

**GARDENS OF RESISTANCE:
URBAN AGRICULTURE IN THE YEDİKULE MARKET GARDENS,
ISTANBUL**

A Thesis Presented

by

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İSTANBUL

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I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother

Gönül Turan

And

To my beloved father

İsmet Turan

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has the following purpose: to demonstrate that the practice of urban agriculture in the Yedikule market gardens in Istanbul is a resistance practice. The ethnographic part of the present study was conducted in the market gardens (in Turkish, *bostan*) at Yedikule, a historic district of Istanbul.

This thesis examines urban agriculture as a resistance practice in the light of the concept of sustainability. Its major claim is that by virtue of the fact that it provides environmental, social and economic sustainability and food security both at neighborhood level and at town level, the practice of urban agriculture in the Yedikule Bostans – which is a local production and consumption system – constitutes resistance to the unsustainable industrial agricultural system. Secondly, I will claim that the Yedikule Bostans have the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of the city of Istanbul. Thirdly, I will argue that the struggle to protect the remaining market gardens at Yedikule from destruction, and to reinstate those that have been destroyed, also constitutes an act of resistance. Fourthly, I will describe the various barriers which militate against the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans, and I will argue that it is the Turkish state's neoliberal policies– of which the 'urban transformation' project responsible for the market gardens' ongoing destruction forms a part – that constitute the major barrier to the sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans.

In conclusion, the thesis claims that the campaign to protect these market gardens should focus on their contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability, and on the issue of food security. In this way, it hopes to be a source of motivation for the continuance of the struggle to protect the Yedikule Bostans.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Yedikule urban neighborhood, which lies under the shadow of the Byzantine era's city walls (the 'Land Walls'), has heard the melodies of history. For centuries, from the heart of the ancient market gardens (*bostan*) on both sides of the Land Walls, these melodies have been reaching the ears of Yedikule's Greek, Armenian and Turkish inhabitants. Walking through this neighborhood is like being present simultaneously in different layers of time: the narrow streets are lined with Greek and Armenian houses, and beside them the shanty houses built by more recent immigrant residents from Anatolia. The multifarious crops in the bostans grow to the accompaniment of the whispers of the Albanian master-gardeners who lived here fifty years ago. Nowadays, however, new, rasping and far less soothing melodies are assaulting the ears of the inhabitants: the ancient bostans which for centuries brought the joy of tasty crops have been trapped under the rubble of a reinforced-concrete mentality that serves only greed. The *Yedikule Konakları* ('Yedikule Mansions'), a brand-new pseudo-Ottoman building development, sticks up like a dagger thrust into the very heart of the bostans – giving a clear message that Istanbul's future is one of devastation. Old Hasan looks at the bostan that he had cultivated for 40 years with longing for its former state – wishing only that he had been able to cultivate it for another two years, and then die peacefully.

The time is April: the Yedikule Bostans, in common with all living creatures around them, are experiencing the joy of spring. This is the time when the seeds and the soil finally meet after waiting throughout the whole winter. The gardeners, thrilled

with the excitement of spring, are planting the first seeds, watering them and ‘taking care of them as if they were their very own babies’. First, the seeds of parsley, purslane, chard and dill are put into the soil. Under the spring sun, the gardeners who compose the melody of the bostans are starting their taxing work. Two women joke with each other as they pick black cabbages that are now ready to eat after being carefully cultivated all through the winter. They give me a bunch of the cabbages, describing to me how I can make a meal with them. Time passes; each day the bostans are further enriched with growing crops. A gardener is ploughing his bostan, and in the neighboring one another gardener is washing the crops he has picked in the pool (fed by an ancient cistern) before sending them to the bazaar – while yet another is planning the layout of the crops in his patch: “This part will be for parsley, and in this part I will plant black cabbages.” Nearby, someone is picking spring onions for a customer, who says: “I love to buy from here because everything is so fresh.” When the customer has left, the gardener turns to me and says he likes the fact that the bostan draws so many people to it. A family in the neighboring bostan are drinking tea, resting in the shelter they have built beside their bostan after working in it since 6 o'clock in the morning. At the entrance to the neighborhood, İsmail, a man in his seventies, is waiting wearily behind his cart loaded with pumpkins for customers to buy them. Two years ago he was in the bostan, harvesting his crops under the burning summer sun. Then the officials from the municipality came and destroyed everything that he had been cultivating for 25 years.

Those of the Yedikule Bostans that lie just inside the ancient walls have been buried under heaps of rubble brought by municipality’s bulldozers. Tension is mounting as these ancient market gardens await a decision on their future; on the one

side, the municipality wishes to use the space as a building site, and some of the neighbors support the bostans' destruction –while on the other, activists are struggling to re-establish them. The environment of which they form a part, with its greenery, its historic land walls and its unique local culture, pleads for its life under the rubble: “If we lose this, emptiness will be all that remains to us,” says one of the gardeners, describing her feelings in the face of the threatened destruction.

1.1 Research Questions

The hypothesis I will put forward is that the act of gardening in the bostans is a resistance practice. Several parts of the historic Yedikule Bostans were destroyed by the local municipality in Fatih (a district of Istanbul) in July 2013. While conducting a case study of the Yedikule Bostans, I will explain the dynamics that led to the destruction of bostans, and the devastating effects this had.

Firstly, I will examine the question of whether urban agriculture is or is not a political act. If it is indeed a political act, from what points of view is it so? What are the factors that make urban agriculture a resistance practice? Furthermore, to what is it an act of resistance?

In the course of my attempt to justify the assertion that urban agriculture is a resistance practice, I will link the act of gardening and that of resistance by means of the concept of sustainability. The first questions I will ask are: What is the meaning of political resistance? What is the relationship between sustainability and resistance? And within this context, in the case of Yedikule Bostans, what are the factors that make the act of gardening there a resistance practice? I will approach the case of the Yedikule Bostans from two angles: I will assert that from the point of view of the

concept of sustainability, the act of gardening in the bostans is a resistance practice, and I will also put forward the idea that the organized struggle to protect the bostans is a resistance practice. I will ask the question of how these bostans contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainability, and to what they constitute resistance. In addition, I will ask in exactly which ways the activists and gardeners conducted the struggle to protect the bostans.

As Ortner (1995) claims, a subordinate can feel a certain ambivalence in the matter of putting up a resistance to the dominant side in the relationship. In the case of the Yedikule gardeners, I will ask what the reasons for this subjective ambivalence were, and what its outcome was. I will explore the importance of the Yedikule Bostans, giving reasons as to why they should be protected from destruction. In the course of dealing with all these matters, I will also describe the gardening practices and daily routines of the gardeners.

1.2 Methodology

During the research for my thesis, the methodology I used was that of participant observation. I conducted interviews with the gardeners during the month of April 2015, asking open-ended interview questions. I also participated in the meetings that were held with a view to setting up a gardeners' association. I attended four meetings in total; two on March and two on April 2015. Most of the interviews were conducted in the bostans themselves, but a few took place in gardeners' shelters located nearby. Each interview took about two hours. Rather than expecting farmers to give answers that completely fitted my questions, I allowed them to talk as much as they wished on the issue in hand. Letting them speak freely was important as it allowed me to

perceive their emotions. Most of my interviewees were male gardeners as it is men who are mostly responsible for gardening in the Yedikule Bostans. For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected a total of fourteen interviews: thirteen with male gardeners and one female with a female gardener.

My questions were directed to their personal background in gardening, the influence of immigrant (Albanian, Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian) master-gardeners on their farming practices, the reasons why they loved gardening, the farming inputs they made use of in growing their crops, the hardships involved in gardening and the marketing system. I also asked them about the differences between gardening today and gardening in the past. Furthermore, I asked them about their feelings concerning the destruction of the bostans in 2013. I asked those gardeners whose bostans had been destroyed at that time about the effects of this destruction on them. I also asked the gardeners (both those who had lost their bostans in the course of the destruction and those who are continuing to practice gardening) for their ideas on the political struggle to protect the bostans. Because the Yedikule Bostans are a source of much tension between several groups (gardeners and state officials, gardeners and neighbors who support the destruction of the bostans, these neighbors and activists struggling to save the bostans), what I focused on primarily were the fears, desires and intentions of the gardeners – thus enabling me to analyze their perceptions of themselves and their stance in the face of the destruction. I conducted my research on the principles of the methodology of “thick description” put forward by Geertz (1973), a methodology which draws attention to the complexity of meaning in anthropological research. Geertz (1973) claims that anthropology is a questioning, a looking for meaning. The aim of my research was to accumulate information about the gardeners’ growing

methods, their social ties and their daily lives, and in doing so to analyze the meanings both of their attitudes towards gardening and of the struggle to protect the bostans.

In order to comprehend the urban agricultural process in the Yedikule Bostans in its entirety, I used the methodologies of direct observation and participant observation. To comprehend the growing and harvesting techniques, I observed the workings of gardeners in their plots. Several interviews were conducted with the same farmer in order to see the change in working system between the planting and harvesting phases. In addition to my interviews with gardeners, I also spoke to other people: customers who came to the bostans to buy produce, and several of the activists involved in the struggle to protect the Yedikule Bostans.

In terms of the interview classification models listed by Denscombe (2010), I can categorize my own model as unstructured interviews giving emphasis to the interviewee's thoughts. What differentiates semi-structured interviews from unstructured interviews, and these from structured ones, is the degree of willingness to allow interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thoughts (Denscombe, 2010).

Most participant observation research methods involve four stages: "getting know to people, immersing oneself in the field, recording data (by taking notes in the field, conducting interviews and writing reflexivity journals), and conducting data analyses" (Iacono, Brown, & Holtham, 2009, p. 42). It will be observed from the foregoing that interviewing forms part of the third step, and that before this step can take place, someone has to get to know people and immerse her or himself in the field. Thus it will be seen that interviews form an integral part of the participant

observation method. In other words, if a field is not first studied by a participant observer, interviews made in that field do not make sense as the researcher has conducted her / his interviews with the people concerned in the role of a 'foreigner'. Another question that needs to be answered is this: is it possible for the researcher to be the same person as the one on whom research is carried out? In my opinion, the answer to this question is 'no' –the observer and the observed cannot be the same person. But the gulf between the researcher and the researched (which casts the researcher in the role of 'outsider') can be bridged by an effort on the part of the researcher to behave in a sensitive and intimate way towards her / his subject; in this model, the researcher is exposed to the same dangers and variables of life as his / her interlocutor. As Geertz (1973) claims, the anthropologist is not same as the subjects of her / his research; she / he should not pretend to be *like* them, but should converse with them.

As a woman researcher in the field, on rare occasions I met with obstacles stemming from gardeners' patriarchal approach. I had to abandon my interview with one of the gardeners because he harassed me while I was in his bostan. My interview with another gardener also had to be abandoned because I felt that he was about to harass me.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of six chapters. In Chapter 2, there is a literature review on the following subjects: the definition of urban agriculture, the concept of sustainability, and the notion of resistance. The theme of Chapter 3 can be described as 'Sustainability and Urban Agriculture', while that of Chapter 4 is 'Urban Agricultural

Practices’. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on the case that I researched for my thesis: that of the Yedikule Bostans. Chapter 6 is the one in which I draw my conclusions.

Chapter 2 (‘Literature Review’) will start by attempting to define urban agriculture (2.1); it will then continue by outlining one of the fundamental concepts of this thesis – that of sustainability (2.2); following this, the political aspect of urban agriculture (2.3) and its relation to resistance (2.4) will be examined.

Chapter 3 (‘Urban Agriculture Within the Context of Sustainability’) is divided into two sections: ‘Sustainability and Urban Agriculture’ (3.1) and ‘Urbanization and Sustainability’ (3.2). In the first section, after defining sustainable agriculture, the issue of food security will be examined (3.1.1); I will then deal with environmental (3.1.2), social (3.1.3) and economic sustainability (3.1.4). In the second section (3.2.), I will first explain how urbanization affects sustainability; then, in the last part of this section, I will describe how urban agriculture contributes to the sustainable development of cities (3.2.1).

Chapter 4 (‘Urban Agricultural Practices’) is divided into two sections devoted to (firstly) urban agricultural practices at global level (4.1), and (secondly) urban agricultural practices at local level (4.2). In the first of these two sections (4.1), I will present two case studies relating to countries in Africa, and two relating to countries in South America. The second section of Chapter 3 (4.2) is also divided into two parts, dealing (firstly) with urban agricultural practices in Istanbul before the Gezi resistance (4.2.1), and (secondly) with urban agricultural practices in Istanbul during and after the Gezi resistance (4.2.2). I regard this resistance as a breakthrough in the practice of urban agriculture in Istanbul from the point of view of the concept of the “right to the city” as described by Lefebvre (1968); in the second section of Chapter 4, I will focus

on the case of the bostans in this context.

Chapter 5 ('The Case of the Yedikule Bostans') deals specifically with the Yedikule Bostans; this chapter is the most detailed one as it contains my most important case study. The subject of the first section of this chapter is the history of the Yedikule Bostans (5.1), which will be recounted in parallel with the history of the Land Walls. The second section will describe the everyday life of the gardeners in the bostans (5.2). The focus of the third section will be the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans (5.3), while that of the fourth section will be the importance of these bostans (5.4). In the fifth section (5.5), I will evaluate the gardening practice at the Yedikule Bostans as a political act and as a resistance practice centered on the concept of sustainability (5.5.1) – touching on environmental (5.5.1.1), social (5.5.1.2) and economic (5.5.1.3) sustainability, as well as the issue of food security (5.5.1.4). In this section, I will also describe the organized struggle to protect the bostans (5.5.2). The sixth section, 5.6, is entitled 'Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans'. Here, I will first provide a general overview of the various factors which, in the wider sense, led to this act (i.e., globalization, the state's neoliberal policies, gentrification, and the government's political ambitions)–in the section entitled 'The Wider Political Background', 5.6.1. Following this, I will describe the 'urban transformation' projects which aim to build new settlements in the Land Walls area (5.6.1.1). I will then go on to describe the so-called 'renovation' of the Land Walls (5.6.1.2), and the gentrification process which is currently affecting the neighborhood (5.6.1.3). I will also discuss the domination of industrial agricultural produce in Istanbul – this being a factor that militates against the sustainability of the bostans (5.6.1.4). Lastly, I will describe the barriers to social (5.6.2) and economic (5.6.3) sustainability caused by

the destruction of the bostans; and the effect of the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans on the sustainability of the city of Istanbul (5.6.4).

Chapter 6 ('Conclusion') will contain the conclusions I arrive at as a result of all the foregoing; my contention will be that the bostans need to be protected for various reasons – their cultural and historical value; their potential to contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainability; and their contribution to the sustainability of the city itself.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

2.1 The Definition of Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture does not have one single definition: its characteristics vary according to the urban area in which it is practiced. Mougeot (2000) defines urban agriculture as “an industry located within (intraurban) or on the fringe (periurban) of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows or raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, (re-)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area” (p. 10).

I will adopt Mougeot’s (2000) definition for my thesis, because it is applicable to the specific case with which this thesis is concerned – that of the Yedikule Bostans. Only the “non-food products” (i.e., animal husbandry) part of the definition is not applicable, because the urban agricultural practice in Yedikule is based solely on food production. Mougeot’s definition of urban agriculture rests on two main ideas, which will also form the basis for my thesis during my analysis of the specific case of the Yedikule Bostans. These two ideas relate to the local food system, which can be defined as an urban agriculture system in which production, processing, trading and consumption of food take place across a relatively small geographical area (Martinez *et al.*, 2010). The first of the ideas in Mougeot’s definition is that the food produced in a city goes to supply that city. The second idea is that the inputs (i.e., “material resources, products and services” that are necessary for agricultural production) are

also supported locally.

What chiefly differentiates urban agriculture from rural is “its integration into the urban economic and ecological system” (Mougeot, 2000, p. 9). As stated by the RUAF Foundation (the ‘Resource Center on Urban Agriculture and Food Security’),¹ urban agriculture is tied to “the economic and ecological system” through the use of urban residents as laborers, the usage of typical urban resources (such as the use of organic waste as compost and of urban wastewater for irrigation), direct links with urban consumers, direct impacts on urban ecology (both positive and negative), competition for land with other urban functions, the fact that urban agriculture is influenced by urban policies and plans, etc.” The scope of urban agriculture is variable: it refers to community gardens, personally-managed allotments, home gardens, portions of parks, fruit trees along roadside reserves, greenhouses, green roofs and even green walls (Pearson, 2007). It encompasses both commercial and non-commercial practices (Reynolds, 2009). The commercial practice of urban agriculture is called either ‘entrepreneurial gardening’ or ‘market gardening’, and these include not only home consumption but also the growing of food to sell in the market (Golden, 2013). Farmers’ markets and neighborhood markets in cities are the distribution mechanisms for this type of agriculture. The Yedikule Bostans are a type of market garden.

¹ The RUAF Foundation (Resource Center on Urban Agriculture and Food Security) is a global not-for-profit expertise organization in the field of ‘Urban Agriculture and City Region Food Strategies’ < <http://www.ruaf.org> > accessed on September 14, 2014

2.2 The Main Concept of this Thesis

I will use the concept of ‘sustainability’ as the basis for the main contentions of my thesis. Sustainability is already a component of urban agriculture in the definition of Mougeot (2000) that I quoted above. A familiarity with the concept of sustainability is necessary in order for us to be fully aware of the devastating effects of industrial and global agriculture, and to take action against it. This concept received its first definition in the United Nations’ 1987 Brundtland Commission Report ‘Our Common Future’. The definition in this report was linked to the development of cities. ‘Sustainable development’ was first defined in the ‘Brundtland Report’ of the World Commission on Environment and Development as follows: “... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED,1987). Constanza and Pattern (1995) assert that the idea of sustainability is clearly definable: “a sustainable system is one which insists or persists” (p. 193). If we apply the concept of sustainability to agriculture, ‘sustainable agriculture’ means the supplying of current and long-term food needs while conserving natural resources and long-term human development (Rao and Rogers, 2006).

2.3 The Political Aspect of Urban Agriculture

When considering this topic, our first question should be: what does ‘political’ mean? Is urban agriculture a political act, or not? If the answer to this question is ‘yes’, to what does urban agriculture correspond in political terms?

In “Ten Theses on Politics”, Rancier (2001) ‘politics’ from ‘policy’, describing ‘politics’ not as “the exercise of power” but as a “mode of acting” that is put into

practice by a political subject(ivity) through political relationship.

If we apply Rancier's concept of politics to urban agriculture, we see that it is a political act: it is both an act of growing food and one that involves political relationships. The political subjects are both the growers and the eaters in the cycle of local production and consumption. The political relationship created through urban agriculture is an issue of current concern to scholars, who see urban agriculture as an alternative to industrial agricultural production. According to the current literature, urban agriculture creates a relationship between food, the environment and people – as opposed to industrial agriculture production, which cuts off the relationship between us, the food we eat and the people producing it. The relationship created through urban agriculture is of three kinds: the relationship between people and the environment; the inner relationship between the various people who are engaged in urban agriculture; and the relationship between the growers and their own inner selves (Thom, 2006). The disconnection between food and eaters that is caused by the industrial agricultural system turns these eaters into passive 'consumers' who do not think critically about the following questions: Where does the food come from? Is it fresh or not? Is it free from chemicals or not? How far was it transported, and how much cost was added during transportation? How much packaging cost was added? Who is producing this food? Under what working conditions are they producing it? (Berry, 2009). By emphasising the relationship between food and the land it is produced on, Berry (2009) says "eating is an agricultural act" – which means that the eaters are not passive consumers, but are part of agricultural production. Within this context, both the act of growing and that of eating are political. As Pretty(2008) maintains, "eating is the most political act we do on a daily basis because of its effect

on farms, landscapes and food businesses.”²

In addition to the relationship between food and people, McMahon (2002) asserts that food itself is the “embodiment of relationships”, saying that “a potato is not just a potato: it carries in it and into us when we eat it, a host of social relationships such as those with the people who grow, harvest, or trade it and also with nature, not in the abstract but with particular nonhuman others, things, and individual places” (p. 204). So, from this perspective, what kind of relationships do we ‘consume’ at our dinner tables? Because of the industrialization of food, we are consuming socially and environmentally exploitative relationships. Furthermore, this process has been going on since the time when we lost our connection with the food we eat (Thom, 2006). The question is: although humanity’s agricultural history – and thus its connection with food – has spanned 100,000 years, how did we come to lose this connection? Ever since the domination of the industrial agricultural system began, we have gradually been losing this connection. The reason for our regarding ourselves as ‘consumers’ is our being unaware of this connection. The capitalist industrial agricultural system needs people to remain passive as ‘consumers’ in order to be able to sell its products and generate capital accumulation. Therefore, the industrial food economy – from large farms to supermarket chains and fast food restaurants – deliberately obscures the connection between food and farming in order to prevent people from awakening to the damage to the environment and to health caused by the industrial food they eat (Berry, 2009). If this were not so, people would object to being merely ‘customers’. In feeling our connection with food, with the people who produce it and with the land, we may become aware of the damage caused to other

² From an interview in the following online magazine < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4312591.stm> > accessed on October 15, 2014

people and things who/which are exploited (Thom, 2006). Therefore, in view of the disconnection brought about by the capitalist industrial agricultural system, the far more direct relationship between us and food that is created by urban agriculture is a political relationship which makes urban agriculture a political act.

2.4 Urban Agriculture as a Resistance Practice

The notion of resistance has different meanings according to different writers; in contrast with the binary opposition between the dominant and the dominated that was for many years accepted in academic circles, several recent writers underline its more complex, layered structure. Foucault (1980), in conceptualizing the “micro form of power”, draws attention to the fact that domination is not limited to institutions and to macro structures such as the state, but can also be present in our daily lives. Scott (1985) puts forward the notion of “everyday forms of resistance” – which leads to the understanding that resistance does not need to be strictly organized. In terms of the actions of our everyday lives, what can be called ‘resistance’? Brian Fegan’s (1986) answer to this question is that there has to be intention: if the actors do not have the intention to resist, their act cannot be said to be one of resistance. Contrarily, Stoler (1986) suggests that the intention of the people concerned is not important: rather, we should investigate the question of whether or not their acts are causing a transformation. Agreeing with Stoler, Ortner (1995) claims that resistance is not limited to the opposition of the subordinated to the dominant, but can also be “creative and transformative” (p. 191).

My hypothesis in this thesis is that urban agriculture is a resistance practice. My question here is: resistance to what?

Urban agriculture can be described as an “everyday form of resistance” or “micro form of resistance” because although eating is a daily act, it is – as we have seen – also a political act. In addition, from Ortner’s perspective, urban agriculture fits the definition of resistance which is “creative and transformative”. The transformative effect of urban agriculture lies mostly in its function as an act of awareness-raising. Urban agriculture opposes the industrial agricultural system in three ways: by creating relationships between people and food, by connecting people to each other, and by connecting people with the environment – all of which encourage people to grow their own food. By using agricultural production methods that do not harm the environment, it also helps to transform society by appealing to people to be sensitive about the food supply system. “The act of growing tomatoes can be more transformative than any number of speeches or pamphlets” (Thom, 2006, p. 14).

