ANKARA CITY PROFILE

By

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Source: CoğrafyaHarita (2020). Ankara ili haritası,
http://cografyaharita.com/turkiye_mulki_idare_haritalari.html
1. **General information about the capital:**

**Demography:** Located in the Central Anatolian Region; surrounded by Kırıkkale and Kırşehir at East, Çankırı at North, Bolu at the Northeast and Eskişehir at West, Konya and Aksaray at South.

**M²:** 24,521 km²

**Population:** 5,732,540 in 2021; Population projection for 2062 is 7,818,000 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>74,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>122,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>157,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>226,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>288,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>451,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>650,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>905,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,236,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1,606,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,800,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2,228,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2,559,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,917,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,203,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,763,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4,194,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>4,306,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4,431,719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Batuman, B. (2013). City profile: Ankara, Cities 31 (2013), 578-590

**Current local government:** Mansur Yavaş (Metropolitan Municipality Mayor elected in 2019 local elections) / Republican People’s Party (CHP), together with a metropolitan city council elected from 25 districts.

**Economic data:** According to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (2019), Ankara ranked first among the top 5 big cities (Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Kocaeli) in terms of Gross Annual Product (GDP) with a share of 29.2% in service activities. The city's economic power primarily comes from the service sector. This is followed by the information and transaction
sector (idem). The city thus held the first rank for patent applications in 2013, according to the report of the Ankara Development Agency. The city has twenty-one universities, six technoparks, eleven commercial areas and several research centers. The quality of Ankariot universities and hospitals is particularly recognized in the country. Moreover, the existing high-tech, defense oriented industrial sector, and conventional middle and small sized industrial estates employment opportunities are very limited. The province produces approximately 9% of Turkey's gross national product. However, its level of industrial production remains low compared to that of other metropolises in the country, with a 2.9% participation in the national production of added value (Ankara Development Agency 2013). The city specializes in services with 72% of employment in this sector (idem).

2. Urban history

Ankara: The capital city of the Turkish Republic; historically known as Ancyra and Angora. The city, which became the symbol of National Struggle as being the administrative center of the War of Independence after 1919, became the capital city of Turkish Republic on October 13, 1923. Reasons of this choice was the physical and geographical position of Ankara, also the unique historical and cultural stance of the city as it is a door opening to Anatolia and some late-Ottoman debates about the transfer of the capital city to central Anatolia after wars with the Russia.

For İlhan Tekeli (2011), “Istanbul was the symbol of imperialist and bourgeois relations as well as of Levantine life which was based on clientelist relations. By abandoning Istanbul in favor
of Ankara, we were also abandoning these relations in order to turn towards the development and national modernization of Anatolia with Ankara at its heart” (p. 271). Thus, the image of İstanbul was incompatible with the identity of the republican regime. The administration wanted to create a capital that would symbolize the transition to the nation state. The capital of the caliphate and the empire was therefore to be forgotten with the establishment of the new political regime. The Kemalist elites wanted to create a national unity within the borders of the remaining territories, and the best way to achieve this was in their eyes to choose a new capital that would symbolize it. According to Meltem Ahıska (2001), “nationalist ideas and practices were going to be written in Ankara, which was seen as a blank slate. Ankara was seen as a 'starting point' for republican elites who saw Turkish nationalism as the country's political project” (p. 52). Ankara therefore made it possible to make a clean sweep of the past; a new Turkish history was to be written there, distinct from the cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire.

Thus, İlhan Tekeli (2011) summarizes the modalities of the foundation and development of Ankara as follows:

- Create a new and exemplary city where modern and contemporary Western life can be born and dominate.

- Form a national bourgeoisie and develop modern lifestyles in Ankara to set an example for other Turkish cities.

- Represent the Republic spatially through urban works constituting the birth of the modern city.

- Write a new urban and national memory through the making of Ankara.

Considering the urbanization process of the capital Ankara, the following years are important:

1925: Architect Carl C. Lörcher’s city plan was approved to create Yenişehir (new city) for the employees of the state around Altındağ and Çankaya.

1927: First census in Ankara. The city’s population is 404,581 (Ankara Governorship, 2015)

1929: The city plan of architect Hermann Jansen, in which the city center was designed around the old Citadel (Ankara Kalesi), was approved.

