# ISTANBLUE SPACE

## Evaluating Urban Blue Space Regeneration in Istanbul from a Spatial Justice Perspective

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## Personal note

I have been to Istanbul several times, and for me the most magical place in the city is on the public ferry across the Bosporus. Looking out over the city from the water is something special. However, the other way around I feel something different. Looking out over the water from one of the many waterfronts in the city, it is hard to miss the shopping malls, hotels, and road blocks that prohibit entrance to the water. While some fisherman remain and occasionally it is possible to spot dolphins from the waterfront, many of these special places are reserved for a select group of people. It is this injustice that has motivated me to study Istanbul's waterfront.

I want to thank all the wonderful people of Istanbul Planning Agency who have welcomed me and helped me to make sense of the chaotic, diverse, and surprising city. In particular I want to thank Elif Durğun and Gökçer Okumuş for making the research possible. I would also like to thank Serengül Seçmen, Aslı Erbil, Tansel Erbil and Gül Köksal for the interesting discussions we have had about Istanbul's blue space and justice. I want to thank Karin and Roberto, my supervisors, for their guidance and support. I want to thank Arda Erbil and Afsin Baran for their help as translators and Judith Nijman, Michael Nannings, Koen Gerats and Sake Kolhoff for their critical feedback. I want to thank Marissa Steenbergen for being a great sparring partner, and lastly I want to thank EFL foundation for their funding.

In the end, I have experienced an Istanbul full of motivated and smart people working day and night for a fair and just city. I hope that one day I can join you and we can make Istanbul a social and environmental front runner.

## Abstract

Urban blue space is increasingly used to refer to an urban waterbody and its waterfront, implying that the waterfront should be a shared public space. Unsurprisingly, increasing competition over the benefits of urban blue space has resulted in issues of justice. While spatial justice is rapidly becoming one of the main planning goals in the global North, in the global South, where central states are often pursuing neoliberal agendas to keep up with developed countries, empirical studies remain few. This thesis evaluates urban blue space regeneration from a spatial justice perspective in Istanbul, a typical example of such a context. An evaluative spatial justice framework is applied to the policy plans for 'Haliç Marina and Complex Project', a recent regeneration initiative and hot discussion topic in local and national politics. Using interviews, site observations, and two local Masterplans, a qualitative content analysis (QCA) shows that the plan prioritizes commercial development before spatial justice. The plan seems to be an iteration of developmentalist politics of the national government, and so Istanbul's blue space is subject to the will of a powerful, entrepreneurial government. While this poses many challenges to spatial justice, a strong resistance movement and a slowly changing political climate stem hopeful. Future studies should extent the empirical database to more different contexts, to identify how the transition from profit-based regeneration towards spatial justice can be achieved.