Urban agriculture can be regarded as a resistance to the exploitation which is caused by industrial agriculture with the collaboration of the capitalist system. The fact that harm is caused by industrial agricultural production (on the environment, on individuals and their health, and on society) should not surprise us because this production model is the outcome of the capitalist development which facilitated industrial agriculture in order to meet the need for capital accumulation. As Sodano (2012) claims, food policy has changed as a result of the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century and 20th century capitalism. In the Industrial Revolution, small scale production was replaced with mass-produced mechanized production (Jones, 1974). Sodano (2012) describes the change in the history of food under four main headings. Firstly, the commodification of food has forcibly replaced the model of self-sustained

peasant communities (which rely on the gift or exchange of food) with food markets and wholesale outlets. Secondly, agriculture has become increasingly dependent on the financial sector. Thirdly, the agricultural system has been integrated with the market. Fourthly, the food sector has been dependent on non-renewable energy sources which harm the environment. According to the Union of Concern Scientists, owing to its capitalist ideology, the industrial agricultural system aims to “increase yield (such as bushels per acre) and decrease costs of production, usually by exploiting economies of scale”.³ In other words, industrial agriculture has been running at the expense of the environment, society and culture in order to serve capitalist interests. Furthermore, it has recently been observed that the industrial food system fails in meeting the food needs of people equally (Levkoe, 2011). Urban agriculture, by contrast, constitutes a resistance to the capitalist exploitation embedded in the industrial agriculture system because it aims not to secure the maximum profit but to meet the food needs of the household and town (as much as possible) through local production and consumption.

Industrial agriculture has devastating impacts on nature because it “depends on expensive inputs from off the farm (e.g., pesticides and fertilizer), many of which generate wastes that harm the environment; it uses large quantities of non-renewable fossil fuels; and it tends toward concentration of production, driving out small producers and undermining rural communities” (Horrihan *et al.*, 2002, p. 445). Hence, urban agriculture, through producing at local level and keeping mechanization and the use of fossil fuels and chemical inputs to a minimum, is an act of resistance to the degradation of the environment.

³ Union of Concerned Scientists: ‘Industrial Agriculture: Features and Policy’ < <http://www.ucsusa.org/our-work/food-agriculture/our-failing-food-system/industrial-agriculture#.VaDIWMqUc8o> > accessed on September 3, 2014

Urban agriculture is resistance not only to environmental exploitation but also to the social and economical exploitation of workers that the industrial agricultural system causes. Workers on industrial agricultural farms encounter alienation from the food they produce. Because the industrialization of agriculture and its integration with capitalism empowers off-farm actors, the autonomy of farmers is eliminated and they are reduced to being merely a part of the agricultural commodity chain (Amir, 2013). The growers in urban agriculture, however, do not become subject to this alienation thanks to their relationship with the environment and with their inner world. Thus, urban agriculture constitutes a resistance to the injustices and inequalities caused by industrialization, to neoliberal policies and to the corporate-dominated globalization of agriculture.

Urban agriculture is also a resistance practice within the context of claiming the “right to the city” as put forward by Lefebvre (1968). As Marcuse (2009) emphasizes, the “right to the city” in fact consists of various different rights. It is “not just a right to public space or a right to information and transparency in government, or a right of access to the center, or a right to this service or that” (p. 192-193); rather, all these are part of a whole (Marcuse, 2009). Just as the city is an outcome of power relationships, so is the production of crops. A crop produced on agricultural land is in fact the product of social, political and economic relations. What Lefebvre means by the notion of the “right to the city” is a radical transformation of the social and spatial relations underlying the production of space which will enable a shift of decision-making from the state and capital to the urban inhabitants (Purcell, 2002). Especially since the Second World War, owing to globalization and international trade agreements, the control of food production has been removed from the consumer;

also, the food chain has become longer and less transparent (Roos, Terragni, & Torjusen, 2007). According to Sodano (2012), “about 7 billion consumers and 1.5 farmers are squeezed by no more than 500 companies – retailers, food companies, traders and processors – who control 70% of the world food market. Four firms (Dupont, Monsanto, Syngenta and Limagrain) control over 50% of seed industry” (p. 382). Within this context, urban agriculture is a resistance on the part of the inhabitants of a city to the hegemony of the industrial agricultural companies over food; the purpose of this resistance is to reclaim control for themselves.

Moreover, urban agriculture claims the “right to the city” because it enables the social production of space. According to Lefebvre, the production of urban space is inseparable from the production of social relations. Urban agriculture is a focus for social relations – between the various different people who are engaged in growing agricultural products, and between growers and consumers. In this context, “the right to the city is resistance to the disenfranchisement associated with urban neoliberal citizenship relations and capitalist social relations” (Purcell, 2002, p. 103). Harvey (2008) states that “the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire” (p. 23). According to Harvey (2008), claiming the “right to the city” means changing yourself – something which is realized through the action of changing the city; it is a question of what kind of people we want to be. Having established that claiming the “right to the city” involves changing the self (with all that this implies), we can now ask the following question: Do we want to be victims who just pay the price of our food with no thought for the harm caused by the global industrial system, or do we want to reclaim control over our food and over the

production of our social relationships, in the context of the “right to the city”?

Engaging in urban agriculture is reclaiming our “right to the city”; in doing this, we reclaim our connections with each other and with our food.

CHAPTER 3

URBAN AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 Sustainability and Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture as a sustainable agricultural practice constitutes resistance to the unsustainable industrial agricultural system. Sustainable agriculture combines three main goals: “environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity.”⁴ Urban agriculture, in contrast with globalized agricultural production, is sustainable because it is based on a local production and consumption system.

As Foaken, Sofer and Mlozi (2004) claim, sustainability can be approached on two levels: that of the household, and that of the town. At household level, sustainability means ‘having a sustainable livelihood’. A livelihood is sustainable when it is sufficient to meet basic needs. In this context, urban agricultural practice is sustainable because it provides enough food or income to maintain a satisfactory standard of living. At town level, the sustainability of urban agriculture depends on the outcome of the farming methods employed – especially with regard to the environment: if farming in the city does not harm the urban environment, it can be said to be sustainable. Foaken *et al.* (2004) stipulate the following as conditions for the maintenance of sustainability in urban agriculture: (1) the provision of a food supply for the people; (2) the provision of employment; (3) the generation of income; (4) the marketing of produce; (5) the maintaining of environmental balance; and (6) the enablement of legal and policy regulations.

In terms of the provision of a food supply at household level (1), urban agriculture

⁴ University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program: What is Sustainable Agriculture? < <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/about-sarep/def> > accessed on October 7, 2014

benefits households directly through self-consumption on the part of the growers, and through the provision of income to these latter –which allows them, in turn, to purchase food. At town level, many city dwellers can obtain food by purchasing products produced on the land that is used for urban agriculture. Sustainability should also meet the criterion of the provision of employment (2). This is seen at household level in the employment of family members (family labour). At town level, people can become paid labourers by working on urban agricultural land; also, this land presents an employment opportunity for people who are selling farming inputs (such as seed and fertilizers), or who are transporting the products and selling them. In the context of the criterion of income generation (3), households can obtain income by selling their produce in the market. At town level, people who are employed in urban market gardens (ranging from paid labourers to sellers of inputs to traders) can obtain income through their farming practice. In terms of the marketing of agricultural produce (4), sustainability at household level depends on ready access to the market for growers, allowing them to sell their agricultural produce. At town level, sustainability refers to the ability of residents to purchase urban agricultural produce. At household level, the maintaining of environmental balance (5) means having “awareness of the impact of urban agriculture on the urban environment and willingness to take the environment into account, abstain from use of polluted water for irrigation, proper management of livestock waste”. At town level, the maintaining of this balance consists in “awareness of the importance of a healthy urban environment and the willingness to make it a reality, plus solid and liquid waste management for recycling purposes” (Foaken *et al.*, 2004, p. 8). If legal and policy regulations (6) can be modified so that they guarantee access to urban land for growers, sustainability of urban agriculture at

household level can be realized. However, growers are usually denied access to urban land by policies which do not take their interests into account. Gerstl (2001) asserts that the fact that producers do not own the land they work on is an obstacle to the sustainability of urban agriculture. At town level, in order for the sustainability of urban agriculture to be guaranteed, legal and policy regulations need to be directed towards “the encouragement of organic farming, the creation of farming zones, the allocation of land for farming” (Foaken *et al.*, 2004, p. 8). This issue will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 4, which is concerned with the specific case of the Yedikule Bostans.

In addition to the above criteria, Pretty (2008) claims that the use of agricultural technologies and practices that do not harm the environment meets the conditions required for the sustainability of urban agriculture. Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO)⁵ (2002) defines this sustainability in these words: “Recognizing the urban agriculture as an urban land, by making it guarantee to have secure access to the vacant lots, by strengthening the farmers' organizations, by providing the farmers with the technical support, knowledge and training”.

The pillars on which sustainability rests are fourfold: food security, and environmental, economic and social sustainability. In the rest of Chapter 2, I will expand on these four pillars in order to clarify firstly, the contradiction between urban agriculture and industrial agriculture in the matter of sustainability, and secondly, the basis on which urban agriculture can constitute resistance to industrial agriculture. As already stated, my hypothesis is that sustainable agriculture is an act of resistance to

⁵ FAO is ‘an intergovernmental organization that leads international efforts to defeat hunger’ < <http://www.fao.org/home/en/> > accessed on October 12, 2014

the profit-oriented practice of industrial agriculture; urban agriculture contributes to the protection of the environment, the formation of social connections between people and the assurance of their economic wellbeing. By virtue of the fact that it relies on local production and consumption, and because it contributes both to food security and to environmental, social and economic sustainability, urban agriculture constitutes resistance to the industrial agricultural system.

3.1.1 Food Security

In the face of the hunger and poverty suffered by millions of people today, the lack of food security is a major problem that requires urgent solution. FAO (2014) estimates that 805 million people – about one in nine of the world’s population – were chronically undernourished in the period 2012-2014, having insufficient food for an active and healthy life. In a report prepared by the FAO as a contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)⁶ Integration Segment, it is stated that “we produce enough food in the world to feed everyone. Yet about 840 million people are food insecure and considered to be undernourished.”⁷ Indeed, food insecurity will continue to be a global problem in the future – but to an even more devastating extent than it is at present.

According to FAO (2002), food security is provided “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. As Drescher, Jacobi and Amend (2000) maintain, the provision of food security depends

⁶ The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the United Nations’ central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.

⁷ See < <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/pdf/foodandagricultureorganization.pdf> > accessed on November 14, 2014

on three main factors. Firstly, it is dependent on “availability of food” (that is, the production of food in rural and urban areas, as well as its importation, marketing and distribution). Secondly, it is dependent on “access to food” – the matter of whether or not the household can afford to purchase food to subsistence level. And thirdly, food security depends on “quality of food” – a concept that is related to production conditions (such as the use of pesticides, air quality, and farming techniques in general). According to Lee-Smith (2010), two ways of providing food security can be identified: increasing production, and improving access and distribution. Industrial and globalized agriculture, besides adversely affecting food security, also decreases the quality of food; an industrial crop which is transported during 5-10 days loses 30-50 percent of its nutritional value (Klein, 1987).

Thus we see that urban agriculture is indeed an act of resistance to the food insecurity caused by industrial agriculture. It offers a solution to the problem by providing both growers and eaters with enough food, and by providing them with access to food which is fresh and nutritious – in contrast with that provided by the industrial agricultural system. Mougeot (2000) asserts that the majority of urban farmers who grow food on small plots mainly for their own subsistence can be considered to be part of the urban poor. Urban agriculture contributes to the solution of the problem of urban poverty by providing food security for those households who would not otherwise be able to afford it (Mougeot, 2000). As stated above, urban farmers enjoy household food security in two ways: through self-consumption and through income. They produce enough food to meet their household needs; also, their practice of urban agriculture provides them with an income – which, in turn, gives their households the economic power to purchase food over and above what they

produce (Andersen, 2009).

As stated by RUAF, food security is a vital issue not just for those families who are engaged in the practice of urban agriculture, but for all city-dwellers. Most urban consumers are vulnerable on the issue of food security because they depend on cash income to obtain food (Ruel *et al.*, 1998). Urban agriculture can provide city residents – especially those who are less educated or who have a low income – with the means to obtain food, as well as income for some of them (Wilson, 2014). In addition, city-dwellers are provided with nutritionally-rich crops (Zezza & Tasciotti, 2010) because urban agriculture is based on local production and makes use of sustainable farming methods.

3.1.2 Environmental Sustainability

According to Foster (2002), environmental sustainability means “protecting existing environmental resources (both in the natural and the built world) including the preservation of historical sites and the development of environmental resources and assets for future use” (p. 785). In the light of Bookchin’s (1995) claim that ecology and society cannot be separated from each other, it can then be claimed that the assurance of environmental sustainability is essential to the sustainability of our lives. Bookchin (1995) conceptualizes this notion as “social ecology”, which implies that ecological problems arise from social problems, and that the destiny of human beings runs parallel with the destiny of non-human beings. Through its use of sustainable methods, urban agriculture contributes to environmental sustainability – thus making it an act of resistance to the unsustainable methods of industrial agriculture.

Among the industrial agricultural methods which exploit the environment we

may cite the following: (1) monoculture (planting the same crop on agricultural land); (2) the mass use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers; (3) high dependence on fossil fuels; (4) the use of an extensive irrigation system relying on surface water which is already polluted; (5) highly-mechanized production; and (6) the intensive use of greenhouses.

In contrast with the unsustainable methods adopted by industrial agriculture, urban agriculture makes use of sustainable methods such as: (1) crop diversity (i.e., the planting of a wide diversity of different plants); (2) the use of cover crops (obviating the need for pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers) as a means of soil and nutrient management; (3) no-till or low-till farming and non-dependence on motorized transport (resulting in far less dependence on fossil fuels); (4) the balanced use of water resources thanks to the use of small plots of land; (5) methods of production that are more dependent on human labour, and thus far less mechanized; (6) minimal use of greenhouses (Horrigan, Lawrence, & Walker, 2002).

To expand on the above six points: firstly, as opposed to monoculture – which causes the loss of the biodiversity that has so far bolstered our food supply, and also triggers global warming– crop diversity preserves the nutritional quality of the soil, which in turn maintains biodiversity and reduces the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast with mechanized farming, which rips up the soil and releases into the air huge amounts of carbon, a greenhouse gas (which if left in the soil would benefit plants and micro-organisms) (Kyte, 2014). In addition, the no-till or low-till farming methods used in urban agriculture disturb the soil at a minimum level during the process of planting, thus keeping intact those micro-organisms which keep carbon in the soil (Wernick, 2014).

Secondly, industrial agriculture is not sustainable because “it is similarly eroding natural resources faster than the environment can regenerate them and because it depends heavily on resources that are non-renewable (e.g., fossil fuels and fossil aquifers)” (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002, p. 452). Furthermore, as a result of industrial agriculture, “fertilizer runoff has created dead zones in our oceans and increased green gas emissions; the search for more arable land has devastated our forests; irrigation methods have depleted surface and ground water; the way we farm is eroding our topsoil and reducing soil fertility; pesticides and herbicides have polluted our air and water; monocropping has resulted in loss of habitat for many species” (Brownlee, 2010)⁸. In fact, pesticides first began to be used in fields in the United States after the Second World War because chemical companies needed a market for their wartime inventions.⁹ By contrast, urban agricultural methods not only use less pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers, but also – thanks to crop rotation – help farmers to prevent the development of permanent niches for potential pests, thus reducing the need for pest control (Goldsmith, 1991). Urban agricultural methods do indeed use pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers to a limited extent; however, “the question should be put like this: urban agriculture produces safe products despite the polluted environment” (De Bon, Parrot, & Moustier, 2010, p. 27).

Thirdly, industrial agriculture causes climate change and global warming by increasing greenhouse gas emissions owing to “high use of fuel and oil for tractors, equipment, trucking and shipping; electricity for lighting, cooling, and heating” (Bownlee, 2010)¹⁰. The industrial agricultural system aims only to gain maximum

⁸ Retrieved from < <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2010-03-09/local-food-and-farming-revolution> > accessed on November 25, 2014

⁹ See < <http://www.panna.org/issues/food-agriculture/industrial-agriculture> > accessed on September 27, 2014

¹⁰ Ibid.

profit from farming through the use of chemical inputs and heavy machines which cause soil erosion, and the contamination of soil nutrients and groundwater (Peters, 2010). Furthermore, industrial agriculture also causes loss of agricultural land and productivity: as Sodano (2012) points out, both the amount of agricultural land and the yields obtained from this land have been decreasing because of the desertification and water shortages caused by global warming.

Fourthly, in contrast with industrial agriculture, urban agriculture contributes to environmental sustainability both because it uses minimal mechanization and because it does not waste plastic packaging or make heavy use of fossil-fueled transport in its transportation to the markets – thanks to the proximity of the land where the produce is grown to the places where it is sold; both these factors result in a decrease in CO² emissions (Peters, 2010). Decreasing the distance between food and people brings about a decrease in the energy used for food transportation and storage (Ackerman *et al.*, 2014). Also, urban agriculture – by virtue of the fact that it is practised in green spaces – is a way of reducing the discharge of CO², because plants and trees capture CO² (Deelstra & Girarget, 2000). Moreover, green fields in urban land reduce the temperature during hot weather, and also improve the quality of urban air.¹¹ Also, urban agriculture brings about biodiversity by keeping the urban environment green (Martin, Clift, Christie, & Druckman, 2014, p. 756). In sum, because it uses ecologically sound agricultural methods, urban agriculture constitutes resistance to the unsustainable and harmful methods of industrial agriculture.

¹¹ Urban Heat Island Mitigation < <http://www.epa.gov/heatisland/mitigation/index.htm> > accessed on December 13, 2014

3.1.3 Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is “a life-enhancing condition within communities and a process within communities that can achieve that condition” (McKenzie, 2004, p.12). The conditions required for social sustainability are: equity of access to key services (food, health, education, housing); political participation by citizens at local level; a sense of community responsibility; and equity between generations – which means that future generations will not be damaged by the current generation (McKenzie, 2004). Thus we see that without the environmental sustainability and food security provided by urban agriculture, social sustainability is impossible. Urban agriculture provides equity as it improves the health and economic wellbeing of poor people (Smit, Ratta, & Nasr, 2001) by providing them with a source of food or income. Urban agriculture improves people’s health both by providing green spaces – which help those trying to survive in environments with heavy air pollution (Bellows, 2005) and also by providing nutritious and fresh food. Urban agriculture is a resistance to the globalized food system, which causes “increasing inequalities, poverty, hunger, poor health” (Koç & Dehlberg, 1999, p. 112). The globalized agri-food system is not concerned with growing food or feeding people, but is interested only in gaining power and reproducing the capitalist system (McMahon, 2002). In this context, growing food constitutes an act of social resistance to the corporate-dominated global powers, while at the same time enabling people to live their lives with dignity.

Urban agriculture, because it leads to the creation of urban communities, also constitutes resistance at the social level. Firstly, by encouraging social connections, it is a practical form of urban community development (Garnett, 1996). Anschutz (1996) defines ‘community’ as “a group of users of a service who live in the same

area and have access to, and use, the same service” (p. 12). Community building, which is one of the pillars of social sustainability, is made possible by urban agriculture thanks to the connections created between the various different people engaged in the practice of urban agriculture (e.g., between different producers, between producers and consumers, and between people and the environment). This constitutes resistance to industrial agriculture, which severs the connection between people and food, and between land and producers.

Consumers pay the social cost of industrial agriculture by losing their connection both with the food they eat and with the people producing this food. The commodification of food, as part of the capitalist industrial agricultural system, causes this disconnection by turning food into a ‘commodity’ and eaters into ‘consumers’. Local production and consumption, however, connects people (eaters and producers) with each other, and connects eaters with their food. Through this connection, people can acquire an understanding that food involves multi-layered relationships (i.e., social relationships along a wide spectrum ranging from those between the various actors involved in the cultivation of the land to those between producers and consumers) – which in turn enables people to resist the commodification of farming and food (McMahon, 2002).

Urban agriculture gives rise to social activism and networking – these being the outcome of participants’ awareness of environmental issues: they personally witness the effects of urban agriculture on matters such as food security and connection with food (Ferris, Norman, & Sempik, 2001). The consumer who understands how the food system works and their role in it will act responsibly for change (Kloppenborg & Lezberg, 1996). Social sustainability concerns “the

relationships between individual actions and the created environment, or the inter-connections between individual life-chances and institutional structures” (Jarvis, Pratt, & Cheng-Chong Wu, 2001, p. 127). Creating relationships through urban agriculture breaks down the alienation of people from each other and from their food. Thus we see that urban agriculture is also an act of resistance in terms of social sustainability.

Social relations allow city-dwellers to participate in the creation of urban space, and these relations are encouraged by the fact of people’s being together in the new urban space that they have created (Shillington, 2013). Urban agriculture also contributes to social sustainability through the sharing of knowledge and practice by different generations, through the sharing of work on the land by older and younger members of the community, and through the act of playing host to each other on the same piece of agricultural land. All these activities cut across racial, ethnic and religious boundaries (Bellows, 2003); they also protect the community’s culture from the mechanization brought about by industrial and globalized agriculture. Explaining the mechanization of culture, Berry (2009) says that we are exposed to “cultural amnesia” – that is, that we (i.e., “industrial eaters”) forget the connection that exists between food on the one hand, and farming and the land on the other. In this context, urban agriculture constitutes cultural resistance both through resisting commodification and through reclaiming our relationships with food, with the environment, with the people producing food and with the practice of traditional sustainable farming methods on agricultural land. Thus, urban agricultural practice encourages “sustainable human development” because it constitutes a focus for the organization of culture, identity and therapy (De Bon *et al.*, 2010, p. 26).

3.1.4 Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability can be defined as maintenance of capital, or keeping capital intact: it is “the amount of money one can consume during a period and still be as well off at the end of the period” (Goodland, 2002, p. 2). By contributing to economic sustainability, urban agriculture constitutes an act of resistance to the economic exploitation and poverty that is caused by globalization and the industrialization of agriculture. Firstly, it is a source of income: many people earn their living by selling the produce they grow. Secondly, it is a means to “self-employment” for people who are unemployed, or who earn low wages in their jobs (Avila & van Veenhuizen, 2002). In the past, in times of crisis such as war or economic collapse, growing food has been a life-saving solution for city-dwellers. In Germany after the First World War, many people resorted to growing their own food in order to avoid dying of hunger. In Britain during the Second World War, a ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign was organized to encourage the cultivation of urban lands (De Bon *et al.*, 2010). Today, although we may not be living under war conditions, we are still waging a war in that a large number of us are living in poverty. Many people in cities fall victim to unemployment and become unable to meet their basic needs. Ravillion (2002) calls this situation the “urbanization of poverty”, pointing out that poor people living in urban areas make up one quarter of the world's population, and that economic growth in these areas fails almost entirely to help in decreasing poverty. Drawing attention to the increase in the number of people who experience poverty owing to migration from rural to urban areas, he asserts that while people in the cities become poorer, more poor people are becoming urbanized. In this context, urban agriculture has an important role to play as an employment opportunity for the urban poor; it becomes “a

component of their livelihoods and also an important survival strategy” (Deelstra & Girardet, 2000, p. 46).