1950: Turkish government started a process of structural adaptation regarding economic and political policies compatible with the Western world. While the modernization of agriculture created surplus labor, a new road network also facilitated massive migration to the big cities.

1957: Another open international planning competition was opened. This time the competition was wok by the two prominent Turkish architects, Nihat Yücel and Raşit Uybadin. Yet, because of the apartment ownership law, which legitimized the high-rise buildings in the existing macroform, this plan has never get the chance to be implemented.
1960: City’s total population rose from 819,693 in 1950 to 1,321,380 in 1960, showed % 61.2 of rise in 10 years.

The boom in population caused the housing problem, as cities were insufficient to accommodate such migration, so did Ankara. The result was the emergence of **gecekondu** (literally means built in one night) in cities. In 1960, % 64 of all housing in Ankara was **gecekondu** (Karpat, 2003). Until 1980’s the city was shaped on the one hand side **gecekondu**’s of the lower income classes around the outskirts of the city and the high-rise apartments of the prosperous sections in the planned sections of the city.

1970: Through the end of 1970’s metropolitan planning bureaus were established by the military coup administration of the time the three big cities, Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir. The Metropolitan Urban Planning Bureau of Ankara prepared a structural plan for the city to tackle environmental and infrastructure problems of the city. The name of the plan was 1990 Metropolitan Development Plan of Ankara. It was implemented to a certain extent and some decisions such as decentralization of the state buildings and urban regeneration projects to clear up valuable valleys were implemented through time.

1980: The year 1980 marks an important period in Turkey's political and social history. The unstable economic and social environment ended with a military coup in 1980. As summarized by Batuman (2013), “this abolished the constitution, introduced a new (and anti-libertarian) one and severely curtailed civil rights. The upcoming years would witness gradual economic recovery making use of neoliberal strategies that made extensive use of urban space (582).

1984: Although various activities related to the construction of public housing were carried out until the 1980s, they were not fully successful and the structural problems of urbanization continued. With the Mass Housing Law No. 2985, which was enacted in 1984, the institutional foundations of the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) were laid (Mass Housing Foundation, 2022). Followed by a series of squatter amnesty laws, squatters were legalized and started to be transformed into apartment buildings by the small size investors. For the first time in history, metropolitan municipalities were established in large cities and Ankara was one of them.

1990: The phenomenon of **gecekondu** has shown a dramatic development, turning from no infrastructure, to **apartkondu** (literally means apartment built in one night) and the population of **gecekondu** has shifted from jobs stigmatized as marginal sector to informal and small-scale jobs (Şenyapılı, 1998). The first priority of the metropolitan municipality in Ankara was to provide large-scale infrastructure projects for water and sanitation.

2000: City’s total population was raised from 2,854,689 in 1980 to 4,007,860 in 2000, showed %40.39 of rise in 20 years. In the 2000s housing was effectively utilized as a development strategy with the unprecedented amount of housing construction. Most of this housing production was realized through thousands of urban plan modifications without a general framework for urban development.
2002: Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is still in power in central government, increased the dominance of neoliberal accumulation strategies with the mixture of Islamist ideologies, came to power in 2002. One of the first moves of the AKP was to change local government laws. As a result, the metropolitan area of Ankara and municipal authority was enlarged.

2007: As a result of the new metropolitan municipality law a new plan was prepared for Ankara by the municipality itself named “2023 Urban Development Plan for Ankara”. The Plan was foreseeing a balanced urban development with urban regeneration areas and new urban development areas. However, the plan has never been fully implemented but urban development via urban plan modifications continued.

2013: As new metropolitan municipality law was passed and the authority of the metropolitan municipality was enlarged to the whole Ankara Province. With increasing planning authorities, the existing AKP mayor opened valuable ecological corridors, remaining squatter areas, historical urban center and some of the existing public land for urban development, all of which were realized via partial urban plan modifications. This caused dramatic ecological and infrastructure problems as well as emergence of excess luxury housing and shortage of affordable housing in the years to come.

2018: After a failed coup in 2016, Turkey changed its regime to a presidential government. This change gave incredible new executive authorities to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, starting with allocation of valuable public land and urban planning decisions. These authorities were used to transform public land into “Nation Gardens” (Millet Bahçesi) and “Nation Facilities” (Millet Kıraathanesi) as a significant political tools for creating a new public image for the regime.