**Key words**: Spatial justice; urban blue space; urban regeneration; policy analysis; Istanbul.

## Table of Contents

**1. Introduction** ..... **11**

1.1 Research context ..... 12

1.2 Research aim ..... 13

1.3 Reading guide ..... 13

**2. Theoretical framework** ..... **15**

2.1 Urban blue space regeneration and justice ..... 15

2.2 Conceptualizing spatial justice ..... 15

2.3 Urban blue space regeneration from a distributive justice perspective ..... 18

2.4 Urban blue space regeneration from a procedural justice perspective ..... 19

2.5 Urban blue space regeneration from a recognition justice perspective ..... 20

**3. Methodology** ..... **25**

3.1 Methodological approach ..... 25

3.2 Study area ..... 25

3.3 Exploratory phase ..... 26

3.4 Data collection phase ..... 27

3.5 Data analysis phase ..... 29

3.6 Trustworthiness ..... 29

3.7 Positionality ..... 29

**4. Geological, historical and socio-political context of Haliçport** ..... **31**

4.1 Geology at Haliçport ..... 31

4.2 History of Haliçport ..... 31

4.3 Current socio-political dynamics at Haliçport ..... 32

**5. Legal and institutional context of Haliçport** ..... **35**

5.1 Legal framework ..... 35

5.2 Stakeholders and planning process ..... 36

**6. Results** ..... **41**

6.1 Introduction to the Masterplans ..... 41

6.2 Transform the area into a central commercial district ..... 42

6.3 Contribute to marine transportation and (sea)tourism ..... 45

6.4 Improve accessibility to the shore and create a walkable coast ..... 47

6.5 Remake the silhouette of the area, as seen from the water ..... 50

6.6 Overview of results ..... 51

**7. Discussion** ..... **57**

7.1 Spatial justice not a priority ..... 57

7.2 A powerful, entrepreneurial national government ..... 58

7.3 Tensions between the local and national governments ..... 58

7.4 A policy framework skewed towards private developers ..... 59

7.5 Reflections on the spatial justice framework....60
7.6 Limitations ....61
7.7 Recommendations ....62
**8. Conclusions.... 65**
**9. References.... 67**

## 1. Introduction

Urban ports have historically functioned as economic and cultural hotspots of trade. Since the twentieth century, however, global processes such as modernization, globalization, and increased air travel have considerably changed the role of ports around the world (Ravetz, 2013). Urban ports relocated away from city centers towards industrial areas, to meet the increasing demands of industry and trade (Erbil & Erbil, 2001). The abandoned port areas in the city center formed urban brownfields, marked by environmental decay and poverty (Girard et al., 2014). Urban planners and local governments started to realize that the abandoned waterfront can offer opportunities as hotspots for urban development. Development along the water as such came to be known as waterfront regeneration. While similar terms have been used in the academic field, such as waterfront redevelopment or revitalization, waterfront regeneration is said to be intrinsically more long-term, strategic, and purposeful as the other terms (Roberts & Sykes, 2008).

As waterfront regeneration developed, simultaneously the role of urban marketing became more central in capitalist systems, and, as a consequence of neoliberal policies, this resulted in a competitive environment for cities (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012). Cities started competing over the attraction of tourists, investments, and revenue in a globalized world. They were not able to merely manage, but needed to actively pursue development aimed at increasing the city's 'attractiveness' (Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006). This competitiveness became especially visible along the waterfront due to their central location in the city, their symbolic value as being the 'face of the city' and their potential economic value for real estate development (Avni & Teschner, 2019).

While economic interests are foregrounded with urban waterfront regeneration, there is also a growing consideration for the environment (Avni & Teschner, 2019). Scholars and practitioners now realize the importance of protecting the natural values of urban waterways. Recently, the concept of urban blue space has been receiving more attention in academic literature (see e.g. Foley & Garrido-Cumbrera, 2021; White et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021), similar to the better known 'urban green space'. Urban blue space concerns both an urban waterbody and its waterfront. Urban blue space implies that water is a shared public space, accessible to all, where ecology thrives. The area can be seen as a shared common good or a public resource (Wessells, 2014). Urban blue space has been ascribed many benefits for both people and the environment. We need water for drinking, irrigation, sanitation, health care, and industry (White et al., 2020), while ecological improvements of urban blue space results in more fresh air and improved living conditions for plants and animals (Smith et al., 2021). I will adopt the term blue space in this research to mean both waterbody and waterfront. By doing so, the focus of this research implies that water is, or should be, a shared public good.

Unsurprisingly, the competition for the environmental, health, and economic benefits of urban blue space has occasionally resulted in issues of justice (Avni & Fischler, 2020). For example, longtime residents that lived close to the abandoned port areas are often not the ones profiting from their regeneration (Avni & Fischler, 2020). The discussion about urban justice is not new. Most studies have focused on the doctrine of neoliberalism to explain urban blue space regeneration around the world (Avni & Teschner, 2019), but scholars have also mentioned how they can provide opportunities for equity and accessible public space (Brownill, 2013). In this thesis, I will evaluate urban blue space regeneration from a spatial justice perspective.