Besides leading to environmental exploitation and the social exploitation of consumers and factory farmers, industrial agriculture and the corporate-dominated market also cause the economic exploitation of those farmers who work on industrial agricultural farms. In other words, the industrial agriculture system brings economic unsustainability for these people. What Ikerd (2010) says about farmers in the U.S. can also be applied to those farmers who work on industrial agriculture farms worldwide: he says they “are among the lowest-paid workers while working under dangerous and disagreeable conditions, most without adequate health care or other fringe benefits”. This is equally true for those people who work on industrial farms in hazardous working conditions, earning low wages.¹² In addition, while the leading corporations of the industrial sector “are gaining profit because of increasing dependence on off-farm resources, the farmers are losing money.” (Horrihan *et al.*, 2002). In this context, urban agriculture constitutes an act of resistance on the part of small-scale farmers: by producing locally, they claim independence from the corporate-dominated market (McMahon, 2002).

While industrial agricultural methods harm farmers economically, the sustainable methods used in urban agriculture provide urban farmers with economic sustainability. For example, by practising crop diversity, farmers take on a lower level of financial risk because at least one of their crops will be able to tolerate the local weather conditions, whereas in the monoculture model, farmers are vulnerable to fluctuations in market price (Goldmish, 1991). Furthermore, the extensive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the monoculture model gives rise to greater

¹² See < <http://www.sustainabletable.org/273/workers> > accessed on January 5, 2015

production costs and high dependence on inputs of this kind (Bryant, 2012).

3.2 Urbanization and Sustainability

Urbanization can be defined as “an increasing share of a nation’s population living in urban areas and thus a declining share living in rural areas” (Satterthwaite, McGranahan, & Tacoli, 2010, p. 2810). According to the UN Report ‘The World's Urbanization Prospects’ (2014), the world’s urban population has grown rapidly in the last 64 years – from 746 million in 1950 to 3.9 billion in 2014; this figure is likely to increase to an estimated 6.8 billion in 2020. According to 2014 data, more people are now living in urban areas than in rural ones: city-dwellers currently make up 54% of the world’s population. In 1950, 30% of the world’s population was urban-dwelling; by 2050, 66% of the world’s population is projected to be living in urban areas.¹³ In low- and middle-income nations, urbanization is the result of migration from rural to urban areas; people migrate because of the lack of assets in their home villages, expecting to find jobs in the industrial sector in the cities. Migration results in increased urban poverty and hunger: “More of the rural poor are migrating to the cities, more of the people in cities are being born in poor families and more urban middle-class residents gravitate around the poverty line” (Mwuese, Abraham, Apollos, 2014, p. 12).

In parallel with the rapid increase in urban population, the number of people needing to be fed is growing enormously day by day; thus, it is expected that in the future more people will suffer from poverty. As Kaldjian (2004) points out, the problem is not one of food scarcity but one of restricted access to food. Urbanization

¹³ *The World's Urbanization Prospects' 2014 Revision* < <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Highlights/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf> > accessed on January 7, 2015

is proceeding rapidly in the cities, bringing with it increasing inequality in the matter of access to food: while the upper class enjoys full access to food, the urban poor are denied this right. The reason for hunger is not the increase in urban population, as is claimed by the owners of industrial companies; rather, it is the urban population's capitalist consumption patterns (Satterthwaite *et. al*, 2010).

Urbanization does not just mean migration from rural to urban society: it also brings with it changes in production and consumption patterns and in the way people interact with nature. Because of the global trade in agricultural products, cities rely less and less on their own products and more and more on imports ranging from consumer goods to food, water and energy – none of which is sustainable (Allen, 2009). Another consequence of the increase in urban population is a rapid increase in the use of fossil fuel. Extensive use of natural resources and the generation of waste brought about by the process of urbanization negatively affect ecology at the local level (in and around urban areas), regionally (through flows of waste from cities to surrounding areas) and globally – in the form of climate change (Satterthwaite *et al*, 2010).

Capitalist production and consumption, which are the result of the capitalist and globalized system – triggered by the industrial agricultural system – are a major reason for hunger and poverty. Over the last 30 years, urbanization has gone hand in hand with the neoliberal policies and corporate-dominated globalization on which industrial agriculture relies. Thus we see once again that the main problem is not urbanization itself, but its unsustainability – which results from the neoliberal policies applied by governments. Government policies, far from supporting sustainable agriculture, form the major barrier to sustainability. Neoliberal urbanization and

neoliberal food policies have devastating effects both on farmers and on consumers. Since the 1980s, “neoliberal policies have limited government interventions, reduced subsidies and opened up the economy to international trade and competition” (Huddell, 2010, p. 74). Since the 1990s, many small family farms relying on human labour have been replaced by highly-mechanized corporate factory farms (Kimbrell, 2002). Neoliberal policies have hurt small-scale farmers in a dramatic way: they have not been able to compete with global agricultural trade, and have lost their lands (Huddell, 2010).

Similarly, especially since the implementation of neoliberal policies began, more and more people have lost their access to food – which in turn has given rise to serious illnesses (Sodano, 2012). According to the November 2014 report of the World Health Organization (WHO),¹⁴ foodborne and waterborne diarrhoeal diseases have killed almost 2 million people – many of them children – annually.¹⁵ As Sodano (2012) observes, the neoliberal food policies applied in the last thirty years have failed to meet people’s food needs, and have also failed to preserve natural resources and the environment. According to the 2005 report of the UN Millennium Project, an estimated half of the hungry poor are smallholder farmers, while two-tenths are landless laborers who are unable to grow or buy enough food to meet their household requirements.¹⁶

Urban agriculture does not give rise to any of the aforementioned environmental, social or economic problems. It does not rely on the intensive use of machinery, fossil fuel, fertilizers or pesticides, and does not waste non-renewable

¹⁴ The World Health Organization (WHO) is an agency of the United Nations (UN) that is concerned with public health at international level.

¹⁵ See < <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs399/en/> > accessed on October 22, 2014

¹⁶ United Nations Millennium Project, Task Force on Hunger (2005). *Halving Hunger: It can be done* < <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Hunger-lowres-complete.pdf> > accessed on November 23, 2014

resources such as water – and so does not harm the environment. It helps to meet people’s food needs while preserving natural resources. It brings people together, rather than alienating them from each other, and also re-establishes their connection with the environment. It helps to alleviate the side-effects of urbanization – poverty and hunger – through providing employment opportunities, enhanced access to food and greater food security. As its practice depends on small farmers, it cannot be said to represent an economic threat to them. We need sustainable urbanization in order to eliminate food inequalities: by linking cities with the environment, urban agriculture can provide sustainable urbanization (Deelstra & Girardet, 2000). Thus, government policies – if they are truly intended to improve sustainability – should support urban agriculture rather than discourage it.

3.2.1 The Sustainability of Cities and Urban Agriculture

The sustainability of cities depends on the provision of environmental, social and economic sustainability. It also involves the question of the “right to the city”: “who should have the benefit of the city and what kind of city it should be” (Marcuse, 2009, p. 192). In the face of the devastating effects of the industrialization and globalization of agriculture on people’s wellbeing, on the household, on the local economy and on the environment, there is an urgent need to transform cities in accordance with the ideal of sustainability.

The drive to create sustainability has become an urgent matter in the face of economic liberalism and the deregulation of markets on an international scale that has taken place since the early 1980s (Pugh, 2000). Importance has been given to the concept of ‘sustainable development’ at international level since the early 1990s (Allen, 2009).

This concept was first mentioned in the Brundtland Report (1987) of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), where it was described as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Official recognition of the notion of sustainable development in cities dates back to 1996, when the UN ‘City Summit’ Conference took place. At this conference, an official agreement entitled the ‘Habitat Agenda’ was signed by 180 nations, who agreed by this action that “human settlements shall be planned, developed and improved in a manner that takes full account of sustainable development principles and all their components. We need to respect the carrying capacity of ecosystems and the preservation of opportunities for future generations. Science and technology have a crucial role in shaping sustainable human settlements and sustaining the ecosystems they depend upon.”¹⁷

Sustainable development aims to protect environmental assets for future generations in the face of the unsustainable urban development policies that are currently being pursued with regard to cities. The challenge we are facing today is one of whether or not it is possible to make cities socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Directly related to this challenge is the fact that most governments and capitalist powers are motivated to prevent the application of urban agricultural practices because those corporations which run the global trade in agricultural products benefit from the current industrial agricultural system. Because industrial agriculture depends on external inputs (chemical fertilizers and pesticides, machinery, fossil fuel), various industries earn profits while farmers are obliged to pay the costs (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002).

¹⁷ See < <http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/The-Habitat-Agenda-Goals-and-Principles-Commitments-and-the-Global-Plan-of-Action-2003.pdf> > accessed on October 18, 2014

According to United Nations Research Institute for Social Development¹⁸, in order to achieve sustainable development in cities, “the development must deliver material wellbeing, including good health, education, and access to the goods and services necessary for decent living; and social, cultural and political achievements, such as a sense of security, dignity, and the ability to be part of a community through recognition and representation. All of these are inseparable from the environmental resources necessary to sustain life, health and wellbeing”¹⁹. It follows that sustainable development can only be realized by protecting natural resources and the environment. In this context, while industrial and globalized agriculture prevents sustainable development in cities, urban agriculture (resulting as it does in environmental, social and economic sustainabilities) has the potential to provide it. In the earlier section devoted to ‘environmental sustainability’ (section 2.1.2), the various contributions of urban agriculture in this respect were listed. In addition to these contributions, Deelstra and Girardet (2000) assert that urban agriculture leads to environmental sustainability in cities because it enhances micro climate improvement and urban water management. Micro climate improvement is brought about by the fact that plants, trees and soils capture dust and gasses from the polluted air. Urban water management is facilitated because rainwater and runoff can be absorbed through the soil, while hard-covered surfaces (such as streets, roofs and car parks) in cities cause increased runoff during storms. Growing food in cities also helps to restore some of the lost biodiversity in urban areas; part of the reason for this loss of biodiversity is government projects involving the construction of buildings – which

¹⁸ United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is ‘an autonomous research institute within the UN system that undertakes multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on the social dimensions of contemporary development issues’ <

<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BF3C2/> > accessed on January 17, 2015

¹⁹ See < <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2014/SocialDriversofSustainableDevelopment.pdf> > accessed on January 19, 2015

causes deforestation in cities (Garnett, 1996).

As Deelstra and Girardet (2000) claim, a sustainable world cannot be created without sustainable cities. It is a well-known fact that cities exploit natural resources and cause excessive waste by reason of urban development and economic growth. This environmental degradation threatens the habitat of many species. What is even worse, the effects of this degradation are not felt equally by rich and poor. Ruel *et al.* (1998) emphasize the fact that environmental contaminations, such as the side-effects of air contamination, do not affect rich and poor in the same way: the urban poor are more strongly affected by environmental hazards because they tend to live close to industrial zones which the wealthy try to avoid. Thus, for the majority of people who are living in poverty, sustainable development can provide a solution to the problem of the concentration of wealth in a few countries and in social and economic élites (Hawkins, 2010). Thus, we see that urban agriculture is a major factor in the creation of sustainable development as it is based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

CHAPTER 4

URBAN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

4.1 Urban Agricultural Practices at Global Level

Urban agriculture has been widely practiced at global level. According to global estimates of the level of urban agricultural activity (based on 1993 data), almost 800 million people are engaged in this practice (Smit, Ratta, & Nasr, 2001). Today urban farms produce 1/5 of world's food (Royte, 2015). The main reasons why people practice urban agriculture are poverty, food insecurity and the poor economic conditions prevalent in those countries which are experiencing rapid urban growth and unsustainable urbanization. This is especially true of city-dwellers in the countries of Africa and Latin America, all of whom are faced with the same catastrophic conditions: lack of sufficient food and dependence on food aid and imports (Mougeot, 2000). Therefore, many of them resort to urban farming in order to obtain food. It is practiced by 40 percent of urban populations in African cities, and by 50 percent of these populations in Latin America.²⁰

4.1.1 Two Case Studies of Urban Agricultural Practices in Africa

The countries of Asia are faced with rapid population growth, unsustainable urbanization and lack of employment – and, as a result of all these, urban poverty and hunger. In this context, urban agriculture has an important role to play in the provision of food and livelihood security for city-dwellers (Smit & Nasr, 1992). Urban agriculture is strong in Sub-Saharan African cities, which exhibit the fastest urban growth and the greatest lack of financial resources to feed the urban poor (Arku,

²⁰ See < <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0262e/x0262e22.htm> > accessed on September 18, 2014

Mkandawire, Aguda, & Kuuire, 2012). It has been estimated that in 2004, more than half of the region's population (i.e., 350 million people), were hungry – hunger being defined as recurrent or involuntary lack of access to food (Maxwell, Levin, & Csete, 1998). There was an increase in urban farming in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s in parallel with the increase in urban populations in the greater part of the region, and with the sharp decline in urban economies (Ruel, Haddad, & Garrett, 1999). Urban agriculture also has a role to play in providing income for people in African countries who have no employment prospects (Zeza & Tasciotti, 2010). I will examine one African city – Harare – and one African country – Malawi – as examples. Harare (the capital of Zimbabwe) was chosen in order to exemplify the dynamics of the practice of urban agriculture in metropolitan areas; Malawi – one of the poorest countries in Africa – was also selected as it provides a good illustration of the role urban agriculture can play in the alleviation of poverty.

4.1.1.1 Urban Agricultural Practice in Harare, Zimbabwe

Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, is the country's largest commercial center and the seat of political and administrative power. The situation there is typical of that in many other cities throughout the world in three respects. Firstly, an increase in the practice of urban agriculture has been brought about by economic collapse and the resulting fall in incomes and employment. Secondly, urban agriculture is practiced mostly in order to meet household needs, a secondary purpose being to provide some saleable produce (Mbiba, 2001). Thirdly, the authorities are, for the most part, an obstacle to the practice of urban agriculture. Officials do not actually order crops to be destroyed (as they do in Istanbul and in many other cities worldwide), but urban

agriculture is officially discouraged on the grounds that it harms (!) the environment (Drakakis-Smith, 1991). The situation in Harare is exceptional in that women are more involved in the practice than men, being responsible for everything from production to marketing. However, there is currently an increase in the number of men participating in urban agriculture in response to high unemployment, especially in the formal sector (Mudimu, 1996).

4.1.1.2 The Practice of Urban Agriculture in Malawi

Malawi is one of the poorest and least-developed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; urban agriculture is widely practiced there, and plays an important role in the supply of food. As stated by Mkwambisi, Fraser and Dougill (2007), there are two main groups engaged in the practice: middle- and upper-class families on the one hand, and poor and female-headed families on the other. In the case of the former, urban agriculture is practiced mainly for profit, while in the case of the latter the prime motivation is subsistence. Middle- and upper-class families have easy access to land and to the inputs needed for farming, so they are able to produce more food than poor and female-headed families can; for these latter, urban agriculture is primarily a household subsistence strategy. In addition, the vegetables produced by low-income and female-headed families are lower in quality, and this food is lower in price in comparison with the produce grown by high-income families. In common with the situation in many parts of the world, the poor do not have access to storage facilities for their produce, which forces them to sell during harvest-time – when prices are low owing to over-supply (Mkwambisi, Fraser, & Dougill, 2011). In spite of these disadvantages, urban agriculture in Malawi still provides a livelihood for poor

families faced with the difficulties of limited formal sector employment (Arku *et al.*, 2012) –and this is also a feature that is common to most countries where urban agriculture is carried out.

4.1.2 Two Case Studies Examples of Urban Agricultural Practice in South America

The countries of South America have the highest urbanization rate in the world, with the proportion of people living in cities predicted to reach 80% by 2020. According to Fay and Laderchi (2005), poverty is increasingly becoming an urban problem, with more than half the absolute population of South America's poor living in cities. During the economic crisis that occurred between 1999 and 2002 (bringing with it a growth in poverty rates), urban agriculture became more widespread as it was seen as a solution to the problem of food security. In South America, rather than discouraging it, the authorities gave it their support. Thousands of people participated in the practice, motivated by their need for access to food (Santandreu, Perazzoli, Terrile, & Ponce, 2009).

4.1.2.1 The Practice of Urban Agriculture in Lima, Peru

Lima is Peru's capital and is also the country's biggest city, being the fifth largest city in Latin America and home to one third of Peru's population. According to the FAO report on urban and peri-urban agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean, although an estimated 17.5% of Lima's residents – that is, more than 1.5 million people – are poor, living conditions for many have improved remarkably in recent years.²¹ Urban agriculture in Peru is practiced by the urban poor mostly as a

²¹ < <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3696e.pdf> > accessed on February 7, 2015

household strategy intended to alleviate poverty. It also provides the urban poor with an income, which allows them to have a livelihood at subsistence level.²²

In Peru, the level of urban agricultural practice has increased thanks to the support of the state, which carried out land reform during the 1970s. Before land reform, industrial agriculture was practiced on large plots of land. With the reforms, these plots were divided into smaller units (usually less than 1 hectare in size) and allocated to the urban poor. Poor families then used these spaces to provide food security, mostly by planting maize and sweet potato. More recently, trade in crops among the urban poor has begun to take place (Villacencio, 2009).

4.1.2.2 Urban Agriculture in Sao Paulo, Brazil

Sao Paulo is the largest and most populous city in Brazil. Sao Paulo has 400 urban farmers, who cultivate food in and around the city in order to generate income (Giacche & Silva, 2014). According to Barbizan (2011), Sao Paulo also has the highest cost of living of any city in South America, and it is the urban poor who suffer most from this circumstance.²³ Urban agriculture is therefore important in Sao Paulo from the point of view of providing the poor with a livelihood and food security. In addition (again according to Barbizan, 2011), it presents an opportunity for the construction of democratic, participatory citizenship for a better future for Brazil.

²² Ibid.

²³ See < <http://positivenews.org.uk/2012/environment/agriculture/6192/urban-agriculture-brazils-favelas/> > accessed on January 25, 2015

4.2 Urban Agricultural Practices at Local Level

Turkey has great agricultural potential because it enjoys favorable climatic conditions and abundant natural resources. Until the 1950s, when the way in which agriculture was carried out began to be determined by capitalist policies, crops were produced mostly on small farms. “The slow capitalization process of agriculture since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 gained a particular momentum in the 1950s, when Marshall Aid enabled the state to mechanize agricultural production, which in turn led to the increased use of chemicals, improved input and the expansion of cultivated areas” (Aydın, 2010, p. 153). Policies since 1980 (in collaboration with the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the EU) has been directed towards the internationalization, modernization and capitalization of Turkish agriculture at the expense of political, economical and social stability. This gradual change in agricultural policy has accelerated since 1998, and has caused the ‘deagrarianization’ and impoverishment of small farmers –to the benefit of the new global food order, under the strict control of US-based transnational agribusiness firms (Aydın, 2010).

In Istanbul, which is by far Turkey’s largest city, very few urban agricultural plots remain in existence. Compared with the situation in the past, both the number and the size of these plots have been constantly decreasing in recent years as a result of the government’s neoliberal policies and of the many urban transformation projects realized as a result of these policies. Turkey does not have a government policy specifically addressed to urban agriculture; therefore, there are no official regulations designed to protect urban agricultural plots, or to protect urban farmers in recognition of their value as practitioners of urban agriculture. Moreover, during its period of

office, the AKP²⁴ government accelerated the neoliberal policies which led to urban agricultural spaces being zoned for construction. In parallel with this development, especially during the last ten years, urban agricultural lands have been destroyed in the interests of gaining profit through building construction. The loss of urban agricultural lands which is currently taking place in Istanbul – for instance, in the Gümüşdere and Kuzguncuk neighborhoods as well as in Yedikule – is part and parcel of the profit-orientated, neoliberal policies outlined above.

In spite of all the aforementioned negative developments, more and more people in Istanbul are beginning to understand the multiple benefits of adopting responsible eating habits, and this is leading to the appearance of a variety of different initiatives designed to shorten food supply chains and create new alliances between producers and consumers. The *Yeryüzü Derneği*²⁵ is one of these initiatives, and aims to enable people to produce their own food. The association sees the practice of urban agriculture as a counter-measure to global warming because the former contributes to the lowering of carbon emissions by shortening the food supply chain. In addition, the association sees this practice as a way of empowering the urban poor and reducing poverty levels. The *Yeryüzü Derneği* provides seed for city-dwellers who wish to engage in urban agriculture in private gardens, on the terraces outside their houses or on their balconies. Today, 1500 people in Istanbul from a variety of neighborhoods are growing some of the vegetables and fruits they need at home, with seed supplied by the *Yeryüzü Derneği*. By means of the act of growing food, people gain increased awareness of the environment. As climate activist and founding member of the

²⁴ The Justice and Development Party (in Turkish, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) is a neoliberal, conservative political party that ruled as a single-party government from 2002 until the general elections of 7th June 2015.

²⁵ The description of the activities of the *Yeryüzü Derneği* ('Face of the Earth Association') is based on an interview with Devin Bahçeci, a climate activist and one of the founders of the *Yeryüzü Derneği*.

Yeryüzü Derneği Devlin Bahçeci points out, since people started to grow their own food they have begun to make a stand against ‘urban transformation’ construction projects²⁶.

In the section entitled ‘Urban Agriculture in Istanbul Before the Gezi Resistance’ (section 4.2.1, below), I will describe the loss of bostans in three specific neighborhoods (4.2.1.1, 4.2.1.2, 4.2.1.3). Then, in the section entitled ‘Urban Agriculture in Istanbul During and After the Gezi Resistance’ (4.2.2), I will describe urban agricultural practices conducted in response to the Gezi resistance (4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2, 4.2.2.3., 4.2.2.4, 4.2.2.5).

4.2.1 Urban Agriculture in Istanbul Before the Gezi Resistance

Istanbul has a long history of urban agriculture, which has traditionally been carried out in bostans. In the past, the production of vegetables and fruits within the city was very much a part of the fabric of daily life. One newspaper²⁷ reports that at the end of the nineteenth century, there were more than 1,200 vegetable gardens on both the European and Asian sides of the Bosphorus, and that these were productive enough to satisfy all Istanbul's fruit and vegetable needs. At the beginning of the Republican era (in the 1920s), the main areas of vegetable production were Bakırköy, Yedikule and Langa on the European side, and Kartal, Maltepe and Kadıköy on the Asian side (Kaldjian, 2004). According to Koder (1995, as cited in Kaldjian, 2004), in the 12th-13th centuries, 15 or 16 km² of land in Constantinople was producing enough vegetables to meet the needs of 300,000-500,000 people. A huge number of these bostans have been lost since the capitalist transformation of agriculture took place,

²⁶ Devlin Bahçeci, personal interview, January 12, 2015

²⁷ *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, 15 December 1990.

and today the few remaining urban agricultural areas (Gümüşdere, Kuzguncuk and Yedikule) are under threat of extinction because of neoliberal policies.