2019: Together with İstanbul and several other large metropolitan areas, the AKP lost the local elections and mayors of the opposition came to power. However, since the AKP still holds the majority of the seats in the metropolitan councils, it was still not possible to see a mayor change in the urban planning policy in the city. Yet, the new mayor openly declared that the development of the city via urban plan modifications came to an end.

3. Stages of urbanization / Politics of urbanization

Before the First World War, Ankara was a small Ottoman town with a population less than 30,000. In the aftermath, which ended with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the republicans arrived in Ankara to pursue a War of Independence in 1919. A major factor in the city’s choice by the republicans was its location at the heart of the Anatolian peninsula. As the city served as the center of the nationalist struggle and was later in 1923 declared the capital city of the nation-state (Batuman, 2013).
Looking back at the urban history of Ankara, 4 periods might be identified (Şengül, 2009; Şenyapılı, 1982)

From 1923 to 1950 is known as the “modernization period”: in order to create modern cities of the young republic, city plans were asked to prepare by German architectures such as Carl Lörcher or Herman Jansen in which the city center was designed around the old Citadel in Altındağ district.


From 1950 to 1980 is known as the period of “urbanization of labor force”: the Turkish government started a process of structural adaptation regarding economic and political policies compatible with the Western world. While the modernization of agriculture created surplus labor, a new road network also facilitated massive migration to the big cities such as Ankara. City’s total population rose from 819,693 in 1950 to 1,321,380 in 1960, showed % 61.2 of rise in 10 years. The boom in population made emerged the phenomenon of gecekondu in big cities such as Ankara. In 1960, % 64 of all housing in Ankara was gecekondu (Karpat, 2003).
Many researchers have been interested in the phenomenon of *gecekondu* under different aspects and in different cities (and in particular in Ankara) (Öğretmen 1957; Karpat 1976; Heper 1978; Şenyapılı 1982; Danielson & Keleş 1985). Many have looked into their genesis and the reasons of their proliferation. While the housing scarcity in the city is a factor identified by all, some have also highlighted migration while others point out the economic system and social stratification in the city. Mübeccel Kırçay (1972), defines the neighborhoods of *gecekondu* as "the places of shelter of large masses of unskilled and low-income labor, spreading in our cities unable to adapt to agricultural and demographic changes and which fail to industrialize nor organize themselves socially" (quoted in Danış & Karakaş 2021, p. 398). It emphasizes the need for social and economic redistribution of resources in favor of the inhabitants of these places for the implementation of healthy urbanization (Kırçay 1998, p. 27). This negative vision progressively changed (see Erman 2001).
From 2000 to today is known as the period of “neoliberalisation”: Privatization and liquidation of the public, which is called the neoliberal project has accelerated with the mixture of Islamist ideologies by Justice and Development Party (AKP) that came to power in 2002. While a total of 8 billion dollars of privatization was realized in the 1986-2002 period, approximately 60 billion dollars of privatization was realized in the 2003-2016 period (Şahin, 2019). In the 2000s housing was effectively utilized as a development strategy with the unprecedented amount of housing construction.

From 1980 to 2000 is known as the period of “urbanization of the capital”: In the 1980s, local administrations were reorganized and granted new powers in terms of planning as the phenomenon of gecekondu has shown an incredible development, turning from no infrastructure, to apartkondu and the population of gecekondu has shifted from jobs stigmatized as marginal sector to informal and small-scale jobs (Şenyapılı, 1982). Mass housing administration (TOKİ) was established for the need of housing and this allowed them to gradually become the major actors in directing urban growth. In the meantime within the AKP era from 2002 to 2021, 13,318 mosques were constructed in Turkey. In a nutshell, Ankara was and still is not only a capital city, but also the center of the country’s military and elite bureaucracy.
Urbanization in Turkey: a top-down process and public-private partnerships

Urbanization in Turkey is mostly seen as a top-down process. The Turkish government follows a neoliberal approach of planning cities. This perspective includes market-driven strategies where the State is in the middle of new complex relationships between public and private actors. Laws (n°6306) and plans (imar yönetmeliği, çevre düzeni planı, tasarım planı) are designed to facilitate the insertion of these actors under the control of the Ministry of environment and urbanism (Çevre ve şehircilik Bakanlığı). Laws are an attempt to manipulate urban issues such as patrimony (law n°5336 on urban renewal and heritage conservation) or risks (law n°6306 on urban transformation and risk mitigation). Within the framework of the "Planned Urbanization" plan taken by the government, TOKİ has been set on a new vision with an ability to use the public land and to operate land transactions with the private sector. TOKİ became the main actor of the urban transformation projects. State-linked-actors gain power as well in this situation.