Spatial justice is an elusive concept that can be used to evaluate the fair distribution of resources in space (Soja, 2009). It assumes that space is a social construct and that issues of (in)justice are embedded in our geographies. Urban space is formed by social relations in the city, yet social relations are also formed by urban space (Soja, 2009). Spatial justice is rapidly becoming one of the main goals of urban planning in the global North. For example, the Council of the European Union developed an updated version of the Leipzig Charter (2020), a framework for key policy interventions to promote sustainable urban development. The policy interventions have a strong focus on spatial dimensions, good governance, and social justice (Council of the European Union, 2020). Nevertheless, empirical studies about spatial justice remain few. Recently some progress

has been made and spatial justice is increasingly used as a theoretical lens to evaluate the fairness of certain processes (see e.g. Uwayezu & de Vries, 2018; Barbierie et al., 2019). To promote spatial justice, urban blue space benefits should be distributed evenly among society.

Despite the realization that we should move away from neoliberal urbanism and promote justice in the city, income inequalities within cities keep growing (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017). Competition for the attraction of capital between cities, and for urban space within cities, often legitimizes prestigious investments in selected urban areas (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017). Justice concerns will, thus, keep on challenging urban blue space. Empirical studies can help to evaluate how the transition away from neoliberal regeneration, towards a consideration of spatial justice can be made. While there are some scholars that have researched urban blue space regeneration from a justice perspective, these studies focus on Europe, the U.S., and Australia (Avni & Teschner, 2019). In the global South, where central states are often pursuing neoliberal agendas to keep up with 'the West' (Yazar & York, 2023), empirical studies are limited (Avni & Teschner, 2019). Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey and Europe, is a typical example of such a context.

### 1.1 Research context

Over the past decade, growing centralization of power has had its effects on urban planning in Turkey (Kuyucu, 2018). In Istanbul, the national government has been pursuing private regeneration of public space, aimed at improving the city's image (Kuyucu, 2018). These neoliberal policies have been successful in accomplishing increased popularity among tourists – Istanbul became world's most visited city in 2023 (Leasca, 2024). However, they have not always benefited the local population. Private development projects, abundant along the Bosporus Strait (in Turkish *Boğaz*, figure 1), have gone hand in hand with numerous problems, such as dense privatization, reduced public space, lack of spatial integration with the water, loss of heritage, and increased traffic flows disconnecting the waterfront from the water (Seçmen & Turkoğlu, 2020).

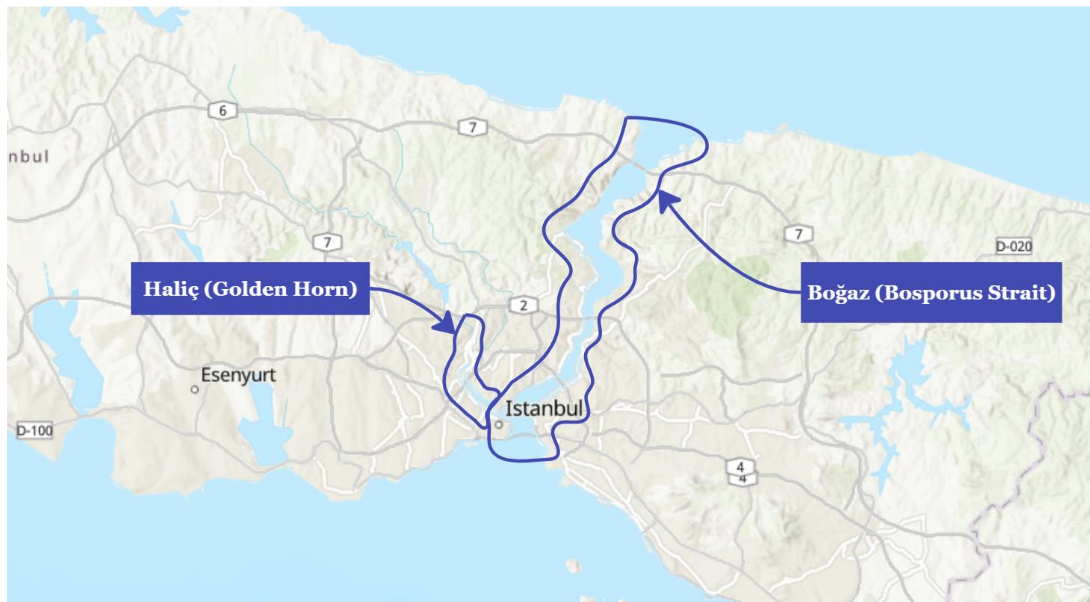



*Figure 1: Location of Bosporus and Golden Horn within Istanbul. Source: Created by author.*