4.2.1.1 The Gümüşdere Bostan

Gümüşdere is a village in the neighborhood of Sarıyer, a district on the European shore of the Bosphorus near the entrance to the Black Sea. Since around 1924, villagers in Gümüşdere have been growing vegetables and fruit in the bostan there. Although the village is a ‘protected zone’ in which restrictions on building construction are in force, the Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration plan to build a water treatment plant here – destroying the bostan in the process. If the project is realized, 632 families will become unemployed, and will be denied their right to food. The farmers of Gümüşdere are organizing a struggle in the courts against this plan by means of an association²⁸ which they have formed, and which has opened legal proceedings.

4.2.1.2 The Kuzguncuk Bostan

The Kuzguncuk bostan is located in the neighborhood of Kuzguncuk, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus not far from the center of Istanbul. For the past thirty years, the neighborhood’s residents have been carrying out a struggle to preserve the bostan from being destroyed in the interests of various urban transformation and gentrification projects. Although Kuzguncuk had previously been officially zoned as ‘green belt’ in Istanbul’s construction master plan, in 1986 it was zoned for

²⁸ The name of this association is *Gümüşdere Köyü Güzelleştirme ve Dayanışma Derneği* – the ‘Beautification and Solidarity Association of the Village of Gümüşdere’.

construction. Soon after this, in 1992, Kuzguncuk residents succeeded in preventing the building of a hospital on the bostan site.²⁹ Then, in 1997, they formed an association entitled *Kuzguncuklular Derneği* ('the Association of Kuzguncuk Residents'). In a struggle lasting from 2000 to 2012, the people of Kuzguncuk once again prevented the construction of a private hospital and private school on the bostan. In the course of their struggle to protect it, they also have turned the bostan site into a community space by organizing harvest celebrations there, by cooking collectively with the crops they have grown and eating communally, and by organizing workshops on subjects such as yoga and making scarecrows for use on the bostan. In this way, the Kuzguncuk bostan has become a meeting place for residents, as well as a focal point for the sharing of communal memory.

Recently, in the face of the government's ongoing attempts to destroy the bostan, the Kuzguncuk Residents' Association carried out negotiations with the Municipality of Üsküdar (the local authority) as a result of which an agreement was struck: according to this agreement, part of the bostan would be set aside for vegetable growing, while part would be rented to a landscape gardening firm (as proposed by the municipality), and thus devoted to 'hobby gardening'. This has caused conflict between the various members of the Residents' Association, ecology activists and other residents –some of whom support the new development, and some of whom oppose it on the grounds that one part of the bostan is now devoted to 'hobby gardening' –an apolitical act –rather than to politically-inspired food production. Many people involved in the struggle to protect the bostans criticized the Residents' Association for agreeing to the Üsküdar Municipality's proposal. The

²⁹ See <<http://www.yeryuzutanigi.com/ozel-haber/kahraman-bostan-yapilasmaya-karsi/>> accessed on December 27, 2014

Association, for its part, claims that it is only in this way that the bostan can be saved from total destruction. Whatever the case may be, the Kuzguncuk bostan still maintains its place in local people's memories, and remains a part of their shared culture (Mills, 2001).

4.2.1.3 The Yedikule Bostan

The Yedikule bostans are located near the point where the Theodosian Walls, which were originally built in 412 A.D. by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II to protect the city of Constantinople (White, Shopov, & Casson, 2015), meet the Marmara Sea. The bostans have been under cultivation for 1500 years; as previously stated, during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods enough fresh fruit and vegetables were grown in the city's bostans to meet the inhabitants' needs.³⁰ In 2013, however, part of the historic bostans located inside the Land Walls was destroyed by the Municipality of Fatih, acting with the support of the government, in order to build a park. This was done with no regard for the cultural and historic value of the bostans, their benefits for the environment and for the local people, or their contribution to food security; in the process, the farmers who had been keeping the bostan tradition alive there for many years lost their land. In Chapter 4, which examines in detail the case of the Yedikule bostans, I will describe their history, their eventual destruction, the political dynamics that lay behind this step and the various outcomes that it had; I will also give an account of the importance of the bostans, and attempt to demonstrate that both growing food in them and the attempts to protect them from destruction are resistance practices.

³⁰ See < <http://yedikulebostanlari.tumblr.com/> > accessed on February 19, 2015

4.2.2 Urban Agriculture in Istanbul During and After the Gezi Resistance

Before describing the new bostans that were created during and after the Gezi resistance, I will give a brief account of this resistance and its political impact, my intention being to explain the dynamics that led to the creation of these bostans.

The Gezi resistance was a turning point in the consciousness of the people of Turkey, and in the country's political history. Thanks to this resistance, during which thousands took to the streets, people saw that if they united in a self-organized way they could free themselves from all oppressive policies imposed by the state. It was an atmosphere of general hopelessness and despair – caused primarily by a growing lack of trust in the government – that motivated people to become actors in the Gezi resistance, which started on 27th May 2013. At the time when the Gezi movement first began, its *raison d'être* was the desire to protect what the government described as the “*üç-beş ağaç*” (‘three to five trees’) in the Gezi Park beside Taksim Square, which had been destroyed as part of the government's project to construct a shopping mall on the site of the park. Soon, the movement transformed itself into a communal act of resistance to a wide variety of ills and to those forms of oppression that had been systematically practiced by the government since it came to power: ever-increasing social, political and economic inequality; nationalist conformity; environmental destruction; the erosion of freedom of speech, freedom of the press and social rights; widespread and officially-encouraged discrimination on grounds of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender; and other attacks on individual liberty of various kinds. Thousands of people soon extended the resistance beyond the Gezi Park to the streets of Istanbul – and then to other cities in Turkey as Gezi became a symbol of resistance for people throughout the country. During the occupation of the

Gezi Park, which began on 27th May and was forcibly ended by the police on 15th June, the park was transformed into a commune in which people experienced the liberating feeling of communal living; they were able to taste the exuberance of sharing, free from the oppression of dominant powers and the taint of commercial relationships. One of the most important forms of direct action that were practiced during the occupation of the Gezi Park was urban agriculture.

Gezi taught people in Turkey that they had the right to claim their living space. Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city" is thus well-suited to describe the motivation for the political activities that were carried out during and after the Gezi resistance. The notion of the "right to the city" rests on two main foundations: the "right of participation" and the "right of appropriation" (Purcell, 2002). The first of these implies that it is the inhabitants of a city, not the authorities, who should decide the "production of space". Indeed, the "right of participation" was a commonly-discussed theme from the very beginning of the Gezi resistance, cited in response to the government's attempt to build a shopping mall there without regard for public opposition. Acting in direct contravention of the neoliberal concept of democracy – according to which citizens are allowed to participate only through voting, and then only on condition that their ideas are not in opposition to those of the state – the people who took part in the Gezi resistance claimed their own right to decide the park's future. In the end, these people accomplished their goal of preventing the Gezi Park from being destroyed. The "right of appropriation" – the other notion on which the "right to the city" rests – was a principle held in common (consciously or unconsciously) by the occupiers of the Gezi Park, and led directly to the organization of bostans during the occupation's aftermath.

In this context, ‘appropriation’ means accessing, occupying and using urban space. However, in terms of the meaning accorded to it by Lefebvre, appropriation is more than the occupation of an already-produced urban space; rather, it is the right to *produce* an urban space in accordance with what inhabitants demand (Purcell, 2002). Thus, for Lefebvre, ‘appropriation’ implies opposing the capitalist use of urban space, which is regarded as private property. The setting up of bostans during and after the Gezi Park occupation is an example of people’s claiming the “right of appropriation” – by virtue of the fact (firstly) that these bostans were created by the free will of the people themselves, and (secondly) that they came into being as a result of the new social relations the occupation gave rise to, independent of state authority; these bostans arose out of a feeling of solidarity.

During the Gezi resistance, people raised the questions of what kind of country, and what kind of neighborhoods, they wished to live in: it was with these questions in mind that people followed their hearts –resulting in the organization of new bostans, the creation of neighborhood forums and the occupation of several buildings. The setting up of bostans was a reflection of people’s demand to live in a neighborhood, and in a city, where they could be free from capitalist social relations. As against the authorities’ attempt to produce spaces on behalf of developers, large firms and the upper class, the creation of new bostans – some of which are still in existence –was an attempt to benefit city-dwellers themselves. The bostans were not intended to meet the entire food needs of the neighborhood because they were sited on small-sized plots; their function was – as it is today –to symbolize people’s opposition to the capitalist production of space, to capitalist social relations, and to the government’s urban transformation projects. According to Thom (2006), growing

food has the potential to be a social movement; from this perspective, the organization of new bostans in Istanbul can be seen as a continuation of the Gezi resistance, because this action grew out of people's claiming the right to shape their environment for themselves. The creation of bostans has become a social movement as it has led to the forming of new connections between people, and between people and their environment. Thanks to these bostans, the people of Istanbul have had the pleasure of smelling tomatoes that they have grown in the city, as a result of mutual co-operation.

4.2.2.1 The Gezi Bostan

The Gezi Bostan was organized within one area of the park on the eleventh day of the occupation. Seeds were planted in an area where several trees had been uprooted by bulldozers on 27th May. The resisters planted peppers, onions, lettuces, strawberries – even olive trees. The newly-created bostan became a meeting place in which social relations were reproduced. “In the evening of the day when we made the bostan, it filled up with people taking care of the plants, sitting near it to chat with each other, reading, making music and eating.”³¹ Working collectively to give life to the bostan also provided an extra motivation for people to resist. In addition, the Gezi Bostan allowed people to experience the pleasure of touching the soil and growing plants – for many, this was the first time they had done this in Istanbul.

On 15th June, the Gezi Bostan – along with everything else created by the resisters in the park – was destroyed by the police. In this way, according to the official mentality, the Gezi Park was ‘purified’; all trace of communal life there – including the Gezi Bostan – was ‘uprooted’. Not surprisingly, on the site of the

³¹ Timur Daniş, personal interview, January 18, 2015

destroyed bostan, the Istanbul Municipality planted expensive imported flowers. A huge expanse of concrete was laid, entirely covering the area by the side of the park that had previously been the main road northwards from Taksim Square. This sea of concrete served no practical purpose, and was probably laid as a deliberate act of spite: the government well knew the resisters' opposition to concrete.

The Gezi resistance and the experience of the creation of the Gezi Bostan served to teach people in Turkey that parks do not belong to the state and the capitalists, but to the people themselves. Following the example of the Gezi resistance, and wishing to experience for themselves the emotional satisfaction of producing a space like a bostan, people not only in Istanbul but also in several other cities in Turkey began to extend the resistance to their own neighborhoods: they organized forums and local solidarity networks, and organized bostans in their own localities. Thus, the ending of the Gezi occupation had at least one positive outcome: the inculcations of the idea and the adoption the practice of reclaiming urban space by means of bostans, as a form of resistance.

4.2.2.2 The Gezi Bostan in Moda³²

After the eviction of the Gezi Park resisters, residents in Kadıköy (one of the two major urban centers on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, the other being Üsküdar) held forums in Yoğurtçu Park, located in Kadıköy. During this time, some local residents who belonged to the Caferağa Solidarity Group (Caferağa is a neighborhood in Kadıköy) occupied a building and turned it into a collective space. In April 2014,

³² This section is based on an interview with Bahadır Altan, one of the members of the Caferağa Solidarity Group, who took part in the struggle to set up and then protect the Moda Gezi Bostan.

the Solidarity Group decided to create a bostan. They identified an empty plot in the nearby neighborhood of Moda. The soil there was not in very good condition at first, but after they had begun to grow vegetables in it the soil improved substantially. “We were aware that organizing more bostans was the right way to resist ‘urban transformation’”.³³ They turned their first planting of seeds into an act of communal celebration, inviting neighbors and people from other solidarity groups to take part. Thus, ordinary Caferağa residents as well as Solidarity Group members participated in the creation of the bostan. People from other parts of Kadıköy brought seeds and preserved their household waste to use as compost. The irrigation problem was solved by carrying water in large pans from the houses of neighbors in the surrounding area. The first crops to be grown were tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. In addition to the growing of crops, workshops were also set up on the bostan. The children of neighborhood residents watered tomatoes for the first time in their lives, and had the pleasure of eating tomatoes that they had grown themselves. Today, the Moda Gezi Bostan is still a space where harvests are celebrated, community sharing takes place and political action is debated.

The bostan is now threatened with destruction by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, who wish to turn it into a parking lot; however, as a result of the campaign conducted by members of the Solidarity Group and various neighbors, the bulldozers have been stopped – for the moment. The Municipality may have temporarily taken a backward step, but they have not completely shelved their plans because the plot is ‘valuable’ in terms of potential financial profit. “If we had not planted tomatoes, peppers and eggplants here, we would not have been able to

³³ Bahadır Altan, personal interview, January 7, 2015

organize the struggle against the parking lot”.³⁴ One Caferağa resident demonstrated her strong support for the bostan in these words: “This is a place where I can breathe. I am collecting seeds to plant here. If they insist on building a car park, I will certainly raise my voice against it.” For the past two years, the Caferağa Solidarity Group has been organizing forums in the bostan during the summer. Their aim is not to grow more vegetables as their produce is not intended for sale; rather, it is to keep alive the spirit of solidarity and resistance by means of the bostan; by laying claim to urban space, they are expressing their opposition to the authorities’ plans.

4.2.2.3 The Berkin Elvan Bostan

The Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity Group is one of those that were organized in the aftermath of the Gezi Park occupation. The group decided to occupy a building in Yeldeğirmeni, a neighborhood in Kadıköy. This was the first squat after Gezi, and the building immediately turned into a political center –a meeting place for both solidarity groups and local residents. In accordance with a decision taken by the Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity Group on 17th March 2014, a bostan was created in front of the occupied building by neighbors and Solidarity Group members. It was decided to name it after Berkin Elvan, a young teenager who had died six days previously, on 11th March, after being in a coma for almost nine months following a gas-bomb attack by the police during the Gezi protests. The motto of the creators of the bostan was: “Berkin is the inspiration for our hopes. Come with your seeds, with your spade.” Each seed they planted was given the name ‘Berkin’. However, after the termination of the Yeldeğirmeni squat, it was no longer possible to maintain the bostan.

³⁴ Bahadır Altan, personal interview, January 7, 2015

4.2.2.4 The İmrahor Bostan

Also in the aftermath of the Gezi Park occupation, the residents of a neighborhood in Üsküdar (on the Asian side of the Bosphorus), organized forums in a local park called the ‘Doğancılar Park’. During the course of these forums, they decided to create a bostan in an unused field in Üsküdar, naming after the nearby ‘İmrahor’ Mosque. On January 26th 2014, they began a collective effort to clean up the field; then, in March, they started to sow seed in it, and organized a celebration for their first planting. The struggle to keep the bostan alive, in spite of opposition by the Municipality of Üsküdar, is continuing.

4.2.2.5 The Cihangir Roma Bostan

The decision to set up the Cihangir Roma Bostan was taken during forums held after the termination of the Gezi Park occupation; these forums took place in a park in the center of Cihangir, a neighborhood in the Beyoğlu district (close to Taksim Square). Participating in the forums were residents of the Cihangir neighborhood, as well as people from other parts of Beyoğlu. The name ‘Roma’ (Turkish for ‘Roman’) was given to the bostan because the park in which it was situated was known as ‘Roma’, the foundations of a Roman villa having once been discovered there. The Cihangir Roma Bostan was established as an act of solidarity with the people who had already set up bostans in other parts of Istanbul. The people involved in its creation visited the Yedikule Bostans in order to share ideas with the farmers there about ways of growing food without the use of pesticides. The Cihangir Roma Bostan has now maintained its existence for two years, and is being kept alive with an everlasting enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE OF THE YEDIKULE BOSTANS

5.1 The History of the Yedikule Bostans

The Yedikule Bostans are one of the oldest intra-urban agricultural areas in the world. As stated in the report entitled “the Theodosian Land Walls of Istanbul: cultural heritage and urban potential for a metropolis of the 21st century”³⁵, the Yedikule Bostans are located close to the ancient Theodosian Walls (also known as the ‘Land Walls’) in the neighborhood of Yedikule, at the south-western corner of Istanbul’s ‘Historic Peninsula’. The Theodosian Walls were built in the 5th century by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II, and they run from the Golden Horn in the north to the Marmara Sea in the south, thereby enclosing the Historic Peninsula. Agricultural activities around the walls date back to the 5th century; in the edicts of the Emperor Theodosius, we see that he ordered the storing of farming tools within the lower floors of the inner wall (White *et al.*, 2015). At the end of the 16th century, during the time of the Ottoman Empire, intra-urban agricultural production expanded to the area around the Land Walls at Yedikule, in parallel with population growth. The Langa Bostan, in a coastal area closer to the center of the city, is recorded in Ottoman documents as being the largest agricultural area in 16th century Istanbul (Shopov & Han, 2013). In the 17th century, there were a large number of vegetable gardens and orchards along the Land Walls (White *et al.*, 2015). An Ottoman document dating back to 1735 that is specifically about the Yedikule Bostans gives us the most detailed information we have about them, as is recorded by Shopov and Han (2013).

³⁵ Lohrberg, Frank, “the Theodosian Land Walls of Istanbul: cultural heritage and urban potential for a metropolis of the 21st century”, draft report of the workshop carried out by Chair of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, RWTH Aachen University.

According to this document, “There were 344 bostans and 1381 *bostancı*³⁶ inside the city walls; 9 of these bostans were located around Yedikule (between the Yedikule Gate and the Silivri Gate), and were cultivated by 52 *bostancı*” (Shopov & Han, 2013, p. 36). From the Byzantine period up to the second half of the twentieth century, the bostans met the entire vegetable requirements of Istanbul (Istanbul Ansiklopedisi, 1994; as cited in Kaldjian, 2004). During the Ottoman period, most of Istanbul’s market gardeners were immigrants from Macedonia, but some were immigrants from Albania or Bulgaria, or members of Armenian community. There were religious foundations belonging to the Greeks and Armenians, and some of the gardeners who cultivated the Yedikule Bostans paid rent to these foundations. In the 19th century, the Yedikule neighborhood was predominantly Greek; however, with the establishment of the Armenian Surp Pırgiç Hospital, there was an increase in the Armenian population.

Since the 1950s, it has for the most part been migrants to Istanbul from Cide, a village on the Black Sea coast in the province of Kastamonu, who have been cultivating the Yedikule Bostans. In the second half of the 20th century –a time at which Turkey experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization – there was a major influx of migrants from country areas to Istanbul (Küçükmehtetoğlu & Geymen, 2006). The motivation for the inhabitants of Cide to migrate to Istanbul was the need to find employment. Aydın (2010) tells us that, owing to the uncertainty of employment options in sectors other than agriculture, “villagers always try to have access to a piece of land on which they can earn a living, or at least part of a living” (p. 173). Hence, the people of Cide started to practice market gardening in the Yedikule Bostans – using the farming experience they had gained in their home

³⁶ *Bostancı* means ‘market gardener’ in Turkish.

village.

5.2 Everyday Life in the Yedikule Bostans

The Bostans of Istanbul have been part of the fabric of everyday life in the city throughout many centuries. The unique way in which daily life in and around the bostans is organized is a tradition handed down by generations of Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Armenian master-gardeners. Almost all of today's market gardeners in Yedikule learned their art from these people; the gardeners of Yedikule refer to them as *ustalarımız* ('our masters'). Hüseyin Sargın, a 66-year-old gardener, worked for twenty years in the Yedikule Bostans in the time of the Albanian bostan-keepers. He speaks of his masters with respect: "They were so careful to be fair to us. They gave us delicious food, too."³⁷ Recep Elaskan, 62, learned gardening from the Bulgarians when first he came to Istanbul at the age of 14. He worked with his Bulgarian masters in the Langa Bostans. "The Langa Bostans had been owned by them since 1930. Then, in the 1960s, we³⁸ started to outnumber them in Langa."³⁹

Today, because most members of the younger generation do not choose to become gardeners, nearly all of the bostan-keepers at Yedikule are more than 40 years old. They migrated to Istanbul from Cide when they were 12 or 13. Their fathers would send them to work in the bostans of Istanbul during the summer so that they could earn some money for their families. The bostans in which they worked belonged either to Albanian master-gardeners or to people from Cide who had previously migrated to Istanbul, and were renting their bostans from other people.

³⁷ Hüseyin Sargın, personal interview, April 16, 2015

³⁸ Here, 'we' means 'people from Cide, Kastamonu'.

³⁹ Recep Elaskan, personal interview, April 5, 2015

Through working in Istanbul's bostans every summer, they not only made a contribution to their family's budget, but also learned the art of gardening. The reason for their starting work as gardeners at such a young age was the poverty prevalent in their village at that time. Their families usually owned lands in Cide which produced some crops, but these lands did not generate enough income to live on: there was a scarcity of both land and water. Also, there was insufficient opportunity to sell their produce: "In Cide, we could just plant sweet corn and wheat –nothing else. Everyone was growing the same things, and there was no-one to sell them to. So we earned hardly any money from them."⁴⁰ Almost all the children in Cide left school at an early age in order to work and increase their families' income. Halil Mert, one of the gardeners in a bostan outside the Land Walls, said: "In our village, almost no-one stayed on at school after the fifth grade of primary school. Our elders would tell us to go to Istanbul to work and earn money for our families."⁴¹ On reaching middle age, after learning the art of gardening from their masters, most of them decided to settle in Istanbul permanently and work in the bostans there.

For the gardeners in the Yedikule Bostans, the day starts at 6 o'clock in the morning and continues until late evening. During the day, they plant, till the soil, water their vegetables, pick crops, tie them in bunches and put them in crates ready to be sold in the market. When they need to rest, they go to their wooden shelters by the side of the bostans; these shelters have a living room and kitchen inside. If the bostan-keepers employ workers, this shelter is used to accommodate them. During the day, the gardeners rest here; the bostan-keepers drink tea, cook food and eat together with their workers. Labour is supplied mostly by household members, and the bostan-

⁴⁰ Hüseyin Sargin, personal interview, April 13, 2015

⁴¹ Halil Mert, personal interview, April 27, 2015

keepers' relatives also form part of the labour force.

There is a division of labor between men and women. As some of them said during interview, it is the men who do the 'hard' part of the work – for instance, preparing the beds for planting, sowing, watering and operating motorized equipment; the work of weeding, harvesting and binding produce into bundles is shared by both men and women. In the late evening, tired after their working day, the gardeners return home in small trucks. Most of them live in Zeytinburnu, a neighbourhood close to Yedikule. Nearly every gardening family has its own truck; these vehicles are used to transport the produce to nearby bazaars, or to the wholesale market.