In this way, contractors (müteahhit), real estate (gayrimenkul) and constructors (inşaatçılar) emerge in new power relationships. As the urban actors-network becomes more complex, it may become more fragile as well. The economic crisis indeed showed how the construction and the selling sectors are vulnerable and dependent to each other and other actors such as the energy sector.

There is also another top-down process at work in the metropolitan areas. Apart from the influences of the central government, the metropolitan municipalities have extensive authorities on urban planning and management of the public land. For this reason, especially urban plan modifications are the most significant means to allocate urban land rent among city...
constituents. There has been harsh political debates about the role of urban land rent in feeding informal politics and especially underground Islamic and other types of corruption in the last two decades. The notorious mayor of Ankara, Melih Gökçek was condemned by a prominent political figure of the AKP, for distributing Ankara, parcel by parcel to the FETÖ Terrorist organization, which attempted a failed coup in 2016.

Moreover, the decentralization process led to an increase of public-private partnerships with the authority of the central government. The private sector plays a powerful role in the conception and implementation of the plan. It may also have an influence upon the derogation to the plan to facilitate the implementation of projects. This process has for consequence a reduction of planner’s space in negotiations. Indeed, many tensions occur between those new actors, central government and municipalities in planning processes (plan’s design, rules application, change of the plan). Main critics point out the government’s authoritarianism against the inclusion of civil societies in planning processes. However, since a few years, the effective use of city councils (kent konseyi) and the increase of associations (dernek, dayanışma) raise questions about new forms of relationships of actors in city planning.

TOKI’s projects in Turkey and Ankara (2003-2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project type</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Ankara</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of project</td>
<td>Number of housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff housing</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>225 538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private housing + social</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>168 599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amenities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban transformation projects</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>91 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income housing</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>42 974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-natural disaster housing</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>31 646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared for-profit housing</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24 796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructures and amenities</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>12 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration building</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 467</strong></td>
<td><strong>597 413</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TOKI 2017
5. **Urbanization problems: Urban Sprawl, informal settlements, pollution etc.**

From the 1980s, in the scope of city branding strategies, the main idea was to change Ankara’s image of a bureaucratic and military center to a social and modern city (Eraydın 2014). These urban politics implied both the renewal of *gecekondu* neighborhoods that spread in the city center and were given a deemed image of the capital, and an urban extension through the development of the built environment.

