

Utilizing gis for a critical heritage mapping of urban activism in Istanbul in the 1960s

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## Urban legacies of the late 20th century

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

GRAND  
PROJECTS

Urban legacies  
of the late 20th century

# GRAND PROJECTS

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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	WEDNESDAY, 17	THURSDAY, 18	FRIDAY, 19
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11:15	SIDE EVENT Lisbon Waterfront Buildings and Public Spaces	CLAIRE COLOMB <i>Keynote Speaker</i>	CHRISTIAN SCHIMDT <i>Keynote Speaker</i>
12:45		LUNCH-BREAK	LUNCH-BREAK
		Parallel session Slot 2	Parallel session Slot 4 T1 s3 T3 s4 T6 s1 T7 s3 T8 s1 T9 s1
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# 143 Utilizing gis for a critical heritage mapping of urban activism in Istanbul in the 1960s

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## ABSTRACT

Focusing on the social activist movements that took place in the historic urban areas of İstanbul during the 1960s, the main aim of the paper is to understand how urban heritage is related to social activism. Adapting digital humanities approach, the paper presents a critical mapping of the historic spaces of urban activism and investigates how these spaces of social movements were historically formed and/or transformed.

In Turkey, a new constitution was written following the 1960 coup d'état formulating the state as a 'social state' and generating a liberated space for social movements. Accordingly, workers, students, and women's movements raised especially in the multicultural urban context of İstanbul. The urban developments in the previous decade had an important role in this rise of workers movements despite the completely different contexts of two decades. In the 1950s, a populist right-wing party had won the elections and became gradually more autocratic throughout the decade. In the late 1950s, the government launched an urban project that irreversibly changed İstanbul. Accumulation of a working class in the 1950s and immense construction projects in urban historic environments generated the urban milieu for the social movements in the 1960s. Focusing on these two periods, the paper investigates the relationship between urban historic space and social activism through georeferencing the projects of the 1950s and urban social movements of the 1960s.

**Keywords:** Historic environments, Social movements, Istanbul in the 1960s, Cultural heritage

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between social movements and urban space is already theorized by researchers such as Castell, 1977; Castell, 1983, Harvey 2012. Despite this considerable literature, the role of city in activating social movements still needs to be outlined (Miller & Nicholls, 2013). However, especially through mapping and georeferencing these relations through digital tools, one may gain an insight into the very nature of the relationship between social movements and urban environments (Fidan, 2019).

Investigating this relationship with a special focus on historic environments, the paper will present a case study about Istanbul in the 1960s. This decade is significant in terms of acceleration of social movements and developments in the urban historic environments but in order to understand this significance, it is necessary to look at the 1950s. Because in the late 1950s, the government initiated an immense urban operation all over Istanbul. In May 1960, a military coup ended the government's rule, performed a juridical process executing some members of the government including the prime minister, orchestrated the writing process of a new constitution that gave space for flourishing of social movements. The paper will outline the spatial dimension of this relationship through a georeferentiation of various resources on GIS platform.

## 2. 1950s and changes in the mobilization network of the city

After the foundation of the Republic in 1923, a single party regime had ruled the country with an immensely centralized power. With the 1950 election, for the first time a new political party, Demokrat Party, challenged the Republican rulers and won the elections, and followingly they either reversed or slowed down some of the reforms. The Democrat Party's electoral victory was attributed to many factors, including a bad harvest in 1949. However, at the bottom line, all the reasons represent the frustration of society after a quarter century of single party rule of the CHP.

The new government struggled in three main areas towards the late 1950s. The first of these is economics, despite the fact that financial restructuring helped the country to recover from the war. The private sector was encouraged, agricultural and industrial production increased. Moreover, literacy increased. In terms of the physical environment, the urban character of villages, towns, and cities physically changed with widened roads, new arteries, and demolished buildings. This sudden economic growth threatened overall economic policies leading to debts and eventually placing the government in economic hardship. The second problem was related to political freedom. The DP had made efforts to repress the press, universities, and intellectuals who opposed DP policies. Moreover, CHP's assets and properties were transferred to the Treasury. Halk Evleri were closed,

and the political activities of new parties were restricted. This political tension provided legitimacy to a possible army intervention. The third problem was about religion. The DP was accused in reversing many secular reforms. For instance, religion courses were re-included in the curriculum, and unless parents asked for an exemption, all Muslim students were required to follow the course. Islamic education schools, *imam-hatip* schools, were also established in this era. Religious leaders appeared in public and preached against secularism. There was an interest in restoring the dervish orders. Even though a generation was already raised under republican reforms, Islam was still a uniting force in society. As will be discussed further below, this interest in Islam would be seen in conservation projects as well (Zürcher, 2004; Shaw & Shaw, 1977)