The Golden Horn (figure 1) is a unique natural estuary fueled by two rivers, where the sea water flows into the river (Coleman, 2009). The Turkish name for the Golden Horn is *Haliç*, as I will also call the area from now on. The area functioned as a natural harbor during Ottoman times, but after rapid industrialization halfway through the twentieth century, Istanbul's harbor moved to a different location outside of the city center. Dalan, Istanbul's mayor at the time, started the first regeneration attempt of Haliç in the year 1983 (Geambazu, 2019). Since then there have been some independent projects which lacked coherence or continuity (Bezmez, 2008). So, while development along the Bosporus Strait has been abundant, Haliç remained an urban brownfield (Bezmez, 2008). In 2012, a plan was born to regenerate three of the historical Ottoman shipyards

at Haliç (Geambazu, 2019). Two of these are currently under construction, an initiative called *İstanbul Haliç Yat Limanı ve Kompleksi Proje*, which translates to 'Istanbul Haliç Marina and Complex Project'. In this thesis, I will refer to the initiative as 'Haliçport'. The case of Haliçport is an example where the national government tendered the area for development by private investors (Sehir Planlama Müdürlügü, 2022). Following this, there is a risk that Haliçport will prioritize the development of tourism and retail, while the area contains valuable cultural heritage (Köksal, 2019) and unique environmental qualities (Coleman et al., 2009). It makes Haliçport, currently a hot discussion topic in Istanbul's urban politics, an interesting case for a spatial justice analysis.

### 1.2 Research aim

This thesis aims to evaluate the policy plans for Haliçport from a spatial justice perspective. I will develop a framework to evaluate urban blue space regeneration through a spatial justice lens, and apply this to Haliçport. The framework will function as a guide to my evaluation, by gathering different perspectives on the policy plans and their effects on the city and its residents. In doing so, the thesis will answer the following main research question: *To what extent does the plan for Haliçport cater to distributive-, procedural-, and recognition spatial justice?* The discussion of this case will create an understanding whether or not Haliçport indeed prioritizes tourism and retail above the needs of residents, and if so why. Furthermore, the discussion of this practical evaluation will allow me to reflect on the potential of using spatial justice as a theoretical lens to evaluate urban blue space regeneration. The thesis will then contribute to increasing the amount of empirical applications of spatial justice, increasing the amount of empirical data on urban blue space regeneration in different contexts, and identifying the challenges and opportunities for spatial justice at Haliçport.

### 1.3 Reading guide

The next chapter discusses different theories of spatial justice, where I conceptualize spatial justice into distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice. Integrating these dimensions of justice with relevant aspects of urban blue space regeneration, provides me with evaluation criteria. Chapter three describes the methodology, after which I will contextualize Haliçport from a geological, historical, and sociopolitical point of view (chapter four), and from a legal and institutional point of view (chapter five). Spatial justice and assessments of justice are inherently context-dependent (Iveson, 2011). In chapter six I will present the results of the research, while I will discuss and interpret the results to a wider context in chapter seven. Finally, I will present the conclusions in chapter eight.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical bases behind this study are discussed. First, a brief literature review highlights how similar studies have explored the relationship between urban blue space and justice. These contributions will be helpful when creating the evaluative framework for this research. Second, I will explore different theories of spatial justice and conclude that for a comprehensive definition, spatial justice can be conceptualized into distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice. Third, I will explore these three dimensions of spatial justice more in-depth and formulate working definitions for all three. I will review the studies discussed in the brief literature review, from the perspective of those definitions. This integration provides me with criteria to evaluate urban blue space regeneration from a spatial justice perspective.