**Evolution of the public policy management of *gecekondu* in Turkey**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Model</strong></td>
<td>Nation state, welfare state</td>
<td>Nation state</td>
<td>Nation state questioned, rise of the local</td>
<td>Nation state narrows down, increasing dominancy of the local, governance concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Policy</strong></td>
<td>Liberal development model, Keynesian policy, rapid development, government intervention for full employment and stability, industry led growth, foreign aid, eradication of poverty and equity in distribution of income to be achieved in time in development, growth poles, spillover effect</td>
<td>Planned development, import substitution model, internal market protected by customs, quotas, only factors of production imported, neo-classic economic approach</td>
<td>Impact of oil crisis, urban problems hinder national development, solution of these will lead to general development, World Bank enters the poverty agenda, collaboration with IMF, criticisms of import substitution models, reorganization of production towards flexibility</td>
<td>Foreign debt crisis and transition to neo-liberal, export-oriented, privatization model, flexibilization of markets, social policies structured by market forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>World Bank Policy</strong></td>
<td>Conducts research especially in Latin America and Asia to clarify the squatter problem</td>
<td>Research continues, culture of poverty, poverty is fate therefore it is the problem of the poor</td>
<td>Restructuring of policy after Turner approach, financial support to project based ‘site and services’</td>
<td>Restructuring of policy, enabling, general urban policy, housing and urbanization finance organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Urban Planning</strong></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Incremental, project level approaches, strategic planning, Infrastructure development</td>
<td>Structure planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant Urban Land Supply Model</strong></td>
<td>Illegal invasion</td>
<td>Shared ownership</td>
<td>Housing cooperatives</td>
<td>Mass housing, cooperatives, transformation of squatter housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Approach to Squatter Housing Problem</strong></td>
<td>Squatting is an illegal and dilapidated housing problem, elementary measures to stop or to redirect migrant flow, the problem is temporary, public housing, multi-party system starts political patronage</td>
<td>Housing sector is unproductive, squatting is a housing problem, central government intervenes through Law 775, legalizing and classifying existing stock, prohibiting new stock, political patronage expands, worker migration to Europe eases migration pressure on cities</td>
<td>Populist subsidies to rural area, credit flow and subsidy to prices of agricultural products slows down rate of migration flow, politicization of squatter housing areas between nationalist and radical left groups cooperative organization in housing sector, squatter problem more and more identified with poverty, starts to lose its ‘housing’ connotation,</td>
<td>The problem is now poverty, rent allocation provided through Law 2081, commercialization of squatter areas, transformation, forced migration from the east, increased migration to especially coastal cities, internal fragmentation and rising conflicts in squatter communities due to decreasing opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More precisely, this new city branding, particularly active since the 2000s, goes through the development of: 1) Luxury residences: renewal of informal housing areas through gentrification processes (Güzey 2009; Bektas 2014) (Çankaya, Mamak, Yenimahalle, Altındağ) and building of large scale housing complexes leading to an urban sprawl to the West
along a highway leading to Eskisehir city; 2) Competitive industry: Ankara hosts R&D and industries in Organized Industrial Zones and Technology Development Zones (Varol 2010) (Sincan, Ayaş, Akyurt), especially defense and aviation firms; 3) The health sector: construction of Ankara Bilkent Hospital in 2019, the biggest in the country with more than 3000 beds. Importantly, city hospitals are part of the President’s “crazy projects” that aim to reconnect with the greatness of the Ottoman Empire (Pérouse 2017); 4) The tertiary sector: construction of shopping malls in several districts, of a new business center (Çukurambar in Çankaya district) and infrastructures to host national and international commercial events (hotels and convention centers in Çankaya and Keçiören); 5) Education sector: Ankara hosts the highest number of universities in a province (22) with some of the best of the country.

Another striking example is the North Ankara Entrance Urban Regeneration Project (Kuzey Ankara Girişi Kentsel Dönüşüm Projesi), a mass housing project between 3 districts (Keçiören, Pusaklar, Altındağ) revealed in 2004. It is planned along the highway connecting the international airport to the city center, and as such paves the way for a new urban front towards the North. It aims at building 18000 units, 2 five-star hotels, a congress center, a mosque, 5 commercial centers, and facilities for 70,000 inhabitants along the highway connecting the city center to the international airport in the North (Topal, Yalman & Çelik 2018). These projects participate in urban sprawl and therefore transform the social and economical structure of rural areas.

An image from the North Ankara Urban Transformation Project

Crédit : Gülçin Erdi, 2021. The lights are on between sunset and sunrise everyday. An example of demonstration of the prosperity of the political and economic power of Turkey resulting in an ecological disaster.
The North Ankara Entrance Urban Regeneration Project
6. Environment and social uncertainties

Even though Ankara is not mainly studied in the scientific literature on Turkey’s risk, we may consider some specific risks and uncertainties this city is confronted with. Whereas risks are usually studied in a divided perspective (environmental risk vs man-made risk for instance), Ankara’s case study shows how hybrids they are. Thus, flood risk is caused by the infilling of the Kızılırmak river. Pollution is linked to an unplanned urbanization and to a dry climate (Ankara is the second most polluted city in Turkey).

For instance, Mamak neighborhood has a fragile urban typology of building. However, the urban transformation processes put by the municipality and the ministry of environment and urban planning question the fact that “resistant” does not always mean “resilient”. Indeed, the neighborhood is regularly the place of strong floods: 7th of May 2018, 9th of June 2021 and the recent one from the 11st of June 2022. These disasters may question flood management and disaster memory on the territory even though strong buildings and infrastructure have been implemented in the neighborhood from the urban transformation. Flood risk in Ankara and especially in Mamak neighborhood is not new: archives from 1957 show that the population have already lived through such a catastrophe. However, it may have been amplified by the waterproofing processes of construction and a lack of education of the population toward disasters. Mamak’s example raises some questions: is there any risk memory in the dweller's circle? How floods shape urban fabric in Mamak and more generally in Ankara? Are there any vernacular practices towards floods that have an impact on the urban fabric?