For some scholars, DP government's time was an era in which an Islam-oriented rhetoric dominated the political atmosphere along with nationalism. Menderes-era construction activities are generally considered an echo of a populist nationalist Islamic discourse over architecture and urban planning. As will be discussed below, the 1950s implementations are considered damaging for historic structures, and the lack of a holistic town strategy (the lack of a master plan) is highly criticized. Menderes-era projects are narrated as piecemeal projects which aimed to win support from the Muslim community (Kuban, 1993; Altinyildiz, 1997; Akpınar, 2015). The project *İmar Hareketi*, or *İstanbul'un İmarı* (which means *the Development Movement*, or *Istanbul's Development*) was a project launched by the DP government in 1956, one year before the parliamentary elections. After the launch of the project, the whole city became a construction site in less than a year. The main criticism was centered around the pace of constructions, the wide extent of expropriations, and the lack of a master plan (Akpınar, 2015; Gul, 2009).

Regarding the impact of the *İmar* project on historic urban environments, one of the most important source is an article published in 1969 (Unsal, 1969) and an anonymous 1957 publication by Istanbul Municipality (-, 1957) which is called *İstanbul'un Kitabı* (the Book of Istanbul). A visualization of this impact is presented in the map below.



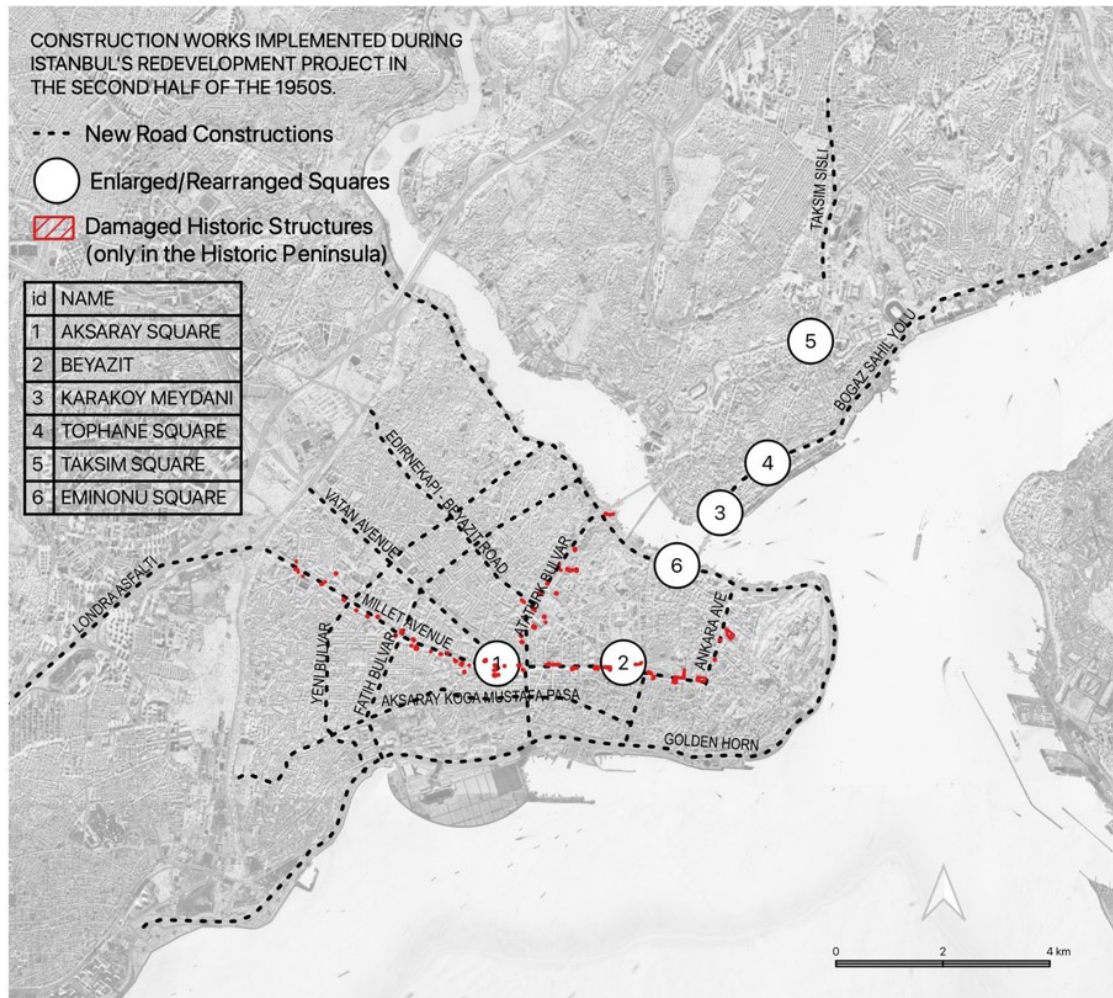


Fig. 1 – Construction works implemented during Istanbul’s Redevelopment Project. Created by the author.

During the implementation of the project, the General Directorate of Highways (KGM -*Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğü*) was the most influential decision-making actor. KGM was established in 1950 under the Ministry of Public Works as a part of the Marshall Plan and it was mainly needed for the distribution of agricultural products. Moreover, a new network was needed more than ever since the American influence had a profound impact on the automotive sector. The decisions on the construction were mainly based on the decisions of the KGM. However, for the engineers, the city’s existing historic and topographic features needed to be ‘fixed’ for the city have a well-functioning road network. The KGM engineer Muzaffer Uluşahin’s remark “this city has a hunchback; we need to fix it” is still used to outline the planning approach of the 1950s. This approach of KGM was to use the intra-cities highway construction standards in a historic urban setting without an adaptation process (Tekeli, 2009: 171). For the construction of Vatan and Millet Avenues, the section of the city walls that coincided with the new road was

