat III Issue Papers Report (180 pages) | 28 | 125 | 11 | 0 | 140 | 60 | 10 | 297 | 150 | 110 |
| 2017 | The New Urban Agenda (102 pages) | 7 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 24 | 10 | 0 | 162 | 140 | 15 |
| 2019 | Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023) of Türkiye (124 pages) | 32 | 3 | 4 (hobby Garden) | 3 | 88 | 45 | 16 | 86 | 18 | 32 |
| 2019 | Strategy Plan of Ministry EU of Türkiye (2019-2023) (165 pages) | 4 | 29 | 27 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 13 |
| 2020 | Strategy Plan of IMM (2020-2024) (156 pages) | 85 | 120 | 15 | 2 | 60 | 45 | 0 | 10 | 34 | 50 |
| 2020 | Strategy Plan of Esenler M. (2020-2024) (90 pages) | 15 | 10 | 10 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 1 |
| 2021 | Türkiye National Report on the Implementation of the NUA (221 pages) | 23 | 145 | 45 | 22 | 28 | 42 | 0 | 25 | 12 | 63 |
| 2024 | Twelfth Development Plan (2024-2028) of Türkiye (253 pages) | 2 | 3 | 1 (School) | 1 | 118 | 85 | 28 | 214 | 8 | 12 |

**Annex 2. Consent Form**

Politecnico di Torino

**DRAFT INFORMATION NOTICE PURSUANT TO ART. 13 OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION EU 679/2016 FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY**

Dear interested party, as required by the General Data Protection Regulation (EU Regulation 2016/679 – also known as the "GDPR"), we provide you with the following information regarding the processing of your personal data.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**The Data Controller** is the Politecnico di Torino, with headquarters in Corso Duca degli Abruzzi, n. 24, 10129 – Turin, in the person of the *Rector pro tempore* as the legal representative.

The Data Controller's contact detail is PEC: politecnicoditorino@pec.polito.it;
For further information and clarification: privacy@polito.it;

The **Data Protection Officer ("DPO")** of the Politecnico di Torino, whom interested parties can contact for matters related to the processing of their personal data and the exercise of their rights, can be reached at the following addresses: dpo@polito.it; PEC: dpo@pec.polito.it.

**PRINCIPLES, LEGAL BASIS, AND PURPOSES OF THE PROCESSING**

In compliance with the principles of lawfulness, fairness, transparency, adequacy, relevance, and necessity as per Art. 5, paragraph 1, of the GDPR , the Politecnico di Torino, as the Data Controller, in pursuit of the institutional purposes connected with the progress of scientific research as provided for by the University Statute, will process your personal data pursuant to Art. 6, paragraph 1, letter a) [1] ["the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of those personal data for one or more specific purposes"] of the Regulation.

In particular, your personal data will be processed by the Politecnico di Torino, using paper and/or computerised methods, to conduct a study in Italy that will be included in the research "**The Right to the City in the light of the New Urban Agenda:** The Impact of State-led Gentrification on Everyday Life of Migrants through Urban Megaprojects in Türkiye".

[1] In the case of data belonging to special categories (e.g., personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, as well as the processing of genetic data, biometric data intended to uniquely identify a natural person, data concerning health or a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation), it is necessary to refer to Art. 9, paragraph 2, letter a) ["the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of those personal data for one or more specific purposes"] and modify the relevant field in the consent expression form (see page 4).

**PERSONS AUTHORISED TO PROCESS DATA, ANY RECIPIENTS OR CATEGORIES OF RECIPIENTS, AND DATA PROCESSORS**

The data processed for the aforementioned purposes will be communicated to, or will in any case be accessible by, the Project Manager and the other members of the research group of the DIST Department.

The information collected during the research may be communicated in an anonymous and/or aggregate form to other parties, such as, for example, other Universities, public and private institutions, and organisations having research purposes, limited to information without identifying data and for historical or scientific purposes.

The disclosure of the results (for example, through the publication of scientific articles, participation in conferences, writing theses, etc.) may take place, subject to your consent, by associating your personal data or the role you held with the information and declarations you provided OR in an anonymous and/or aggregate form and in any case in ways that do not make you identifiable.

The management and storage of personal data collected by the Politecnico di Torino take place on systems located within the University and/or external systems[2] of providers of certain services necessary for technical-administrative management who, solely for the purposes of the requested service, may become aware of the personal data of the interested parties and who will be duly appointed as Data Processors pursuant to Art. 28 of the GDPR.

**DATA TRANSFER**

The collected data will not be transferred to a country outside the European Union (so-called third country), except in cases where this is guaranteed by adequacy decisions of the European Commission or carried out in a way that provides appropriate and suitable safeguards pursuant to Articles 46 or 47 or 49 of the GDPR.

**DATA RETENTION PERIOD**

The personal data relating to the processing will be kept for a maximum period of 5 years after the conclusion of the project, to complete any ongoing publications related to the research results.

**PROVISION OF DATA**

The provision of personal data is necessary for your participation in the Study.