### 2.1 Urban blue space regeneration and justice

There are several scholars who conducted a similar study as the present study. For example, some scholars have worked on integrating an assessment of public space with social justice (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Low & Iveson, 2019), which is relevant when talking about urban blue space. Nikšič and Sezer (2017) show how the creation of public space can be discussed from the perspective of the just city, based on the work of Susan Fainstein (more about Fainstein later). Low and Iveson (2019) make the case that, to evaluate public space from a social justice perspective, social justice can be conceptualized into distributive-, procedural-, interactional-, and recognition justice, as well as an ethic of care. A study by Sairinen and Kumpulainen (2006) has focused on the social impacts of, more specifically, urban blue space regeneration. The authors developed a social impact assessment (SIA) framework for urban blue space regeneration based on a review of several earlier SIAs of such developments. They reveal four factors that should be addressed when considering the social impacts of urban blue space regeneration: Resources and identity, social status, access and activities, and waterfront experience (Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006).

Not many scholars have researched urban blue space from a central justice perspective, but there are some exceptions. Nufar Avni (2017) has presented a framework that can evaluate urban blue space regeneration from different perspectives of justice: Social-, economic-, environmental-, and identity justice. Based on these perspectives, or dimensions, Avni has developed several questions that can be used to interrogate urban blue space regeneration (Avni, 2017). Another exception is the work by Wessells (2014), who has analyzed an urban blue space regeneration initiative in Seattle, also from a fourfold perspective on justice: Economic-, environmental-, social-, and tribal justice (Wessells, 2014). Wessells specifically highlights the implications of using the term urban blue space instead of urban waterfront, arguing for a focus on ecology and public space (Wessells, 2014). Lastly, Avni and Fischler (2020) have analyzed the regeneration of the Anacostia river in Washington D.C. from both a social- and environmental justice perspective. They highlight the tradeoffs between the two dimensions of justice and argue for an integrated assessment (Avni & Fischler, 2020). These are interesting contributions, but, to my knowledge, none have focused on spatial justice to analyze urban blue space regeneration.

### 2.2 Conceptualizing spatial justice

In this section, I will discuss different theories of spatial justice, to find a useful conceptualization that can guide an analysis of urban blue space regeneration. The discussion about urban justice has been going on for a long time. Scholars have used different terms to refer to either the right to the city, the just city or spatial justice. One of the most influential works about urban justice is perhaps ‘the right to the city’ by Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre (1996) has defined urban space as a social construct, formed by social relations in the city. This allowed the discussion of space to go beyond the physical definition, and subsequently for a connection between space and (in)justice. Many urban thinkers have further worked out the concept of the right to the city, in their quest for urban justice.

David Harvey is one of them. Harvey (2008) argues that the right to the city is a human right: “*The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights*” (p. 23). Harvey (2008) has been particularly critical of

capitalism, arguing that both public- and private space should be accessible to everyone, but that this is not possible within a capitalist system. Cities are products of surplus, and a capitalistic view on society will naturally cause wealth to accumulate in certain prime spots (Harvey, 2008). Harvey (2004) argues that notably neoliberal policies have caused wealth to accumulate in the hands of a few, through what he calls 'accumulation by dispossession'. For example, privatization policies dispossess public land in the hands of private developers, who can then rent or sell this land back to the public for their own gain (Harvey, 2004). Susan Fainstein has also explored ways to create a just city, but with a different argumentation than Harvey's. Fainstein (2014) aims to explore how the just city can be achieved within existing political-economic processes. In the book 'the just city' (2010), Fainstein sees the just city as having three fundamental dimensions: Democracy, diversity, and equity, where equity has priority. Fainstein's work on the just city has been particularly influential for spatial planning. Based on practical applications, Fainstein (2010) proposes a set of criteria for practitioners that outline how to reach a just city. The dimensions and criteria of Fainstein's just city seem relevant for a conceptualization of spatial justice.

While Lefebvre, Harvey and Fainstein generally refrained from using the term spatial justice, Edward Soja has explicitly called for the adoption of the term. Soja (2009) argues that all terms relating to justice or the just city that do not use the adjective 'spatial' in front of justice, are missing significant opportunities that an explicit spatial use of justice can provide. Soja (2009) defines spatial justice as: "*an intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice. As a starting point, this involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them*" (p. 2). The basis for Soja's argumentation revolves around the notion that thinking with a critical spatial perspective, opens up clear opportunities for social and political action to enhance both justice and democracy. Where traditionally space was constructed by the social (Lefebvre, 1996), Soja (2010) argues that the social is also constructed by the spatial.