immediately demolished. The pace of these deconstructions did not allow any survey of these city land walls that remained between the buildings or on the courtyards of the building blocks. Also on the Karaköy district, located on the other side of the Golden Horn, the new roads damaged historic structures.

3. 1960s and changes in the mobilization of the society

Following the 1960 coup d’état, within a year and a half, a new constitution was formed by referendum and the power had been handed back to civilians with general elections. Since then, the 1960 coup has been either praised for producing a liberal constitution or detested as a power-grab by a once-powerful but now discredited elite community (Keyder, 1961: 141).

The new constitution of 1961 had generated various control mechanisms to limit the actions of the government in order to prevent the re-emergence of an authoritarian centralized government. Nevertheless, it created a liberal atmosphere where political ideas could flower, especially on the left. Socialist parties were represented in the parliament. However, due to rising political tensions, in order to preserve the status quo that was threatened by the increasing leftist movement, the army made a second intervention in 1970 forcing the government to resign. The best word to describe the decade after the 1971 intervention is ‘chaos’. Fragmented and polarized political movements confronted each other. Extremist militants also emerged in this era of conflicts, in which waves of violence gradually escalated. By the late 1970s, the parliament could not even select a president (Tachau & Heper, 1983).

The State Planning Organization (DPT- *Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*), established in 1960, managed the economic structure of the new state by generating financial policies. DPT formulated three Five-Year Development Plans for this purpose. Structures similar to DPT were already active in Europe. However, in Europe, many states’ resources had already increased following a certain period of capitalist development. In Turkey, on the other hand, this process of development was not yet reached. Nevertheless, DPT was devised to help Turkey recover from economic hardship. In the parliament, a financial structure like DPT received support from many parties (Ahmad, 1993). The First Plan was for 1963-1967. It included a series of reforms to restructure the central administration. Urban issues were also addressed in this plan, such as the definition of various planning schemes. The Second Plan was for 1968-1972. It was prepared to meet market demands. Modernization in agriculture, urbanization, and industrialization were formulated as integral goals, and urbanization, once more, was projected to provide a major income for the state budget. In addition, the need for social housing was highlighted in this plan. The third plan came in a completely different political context; the military had once more intervened with an ultimatum.



