Democraticizing the City: Urban Citizenship in Buenos Aires and Istanbul

convened by
Defne Kadioğlu Polat
(2015/16 Mercator-IPC Fellow)

Speaker
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Discussant
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Monday, April 18, 2016
10:00 - 12:00
Istanbul Policy Center, 2. Floor
(Minerva Han, Bankalar Caddesi No: 2, Karaköy)

Why do residents of some cities enjoy a wider range of legally recognized rights concerning urban space and governance than others? When do societal demands for such rights emerge and under what conditions are they institutionalized? This talk examines these questions concerning the development of urban citizenship by exploring the case of Buenos Aires. In the last two decades, Buenos Aires’s urban citizenship regime has undergone an institutional transformation by recognizing new rights for the city’s squatters in the constitutional, legislative, and judicial realms. Embedded in a history of grassroots struggles, these new rights in turn have motivated new practices of urban citizenship that strive to achieve concrete social changes. The first part of this talk will explore the bottom up social practices and political-institutional dynamics that underlie these transformations in Buenos Aires. The second part will reflect on the contestations over urban citizenship in contemporary Istanbul in light of the Buenos Aires case. More broadly, this talk intends to advance the premise that 21st century megacities constitute both the site and the substance of conflicts over democratic citizenship.

The event will be held in English. There will be no translation.

Bio: Mert Arslanalp is currently a visiting professor in the Graduate School of Social Sciences at Özyeğin University. His research and teaching are located at the intersection of Comparative Politics, Political Sociology, and Urban Studies. He received his PhD in Political Science from Northwestern University in 2015. His dissertation, “Claiming Rights, Negotiating Exceptions: Politics of Urban Citizenship in Istanbul and Buenos Aires,” examines the interaction of contentious politics and democratic citizenship within the context of globalizing megacities based on 15 months of fieldwork. Mert holds a BA in Political Science and International Relations from Boğaziçi University.