Peter Marcuse holds a similar view of justice, arguing that the spatial element is indeed crucial to incorporate. Marcuse differs from Soja, however, in arguing that spatial justice is derivative but causal from social justice (Marcuse, 2009). Issues related to (in)justice in a certain area, can then not be tackled by a solely spatial approach. Injustice is caused by wider socioeconomic processes in society, and to promote justice, these should be addressed as well (Marcuse, 2009). Soja (2009), on the other hand, argues that also those processes are fundamentally spatial in nature. Theories of spatial justice developed further, most notably in the field of law, to include the non-human more in its scope. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2014) sees spatial justice as "*the conflict between bodies that are moved by a desire to occupy the same space at the same time*" (p. 3). Generally, theories of spatial justice agree that socially valued resources should be distributed evenly in space among society. This speaks to urban blue space, considering the benefits it provides. A fair outcome of distribution is often referred to as distributive justice.

So, spatial justice is about the distribution of socially valued resources in space, but also about how injustices are caused by or could be tackled by socioeconomic or -political processes. Indeed, while there are differences, most scholars agree that promoting spatial justice should focus on more than an equal distribution. Both Soja and Marcuse agree that a comprehensive analysis of spatial justice should consider the outcome, but also the process of decision-making (Iveson, 2011). Nancy Fraser agrees that concerns of justice can only surface by evaluating justice from multiple perspectives, or dimensions, of justice. "*To avoid [...] unwittingly colluding with neoliberalism, we need to revisit the concept of justice. What is needed is a broad and capacious conception, which can accommodate at least two sets of concerns. [...] without reducing one to the other*" (Fraser, 2001, p.4). The way in which the distribution of resources is negotiated is often referred to as procedural justice.

Iris Young has, among others, made the case that procedural justice does not adequately address true inclusive decision-making. Young (2008) argues that group differences are suppressed by treating all social groups as equals, since not all groups are similar. Some might, therefore, require different treatment to arrive at the same outcome (Young, 2008). Similarly to Young, Fraser (2001)

argues that procedural justice and distributive justice do not adequately address the differences between different social groups. Especially minorities are often subjected to the will of the cultural majority (Fraser, 2001). Wessells (2014) discussed this dynamic also in an empirical study about urban blue space regeneration. Therefore, Fraser and Young, among others, make a case for recognition justice. Injustice of recognition, or misrecognition, can then be found in the cultural domination of one group over another, in disrespect, or in the non-recognition of certain group's beliefs by society or its institutions (Fraser, 2001).

We have discussed the importance of distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice for spatial justice. These three dimensions of justice have primarily been developed within the environmental justice discourse (Walker, 2012). Environmental justice has its origins in assessing the disproportionate proximity of toxic waste disposals to marginalized communities (Anguelovski, 2013). However, more recently, environmental justice has come to include a broader interpretation including also access to urban green- or blue space (Hanson & Olsson, 2022). Environmental justice is said to have close ties with spatial justice, as both are concerned with (in)justice based on a spatial premise (Williams, 2018). However, according to Soja (2009), environmental justice misses crucial spatial implications of urban planning.

It seems that conceptualizing spatial justice into distributive-, procedural- and recognition justice could adequately capture different concerns of (in)justice (figure 2). In the next sections, after discussing the question of 'justice for whom?', I will dive further into those three dimensions of justice and formulate working definitions. These will be based on a discussion of different theories of distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice. To define evaluative criteria for this research, I will review the findings of the following studies from the perspective of distributive-, procedural, and recognition justice: Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Low & Iveson, 2019; Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006; Avni, 2017; Wessells, 2014; and Avni & Fischler, 2020. From now on 'the plan' will refer to the policy plan for the urban blue space regeneration under study.