The 1961 constitution was a product of politician-intelligentsia collaboration. In a way, the new constitution re-emphasized the power of an upper class that was threatened by the peasant class who migrated to cities in waves throughout the 1950s. Those who immigrated from rural areas to cities formed a working-class movement which gained momentum throughout the 1960s. In fact, even in the 1950s, there was already a small political group among the workers of Turkey. Under the new constitution, this group was now given a liberated space to accelerate their political activities. These workers were organized under the *Türk-İş Union* founded with the advice of the American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industry Organizations (AFL-CIO). *Türk-İş* became a pro-government union in the second half of the 1960s. In 1967, a group of workers resigned from *Türk-İş* to unite under the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions (*DİSK – Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*). Afterwords, *Türk-İş* became a pro-government union whereas *DİSK* attracted left-wing sympathizers. The socialist intellectuals established the Turkey Workers Party (*TİP – Türkiye İşçi Partisi*) in 1961 to prompt a political movement uniting workers and intellectuals. In the next elections, *TİP* even won seats in the parliament. The new social state provided more liberties than ever; universities gained their autonomy, university students could protest, and workers could strike. Women's movements were also active. The second wave of Turkish feminism took place in this era. In a way, in the changing atmosphere of the post-war world, Turkey was also re-defining its position. This position, in a bi-polar global power struggle, was in the capitalist pole. Nevertheless, Soviet power was also still influential.

These developments disturbed capital owners who argued that in the development process of Turkey, it was too early for workers to gain the right to strike or to collective bargaining. The ultimatum of the army to the government in 1971 brought this early luxury for Turkey's working class to an end. The military intervention responded to the request of the business/industry community.

As one can trace, parallel to the societal changes, the 1960s was an era in which Turkey became politicized and a left tradition emerged from the liberal milieu that the new constitution produced. The students in the universities were following Marxist literature even in small towns. However, the US was still an ally to Turkey. The government was still committed to US policies. Strangely, Turkey's emerging left and the conservatives were both on the same page in criticizing the government's loyalty to the US. Both the left and the right became anti-American. International developments also had influence on Turkey's leftists; May events in France encouraged them be more involved and active in politics. The conservatives, on the other hand, established organizations such as the Association to Fight Communism as early as 1962. This was a global trend. In fact, the Union of the World of İslam was also established with a similar agenda, to fight communism.

In the 1960s, the society was changing and forming a strong working class

movements, but the urban condition of this change was inherited from the previous government. In a way, what remained unfinished due to a coup d'état generated the urban space for a next generation of social movements.