[2] Regarding storage (retention), the importance of security is recalled, and if necessary, Eng. Enrico Venuto, the University's CISO (Chief Information Security Officer), can be contacted: ciso@polito.it

**RIGHTS OF THE DATA SUBJECT**

As a data subject, you have the right to request from the Data Controller, in accordance with Articles 15 et seq. of the GDPR,

- access to your personal data and to all the information referred to in Art. 15 of the GDPR;
- the rectification of your inaccurate personal data and the integration of incomplete data;
- the erasure of your data, with the exception of those contained in documents that must be compulsorily retained by the University, and unless there is a legitimate overriding reason to proceed with the processing;
- the restriction of processing in the cases referred to in Art. 18 of the GDPR.

You also have the right:

- to object to the processing of personal data, without prejudice to what is provided for with regard to the necessity and obligation of data processing to be able to use the services offered;
- to withdraw any consent given for non-mandatory data processing, without thereby affecting the lawfulness of processing based on consent given before withdrawal.

If you wish to exercise any of your rights, you may contact the Data Controller.

**COMPLAINT**

You have the right to contact the Garante (Italian Data Protection Authority) according to the procedures indicated at the following link:
https://www.garanteprivacy.it/web/guest/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/4535524

This information notice is updated as of 28/12/2024

Politecnico di Torino

**EXPRESSION OF CONSENT FOR DATA PROCESSING**

In light of the foregoing and the information provided to me:

I, the undersigned _____

**DECLARE**

- that I have read the information notice on the processing of personal data provided pursuant to Art. 13 of EU Regulation 679/2016 (known as the "GDPR");
- to:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ | CONSENT | ☐ | DO NOT CONSENT | the processing of my personal data pursuant to Art. 6 of the GDPR for the research purposes previously indicated.[3] |

The undersigned also prohibits the use of images in contexts that prejudice personal dignity and decorum.

PLACE, DATE

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT

[3] In case of special categories, include the indication thereof, see footnote no. 1.

All participants provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study.

Consent forms were kept by the researcher.

**Annex 3. List of Interviewees**

*Table 11 List of the interviewees*

| Number | Interview Date | Interview Location | Stay in Türkiye | Age | Sex | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I1 | 13.12.2025 | On the west side of the artificial lake | 4 years | 30 | F | Arabic / English / Turkish |
| I2 | 13.12.2025 | On the south side of the artificial lake | 4 years | 15 | M | Arabic |
| I3 | 13.12.2025 | On the north side of the park near the playground | 10 years | 31 | M | Arabic - Together with number 4 - (with their child) |
| I4 | 13.12.2025 | On the north side of the park near the playground | 10 years | 27 | F | Arabic - Together with number 3 - (with their child) |
| I5 | 14.12.2025 | The bench on the north side of the artificial lake | 14 years | 33 | M | Arabic / Turkish |
| I6 | 14.12.2025 | The picnic table on the west side of the park | 1 year | 35 | M | Arabic |
| I7 | 14.12.2025 | The walk path on the east side of the park | 5.5 years | 39 | F | Russian / Turkish - (with her child) |
| I8 | 14.12.2025 | The picnic table on the west side of the park | 2 months | 45 | F | Arabic / English - Together with number 9 |
| I9 | 14.12.2025 | The picnic table on the west side of the park | 5 years | 48 | F | Arabic / Turkish - Together with number 8 |
| I10 | 16.12.2025 | The southern entrance of the park near the restaurant is named as “Surname” | 13 months | 25 | F | Turkish / English |
| I11 | 18.12.2025 | The southern entrance of the park | 13 years | 21 | F | Turkish – Together with the numbers 12 and 13 – Student Urban Planner |
| I12 | 18.12.2025 | The southern entrance of the park | 13 years | 18 | F | Arabic / Turkish - Together with the numbers 11 and 13 |
| I13 | 18.12.2025 | The southern entrance of the park | 13 years | 40 | F | Arabic - Together with the numbers 11 and 12 |
| All participants provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study.<br><br>Consent forms were kept by the researcher. | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I14 | 23.12.2025 | Near the playground on the north side of the park | 6 years | 42 | F | Arabic |
| I15 | 27.12.2025 | In a cafe named as “Escafe” in the park near the sports fields | 3 years | 30 | F | English |
| I16 | 27.12.2025 | The southern entrance of the park near the restaurant is named as “Surname” | 4 months | 22 | F | Persian |
| I17 | 27.12.2025 | The west entrance of the park | 3 months | 55 | M | Turkish/English - Together with the number 17 |
| I18 | 27.12.2025 | The west entrance of the park | 13 months | 52 | M | English - Together with the number 16 |
| I19 | 01.01.2026 | In the open library is named as “Sifa Garden” | 10 years | 70 | M | Arabic |
| I20 | 01.01.2026 | The southern entrance of the park near the restaurant is named as “Surname” | 3 years | 41 | M | Russian / English |
| I21 | 01.01.2026 | In the northern playground | 5 years | 38 | F | Turkish |
| I22 | 03.01.2026 | In a cafe named as “Escafe” in the park near the sports fields | 1 year | 40 | M | English |
| I23 | 03.01.2026 | In a cafe named as “Escafe” in the park near the sports fields | 10 years | 25 | M | English/Arabic |
| I24 | 04.01.2026 | The southern entrance of the park near the restaurant is named as “Surname” | 3 years | 45 | M | Ukrainian |
| I25 | 04.01.2026 | In the western playground | 3 months | 32 | F | Turkish |

All participants provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study.