The gardeners' relationships with each other are based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual respect. For example, if one of them rents a new bostan, this is a cause for celebration, and other gardeners give him presents of seed. "When we came to this plot, Hasan⁴² sent us some of his radish seed. Radish seed is valuable: it is expensive, and good seed like that is hard to find," says an old woman in her seventies who used to be a bostan-keeper⁴³. When seed is needed, people do not sell it to each other: rather, they operate a system of exchange. "If another gardener comes and tells me that he needs a kilo of purslane seed, I give them to him. Then, when I need another kind of seed, I can ask him for it," says Ahmet, whose plot is outside the walls.⁴⁴ People also help each other in the work of gardening: if one of the gardeners does not have motorized equipment to plough his land, another gardener who has this equipment ploughs it for him. While I was at the bostans to conduct an interview, a gardener called Recep was using a machine to plough his land; another gardener who

⁴² Hasan is one of the Yedikule market-gardeners.

⁴³ Zehra Ökten, personal interview, April 14, 2015

⁴⁴ Ahmet Öztürk, personal interview, April 22, 2015

was older than Recep came and asked him for help in ploughing his own plot, and Recep readily obliged. Again, two gardeners whose plots are close to each other may take some of each other's produce to taste, or to take home, without asking for permission. In the past, master-gardeners were accorded great respect (Kaldjian, 2004). This practice is still maintained among gardeners today. "Because I am an old-timer here, everyone greets me, treats me with affection and respect, and asks my advice – for example, when they are planting seed," says Hasan, who has been gardening in the Yedikule Bostans for 40 years.⁴⁵ Also, if a gardener needs a worker for his bostan, he usually employs either a relative or another person who is from Cide. This shows that the traditional organization of social ties in the bostans is still alive today.

The gardeners are smallholders: their plots are at most one hectare in area. A plot of this size is sufficient to meet a family's basic needs. Most of what the bostan-keepers produce is green, leafy vegetables such as dill, parsley, cabbage lettuce, chard, roquette and black cabbage; however, root vegetables such as radishes are also grown. All of these are sold in neighborhood markets; if any produce is left over, it is brought to the wholesale market and sold there. In addition, some crops – such as zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes and green beans – are produced not for sale but for home consumption.

5.3 The Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans⁴⁶

Many of the bostans inside the Land Walls at Yedikule had already been destroyed

⁴⁵ Hasan Sargin, personal interview, April 9, 2015

⁴⁶ This section is based largely on personal interviews conducted with Yedikule gardeners.

before the most recent act of destruction took place in 2013. The process first began in the 1950s, and continued in an ever-accelerating manner during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. In every case, some of the bostans were destroyed to make room for building construction. In 1999, a part of the Yedikule Bostans was destroyed in order to build a parking lot. In 2004, more bostans were destroyed to make way for a football pitch. The recently-constructed sports hall and skating rink inside the Land Walls in the vicinity of Yedikule also stand on the site of former bostans. The Langa Bostan, further in towards the center of the city, was another bostan of great historical importance which provided many gardeners with employment and income – until its complete destruction in 1996. Today, there is a large metro terminus on the site. Many of the old gardeners in the Yedikule Bostans used to work in the Langa Bostan. “When the Langa Bostan was destroyed, 80-100 families lost their livelihoods,” said one of the gardeners.⁴⁷ The Langa Bostan is still alive in the memory of many of the Yedikule gardeners.

Few bostans now remain in the neighborhood of Yedikule and around the Land Walls. The historic bostans that were destroyed by the Fatih local municipality⁴⁸ on 6th July 2013 (during the AKP government’s period of office) were some of the last remaining ones: the Bayrampaşa Bostan, the İsmail Pasha Bostan and the Bostan of Süleyman Agha.

The gardeners whose plots were destroyed were not informed about the impending destruction, and were taken by surprise when the bulldozers arrived. It was summer, and they were harvesting their crops. “Our bostans were full of crops; we

⁴⁷ Mehmet Karmak, personal interview, April 13, 2015

⁴⁸ The Yedikule neighborhood is located in the urban district of Fatih. The local municipality responsible for the district of Fatih is ‘the Municipality of Fatih’.

had already started to harvest them to sell in the bazaar,” one of the gardeners said.⁴⁹ They tried to rescue some of their produce, but almost all of it was smothered under the rubble that had been brought to the site and dumped on it by bulldozers; the historic wells shared the same fate. Both the gardeners and the local residents were profoundly shocked to see their bostans turned into heaps of rubble in a single night and day. The Municipality told the gardeners that the neighborhood was in need of a park, so they were going to construct one on the site. This building project, known as the *Yedikule-Belgrad Kapı Arasında Kara Surları İç Koruma Rekreasyon Projesi* (‘Re-creation Project for the Area inside the Land Walls between the Yedikule and Belgrade Gates’), envisaged the destruction of the historic bostans that were located between two gates in the Land Walls – the Yedikule Gate and the Belgrade Gate. These bostans occupy a total area of 60 *dönüm*;⁵⁰ during the destruction in July 2013, nearly half of this area – 27 *dönüm* – was lost.⁵¹

Since that time, the destruction has been halted thanks to a campaign mounted to protect the bostans. In 2014, Kadir Topbaş, the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, vetoed the ‘Re-creation Project’ and returned it to the Fatih Municipality for review, adding that the bostans must be protected and the opinion of Yedikule residents must be sought.⁵² This action does not, however, guarantee the future of the bostans. For the last two years, a large part of the historic bostans has remained under débris; the park has not been built, nor has the rubble been cleared away to re-create the bostans. On the day of the destruction, Mustafa Demir, the Mayor of Fatih, promised the market gardeners that they would be compensated for

⁴⁹ Mustafa Eryılmaz, personal interview, April 3, 2015

⁵⁰ A *dönüm* is a measurement of land roughly equivalent to 920 square meters.

⁵¹ See < <http://www.tarlasera.com/bak-bostanci-gidiyo> > accessed on February 8, 2015

⁵² See < <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/yedikule-bostanlari-plani-reddedildi> > accessed on January 21, 2015

their losses. When their total losses are calculated (including loss of crops, loss of seed kept for the next planting, loss of potential income from sales, loss of the capital invested in the setting up of their bostans⁵³ and loss of equipment), they come to almost 50,000 Turkish lira – currently equivalent to approximately 18,939 US dollars – for each gardener. “We are naive people; we believed what the Municipality told us,” says İsmail, one of the gardeners whose plots were destroyed.⁵⁴ But what the Municipality in fact gave each of them was only 2400 lira –less than 1000 dollars – described as ‘removal expenses’.

A few days after the destruction of July 2013, it came to light that the Fatih Municipality’s project was not limited to the building of a park, but that it also included the construction of a decorative pool, a sports center, a restaurant, two cafés and a children’s play area –plus two parking lots – on the remains of the historic bostans. More importantly, the project ‘rezones’ the area, designating it as a building construction site where new residences are to be built (Emen & İnce, 2013). The project was prepared by two firms, neither of which has an incorporation certificate from the Istanbul Chamber of Landscape Architects (*Peyzaj Mimarları Odası*). According to the Chamber, landscape projects (a term which includes the park project for the Yedikule Bostans) prepared by firms which are not specialists in the subject of landscape architecture are not legal, and must therefore be cancelled.⁵⁵

In addition, the construction of new buildings in a conservation area protected as a historic site (such as the area around the Land Walls) is in contravention of an

⁵³ “Today, it costs 60 thousand lira just to set up a bostan.” Hasan Sargin, personal interview, April 17, 2015

⁵⁴ İsmail Şıvgın, personal interview, April 12, 2015

⁵⁵ See < <http://www.baskahaber.org/2013/08/tarihi-yedikule-bostanlarinda.html> > accessed on 23 February, 2015

international agreement: UNESCO's 'Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention'⁵⁶ state that the historic vegetable gardens (bostans), traditional residences and historic monuments, with their tangible and intangible assets, altogether form a cultural landscape, and that they are essential to the distinctive character of the Land Walls World Heritage Site. Furthermore, the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans contravenes the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's *Tarihi Ada Yönetim Planı* ('Management Plan for the Historic Peninsula'), prepared in 2011, which states that "the *bostan* areas dated to 1875 which have continued to exist until the present day will be preserved. (Kundakçı, 2014). A month after the destruction took place, the Fatih Municipality stated that they would revise the project, and that they would restore an area of 800 square meters for use as bostans (Vardar, 2013). "For the gardeners, an area of 800 square meters is insufficient to provide them with food security, as it would not allow them to grow enough vegetables to sell. In addition, the revised plan still amounts to the complete destruction of the historic heritage of the bostans."⁵⁷

The destruction of the bostans has caused great harm – in non-material as well as material ways –to the gardeners who cultivated their plots there for over 30 years. From the economic point of view, they have lost their livelihoods, and are no longer able to support their families in the same way as they did previously. From the non-material point of view, the work they carried out with love for many years is no longer

⁵⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 2013: 'The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention', World Heritage Center, items 79-95.

⁵⁷ This statement was made by archaeologist Funda Genç and historian Aleksandar Shopov during personal interviews on May 3, 2015. They added that since the Yedikule Bostans are part of the historic fabric as they have been cultivated for many years, it is unacceptable for their use to be limited to 'hobby gardening'.

available to them. Not being able to work on the bostans any more is a bitter pill for the gardeners because of their emotional ties to the land, and because the bostans played such a large part in their personal histories: they had created a life for themselves around their plots.

Hasan, a gardener who cultivated his plot for 40 years, said that his children had grown up in the bostan, and that his grandchildren had played in it. Visiting the shelter near his plot is a habit he still cannot give up, even so long after the bostan itself was destroyed. “I came to this shelter every day for 40 years, so of course I got used to coming here. When my family and I were working on the bostan, we would all sleep here.”⁵⁸ Gazing at his now-destroyed garden, Hasan says: “All I want is to be able to work in this garden again before I die.” İsmail, now in his seventies, cultivated his bostan for 25 years. After it was destroyed, he started to work selling pumpkins on his hand cart. Compared with his former income as a gardener, he now earns very little. “We will go hungry if I do not sell pumpkins,” he says.⁵⁹ Mustafa, aged 40, is another gardener whose bostan was destroyed after he had cultivated it for many years. “They came in the night, and they had covered up the bulldozers’ license plates; they destroyed every last fig and mulberry tree in my bostan,” he said.⁶⁰ After that day, Mustafa found a plot where he could continue gardening; however, it is located near the outer limits of the city. Outside the Yedikule Bostans, it is almost impossible to find any agricultural land inside the city as almost all of it has been taken for building construction. Compared with the time when he cultivated a plot in the Yedikule Bostans, Mustafa now has trouble earning enough money because his current plot is too far away for people to come and buy directly from him. Recep, another bostan-

⁵⁸ Hasan Sargin, personal interview, April 9, 2015

⁵⁹ İsmail Şıvgın, personal interview, April 12, 2015

⁶⁰ Mustafa Eryılmaz, personal interview, April 11, 2015

keeper, said that the destruction had ruined him. In order to be able to start cultivating part of a bostan, he borrowed money; in spite of the fact that his bostan has now been destroyed, he is still paying off his debt.

Although the bostans are officially protected (having the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site),⁶¹ the areas located both inside and outside the Theodosian Walls – including the towers and gates as well as the walls themselves – are under serious threat from construction projects (White *et al.*, 2015). The destruction of the bostans has also damaged the archeological richness of the area. A year after the destruction, during the construction of the decorative pool which formed part of the building project, bulldozers started to excavate the ground where the bostans had once been; in the process, they first uncovered and then destroyed some archaeological remains (Gürkan, 2014).⁶² Archaeologist Funda Genç describes this as “an act of theft, depriving the people of the world of their inheritance.”⁶³ In addition to the physical damage inflicted on the bostans, their destruction also creates the danger that the traditional knowledge, skills and culture of the Yedikule gardeners will be lost. If this happens, their expertise in the matter of sustainable agriculture – something that is passed on by word of mouth – will be lost to us for ever, and we will be deprived of a means by which we might have built up a relationship with our environment.

The political process which led up to the destruction of the bostans will be

⁶¹ See < <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/356> > accessed on January 26, 2015

⁶² According to the *Kültür Varlıklarını Koruma Kanunu* (the ‘Law on the Preservation of Cultural Assets’), all excavation work in the Historic Peninsula must be carried out under the supervision of the Archaeologists’ Association. A firm by the name of *Efor Yapı*, which was contracted to realize the park project on the bostans, carried out the construction work under the supervision not of the Archaeologists’ Association but of a freelance archaeologist. Likewise, before the destruction of the bostans, the Fatih Municipality did not inform the Association of their plans; the Association then declared that the construction work damaged archaeological remains. See < <http://www.arkitera.com/haber/23418/bostanlarda-izinsiz-kazi-durduruldu> > accessed on January 21, 2015

⁶³ Funda Genç, personal interview, May 3, 2015

described later, under the heading ‘Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans’ (section 4.6).

5.4 The Importance of the Yedikule Bostans

In addition to their importance as a food source for Istanbul, the Yedikule Bostans have great importance as a historic site. In 1935, the Theodosian Walls were designated as a protected area; then, in 1985, the entire Land Wall complex – an area of 6,650 square meters – was placed on UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites as a ‘Historic Area of Istanbul’ (White *et al.*, 2015).

The Yedikule Bostans are an urban agricultural area that has been under permanent cultivation for the last 1500 years, and are known to be one of the oldest urban agricultural areas in existence. The soil of these bostans is regarded by experts as some of the most fertile in the world. The Yedikule Bostans can also be regarded as a cultural heritage in that they constitute a means of handing down a gardening culture (consisting of both farming techniques and the organization of everyday life around the bostans) from generation to generation. The water wells, water pools, water mills and gardeners’ shelters which surround the bostans – as well as the soil itself –also form part of this cultural heritage. While the bostans themselves, the gardening tools, the irrigation infrastructure and the shelters are ‘tangible’ heritage, the gardening culture and knowledge of farming techniques are ‘intangible’ heritage⁶⁴. By virtue of the fact that today’s gardeners make use of knowledge learned from their fathers or

⁶⁴ With reference to the gardening culture that has been preserved in the Yedikule Bostans for thousands of years, Ricci says that “the surviving orchards tucked in-between and immediately outside the Land Walls do indeed represent a rare testimony of intangible cultural heritage of the Byzantine and possibly Ottoman period city”. For further information, see < <http://www.culinarybackstreets.com/istanbul/2013/yedikule> > accessed on October 14, 2014

from Albanian, Macedonian, Armenian, Greek or Bulgarian master-gardeners, the Yedikule Bostans are also a product of oral history.

The Yedikule Bostans represent 1500 years of living history; they have welcomed master-gardeners from all the above-mentioned cultures, and have flourished as a result of their contributions. Because they incorporate such a wide variety of cultures and traditions, the Yedikule Bostans are unique in terms of the diversity of their agricultural produce: immigrant gardeners brought their seed with them, and grew it in the bostans. The importance of these immigrant master-gardeners' knowledge is shown by the fact that chicory was grown by Greek gardeners in the Yedikule Bostans until most of Istanbul's Greek residents were forced to leave Turkey during the government-inspired racist attacks of 6th-7th September 1955.⁶⁵ Today, chicory has disappeared from the bostans as a result of the Greeks' departure and the resulting loss of their knowledge. As some gardeners said during interview, 18 varieties of pear used to be grown in the Yedikule Bostans. The cabbage lettuces that were grown here were famous for their taste. Some kinds of vegetable – including cabbage lettuce – cannot be grown any more because climatic conditions have changed, and natural resources have become polluted; however, 'Yedikule lettuce' lives on in the memory of old gardeners.⁶⁶ When seen within this context, the bostans are understood to be a source of the city's cultural identity. Kaldjian (2004) explains that in the past, each neighborhood of Istanbul was associated with the crop that the local producers grew: for instance, the Arnavutköy neighborhood was known for the strawberries produced in its bostans, while the Langa Bostan was famous for

⁶⁵ See < <http://zafer-yenikapi.blogspot.com.tr/> > accessed on February 11, 2015

⁶⁶ This year (2015), a 'lettuce festival' was celebrated in the same way as it was celebrated in the past. The aim of the festival was to protest the destruction of the bostans, and to keep the local community's memories of them alive.

its cucumbers.

The Yedikule Bostans are part of the communal memory and personal history of the market-gardeners not only because of the crops they produced, but also because of the traditions of gardening practice these people preserved. Tuncay, a 33-year-old gardener, said that the bostans helped people like him to keep the memory of their past alive. All Yedikule's present-day gardeners revere their masters. In answer to a question on how he would feel if the bostans were to be destroyed, Ahmet (who kept a bostan outside the Land Walls), said: "All my memories are here. My father and grandfather both died here. I would feel a great sense of loss, an emptiness inside."⁶⁷

Historical documents from the Ottoman period reveal the importance given to the bostans by the authorities: no construction was allowed on the site. As Shopov and Han (2013) tell us, a historical document dating back to 1585 records an official decision to protect the 18 bostans that existed within the Langa neighborhood (belonging to the Süleymaniye Religious Foundation) from any form of intervention. In a privately-prepared academic report entitled 'A Report of Concern on the Conservation Issues of the Istanbul Land Walls World Heritage Site', it is emphasized that the Land Walls, together with the historic vegetable gardens around them, comprise an urban agricultural heritage site, and that the bostans are valuable from several points of view: as a cultural landscape, as part of the water supply system of the Historic Peninsula, as part of the city's lifestyle during the Byzantine period, as an area in which urban agriculture has been carried out in the Historic Peninsula since the Byzantine era, as a databank on the seed and agricultural practices of the past, and as an embodiment of intangible values (Çorakbaş, Aksoy, & Ricci, 2014).

During the Byzantine and Ottoman periods the bostans around the Land Walls

⁶⁷ Ahmet Öztürk, personal interview, April 22, 2015

met the entire vegetable needs of the city, as well as part of its fruit needs. Later, in response to the increase in Istanbul's population, areas on both the European and the Asian sides of the Bosphorus began to be cultivated in order to meet the city's growing need for food (Bilgin, 2010). Today, the Yedikule Bostans still maintain their importance as a source of fresh food for the city – but to a lesser extent than in the past because of the decrease in their number that has come about as a result of the opening of the area to building construction in neoliberal 'urban transformation' projects. Only bostans can provide a solution to the problem of food security at neighborhood level. Their contribution to food security will be described in detail under the heading 'The Yedikule Bostans as a Resistance Practice' (section 5.5).

The unique feature of the produce grown on the Yedikule Bostans compared with that grown outside Istanbul and transported to the city's neighborhood bazaars is that crops from the bostans are fresher, and thus more nutritious. Access to fresh, health-giving vegetables is important for Istanbul residents because most of what they eat is produced in distant regions by means of industrial agricultural techniques; these vegetables lose much of their nutritional value during transportation. Other advantages of vegetables grown in the bostans are the employment in their production of traditional farming techniques, the use of animal manure rather than chemical fertilizers, and the use of natural seeds rather than hybrid ones.

The Yedikule Bostans are also important in terms of their educational value for the younger generation. According to those ecological activists and historians who are engaged in the struggle to protect the bostans, they can be used as educational centers for schoolchildren. One of the gardeners has already welcomed several elementary school students to his bostan: he has taught them how to plant and how to

harvest crops. He says the gardeners will always be happy to share their knowledge: “In one advertisement on the TV, they tell us to ‘plant trees’. How can people plant anything without knowing what to do? Moreover, many parents cannot afford to teach this technique to their children because planting a tree costs about 15 lira – a figure which includes a plant pot and a packet of soil as well as a seedling. But if they come here, it will be a pleasure for us to teach them – it is something we love to do.”⁶⁸

The Yedikule Bostans are one of the largest intra-urban green spaces in the city of Istanbul (Kudia, 2013). In view of the pollution currently affecting the city, each green space is like a breath of fresh air for residents. The gardeners know they make a valuable contribution to the life of the city because they maintain their plots as green spaces. “People in Istanbul get bored of seeing just buildings: they want to see beautiful green spaces,” said one of them.⁶⁹ In addition, the gardeners claim that their presence in the bostans is important because it provides security. They say that thanks to them, both Yedikule residents and visitors can walk freely around the Land Walls without feeling insecure: people feel that the gardeners are somehow ‘keeping guard’ while they are at work on their plots.

The Yedikule Bostans provide an opportunity for Istanbul residents to form a relationship with the food they eat, with their environment, and with the people who produce their food. Most Istanbul residents are alienated from their food. They almost always buy it in supermarkets or in neighborhood bazaars – without giving a thought to the matter of who produced it, or how it was produced. Were chemical inputs used? Is the food healthy, or not? By what method was it produced? Did this method of production harm the environment, or not? Also, people do not know the producers

⁶⁸ Ahmet Ökten, personal interview, April 17, 2015

⁶⁹ Mustafa Karaca, personal interview, April 15, 2015

personally, and have no knowledge of their working conditions. In this context, the bostans have great importance in terms of the creation of relationships between people and producers, and between people and their environment. As the gardeners said, people can come to visit the bostans in person, and choose the produce they want to buy; if they wish, they can touch the plants, feel the soil, and find out how each crop was produced by talking to the gardener. The relationships created thanks to the Yedikule Bostans are also important as a resistance practice – as I will explain in the next section (5.5).

Lastly, the Bostans are important in that they contribute to the economic well-being of city-dwellers. According to data provided by TÜİK – the *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu* ('Turkish Statistics Board'), there has recently been an increase in the proportion of their income that people allocate to food. The lowest-income families allocate one-third of their budget to food, and they allocate twice as much (as a proportion of their income) in relation to families in the higher-income bracket. In the face of the rapid increase in food prices, the consumption of locally-produced food has the potential to bring about a significant improvement in the lifestyle of city residents in economic terms.

In section 5.5.1, I will examine the sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans as a resistance practice. Following this, their importance in the provision of environmental, social and economic sustainability, as well as in the provision of food security, will be dealt with (5.5.1.1, 5.5.1.2, 5.5.1.3, 5.5.1.4).

5.5 The Yedikule Bostans as a Resistance Practice

At a time of rapid urbanization and population growth, when neoliberal policies are in

force, Istanbul needs sustainable development in order to protect the urban environment, and to safeguard the social relations and economic well-being of its inhabitants. Sustainable development can only be achieved through sustainable agriculture. In this context, the bostans have the potential to contribute to the city's sustainable development – especially from the points of view of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Further to my claim that urban agriculture is a resistance practice (see Chapter 2), it is my contention that the market gardening carried out in the Yedikule Bostan constitutes a form of resistance – from two points of view. My primary argument is that the growing of food in the bostans is a form of resistance in that it is a practice of local production and consumption, and is thus a practice of sustainable agriculture. As a subsidiary argument, I will claim that urban agriculture in the bostans is a form of resistance by virtue of the fact that the struggle to protect them (which began after their destruction in 2013) is a resistance practice.

It is not, of course, my contention that the cultivation of the Yedikule Bostans began as a premeditated act of resistance on the part of the gardeners: obviously, they did not come from Cide with this in mind. However, I do not accept Brian Fegan's (1986) thesis that resistance depends on the intentions of the actors; rather, it is my belief that the practice of gardening – as carried out by the Yedikule market-gardeners – constitutes an act of resistance in the terms defined by Ortner (1995): growing food in the bostans leads to transformation in two main ways. Firstly, it brings about a transformation of the alienated, capitalist relationship between producer and consumer into one in which there is a close relationship between the two; secondly, it transforms the unsustainable development of the city of Istanbul into sustainable development.