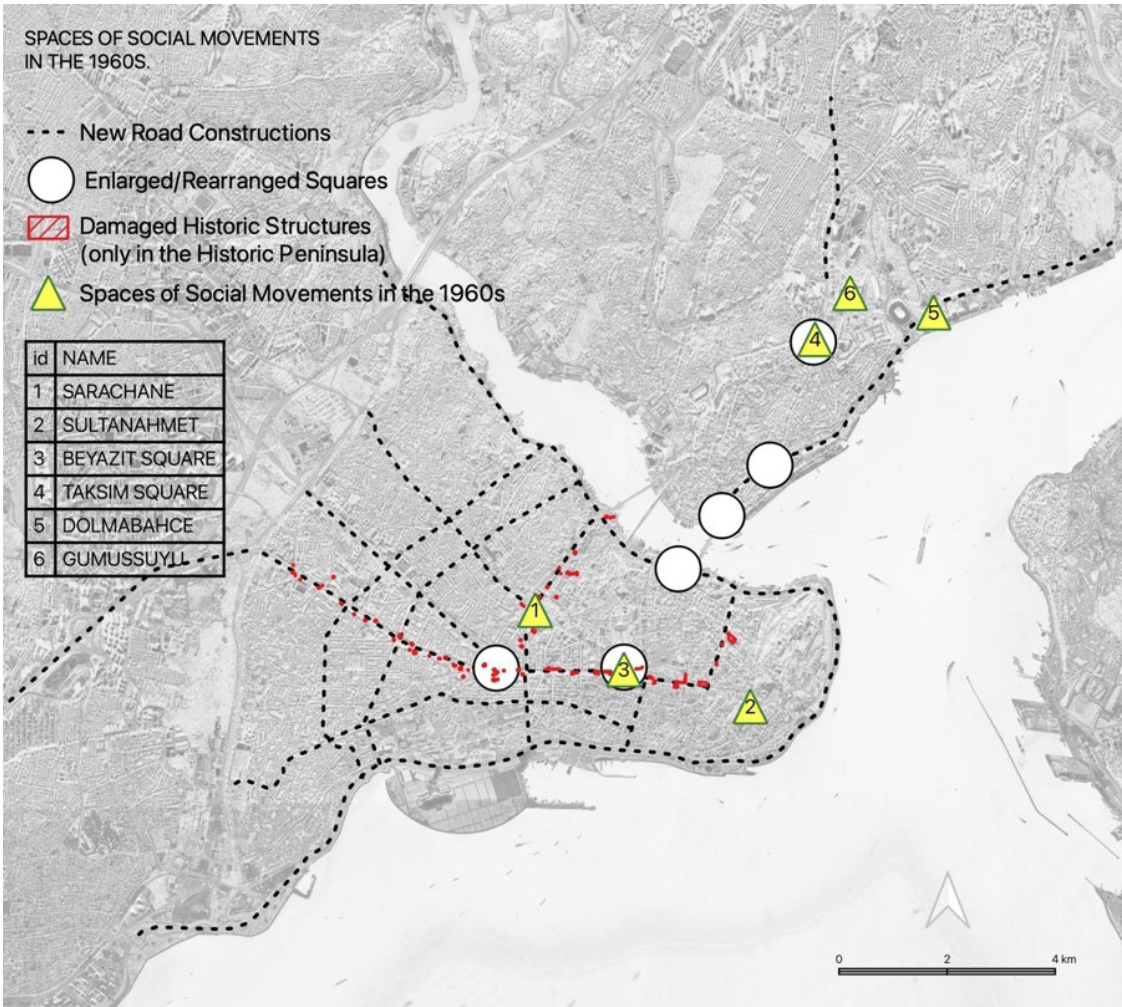


Fig. 4 – Juxtaposition of the Istanbul's Redevelopment Project with the spaces of social movements in the 1960s. Created by the author based on Fig.2 and (Fidan, 2019).

4. Spaces of social movements of the 1960s

Among the spaces of the 1960's social movements, in the early 1960s, Sarachane was the most popular place for worker manifestations. With the widening of the Atatürk Bulvarı in the 1950s, this main transportation axis gained a monumental character. Moreover, the construction of the Istanbul Municipality Building designed by Nevzat Erol in 1953 increased this popularity. The most visible instance of this popularity was the protest on December 31, 1960. Approximately 150.000 people came together on this day. This meeting was one of the most important demonstrator of the accumulation of a working movement throughout the 1950s.

The new constitution was not even promulgated but workers organized the largest meeting until then and demanded their social and political rights, and most importantly, their rights to strike (Koçak and Çelik, 2016).

Similar to Sarachane, Sultanahmet Square and Beyazıt Square is also another important space for social movements. Beyazıt Square, which is constructed in the seventeenth century over the Theodisus's Forum, or the Forum Tauri which was the largest forum of the Constantinople constructed in the fourth century CE, has always been an important urban space. The entrance to the Istanbul University is also from the Beyazıt Square with a monumental nineteenth century entrance door constructed with an Ottoman neo-classical style. Due to the existence of the university, this square has always been the main stage for the student movements. One of the major protests took place on April, 28 1960. The impact of this protest and the death of a student (whose name was Turan Emeksiz) by police activated other students in other cities.

In the 1950s, during the implementation of Democrat Party's *Redevelopment of Istanbul* project, one of the most heated debates emerged during the widening of the Ordu Avenue, which is the avenue traversing the Beyazıt Square. This was due to the destruction of several monumental seventeenth century Ottoman buildings. As mentioned above, in the late 1950s, Democrat Party was ruling the country with an autocratic manner. The protest on April, 28 1960 was also organized against this autocratic regime. Only one month after this protest, on May 27, 1960, the army staged a coup and terminated the government. However, even after these developments, Beyazıt Square never lost importance as a protest space. An architectural competition was launched in the 1960s for the square. Even though Turgut Cansever's winning project was not fully implemented and the square remained inefficiently used, it never lost its meaning as a historical protest space (Kuban, 1993; Fidan 2019).