Consent forms were kept by the researcher.

**Annex 4. Questions**

Structured and semi-structured questions: Prepared also in Arabic, Persian, Ukrainian, and Russian.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE ESENLER 15 JULY MILLET GARDEN**

PERSONAL INFORMATIONS

Where are you from?

How many years ago did you come to Istanbul?

Is your home in Esenler district of Istanbul?

- YES
- NO

Which neighborhood do you live in?

- I live outside of the Esenler district.
- 15 July, Esenler
- Birlik, Esenler
- Ciftehavuzlar, Esenler
- Davutpasa, Esenler
- Fatih, Esenler
- Fevzi Cakmak, Esenler
- Havaalani, Esenler
- Kazim Karabekir, Esenler
- Kemer, Esenler
- Menderes, Esenler
- Mimar Sinan, Esenler
- Namik Kemal, Esenler
- Nenehatun, Esenler
- Orucreis, Esenler
- Tuna, Esenler
- Turgutreis, Esenler
- Yavuz Selim, Esenler

ACCESSIBILITY

How many times have you visited the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden before today?

- 1 - 2 times
- 3 - 5 times
- 6 - 10 times
- More than 10 times

Who do you usually come with when you come to the park?

- Alone
- With your family
- With other acquaintances

How do you usually access the park?

- Walk
- Use public transport
- Drive via your car

Which entrance road do you use when coming to the park?

- From 15 July Neighborhood, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Boulevard (Martyr Park)
- From 15 July Neighborhood, Ismet Yılmaz Street, (Parking Area/Bus Stop)
- From Kemer Neighborhood (Stadium)

What factors **might** encourage you to visit the park more frequently?

MOBILITY IN PARK

DAILY MOBILITY

Do you visit the park before 6 p.m.?

- YES
- NO

Where do you prefer to spend time in the park during these hours? Please explain why, if is there any specific reason.

MOBILITY AT NIGHT

Do you visit the park after 6 p.m.?

- YES
- NO

Where do you prefer to spend time in the park during these hours? Please explain why, if is there any specific reason.

PUBLICNESS

Do you know the park's opening hours and days?

- YES
- NO

Does the fact that “the park is closed before 7 a.m., after midnights, and Mondays”, affect your use of the park?

- YES
- NO

How would you like these opening hours to change?

- No changes.
- The park should remain fully open every day.
- Closing hours should be slightly more flexible.
- It should open at the same hours on Mondays.
- Other

Please explain your reasoning behind your answer regarding parking usage hours.

EVERYDAY ENCOUNTER

Have you had the opportunity to meet new people in the park when you visited?

- YES
- NO

Are there any features of the park that make it “easier or more difficult” for you to meet new people when you visit? If so, what are they? Please explain.

PARK USES

What public services do you use in the park?

What other public services should be provided?

Are there any public services in the park that you were previously able to use but are no longer eligible for? Please explain.

Are there any public services exist in the park but you don't have the right to use? Please explain.

QUALITY OF PARK

Considering all these questions, what positive features of the park can you mention? Can you share any experiences, either your own or those you have heard from other people?

Considering all these questions, what negative features of the park can you mention? Can you share any experiences, either your own or those you have heard from other people?

PLANNING PARTICIPATION

In light of all these questions, have you taken any action to improve your personal experience of the park? If you wanted to take action, what would your first action be?

In light of all these questions, do you believe that other people have taken, or should take, action (small or large scale) regarding the park?

If "some institutions and organizations / an acquaintance of yours / a person you do not know (unaffiliated with any institution; such as a neighbor, an migrant, or any other park user)" announced that they would take action to improve and increase the public use of the park, would you support this? Under what conditions and to what extent would you participate in this action? Please explain.

Which urban concepts would you prefer these actions to address?

Accessibility

- Walkability
- Public Transport Integration
- Parking Planning

Safety & Privacy

- CCTV and Monitoring
- Lighting Planning
- Informal Surveillance

Social

- Placemaking
- Community Programming
- Social Cohesion Programming
- Urban Agriculture Space Usage Organization
- Planning Participation

Infrastructure

- Green Infrastructure
- Blue Infrastructure
- Waste Management
- Recycling

Service & Maintenance Quality

- Service Equity
- Maintenance Schedules
- Park Opening Days/Hours
- Public Building Usage Planning

Do you know of any other Millet Garden besides the Esenler 15 July Millet Garden? What would you like to say about Millet Garden in general? Do you think the questions discussed here are only valid for the Esenler example, or do other Millet Garden share similar characteristics? Please explain.