5.5.1 The Resistance Practice in the Yedikule Bostans in the Context of Sustainability

Most of the vegetables sold in Istanbul's bazaars are transported from the Mediterranean region of Turkey. There, they are produced under greenhouse conditions by means of advanced technology. Because they are grown in greenhouses, the vegetables produced in the Mediterranean region are not seasonal – which means they are not healthy. The modern industrial agricultural methods used in this region also damage the environment. In addition, because it is transported to Istanbul from a distance of over 700 km, the produce grown there loses its freshness and nutritional value in transit. In addition, motorized long-distance transportation causes environmental pollution. Thus, the sustainable agriculture carried out in the Yedikule Bostans constitutes an act of resistance against the domination of the industrial agricultural system.

The method of cultivation practiced in the Yedikule Bostans is 'sustainable' agriculture because it relies on local production and consumption, and also because the traditional farming techniques employed in the bostans minimize damage to the environment. Because they are part of a system of local production and consumption, the Yedikule Bostans provide food security and environmental, social and economic sustainability. I regard the bostans' contribution to sustainability as a resistance practice because in a city like Istanbul (in which environmental degradation is increasing day by day, in which people are losing their social connections with each other and with their environment, and in which they are being exposed to poverty), sustainable agriculture constitutes a resistance to the industrial agricultural system and to the capitalist, neoliberal policies on which this system is based.

In Turkey, especially since 1998, state policies carried out under the surveillance of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO (World Trade Organization) have gradually eliminated traditional agriculture, replacing it with modern farming techniques; production has moved towards luxury cash crops and high-value foods; and free marketism has taken over in production, trade and distribution. This method of production – through monocultures – destroys local farming knowledge (Dinçer, 2014)

5.5.1.1 The Yedikule Bostans in the Context of Environmental Sustainability

The Yedikule Bostans contribute to environmental sustainability because they are part of a local food system, and the gardeners use sustainable farming techniques which they have inherited from previous master-gardeners.

Because they contribute to environmental sustainability, the Yedikule Bostans constitute resistance to the industrial agricultural system. The local production of crops is one of the main pillars of this resistance. For the most part, Istanbul residents are denied the opportunity to eat locally-grown produce which is healthy and ecologically sound. Even though a small amount of locally-produced food is sold in the bazaars, only people in the high-income bracket can afford to buy it. The scarcity of local produce is due to the fact that US transnational agro-food companies are conducting a policy of replacing old crops with new ones: locally-produced crops are being replaced with ones that are dependent on synthetic chemical inputs. This process undermines the local production and consumption pattern of developing countries such as Turkey (Aydın, 2010). In this context, the Yedikule Bostans are a resistance to the exploitative policies of the agro-food companies because the

gardeners use mostly local seed, produced from the crops they grow. All the Yedikule gardeners keep the seeds of their tomatoes, basil, black cabbage, chard, purslane, radishes, roquette and dill. The gardeners do, however, also resort to the use of hybrid seed that is produced and distributed by the agro-business companies. This is due to the fact that the bostans are not large enough to allow gardeners to keep all their vegetables' seed: in order to obtain seed, one has to allocate an area of the bostan for some of each kind of vegetable, and keep each kind in the soil until it flowers. Because of the bostans' small size, there is not enough free space to do this.⁷⁰ It is, however, of great importance that compared with the vegetables grown under industrial agricultural conditions in the Mediterranean region, at least some of the vegetables grown in the Yedikule Bostans are grown from locally-produced seed. The gardeners see this as necessary in order for them to be able to guarantee the sustainability of their bostans: "If a crop is not sold in the bostan, we keep it here so that we can eventually collect its seed," one of them said.⁷¹

In view of the close correlation between agricultural technologies and the sustainability of urban agriculture (Pretty, 2008), it can be claimed that the methods of cultivation used in the bostans are sustainable agricultural practices. Traditional – in other words, sustainable – farming practices such as crop diversity and rotation, low-till farming and rotational grazing constitute resistance to environmental degradation. As opposed to monocropping, which damages the soil and the plants grown in it, the practice preferred by the Yedikule gardeners is the planting of diverse crops. "Eating pasta every day is not beneficial to one's health," said one of the gardeners⁷², explaining in a metaphorical way the need for the sowing of diverse crops.

⁷⁰ Hasan Sargin, personal interview, April 9, 2015

⁷¹ Ahmet Öztürk, personal interview, April 11, 2015

⁷² Halil Mert, personal interview, April 27, 2015

Furthermore, because they minimize mechanization, wastage of plastic packaging and the use of fossil-fueled transportation – as described by Peters (2010) – the bostans provide environmental sustainability. Rather than using the heavy machinery employed in industrial agriculture (which damages the soil and increases pollution), the Yedikule gardeners use ‘minimal mechanization’ in their bostans; on their small-scale plots, they employ only small pieces of motorized equipment which cause far less harm to the environment. In terms of avoiding the wastage of plastic packaging, the bostans make an important contribution to environmental sustainability and to the health of consumers: most of those agricultural products which are widely consumed in Istanbul because of their dominant position in the market are transported over long distances, wrapped in plastic packaging; this packaging contains chemicals which have a detrimental effect both on human health and on the environment. By contrast, the crops grown on the Yedikule Bostans are transported to the bazaars in open boxes, or to their homes by people who come and buy directly from the gardeners. Both these methods of transportation bring about a significant reduction in the use of plastic packaging. Also, the bostans – thanks to their proximity to the market – minimize the degradation of the environment in that they make use of far less fossil-fueled transport. Each family of gardeners transports its produce in a van to the neighborhood bazaars, which are only a short distance away. In addition, in contrast to produce transported to Istanbul from other parts of Turkey (which is refrigerated during transit, thus giving rise to a huge amount of energy usage and pollution), crops produced on the bostans do not waste any energy in this way: the produce does not need storage because of the short distance to the market, and also because it is seasonal (and thus picked only a short time before it is consumed,

eliminating the need for refrigeration).

The Yedikule Bostans also contribute to environmental sustainability thanks to the irrigation system employed in them. Most of the gardeners use water from the 1500-year-old wells in or around the bostans. Some gardeners, however, have new wells sunk because they do not have one of the ancient wells on or near their plots. The depth of the wells in the bostans varies between 15 and 40 meters; this means that the crops are irrigated with water that is not polluted with the city's waste.

The domination of the agro-food regime prevalent in capitalist countries has forced a transformation of the agricultural sector in developing countries, making them dependent on transnational companies for inputs and for distribution networks. These agrobusiness companies dominate the world food system by squeezing out small farmers – replacing their methods with those of energy-hungry industrial agriculture and thus creating an unsustainable system of production and distribution.⁷³ In this context, the form of cultivation practiced on the Yedikule Bostans constitutes resistance to the agro-food regime in that it does not depend entirely on the inputs and distribution mechanisms of transnational companies. Also, in contrast with the chemical fertilizers used by the industrial agro-food regime, the fertilizer used by the Yedikule gardeners is mostly animal manure. In accordance with 1500-year-old gardening lore, many of them prefer to use animal manure because it is better for the health of the soil, of the crops and of the people who consume them. Animal manure “perks up the crop,” as one of the gardeners told me. In the bostans, chemical fertilizers are also used for various reasons, most of which are economic – as will be explained in the section entitled ‘Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule

⁷³ See < <https://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy/world-hunger/agribusiness-companies.html> > accessed on November 5, 2014

Bostans' (5.6). However, compared with the level of its use in the industrial agricultural production methods of the Mediterranean region, the use of chemical fertilizers in the Yedikule Bostans is far smaller.

5.5.1.2 The Yedikule Bostans in the Context of Social Sustainability

Seen within the perspective of the widespread alienation of Istanbul residents from their food, the Yedikule Bostans' contribution to social sustainability constitutes resistance to capitalist consumption and production relations, and to the commodification of food. Very few of Istanbul's inhabitants have any relationship at all with the food they eat, with their environment or with the producers of their food. No-one asks themselves how their food is grown, where it came from, whether or not it is fresh, what transportation and packaging costs were added to the price, whether or not it is free from pesticides, or whether or not it was produced in a greenhouse. Other questions never asked are: Who are the producers of this food, and under what conditions were they working? People are unaware of the "embodiment of relationships" that the food contains within itself (McMahon, 2002). Deprived of any relationship with the food they eat, people see fruit and vegetables as 'commodities' and themselves as 'consumers' whose role is confined to purchasing them. This is partly because the areas where the crops are produced are a long way from Istanbul; this physical distance brings about a mental and psychological distance between the people of the city and their food.

By contrast, the Yedikule Bostans are located within the city, and are thus easily accessible: they are within walking distance for some residents, and within a short distance via public transport or by car for others. Thanks to the shortness of the

food chain, the bostans bring about a transformation in individuals and in society by reconnecting people with themselves, with other people, with their environment and with their food. This situation is transformational for producers as well as consumers. The market-gardeners feel an enhancement of their spiritual well-being – a re-connection with themselves that comes about through producing their own food. Gardening tires their bodies (something that particularly affects the older gardeners), but at the same time they believe in the healing effect of working with the soil. “Thanks to our gardening work, we do not get ill so often. If you worked in a factory, you would be ill all the time. Here, the life is hard, but it is good. We plough the earth in our bare feet, because the soil can take away your stress,” said Mustafa, a bostan-keeper outside the Land Walls.⁷⁴ This ‘re-connection’ that they experience through gardening is also the reason why most of them love their profession. “When you are gardening, the soil talks to you. You can smell it. Although the working conditions are hard, I cannot work anywhere else apart from the bostans. I need to work in the open air, or it would tire my spirit,” said Halil, a worker in a bostan outside the Land Walls.⁷⁵ As for the consumers of their produce, the gardeners say it gives these people great happiness to come to the bostans and pick things with their hands. In this way, people have face-to-face contact with the producers of the crops, and are also able to form a connection with their environment. Elderly gardeners in the Yedikule Bostans complain that there is less communication between producers and consumers today, compared with in the past. I will explain the reasons for this in the next section (‘Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans’, 5.6). But in spite of this gradual decrease in communication, the bostans are still the only space inside the city

⁷⁴ Mustafa Karaca, personal interview, April 17, 2015

⁷⁵ Halil Mert, personal interview, April 27, 2015

where city-dwellers can avail themselves of the opportunity to touch vegetables in the soil in which they are grown.

The Yedikule gardeners resist the capitalization of agriculture by keeping alive their traditional relationships and values. In Turkey, just as in the rest of the world, policy instruments directed towards the capitalization of agriculture between the 1960s and 1980s (such as the use of modern farm machinery, chemicals, artificial fertilizers, hybrid and genetically-modified seeds, cheap credit and subsidies for both inputs and crop) brought about the breakdown of traditional relationships in agriculture. Within this context, the act of gardening in the Yedikule Bostans constitutes resistance to the capitalist domination of agriculture by virtue of the fact that it relies on a local system of production and consumption, and makes use of sustainable agricultural techniques. Moreover, because most of the gardeners in Yedikule come from the same village, the bostans have contributed to the preservation of their social ties, ensuring that they are maintained even after the gardeners' migration to Istanbul. In addition, in the work of gardening, their relations with each other are based on solidarity and mutual support. "If I need seed, someone gives his seed to me. If he needs a machine to cultivate his land, I go to his bostan to do the job with my machine."⁷⁶

As stated above, the Yedikule gardeners make use of traditional knowledge and farming techniques which have been handed down to them by previous master-gardeners. These traditional farming practices, as well as the traditional way of life still maintained on the bostans, constitute an act of resistance to industrialization. The process of globalization makes us more inclined to seek some form of gain in all our relationships; thus, we become more distanced from each other. The bostans resist this

⁷⁶ Ahmet Öztürk, personal interview, April 22, 2015

isolation by being the focus of seasonal celebrations.

In the past, a spring festival was celebrated in the Yedikule Bostans; the special lettuce produced there brought people together for this celebration. The Armenian community that settled in Yedikule in the 19th century celebrated their spring festival⁷⁷ in the Yedikule Bostans together with people who came from many other neighborhoods.

Recently, the traditional annual celebration called *Marul Bayramı* (the ‘Lettuce Festival’), timed to coincide with the traditional *Nevruz Bayramı* – spring festival – has been revived by activist groups after a lapse of many years. On 8th-9th May 2015, people came together in Yedikule and in an open-air space opposite the nearby Armenian Hospital to commemorate the importance of the bostans and their produce for local residents (traditionally, the Yedikule neighborhood has been known chiefly for the lettuces it produces), as well as to raise public awareness of the bostans. Workshops on the history of lettuce-growing in Yedikule and the importance of protecting the bostans were held, panel discussions and special events for local schoolchildren were organized, seedlings were distributed to children and young people for them to grow at home, and exchanges of seed took place.

Thus, the Yedikule Bostans are now – as in the past – a focus of resistance to the disappearance of traditions, and continue to be a cause for local celebration in the face of the gradual erosion of traditional relationships and values.

⁷⁷ The ‘Hamparsun Feast’ is an Armenian festival in which people celebrate the ascension of Jesus Christ. In fact, ‘Hamparsun’ is based on an earlier pagan festival at which people celebrated the beginning of spring. Until the establishment of the Surp Pırgıç Armenian Hospital in Yedikule (which led to the settlement of an Armenian community there), the spring festival was celebrated in meadows in other neighborhoods of Istanbul. With the increase in the Armenian population of Yedikule, the spring festival began to be celebrated there, and Armenians from other neighborhoods began to come and take part. See < http://www.imctv.com.tr/wpvr_video/ne-yiyorsak-oyuz-18-nisan-2015/ > accessed on April 25, 2015

5.5.1.3 The Yedikule Bostans in the Context of Economic Sustainability

At a time when the process of neoliberal globalization has brought with it the threat of widespread poverty, the bostan gardeners' practice of urban agriculture constitutes a resistance to economic exploitation. As Keyder (2009) points out, neoliberal globalization (the dominant policy applied during the period of office of the AKP government) has brought about inequality of income. While those people who have migrated to Istanbul in the last 20 years – especially people of Kurdish, Romany or African origin, and unskilled workers – are marginalized both economically and socially, other groups (for example, the élites employed by transnational companies, businesspeople and high-income consumers) have benefited from these policies (Keyder, 2009). As explained in sections 5.1 and 5.2 above, the gardeners who have cultivated the Yedikule Bostans during the last 30-40 years have been migrant gardeners who came to Istanbul to work as paid laborers. The reason for their choosing the profession of gardening was the poverty prevalent in Cide, their home village; they have carried on in this profession because the bostans provide economic sustainability at household level. A bostan can be a source of income for more than one family because if extra labor is needed, the bostan-keeper prefers to employ relatives. There are 35 bostans outside the Land Walls, and these provide employment for almost 200 people; the bostans inside the Land Walls fulfil this function for nearly 100 people.⁷⁸ As the gardeners told me, the bostans provide them with enough money to meet their most basic needs “without needing help from other people”. The bostans also provide economic sustainability at town level (Foeken *et al.*, 2004) in the matter of employment: in some market gardens, if no family members are available to help,

⁷⁸ Based on an interview with Aleksandar Shopov in the following newspaper report < <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/yine-geldik-bostan-a-71584.html> > accessed on December 17, 2014

laborers who are not family members are employed – mostly in the work of selling the produce in the neighborhood bazaars. In addition, the bostans contribute to economic sustainability for consumers by providing them with cheap food. For example, while a bunch of chard in the Yedikule Bostans costs 50 kuruş, it costs 3 lira (i.e., six times as much) at the supermarket.

Economic sustainability is threatened by government policies in various ways: for example, through the destruction of the bostans and through the placing of certain restrictions on the gardeners; this subject will be explored in more detail in the section entitled ‘Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans’ (5.6).

5.5.1.4 The Yedikule Bostans in the Context of Food Security

As outlined in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.1), RUAF maintains that the provision of food security depends on three main factors: *availability of food*, *access to food* and *quality of food*. All these conditions are met by the Yedikule Bostans. According to Foeken *et al.* (2004), urban agriculture provides food security both at household level and at town level –and once again, this is true of the Yedikule Bostans. At household level, they provide food security for gardeners in two ways: through self-consumption, and by enabling them to save money – money which can then be used for purchasing other kinds of food. Because more than one family often work together in the same bostan, one plot can provide food security for quite a large number of people. Also, the bostans provide food security not only for the gardeners’ families, but for other city-dwellers as well. The contribution to the food supply made by the bostans may be small in comparison with the total food needs of the city, but at neighborhood level it

is sufficient. The bostans outside the Land Walls produce 30 tons of vegetables annually, while those inside the Land Walls produce 10 tons. There are also fruit trees in the bostans, which have an annual production of 4 tons.⁷⁹ Hence, the Yedikule Bostans satisfy the first condition of food security: *availability of food*.

In comparison with the quantity of imported produce, the crops grown on the Yedikule Bostans may seem insignificant; however, from the point of view (firstly) of the food security they provide at household and neighborhood levels, and (secondly) of the social and environmental benefits they provide (at neighborhood level –and indeed, at the level of the city itself) –the act of growing food in the Yedikule Bostans has great importance (Kaldjian, 2004). The produce of the Yedikule Bostans is available for city-dwellers not only locally, but also in the bazaars of nearby neighborhoods such as Kocamustafapaşa, Fatih and Zeytinburnu, in neighborhoods further away such as Esenler – and even in distant parts of the city such as Kadıköy, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. Because the produce grown in the bostans is available in many different parts of the city, the Yedikule Bostans also meet the second condition for food security: *access to food*.

Thirdly (as explained in section 5.5.1.1, above), the vegetables produced around the Land Walls are fresh and nutritious thanks to the use of locally-produced seed and animal manure, and also because of the shortness of the supply chain; thus, the Yedikule Bostans meet the third condition for food security: *quality of food*.

Finally, by providing food security, the Yedikule Bostans constitute a resistance to the globalization of agriculture, and to the power of the multinational corporations (whose activities cause hunger). As Tandon (2000) says, globalization

⁷⁹ Ibid.

has meant the realignment of agrarian structures and agricultural policies towards a free market system, which in turn places agriculture under the domination of modern technology that is exclusively owned by multinational corporations – which aim to generate profits for themselves at the expense of the welfare of the people and their food security.

5.5.2 The Organized Struggle for the Yedikule Bostans as a Resistance Practice

When the bulldozers started to destroy the bostans, word of this disaster soon spread: that day, around 20 people who had up to that time been taking an interest in the preservation of the Yedikule Bostans contacted each other in the social media. On this first day, the *Tarihi Yedikule Bostanlarını Koruma Girişimi* ('Initiative for the Preservation of the Historic Yedikule Bostans') was formed. Because the destruction occurred during the summer of the Gezi resistance, many people were motivated to protect the bostans as a result of the experience they had gained at the Gezi Park (as described in Chapter 4 sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.2.1, above).⁸⁰

The Initiative contributed a great deal to the molding of public opinion. After the destruction, much effort was put into the organization of workshops. Some of these were held in the newly-destroyed bostans; others were held in a bostan outside the Land Walls which was still intact. Agricultural engineers held meetings on the site; workshops were held on subjects such as bird-scaring, seeds, the profession of gardening and the history of the bostans. The efforts of the Initiative focused on informing the public about the destruction and its catastrophic effects. By means of

⁸⁰ Aleksandar Shopov of the Initiative described in a personal interview on May 3, 2015 conducted on the effect of Gezi resistance on the struggle for Yedikule Bostans that it had caused people to show greater sensitivity to the issue of the destruction of the bostans. "If it had not been for the Gezi resistance, no-one would have taken an interest in the Yedikule Bostans."

the active use of social media, press statements, newspaper articles and academic articles, the publication of the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans was transformed into a struggle for the reinstatement of those that had been destroyed, and for the preservation of those that remained intact.⁸¹ One of the aims of the Initiative in holding all these meetings and workshops on the site of the bostans was to communicate with Yedikule residents; during these activities, the questions of why people had come to live in the neighborhood, why the bostans were important for its future and how the bostans could be protected were discussed.

The struggle to protect the historic bostans became a source of local tension when residents became polarized: some supported the destruction, while others participated in the struggle to protect them. As the Yedikule gardeners said, some of the residents who endorsed the Fatih Municipality's project were people who had come to live in the *Yedikule Konakları* ('Yedikule Mansions'), while others were local residents who supported the ruling AKP. As will be explained below (in section 5.6.3), the demand of *Yedikule Konakları* residents to have a view of a park (rather than bostans) from their 'mansions' provided a highly convenient justification for the Municipality to destroy the historic bostans as part of their policy of gentrification. The Municipality was in fact the main instigator of the tension between those residents who supported the destruction and those who opposed it. On the day when the bostans were destroyed, the Municipality brought police to the site in order to terrorize the neighborhood; also, the authorities had somehow contacted AKP supporters in Yedikule, and had encouraged them to turn out to show their support. As the gardeners said, both groups who supported the destruction now feel regret because

⁸¹ Sevgi Ortaç of the Initiative said in a personal interview on May 5, 2015 conducted on how they started to organize Yedikule Bostans struggle: "We had to produce informational material explaining why it was necessary to protect the bostans. This material was produced immediately."

the bostans have been covered in rubble for the last two years – the promised park has not been built. As one gardener said, “For the last two years, the residents of the *Yedikule Konakları* have had a view of rubbish.”⁸²

Ever since its first meeting, the main item on the Initiative’s agenda had been the question of how to organize the struggle to preserve the bostans; soon it was decided to organize an ‘Association of Yedikule Gardeners’. The aims of this Association were to campaign for the reinstatement of the newly-destroyed Yedikule Bostans and prevent those that remained intact (both inside and outside the Land Walls) from destruction; to improve working conditions for the gardeners, and to ensure the sustainability of agricultural production on the bostans. In the process of the setting up of the Association, regular meetings were held between the gardeners and Initiative members. For the most part, it was those gardeners whose bostans had been destroyed who participated in these meetings. They had no hope of receiving compensation, or of bringing about the restoration of those bostans which were now under rubble; however, they believed that if they came together, they might be able to resist any further drastic actions and unfair practices on the part of the Municipality.

The reason for the gardeners’ feeling the need to unite in an association was the injustices they had previously suffered: almost all the gardeners in the historic Yedikule Bostans had already experienced the destruction of their bostans either in Yedikule or elsewhere. After previous destructions, they had not received justice; thus, they understood that rather than attempting to stand up to the power of the Municipality as individuals, they needed to form an association in order to fight for their rights in a more effective manner. To give but one example, Mustafa (one of the

⁸² Ahmet Yüce, personal interview, April 14, 2015

Yedikule gardeners whose bostans were destroyed in 2013) began to take part in the Association's meetings not because he expects that the Municipality will give his bostan back to him, but because he thinks that in the long term, the struggle to preserve the bostans will help future generations to have more green spaces to live in.