Taksim Square, which was also the main space during the 2013 Gezi Resistance (a nation-wide protest movement that started against the conversion of one of the most important public parks of Istanbul into a shopping mall), has a historic significance in terms of public protests. However, not in the 1960s but in the 1970s it became a urban memory space for the worker's movement in Turkey because on May 1, 1977, a huge assembly of fractions met on the Taksim Square to celebrate the Workers Day. However, a mass shooting by unknown forces created a massacre. Since then, May 1 1977 is referred as Bloody Sunday. Gumussuyu was also another important space of students movements due to its proximity to the Taksim Square. In addition, the Istanbul Technical University's Mechanical Engineering Faculty was also located in Gumussuyu.

In terms of the anti-Americanism of the 1960s, Dolmabahce Palace has an historical importance. In fact, Atatürk had also spent his last times here and lost his

life. Thus, "In '60s part of protesters, mainly right-wing student organizations had a tradition to come Dolmabahçe and pledge their commitment to the Republic in the presence of Atatürk" (Fidan, 2009: 61). The most major event that took place when US Sixth Fleet paid a visit to Istanbul anchoring near the Dolmabahçe Mosque. The anti-war, pro-Vietnam tendencies and in general, the global atmosphere of the 1968 generation had already influenced the Turkish students. When the US soldiers disembarked from Sixth Fleet, students blocked them and prevented their reach to Taksim Square. The closeness of the Istanbul Technical University was also helped students outnumber the American soldiers. Moreover, students from the campus occasionally throw stones to the hotels of the American soldiers. This was a turning point for the 1960s' student movements which would become more radicalized in the 1970s (Alper, 2016).

In all these spaces, even though there is a historical continuum in terms of some patterns in the manifestation of social movements, it is noteworthy that the urban operations of the 1950s unconsciously contributed to the urban condition of the acceleration of the social movements. Indeed, the new constitution had an important role in this acceleration, but the infrastructure and social context of it was formed in the 1950s. Although the Democrat Party had repressed the opposition and blocked the rise of a social movement, political developments and urban transformations of the 1950s had prepared the background for 1960s' social movements.

## 5. Conclusion

The 1950s marked a milestone for the development of democracy in Turkey because a new political party, Democrat Party challenged the power of republican rulers and eventually won the 1950 general election and followingly, they won several other general and local elections until 1960. The US support helped the Democrat Party implement its agenda throughout the 1950s. In fact, in the late 1940s, the United States had already supported Greece and Turkey with the Truman Doctrine as a precaution against the spread of communism in the Middle East. As the next step in American support, the Marshall Plan provided economic support to encourage investments to reshape the country. This followed Turkey's accession to NATO membership which reinforced the US-Turkey alliance. What followed was the Americanization of daily life in street markets, universities, gastronomy culture, journals, theatres, cinemas, books, night life, home appliances, etc. (Alkan, 2015). As Democrat Party concentrated more power in its hands, it also became more repressive and autocratic. Moreover, the changes in the national strategy generated a huge flux of migration from rural to urban areas. İstanbul was the main stage of this areas.

In the late 1950s, the Democrat Party launched the Development of İstanbul project which transformed the whole city into a construction site. The projects were



mainly about the widening the roads and any structure that obstructed this process was demolished or removed without hesitation. However, a military coup put all the government officials into prison and eventually executed prime minister. What followed was the formulation of a new constitution. The 1960 constitution was written by intellectuals and university professors under the management of the army. In the 1950s, the intelligentsia and the politicians had been two confronting communities. With the new constitution, power was re-balanced. This new constitution formulated the state as a ‘social state’ and generated a liberated space for social movements. In the global cold-war context, the tension between right-left wing sympathizers accelerated. In the late 1960s, everyday life in Turkey became politically explosive.

In the current literature, the 1960 coup is referred as the termination of the Democrat Party era and passage to a new era. Two decades are generally separated as different contexts. However, there is also a continuity which is outlined in this paper. This historical continuity is embedded in the urban space and in social movements and social mobility patterns. However, the relationship between these two is not always easy to detect. One of the main methods to understand and visualize this relationship is using the digital tools. In this paper, mainly GIS is used for a georeferentiation of two periods. It is done in two ways; firstly, the urban change that came in the 1950s is mapped through the use of several resources. Secondly, the spaces of social movements are linked to this GIS visualization in order to understand how social movements of the following decade are linked to this change. The conclusion is that the developments in the 1950s had prepared the urban and social context for social movements of the 1960s.

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