Indeed, its history and its position as a capital city reinforce its “at-risk” situation as many other capitals (Sierra, 2015). The presence of political places, embassies or financial districts in a
relatively small territory (in comparison with Istanbul) emphasize the potentiality of loss. Risk comes even more complex that its mitigation causes new risks.

Ankara’s urbanization process with urban transformation and mega-project causes economic and financial risks, social risk with expropriation and forced displacement (ex: Imrahor Valley, Çankaya or Elmadağ). This process emphasizes urban segregation as it has been seen in Istanbul in the notorious cases of Sulukule or Fikirtepe. We may question the social cohesion of the city and the way the central government has been confronted by the opposition since the last municipality election (2019). For these reasons, analyzing risks and uncertainties in Ankara would help us to point out who is defining them and according to which interest. Conversely it will enable us to question how the city itself is stimulated by risk and uncertainties. Moreover, it is necessary to analyze the actors involved in urban processes by following their interests and their capacity of negotiating between each other.

7. Inhabitants’ place in the city: Participations, mobilisations, resistances

In Turkey, resistance to neoliberal urban planning politics started in the 2000s against renewal projects of informal neighborhoods in metropolises. Initiated by inhabitants willing to preserve their living space, the resistance has gained the support of academics and experts - especially the Chamber of Architects and Urban Planners - that have publicized urban policies as accumulation by dispossession processes. They are notably active in contesting urban spreading and renewal projects. Among other actions, the Chamber is filing lawsuits and thus slowing down the planning and construction processes (TMMOB 2016; 2018; 2020). In Ankara, one of the striking examples is the resistance of the Dikmen Valley gecekondu
inhabitants (Çankaya) in 2006 (Erdi 2016; Ertan 2019), with the strong support of socialist and revolutionary local organizations (Halkevleri), as well as in the case of the Tuzluçaşırı mobilization (Mamak)¹: “At the time, it was then called ‘Little Moscow’. In 1978-1979, the fascists and the police came here with caution and fear. The fact that people were organizing had set back these fascists quite a bit. The fascists and the state forces supporting them had started to withdraw completely from Tuzluçaşırı to the lower parts of the area like Mamak and Incesu. Later Natoyolu [NATO road] and Ege neighborhoods were created in Mamak. The revolutionary organizations were strong and united there also because of the presence of families of Alevi origin who lived there” (Yürekli 2016, p. 78).

Since the beginning of the Syrian war in 2011, Syrian exiles are also living in gecekondu neighborhoods of Ankara (especially Önder and Battalgazi neighborhoods, Altındağ), facing racist-based attacks, notably in August 2021 (Poyraz 2021), and being part of expropriation processes as well. There is cooperation between different actors of the civil society on the matter. For example, in 2017, the Chamber of Urban Planners organized a partnership with an NGO, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği) to document the effects of the houses’ demolition on children. Nevertheless, there is little information about other citizen-based mobilization in Ankara on the matter. We can suppose the existence of more ordinary and everyday practices of resistance (Bayat 2009). This politicization of urban issues eventually led to the Gezi Park uprising in 2013: initiated in Istanbul to protest against authoritarian urban transformation projects that threatened patrimonial and natural assets, and more generally, to oppose the AKP government, it found strong echoes in Ankara (Şensönmez 2016). Furthermore, in the following months, the construction of a road passing through the forest-campus of the Technical Middle East University (Metin 2019), as well as the construction of a Presidential palace in the Atatürk Forest Farm (Batuman 2015) have been contested. However, mobilization in public space has become more and more difficult. The violent repression of different urban protests starting by Gezi protests reflects an authoritarian turn under the AKP since the 2010s against any opposition to State’s ideology. Moreover, following the resumption of the conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdish autonomist movement, Ankara has suffered deadly terrorist attacks from ISIS and pro-Kurdish armed groups, limiting political involvement of activists. Finally, following the coup attempt in July 2016, the establishment of a state of emergency has made possible a legal repression notably on trade unionists and academics that have been active in social movements. In that context, some academics in Ankara have started a partial hunger strike and have gained local, national and international support through suppressed protests in the public space.

¹ For further information about the creation of this neighbourhood by leftist organisations, see Tahire Erman (2011).
The Kızılay Square occupation during the Gezi Park protests in 2013
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