On the day when the bostans were destroyed, the gardeners did not attempt to put up any form of resistance to the Municipality officials who came to the bostans along with the bulldozers. İsmail, one of the gardeners whose bostans were destroyed, explained the reason in these words: "We are unable to present any challenge to the state."⁸³ Many gardeners believe that as the state is much more powerful than they are, it would be useless for them to try to get the state to change its decision. This belief is reinforced by the land tenure system imposed by the Fatih Municipality: the monthly payment that the gardeners are obliged to pay to the Municipality is described not as 'rent', but as 'recompense for land occupation'.⁸⁴ This term officially describes the gardeners not as 'tenants' of the bostans, but as 'occupiers'. Because of this official status, they do not have any legal rights whatsoever to the use of the bostans. The effect of the gardeners' status as 'occupiers' is to make them believe that if the Municipality tells them to go, they have to obey without question as they have no rights of tenure so they feel powerless to oppose it. This situation has an adverse effect on the solidarity of the gardeners in the struggle to reinstate the bostans that were destroyed.

Those gardeners who are continuing to cultivate plots in the bostans that have not yet been destroyed do not participate in the Association's meetings very frequently, although most of them agree that the destruction of the bostans was unfair.

⁸³ İsmail Şıvgın, personal interview, April 13, 2015

⁸⁴ 'Recompense for land occupation' translates the Turkish term *ecrimisil (işgaliye bedeli)*.

They are discouraged from lending their support to the Association's struggle because they fear that if they give voice to their opposition, the same fate will overtake them. In addition to the feeling of insecurity caused by their 'occupier' status, the Yedikule gardeners are also exposed to the psychological pressure of the debts they incurred previously, when keeping other bostans. Some of the Yedikule gardeners once worked in the bostans close to Yeşilköy Airport (now renamed 'Atatürk Airport'). Under the pretext of enlarging the airport, these bostans were destroyed – thus taking away the livelihoods of 40 bostan-keepers and 200 workers. In sum, the threat of unfair practices on the part of the Municipality and of the remaining bostans being destroyed without warning creates fear, and this is one of the main barriers to the sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans.

5.6 Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans

It should first be made clear that the whole of this section in fact closely concerns environmental sustainability. Therefore, no separate section entitled 'Barriers to Environmental Sustainability in the Context of the Yedikule Bostans' has been included in this chapter: the term 'Barriers to the Sustainability of the Yedikule Bostans' already implies that there is a threat of environmental sustainability (at neighborhood level in Yedikule, and at town level in the city of Istanbul as a whole). However, sections entitled 'Barriers to Social Sustainability in the Context of the Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans' (5.6.5) and 'Barriers to Economic Sustainability in the Context of the Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans (5.6.6)' have been included because the gardening work in the bostans is threatened by economic and social factors over and above the physical destruction of the bostans.

As stated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), sustainability in urban agriculture can be ensured by officially recognizing the plots on which it is practiced as ‘urban land’, by guaranteeing secure access to vacant lots, by strengthening gardeners’ organizations, and by providing gardeners with technical support, knowledge and training. The sustainability of the bostans has been threatened by state policies. The lack of any legal framework to regulate urban gardening or to guarantee gardeners’ access to open spaces means that in the context of Yedikule, “food security at both household level and town level” (Foeken *et al.*, 2014), as well as environmental, social and economic sustainability, is threatened. The loss of environmental sustainability, in particular, causes the loss both of social and economic welfare, and of food security. As a direct result of the loss of all these, the sustainability of Istanbul as a city cannot be guaranteed.

5.6.1 The Wider Political Background

Especially during the years from 2002 to 2015 (when the AKP government was in power), the people of Turkey were under great political pressure, as well as being the victims of environmental, social and economic exploitation. The destruction of the bostans is, of course, the main barrier to their sustainability. The underlying reason for this destruction was corporate-dominated globalization, plus the neoliberal policies which began to be enforced in the 1980s. These policies prevent the residents of Istanbul from being able to live in their city peacefully, without worrying about what they will have to face tomorrow.

If we examine the political process leading up to the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans, we see that it came about as a result of the growth of globalization

and of the application of neoliberal policies which aimed to make Istanbul a ‘world city’. Recently, Turkey has been caught up in an ambitious drive towards urban ‘transformation’; many destructive neo-liberal policies have been based on this aim. Especially after the proclamation of Istanbul as ‘European Capital of Culture’ in 2010, efforts to promote Istanbul as a ‘world city’ have intensified. Although the destructive effects of a large number of neoliberal policies on various issues might be cited, I will concentrate solely on these policies in so far as they have affected the bostans.

In order to understand the dynamics which led to the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans, we need to examine the state’s neoliberal urban policy, and the gentrification process which forms part of this. My general emphasis in the following sections (5.6.1 to 5.6.7) is the fact that the ‘urban transformation’ project that was carried out on the site of the Yedikule Bostans was realized at the expense of their sustainability. One of these sections (5.6.2) is on the so-called ‘renovation’ of the Land Walls – the reason being that in political terms, it was this that prepared the ground for the destruction of the bostans, thus having an adverse effect on their environmental sustainability. The point that Foster (2002) emphasizes about environmental sustainability is that it necessitates not only the protection of natural resources, but also the protection of the ‘built world’ – such as historic sites. This contention provides the basis for my suggesting a relation between the government’s policy towards the historic Land Walls and the loss of environmental sustainability in the area of the Yedikule Bostans.

Below, I will describe the ‘urban transformation’ projects (specifically in the area of the Land Walls, under the name of ‘renovation’, as well as in the area of the bostans) which led to the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans.

5.6.1.1 'Urban Transformation' Projects in the Land Walls Area

Up to the 1950s, Turkey was an agricultural country; from this time onwards, however, manufacturing began to be the dominant sector, especially in Istanbul (Can, 2013). In parallel with this development, a 'consumer society' was gradually created. During the 1960s and 70s, new patterns of consumption were introduced to Turkish society, and the individual's level of consumption became one of the criteria that defined her or his identity (Aydoğan, 2009). Between 1960 and 1990, millions of people migrated from other parts of Turkey to find employment in Istanbul, settling partly in the historic part of the city around the Golden Horn – because that is where most of the industries were located (Ortaç, 2010). Between 1950 and 1970, more and more shanty houses – called *gecekondu* in Turkish – were built by those migrants who could not afford to rent property (Türkün & Şen, 2009). From 1980 onwards, the state began to apply neoliberal policies, in parallel with the capital flow from the IMF that assured the implementation of neoliberal free market policies. Also as part of this process, the financial and building sectors became dominant in Istanbul. This neoliberal agenda went hand-in-hand with the implementation of steps to realize the aim of making Istanbul a 'world city', and this process speeded up with the proclamation of Istanbul as 'European Capital of Culture' in 2010. The city's new image has been founded on its transformation into a center for tourism and a mecca of real estate.

The gentrification process, according to which poor people are replaced with middle- and upper-class people in central areas, is part of this neoliberal agenda, and this gentrification has been conducted by means of 'urban transformation' projects: these have involved evicting poor people, destroying their homes and forcing the

former residents to move to the periphery of the city. As a result of the gentrification process, construction firms and local municipalities have made huge profits at the expense of the poor. In the 1980s, in parallel with this neoliberal agenda, many 19th-century houses in Tarlabası (in Beyoğlu, near Taksim Square) were destroyed by order of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Bedrettin Dalan.⁸⁵ The ‘transformation’ of Beyoğlu that started in the 1980s is a good illustration of the state’s capitalist approach to Turkey’s cultural and historic heritage. Bedrettin Dalan’s ideas on the subject of Tarlabası are an accurate reflection of this approach: he saw the Beyoğlu district as a place that needed to be ‘cleaned up’ and ‘rehabilitated’, and any attempt to protect the historic buildings there was seen as an obstacle to ‘progress’ and to Istanbul’s transformation into a ‘world city’ (Bartu, 1999). Dalan did not hesitate to destroy historic buildings “if they represented obstacles to development”.⁸⁶

From the 1990s onwards, the urban ‘regeneration / transformation’ of shanty settlements, as well as in historical urban areas, has been seen by the authorities as a potential source of profit (Türkün and Şen, 2009). In the same way, since 2000, neighborhoods in the Historic Peninsula such as Sulukule, Tarlabası, Süleymaniye, Fener, Balat, Ayvansaray and Kumkapı have become victims of the gentrification process. Also during this time, Turkish governments have started to defame those people who live in shanty houses, calling them ‘invaders’ – and through the use of discourse of this kind, implying that such people have a tendency to commit crime (Can, 2013). In this way, governments have attempted to legitimize the destruction of the settlements of the urban poor.

⁸⁵ Dalan was Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality between 1984 and 1989.

⁸⁶ What Bedrettin Dalan actually said was: “*Eğer tarihi eserleri korumak kalkınmaya engel olacaksa biz buna karşıyız.*” (‘If the protection of historic buildings means that they represent an obstacle to development, we are against it.’) – Üçok, A., “Hepsini Yıkacağız”, interview with B. Dalan in *Şehir*, March 1, 1987, pp 78-79; as cited in Bartu, A. (1999).

Several laws have recently been enacted in order to prepare the legal ground for the destruction of historical sites. The ‘Law on the Preservation and Usage of Deteriorated Historical and Cultural Monuments’ (*Yıpranan Tarihi ve Kültürel Taşınmaz Varlıkların Yenilenerek Korunması ve Yaşatılarak Kullanılması Hakkında Kanun*),⁸⁷ enacted on June 2005, is one of these, paving the way for the destruction of historical and cultural heritage of every kind in the name of ‘preservation’. In addition, in May 2012, the ‘Law on the Transformation of Areas under the Threat of Natural Disaster’ (*Afet Riski Altındaki Alanların Dönüştürülmesi Hakkında Kanun*) was passed. According to this law, any area – whether it be a forested area or a historical zone – can be declared a ‘disaster zone’, thus permitting its destruction: “As Istanbul lies in an earthquake-prone area, and consequently is a city considered to be at enormous risk of natural disasters, the law provides a powerful tool for the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning (*Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı*) the justification of transformation projects in almost every neighborhood within the city” (Marquart, 2014, p. 7). What is worse, on July 10th 2013, at the time of the destruction of the bostans, the government passed a law which removed the supervisory role of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects⁸⁸ with regard to urban planning projects. The government’s aim in passing this law was to give itself unrestricted powers to permit construction in any area seen as a potential source of

⁸⁷ “The object of this Act is by reconstruction and restoration in line with the progress of the area of zones which are registered and declared as SIT (Conservation) areas by boards of conservation of cultural and natural assets which have been worn down and tending to lose their characteristics, by metropolitan municipalities, district and first level municipalities within the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities, provincial and district municipalities and municipalities with populations over 50,000 and outside the scopes of authority of such municipalities by provincial special administrations, formation of residence, commerce, cultural, tourism and social facility areas in such zones, taking of measures against the risks of natural disasters and restoration and conservation of and use by living in historical and cultural immovable assets”. See < <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/TarihiCevre/Documents/Mevzuat/yipranantarihivekulturel.doc> > accessed on January 14, 2015

⁸⁸ The Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (*Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği – TMMOB*) is a confederation of all the chambers of architects and engineers in Turkey.

profit; the law allows the state to continue to damage Istanbul's cultural and environmental heritage without the supervision of the above-mentioned chambers and without informing the public of what they are doing. In accordance with the above-mentioned laws, all of which have been passed during the past ten years, "several neighborhoods along the city walls have been rezoned as 'renewal areas', leading to illicit construction work within protected areas" (White *et al.*, 2015, p. 8).

The process which led to the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans was accelerated by the previous destruction of the neighborhood of Sulukule, a 1000-year-old historic neighborhood inhabited by Romany people located inside the Land Walls, closer to the Golden Horn. It fell victim to a 'renovation and conservation project' in 2009. The Romany inhabitants of Sulukule were sent to live in a mass housing development scheme.⁸⁹ While it is not my intention to analyze the relationship between 'urban transformation' and the mass housing system, I would like to emphasize that eviction is an 'urban transformation' strategy which aims to marginalize the urban poor from urban society. A form of this strategy was practiced in the Yedikule Bostans, where people were evicted not from their houses but from their market gardens.

5.6.1.2 The 'Renovation' of the Land Walls

In parallel with the destruction of shanty settlements around the Land Walls, the complex of the Land Walls itself has also been exposed to 'renovations' in the course of the application of neoliberal policies; this, in turn, has caused the destruction of the

⁸⁹ Mass housing development schemes (in Turkish, TOKI) were built to settle people whose houses had been destroyed during 'urban transformation' projects.

historical and cultural heritage embedded in these walls. As stated above, this is one of the factors militating against environmental sustainability in Istanbul in general, and in Yedikule in particular.

The destruction of the city walls of the Historic Peninsula started in the 1950s. During the premiership of Adnan Menderes, new main roads⁹⁰ were built near to them. (For instance, Vatan Caddesi, which cuts through the Land Walls below Sulukule, was built in 1956-1957 – recently, this road has been renamed ‘Adnan Menderes Boulevard’.) The “commercialization of history through its commodification” (Genç, 2013) accelerated during the 1980s: the historic walls fell victim to ‘renovation’ by the authorities with the twin aims of turning the area into a commodity for the capitalist market and pleasing nationalist sensibilities. In fact, this so-called ‘renovation’ consisted of the destruction of a portion of the Land Walls and their reconstruction as perfectly-formed ‘film set’ castle walls.

More recently, during the reign of the AKP, the *Yedikule Zindanları* (‘Yedikule Dungeons’)⁹¹ were rented out to a commercial firm as a venue for concerts, and a ‘non-alcoholic café’ was built on the Land Walls (Genç, 2013).⁹² Following the proclamation of Istanbul as ‘European Capital of Culture’ for 2010, Istanbul’s official ‘Capital of Culture’ committee set aside 70% of its budget for ‘urban transformation’ projects, including one for the Land Walls (Ortaç, 2010). In the event, the ‘renovation’ of the Land Walls served to hide the poor neighborhoods behind them, creating a “shiny package” which (in the minds of its creators) helped to present Istanbul as a

⁹⁰ These high roads were *Vatan Caddesi* and *Millet Caddesi*; this latter cuts through the Land Walls nearer to Yedikule.

⁹¹ The ‘Yedikule Dungeons’ are the oldest open air museum in Istanbul, and indeed in Turkey. They were built by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II in the 5th century.

⁹² See < <http://www.barikat-lar.de/barikat/68-7/kentsel.htm> > accessed on February 12, 2015

touristic destination, and Turkey as a suitable candidate for membership of the European Union (Ortaç, 2010). As a result of this ‘renovation’, the Land Walls complex may now lose its status as a World Cultural Heritage site. The ‘renovation’ has been criticized by experts as “an act of savagery” (Altan, 2013). The UNESCO report for 2006 warned Turkey not to make any new development and reconstruction plans for the World Heritage area, but instead to focus on conserving this heritage for posterity.⁹³

5.6.1.3 The Gentrification Process in the Neighborhood of Yedikule

The neighborhood of Yedikule contains one of the Historic Peninsula’s shanty settlements, inhabited by low-income migrants from Anatolia. As a result of the ‘renovation’ projects that have turned the Land Walls into a ‘clean’, ‘secure’ and ‘touristic’ area, the Yedikule neighborhood has been made ready for future ‘urban transformation’ projects which will benefit upper-class people. To begin the implementation of this neoliberal policy, in 2010 a complex of residences called the *Yedikule Konakları* (‘Yedikule Mansions’)⁹⁴ was built; as the gardeners told me, it is inhabited largely by relatives of AKP members of parliament. The area on which the *Yedikule Konakları* were built is part of the historic İsmail Pasha Bostan – the rest of which was destroyed in 2013.

Besides being the cause of the destruction of the historical and cultural environment in the middle of which the complex sits, the inhabitants of the *Yedikule*

⁹³ “...significant threats to the site have been identified, including demolition of Ottoman-period timber houses, the poor quality of repairs and excessive reconstruction of the Roman and Byzantine Walls..” – from the Report of the Joint ICOMOS / UNESCO Expert Review Mission to the Historic Areas of Istanbul World Heritage Site. 6th to 11th April 2006.

⁹⁴ *Konak* means ‘mansion’ or ‘residence’ in Turkish.

Konakları have also given rise to the emergence of a huge social gap between themselves and the other inhabitants of the locality; in the long term, the presence of the new mansions will bring about the marginalization of everyone in the neighborhood except the ‘lucky few’. Furthermore, as the gardeners and those local residents who oppose the destruction of the bostans related in interviews, the inhabitants of the *Yedikule Konakları* were among those who endorsed the destruction of the bostans: they wanted a park, rather than fields, in front of their ‘mansions’. And indeed, three years after these mansions were built, the historic bostans in front of them were destroyed. Thus it will be easily understood that the construction of the *Yedikule Konakları* was the starting point for the realization by Fatih Municipality of its project to gentrify the area. Furthermore, it is apparent that the government’s policy of destroying urban agricultural areas in the interests of profit is the main factor threatening the sustainability of the bostans.

5.6.1.4 The Domination of Industrial Agricultural Produce in the Market

Almost 40% of the agricultural produce sold in Istanbul is transported from Turkey’s Mediterranean coast; most of the remainder is transported from the Aegean region, Central Anatolia and other parts of Turkey. In contrast with the situation in the past, today it is transported produce, rather than locally-grown, that is predominantly sold in Istanbul’s bazaars. The agricultural produce that is transported to Istanbul is grown for the most part under greenhouse conditions, by means of industrial farming techniques. The *Yedikule* gardeners are small-holders; by reason of this fact, the competition with which they are faced by industrial agriculture is unfair competition. Because industrial produce is grown fast, in large amounts, with the help of chemical

inputs and with the use of highly mechanized techniques, the Yedikule gardeners are obliged to compete by matching this speed of production; otherwise, their produce would be unable to find a place in the market. Therefore, although the gardeners prefer to use animal manure because it is better both for the health of the crops and of the people who consume them, they too are sometimes obliged to use chemical fertilizers. As they themselves said, using animal manure (as opposed to chemical fertilizer) results in the crop having a slower speed of growth. In addition, in the 1990s (as part of the ‘westernization’ of Istanbul) animal farms were moved to the margins of the city, whereas previously they had been closer to the bostans. Therefore, it has become much more difficult for the gardeners to obtain animal manure. Moreover, the gardeners are prevented by the Municipality from using animal manure because it gives off a smell which is not in harmony with Istanbul’s ‘modern’ image. This decrease in the use of animal manure has thus brought about a decrease in environmental sustainability.

5.6.2 Barriers to Social Sustainability in the Context of the Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans

As explained above (in section 3.1.3), the main pillar on which social sustainability rests in the context of urban agriculture is the closeness of the connection between food, producers and consumers. In this context, the Yedikule gardeners are aware of a gradually-increasing loss of social sustainability. One of them described how much she missed the ‘old days’ in the Yedikule Bostans in the following words: “Before, this place was full of life: pedlars, shopkeepers and ordinary citizens –they all used to

come to our bostans.”⁹⁵ Over the years, with the growth in the transportation of industrial agricultural produce from other parts of the country and the increase in the number of supermarkets, people have started to visit the bostans less and less frequently. The surge in the number of supermarkets, in which agricultural produce is presented for sale in plastic-based packaging, has accelerated city-dwellers’ alienation from their food, and from its producers. In addition, supermarkets are advertised in the media as the embodiment of the “modern urban ideal” by contrasting them with neighborhood bazaars, which are described as “dirty”, “crowded”, “unreliable” and “backward” (Kaldjian, 2004). In parallel with this process, people have come to regard food as a ‘commodity’ that is bought from supermarkets in shiny packages, just like any other consumer product.

The gardeners complain that most of today’s customers are not aware of the difference in quality between fresh agricultural produce and that which is industrially produced. This lack of awareness is due to the distance – in both the literal and metaphorical senses –between city-dwellers and their food. The industrial agricultural system goes hand-in-hand with capitalist production and consumption patterns which encourage people to prefer artificial (i.e., industrially-produced) food over that which is grown locally. One of the Yedikule gardeners selling his produce in the bazaar described this new pattern of customer preference as follows: “Some customers refuse to buy a vegetable that has a bruise on it: they will only buy vegetables that are smooth and shiny.”⁹⁶ But in fact, as he explained, if a vegetable or a fruit is smooth and shiny, this usually means that it has been exposed to a large amount of chemical inputs.

⁹⁵ Mehmet Karmak, personal interview, April 17, 2015

⁹⁶ Muhammed Abdullah, personal interview, April 15, 2015

More recently, the gentrification process (begun by the construction of the *Yedikule Konakları*) has resulted in a disconnection between the gardeners and the upper-class residents of the newly-built mansions. This social division is described by one of them in these words: “In their eyes, we are ‘backward’. They look at our hands and our clothes, which get dirty because of the work we do, with distaste; they look at us as if we were monsters.”⁹⁷ The complex of bostans outside the Land Walls is next to a busy highway; between the highway and the bostans, there is a pavement for pedestrians. The gardeners say that a large number of people walk along this pavement every day, but most of them do not make any attempt to communicate with the gardeners. “When they see us at work, they do not even say ‘*Kolay gelsin!*’⁹⁸ Hardly anyone asks what we are doing here, or what we are planting.” In the past, this problem of lack of communication between the gardeners and the consumers of their produce did not exist: as one of the gardeners said, “Everyone knew what a bostan was, and who a gardener was; today, people think gardeners are weird because there are hardly any bostans around any more.”

In accordance with the policy of presenting Istanbul as the ‘modern face’ of Turkey, the municipality rarely allows gardeners to open stalls near to their plots in Yedikule; the gardeners say this is one of the main reasons for the lack of communication between themselves and potential customers. One of the gardeners claims that if he were allowed to open a stall near his bostan, people would see the produce on it; this would make them curious, and they would ask him about it.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ahmet Ökten, personal interview, April 12, 2015

⁹⁸ *Kolay gelsin!* is a Turkish phrase meaning ‘May it come easy’, traditionally said to someone who is seen working.

⁹⁹ Hasan Sargin, personal interview, April 14, 2015

5.6.3 Barriers to Economic Sustainability in the Context of the Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans

The state's neoliberal policies, and the 'urban transformation' projects which caused the destruction of the bostans in order to open up the area for building construction, are the main factors that have caused a loss of economic sustainability for the Yedikule gardeners. Those whose bostans were destroyed in 2013 have lost their livelihoods, and are currently trying to cope with the economic difficulties brought about by the destruction.

In the context of market gardening, the domination of industrial agricultural produce is the major barrier to the gardeners' economic sustainability. As a result of recent neoliberal policies, there has been a gradual decline in the volume of crops grown in Yedikule because many of the bostans inside the Land Walls have been destroyed; at the same time, industrial agricultural produce transported from the Mediterranean region has overtaken produce grown in the bostans in the market. The Yedikule gardeners find themselves faced with unfair competition because they cannot compete with high-volume, rapidly-grown industrial produce. Because of this, the popularity of their crops is decreasing. "No-one asks for Yedikule-grown produce any more," an elderly woman gardener complained, "because vegetables have started coming to Istanbul from all kinds of places." She added that today, none of the gardeners earn as much as they used to because their produce is no longer 'sought after'.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the Yedikule gardeners are faced with a serious loss of economic sustainability.

