

Gentrification in Istanbul: The Twin Paradox

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Abstract : The gentrification literature in Turkey provided important insights regarding the analysis of the socio-spatial change in Istanbul mostly through the existing gentrification theories which were produced in Anglo-American literature. Yet early researches focused on the classical gentrification while failing to notice other place-specific forms of the phenomena. It was only after the mid-2000s that scholarly attention shifted to the recent discussions in the mainstream such as the neoliberal urban policies, government involvement, and resistance. Although these studies have considerable potential to contribute to the geography of gentrification, it seems that copying the linear timeline of Anglo-American conceptualization limited the space to introduce contextually nuanced way of process in Turkey. More specifically, the gentrification literature in Turkey acknowledged the linear timeline of the process drawing on the mainstream studies, and, made the spontaneous classical gentrification as the starting point in Istanbul at the expense of contextually specific forms of the phenomenon that took place in the same years. This paper is an attempt to understand place-specific forms of gentrification through the abandonment of the linear understanding of time. In this vein, this paper approaches the process as moving both linear and cyclical rather than the waves succeeded each other. Maintaining a dialectical relationship between the cyclical and the linear time, this paper investigates how the components of gentrification have been taken place in the cyclical timeline while becoming bolder in the linear timeline. This paper argues that taking the (re)investment in the secondary circuit of capital and class transformation as the core characteristics of gentrification, and accordingly, searching for these components beyond the linear timeline provide strategic value to decenter the perspectives, not merely for Turkish studies. In this vein, this strategy revealed that Western experience of gentrification did not travel, adopted or copied in Turkey but gentrification -as an abstract and general concept- has emerged as a product of different contextual, historical and temporal forces which must be considered within the framework of state-led urbanization as early as 1980 differing from the Global North trajectories.

Keywords : comparative urbanism, geography of gentrification, linear and cyclical timeline, state-led gentrification

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