The 'middle-man' ('brokerage') system in the wholesale market is another factor adversely affecting the gardeners' economic sustainability. In the wholesale

¹⁰⁰ Zehra Ökten, personal interview, April 11, 2015

market, middle-men buy the crops from producers and sell them to stallholders. These middle-men take a commission, and this adds to the cost of the produce. In this way, producers earn less and consumers pay more for their fruit and vegetables. According to a statement by the *Türkiye Ziraatçılar Derneği* ('Association of Turkish Agricultural Producers') issued in September 2011, the middle-man makes a profit of 341% from selling peppers, and a 323% profit from selling tomatoes.¹⁰¹ This shows the huge difference between the price of agricultural produce as determined by its producers, and its actual price in the market. In the Yedikule bostans, a bunch of chard costs 50 kuruş; this is also the price for which the gardeners sell it to the wholesale market. The middle-man sells it to stallholders for 1.5 lira; stallholders then sell it to customers in the bazaar for 2 or 2.5 lira. Thus it will be seen that the only people to make a substantial profit from this system are the middle-men.

The gardeners told me that this system did not exist in the past because pedlars used to come to the bostans and buy directly from the gardeners; they would sell the produce from their hand-carts. "In the old days, you planted your seed. Then the pedlars came and asked us: "What have you planted? Lettuce, parsley or roquette?" We would tell them, and they would say: "OK, brother, from now on the whole of your crop is mine." Our crops were bought up before they had even sprouted!"¹⁰² The gardener telling this story also stressed that the relationship between the pedlars and the gardeners was based on trust. This is another traditional relationship that has been destroyed by aspirations to 'modernization' – which have ultimately led to the dominance of the middle-man. In addition, the selling of fruit and vegetables from hand-carts is now forbidden as it is seen as out of harmony with the 'modern' face of

¹⁰¹ See: *TZ Gıda Raporu 2011* < <http://www.ziraatcilerderneği.org.tr/index.php/tr/Raporlar> > accessed on January 3, 2015

¹⁰² Ahmet Ökten, personal interview, April 18, 2015

the city. As a result of these features of the new marketing system – all of which are disadvantageous for the gardeners – “sustainability at household level” (Foeken *et al.*, 2014) is threatened.

The Yedikule gardeners do not own the bostans where they work; Gerstl (2001) asserts that when producers do not own the land they cultivate, this situation is an obstacle to the practice of urban agriculture. There are two ways in which a Yedikule gardener can claim a right to the use of a bostan: either she or he can take over the cultivation of a bostan from her or his father or grandfather, or – and this is more common in the case of the older gardeners – they can take over a bostan from the Albanian or Greek bostan-keeper who used to cultivate it. In both cases, the new bostan-keeper continues to pay rent to the Municipality. However, since the time when the bostans were bought by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality from the religious foundations who used to own them, the gardeners have been obliged to pay higher rents than they used to pay to the foundations. Hasan, whose garden was destroyed in 2013, said he now paid 1300 lira per month to the Municipality, whereas he used to pay 480 lira when his garden was owned by a religious foundation.

Some of the bostans are owned not by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, but by the National Estate Office Directorate (*Milli Emlak Genel Müdürlüğü*) – which demands huge sums in rent from the gardeners. Ahmet, the keeper of one of the bostans outside the Land Walls, said he was now unable to pay the huge amount of rent that the National Estate Office demanded five years ago in return for the use of the bostan for five years – 432,000 lira (equivalent to 158,241 US dollars at current rates). If he does not pay this sum by the deadline determined by the National Estate Office, it will be increased to 1 million lira. “So far I have earned about 20,000 lira a

year, but even that cannot be guaranteed for this year. How they can expect me to pay over 80,000 a year?" he asks.¹⁰³ The gardeners believe that the huge rents Yedikule bostan-keepers like Ahmet are being forced to pay are actually a ploy to force them out of the bostans.

Moreover, since the Municipality took over the ownership of most of the bostans, the gardeners have had their official status reduced from that of 'tenants' to that of 'occupiers', as described in section 5.5.3. This reduction of the gardeners' legal status is a strategy on the part of the government and the Municipality to pave the way for the destruction of the bostans they 'occupy' – which in turn represents a threat to their economic sustainability. Just as the inhabitants of shanty settlements were evicted to make way for 'urban transformation' projects following a defamation campaign in which the government described them as 'invaders', and thus as potential criminals (as stated in section 5.6.1), so the bostan-keepers of Yedikule have been progressively marginalized in order to prepare for their eviction, and the replacement of the bostans with luxury apartments that will be a source of profit for construction firms, the Municipality and the governing party.

5.6.4 Barriers to the Sustainability of Istanbul in the Context of the Destruction of the Yedikule Bostans

The aim of sustainable development is to protect environmental assets for future generations, in the face of the dangers presented by economic growth. The bostans, through providing environmental, social and economic sustainability and food security, have the potential to provide sustainable development for Istanbul. However,

¹⁰³ Ahmet Öztürk, personal interview, April 21, 2015

sustainability at town level (Foeken *et al.*, 2014) is threatened by the neoliberal policies that aim to destroy the Yedikule Bostans – among other things.

Protecting the bostans would ideally be one of the first steps in the process of providing sustainable development for Istanbul. All the current neoliberal ‘urban transformation’ projects –from minor activities such as the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans to major ones such as the construction of the third Bosphorus bridge, the building of Istanbul’s third airport and the *Kanal Istanbul* (‘Channel Istanbul’) project – form barriers to the city’s sustainability. The province of Istanbul has a total acreage of 535,000 hectares, of which 240,000 hectares is forested land; most of this forested land is located north of the city.¹⁰⁴ The third bridge and third airport projects have already caused the destruction of much of these northern forests, and threaten to destroy the whole of the area’s ecosystem once these projects are realized: it is estimated that an area of 8,175 hectares will eventually be destroyed.¹⁰⁵ The construction of the third Bosphorus bridge on its own will result in the destruction of 1,453 hectares of forested land –a process which will involve the cutting down of over 2.5 million trees. The construction of the bridge will also have a negative impact on the catchment area for the city’s drinking water, and will seriously affect the supply of clean water to Istanbul residents.¹⁰⁶ In addition, these mega-projects will result in a further reduction in the green-space-per-person ratio, which is one of the conditions of environmental sustainability.¹⁰⁷

The region in which the third airport is to be built is unique in that it has so far been free from unplanned urbanization. Moreover, it is unique in terms of its

¹⁰⁴ From a statement by Greenpeace, a non-governmental international environmental organization.

¹⁰⁵ See < <http://t24.com.tr/haber/greenpeace-yatirim-icin-binlerce-hektar-orman-yok-ediliyor,253941> > accessed on January 29, 2015

¹⁰⁶ See < <http://www.wwf.org.tr/?1200> > accessed on January 27, 2015

¹⁰⁷ See < <http://www.wwf.org.tr/?1332> > accessed on January 27, 2015

biological diversity and ecological balance, functioning as the ‘lungs’ of the city. As a direct result of this project, the whole of the region’s ecosystem (comprising forested land, lakes, rivers, agricultural land and pastures which are currently home to 70 species) will disappear. The water supply from the Terkos Lake, which at present meets much of Istanbul’s water needs, as well as two lakes formed by dams, will be reduced, while pollution of the above-mentioned lakes will increase. Also, because the region is on a major bird migration route, the airport project will endanger the lives of the birds passing through. The damage will not be limited to the immediate area of the airport, but will also have a negative effect on the quality of Istanbul’s air and water, as well as impacting the city’s climate.¹⁰⁸

Turkey is currently faced with the prospect of serious environmental degradation as a result of the projects begun by the AKP government, which aim to create economic growth and to promote urban development at the expense of the urban environment.¹⁰⁹ “Housing and industrial developments, tourism and recreation activities, mining operations and the development of the road system have led to a serious destruction of forest zones, wetlands and sand dunes” (Gündüz *et al.*, 2011, p. 232). The construction of hydroelectric dams and nuclear power plants destroys Turkey’s natural heritage and cultural heritage, while at the same time damaging protected areas, destroying millions of trees and ruining the country’s coasts. Over the

¹⁰⁸ From a report entitled ‘The Third Airport Project in Relation to Living Conditions, Nature, the Environment, Humanity and the Law’ (*Yaşam, Doğa, Çevre, İnsan ve Hukuk karşısında 3. Havalimani Projesi*) prepared by the Northern Forests Defense Group (*Kuzey Ormanları Savunması*) < http://www.kuzeyormanlari.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Yasam_Doga_Cevre_Insan_ve_Hukuk_Karsisinda_3_Havalimani_Projesi.pdf > accessed on May 1, 2015

The Northern Forests Defense Group is a movement set up in the aftermath of the Gezi resistance. Its aim is to provide assistance to the whole of Istanbul’s ecological system in its fight for survival, and to resist projects of any kind which are harmful to Istanbul’s environment.

¹⁰⁹ Based on an interview with Ümit Şahin in the following newspaper report < <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21346/the-present-and-future-of-climate-change-in-turkey> > accessed on April 23, 2015

last five years, two million people have been forced to leave their agricultural lands for reasons similar to those threatening the Yedikule Bostans. During this time, the total area of urban agricultural land has decreased by 11.3%. The year 2014, in particular, saw a major loss of urban agricultural land owing to a sudden increase in the number of ‘urban transformation’ projects. The AKP government conducted a policy of unsustainable urban development, while at the same time encouraging economic growth at the expense of natural resources –in order to gain profits through their exploitation.

The policy of the privatization of public spaces is a factor that makes sustainable development an almost unrealizable goal for Istanbul. The attack on the forests around the city began with the privatization of parts of the Belgrade Forest, on the north-western edge of the urban area: in 1992, the Ministry of Forests rented out tens of hectares of this forest to a contractor for 89 years – which resulted in the construction of the ‘Kemer Country’ luxury housing development, one of Istanbul’s gated communities (Perouse, 2014). Recently, those of the city’s local municipalities that are controlled by the AKP have been carrying out building projects in areas not previously built on, using ‘green Istanbul’ as their advertising slogan; Aykan (2014) describes this policy as “greenwashing” – a mendacious attempt to manipulate customers with a degree of environmental awareness into buying houses in developments built on previously green spaces and forest land. *Ağaoğlu Maslak 1453*, a construction project realized by the Ağaoğlu construction group inside the Fatih Forests in the district of Maslak, close to the Belgrade Forest, is another example of “greenwashing” – while not neglecting to appeal to nationalism (1453 being the year in which Istanbul was conquered by the Turks): the project is described as a ‘green’

development (again making use of the discourse of sustainability), although it endangers both the Fatih Forests and those further to the north, and moreover pollutes the nearby Ayazağa River along with other water reserves (Aykan, 2014).

Sustainable urbanization should be an urgent priority for Istanbul because of its huge population, which is increasing day by day.¹¹⁰ Keleş (2001) writes that “sustainable urbanization can be secured only when master-planning is directed to minimize travel needs, to promote public transportation, to conserve fertile agricultural lands, to avoid wasting other sensitive and non-renewable ecological resources and to enhance energy savings in building designs and layouts” (p. 119). Within this context, the Yedikule Bostans (which are an essential part of a system of local production and consumption, and make use of traditional farming techniques) have great value in terms of minimizing the wastage of non-renewable natural resources, the use of motorized equipment and the use of fossil fuels in the process of production, as well as in terms of the minimization of energy wastage during the process of distribution. Hence, the Yedikule Bostans are needed in order to realize sustainable development. Furthermore, as these bostans have the potential to contribute to sustainable development, they constitute a form of resistance to the unsustainable development of Istanbul.

¹¹⁰ According to the figures given for 2015 by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the province of Istanbul has a population of 14 million.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

“Capitalism will cut down the tree if it cannot sell its shadow”; these words of Marx were echoed in the Gezi Park when the trees there began to be cut down by the AKP government in order to build a shopping mall on the site. A few months later, they were echoed once again in the Yedikule Bostans, where the market gardens were bulldozed by the Municipality in order to build a ‘park’.

The practice of urban agriculture is a political act in that it creates a political relationship between people, between people and the food they eat, and between the producers of the food and the environment. In the politics of urban agriculture, the aim is not to exercise power (through exploiting people’s health, natural resources and the growers of food) in order to gain profit, but to bring about transformation by means of political relationships.

The act of market gardening is transformative: it transforms the disconnection between food and us, its consumers, that is brought about by the industrial agricultural food system. Because it has this transformative aspect, urban agricultural practice can be said to be an act of resistance in terms of Ortner’s (1995) claim that resistance does not mean the opposition between subordinate groups and dominant ones: rather, resistance comes about when something has a creative and transformative role. As a result of the globalization process and of the increasing dominance of global agricultural trade and neoliberal food policies worldwide, we have been subjected to a physical and psychological distancing between us and our food.

The claim of this thesis is that in the case of the Yedikule Bostans, the practice

of urban agriculture constitutes an act of resistance to a number of different ‘power plays’. Firstly, it is a resistance to capitalist relationships of production and consumption because it creates social relationships centred on the bostans (for example, between growers and consumers) and because it resists the commodification of food and the exploitation which comes about when people’s role is limited to that of ‘consumers’. Secondly, it is a resistance to food insecurity in that it provides people (both at neighborhood level and at town level) with fresh food, and also provides employment opportunities for the urban poor, thus increasing their purchasing power. Thirdly, it is a resistance to the exploitation of the environment as it uses sustainable farming methods, and because it raises public awareness of environmental issues in the course of the struggle to protect those green spaces in Istanbul which are used as urban agricultural land. Both the practice of growing food in the Yedikule Bostans and the struggle to protect these bostans constitute acts of resistance to alienation from the environment as they involve the reclaiming of people’s rights over the production of their food. In view of all the foregoing, it can be claimed that the practice of urban agriculture constitutes a resistance to the industrial agricultural system in that it is a local production and consumption system which exhibits all the above-mentioned features.

The main ideological tool which can be used as a focus for resistance to the capitalist industrial agricultural system is the concept of ‘sustainability’. In terms of providing environmental, social and economic sustainability, urban agriculture is a resistance to the unsustainable industrial agricultural system. The Yedikule Bostans, because they have the potential to provide environmental, social and economic sustainability, are a resistance to the industrial agricultural system and its exploitative

ideology. The sustainable development of our cities is a problem which requires urgent solution; if this is not done, unsustainable urbanization and the governance of cities according to neoliberal policies that are directed to the accumulation of capital will deprive us even of our right to live.

In the context of Istanbul, deforestation and the destruction of environmental features such as agricultural lands, wetlands, endemic plants, birds and wild life are preventing the city's residents from being able to live in a healthy, sustainable environment. For the city of Istanbul, the Yedikule Bostans have great potential to become one of the first steps towards the provision of sustainable development¹¹¹ at town level; however, we are now faced with the loss of this opportunity because some parts of the historical bostans have already been destroyed. Land and water are the two basic requirements of the practice of farming; however, neoliberal state policies in Turkey are causing the destruction of agricultural land and the pollution of water reserves. In accordance with its neoliberal policies, since the AKP came to power 'urban transformation' projects have been given prominence – at the expense of our bostans, our forests and the whole of the environment in and around the city of Istanbul. Also, as a result of neoliberal 'urban transformation' projects, those areas of Istanbul that have importance from the historic and cultural points of view – including the traditional-style houses and the natural resources they contain – have been turned into 'objects of consumption' that can be bought and sold by construction firms and property developers, as happened in the case of the Yedikule Bostans. In addition to the destruction of environmental, cultural and historical heritage by reason of

¹¹¹ By the term 'sustainable development', I mean meeting the needs of the present while protecting environmental assets for future generations, in the face of the dangers presented by economic growth. This concept is in contrast to the capitalist approach, which can be described as 'greenwashing'.

construction works, the government's 'gentrification' policy (which began with the construction of the *Yedikule Konakları* three years before the local bostans were destroyed) also carries the threat of an increased disconnection between the Yedikule gardeners and the consumers of their produce – both local residents and customers in other areas – as well as a disconnection between all these groups and the environment.

Bostans play a significant role in providing an answer to the question of “what kind of city we want to live in” (Harvey, 2008) as they contribute to the fulfilment of our need to live under healthy, fair and peaceful conditions. Today, all public spaces and natural resources – in fact, almost everything in Istanbul – is being privatized and sold off to large companies without any attempt to consult the people who live in the city. As can be clearly seen in the case of Yedikule, the neoliberal ‘transformation’ of the neighborhood through the destruction of the bostans and the subsequent construction activities on the site are of benefit only to the construction companies, the municipal authorities and the upper-class people involved, while worsening living conditions for the gardeners who put great effort into the cultivation of the bostans over many years. In addition, those of the Yedikule gardeners who still keep on gardening in the parts of the bostans that have not been destroyed are concerned for their future, because the municipality may sell the bostans to a construction firm at any time.

We need to protect the Yedikule Bostans for the sake of our environment, the preservation of our social ties and the economic well-being of the gardeners; we also need to protect them in order to have access to fresh food, to keep our memories of Istanbul's old neighborhoods and their traditions alive, to protect our cultural and historical heritage, and to preserve these assets for generations to come. The main

contribution of the Yedikule Bostans is in the realm of environmental sustainability. Today's Yedikule gardeners still make use of traditional knowledge and farming techniques (the production of natural seed, together with low use of mechanization and of chemical inputs). Thanks to the shortness of the supply chain, the gardeners also use a minimum of non-renewable resources such as those involved in transport; furthermore, the lack of the need for storage also contributes to environmental sustainability in that the food they produce is not sold in packaging. All these factors reduce environmental pollution.

The Yedikule Bostans serve to demonstrate that urban agriculture can be a solution to the problem of urban poverty at household level, and to the threat of poor nutrition: they provide food security for the gardeners' families both through self-consumption and by increasing these families' ability to purchase other food. In addition, the bostans supply fresh vegetables to city-dwellers who are for the most part deprived of the opportunity to buy such things as a result of the domination of industrial agricultural products. From the social point of view, as the Yedikule Bostans are a local production and consumption system, they have potential to eliminate the physical and psychological distance between consumers, the food they eat, and its producers. We need to protect the Yedikule Bostans because they represent what may well be our last chance to re-establish a connection with the food we eat, with the people who produce it, with the land that is grown on, and with the environment in general.

The Yedikule Bostans have potential to transform the capitalist production and consumption relationships which have been imposed on society by the industrial agricultural system, and which are further intensified by 'urban transformation'

projects – which create social alienation and ensure the domination of the interests of the ‘lucky few’. They can help transform the consciousness of the public by facilitating local consumption; this raises general awareness of the importance of protecting the environment (both the ‘natural’ environment and the ‘built’ environment – a term which includes historical assets), and thus reverses the preference for ‘urban transformation’ projects and industrial foods. The Yedikule Bostans also provide an opportunity for the organization of educational projects, centred around the bostans, which are designed to raise awareness on the part of city-dwellers (especially schoolchildren) of the way in which food is actually grown.

Thanks to the Yedikule Bostans, city-dwellers in Istanbul have a place where they can re-establish their relationship with the soil and the food grown in it in both physical and emotional ways. It has been demonstrated that growing food is already part of social movement (Toms, 2006); events during and after the Gezi resistance have shown that the bostans, by encouraging environmental awareness and creating social relationships, can play a significant role in a social movement directed towards the reclaiming of people’s right to the city they live in and the right to the food they eat.

The loss of the Yedikule Bostans has created a sense of hopelessness about the future of Istanbul, and indeed about the future of the world. ‘Urban transformation’ projects which destroy the region’s natural resources (for example, its forests and intra-urban green spaces) as well as its historical sites have already given serious momentum to the rapidly-growing, unsustainable ‘development’ of Istanbul – at the expense of the city’s environment, of social equity and of the well-being of its residents. As stated by Aykan (2014), all the economic, ecological, social, historical

and cultural systems within a geographical area are interconnected: any deterioration in one of these will lead to the destruction of the whole system. In terms of Istanbul, the Yedikule Bostans are pieces of this whole system: they benefit people economically, they contribute to environmental sustainability, they create social relationships between consumers and producers, and they also represent an important part of the city's historical and cultural heritage. In view of all the above, it may be concluded that the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans is a catastrophe both at neighborhood level and for the city of Istanbul as a whole.

We can resist the destruction of the Yedikule Bostans by emphasizing their embodiment of historical and cultural values; their contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability; their contribution to food security at both neighborhood and town levels; and their contribution to the sustainable development of Istanbul. In addition, we can protect the bostans by raising awareness of the notion of the 'right to the city' (as described in section 2.4).

The duty to protect the Yedikule Bostans is part of the duty of reclaiming responsibility for our actions. If we are responsible for the food we eat (and thus for how, where and under what conditions it is produced), we can then claim the right to produce our own food. We cannot separate 'nature' from ourselves; it is not a 'thing of beauty in isolation'. Rather, it has sociological and political aspects in that it is something which is shaped by our actions. The whole of the environment we live in and are surrounded by is within our area of responsibility: we can contribute to, or remain passive observers of, its destruction, or we can keep it alive – an action and a choice which, in turn, will keep us alive. Within this context, protecting the Yedikule Bostans is an issue that involves the very heart of life.

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APPENDIX 1: PICTORIAL OVERVIEW OF THE YEDİKULE BOSTANS

Figure 1: Historic Land Walls overlooking the Yedikule Bostans



Figure 2: Bostans outside the Land Walls are bound by the highway



Figure 3: Diverse variety of crops are grown in the Yedikule Bostans



Figure 4: Diverse variety of crops are grown in the Yedikule Bostans



Figure 5: Produce close to harvest time



Figure 6: A gardeners' shelter constructed near one of the Bostans

**APPENDIX 2: PHOTOS OF GARDENING PRACTICES IN THE YEDIKULE
BOSTANS**



Figure 7: Gardener ploughing the soil to make it ready for seeding



Figure 8: Gardener separating the field into basins before seeding



Figure 9: Watering the crops with plastic pipes



Figure 10: Gardener harvesting the produce



Figure 11: A scarecrow in the Bostan



Figure 12: Bundling the produce to sell in the neighborhood bazaar



Figure 13: Collecting the produce in boxes to take to the neighborhood bazaar



Figure 14: Red peppers grown in the Bostan



Figure 15: Tomatoes grown in the Bostan



Figure 16: Greenhouses are also used in the Yedikule Bostans

**APPENDIX 3: PHOTOS OF THE DESTRUCTION AND URBAN
TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS IN THE YEDIKULE BOSTANS**



Figure 17: Rubble on the Yedikule Bostans inside the Land Walls area after the destruction of 2013



Figure 18: Rubble and debris remain in front of resident's homes instead of the green Bostans



Figure 19: The “Yedikule Residences” urban transformation project



Figure 20: Barren land now is what remains of once green Bostans inside the Land Walls area



Figure 21: Construction materials on the destroyed Bostans placed by the Fatih municipality in 2013 as part of their gentrification plan



Figure 22: Fertile and green Bostans destroyed and dug up to expand the “Yedikule Residences” urban transformation project



Figure 23: A historic water well is now closed after the Bostan's destruction



Figure 24: A water pool once used to wash the crops of the Bostans is now filled with garbage