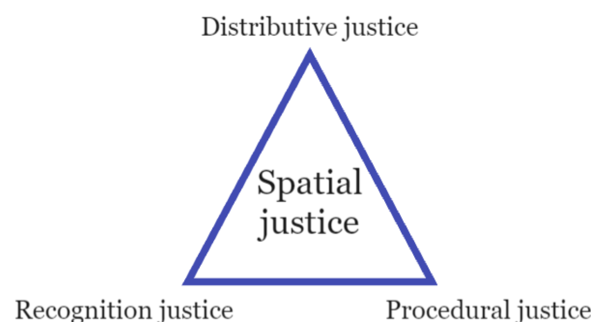



*Figure 2: Conceptualizing spatial justice into three dimensions of justice. Source: Edited by author from Rocco (2023).*

Before moving to the next sections where I will define spatial justice criteria, I briefly want to reflect on the question of 'justice for whom?'. From the discussion above, it follows that spatial justice is part of the discussion about urban justice. Indeed, the concept is mostly applied to study urban areas (see e.g. Fainstein, 2010; Barbierie et al., 2019; Feitosa et al., 2024). Benefits and burdens should then be distributed evenly in space, among everyone in the city. I will apply spatial justice to one regeneration initiative, which is a smaller area. It could then be argued that it makes sense to focus on spatial justice for everyone in the specific area study area. However, urban blue space has benefits that stretch further than the single water basin, even beyond city borders (Wessells, 2014). In the case of Haliçport, those benefits concern residents in the river basin of Haliç, or even beyond, while the remaining cultural heritage from the historical Ottoman shipyards is, arguably, important for the entire country. This is an interesting, but complex discussion that is outside the scope of this research. I will assume here that the benefits of the urban blue space at Haliçport, should be accessible to and fairly distributed among all residents of Istanbul, who are informally referred to as 'Istanbulites'. The focus is on residents, because of the tradeoff between tourism development and the well-being of the local population in Istanbul.

I will, thus, focus on justice for Istanbulites, but as we will see in the next sections, not every aspect of spatial justice directly relates to people.

### 2.3 Urban blue space regeneration from a distributive justice perspective

Distributive justice has its origins in the economic distribution of wealth, and is focused on injustices related to income inequality, exploitation, and deprivation (Fraser, 2001). However, distributive justice is more than only a fair economic distribution. For example, we have discussed how Soja (2009) describes it as a fair distribution of all socially valued resources and opportunities. Within this meaning, access to urban blue space, for example, is also considered an issue for distributive justice. Apart from a fair distribution of socially valued resources, it is necessary to consider the distribution of burdens and 'bads'. Here it makes a clear link to environmental justice. Within the environmental justice discourse, distributive justice also considers, for example, resident's proximity to disposals of toxic waste (Walker, 2012). Within Fainstein's 'just city', the dimension of equity shows most similarities to distributive justice. Equity relates to distributive effects of policies, and, similarly to recognition justice, boils down to the idea that policies should always be aimed at improving the lives of the least privileged social groups (Fainstein, 2010). Here, distributive justice means 'the fair distribution of socially valued resources, benefits and burdens, especially those that are specific to urban blue space'. In the next paragraphs, I will review the selected studies from this perspective to define evaluation criteria for distributive justice.

Urban blue space investments often go to the development of residential apartments or other real estate. We can only speak of a fair distribution of housing when everyone has access to housing. This means that cities should plan for sufficient affordable housing (Fainstein, 2010), also along urban blue space (Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006; Avni, 2017). Besides housing, there are other urban amenities that should be distributed evenly such as public transportation (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Fainstein, 2010) and access to decent work (Avni, 2017; Fainstein, 2010). Based on the above, the first criterion for urban blue space regeneration that considers distributive justice is whether the plan ensures that all Istanbulites have access to urban amenities, including affordable housing, affordable and accessible transportation, and decent work.

Urban blue space should be regarded as public space, and public space should be accessible to everyone (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017). Therefore, accessibility to urban blue space is essential for a spatially just development (Avni, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020). Accessibility to urban blue space does not only mean that everyone can reach it, but also that everyone has access to the social activities taking place at the urban blue space (Wessells, 2014; Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006). So, the second criterion is whether the plan ensures that all Istanbulites have access to the urban blue space and the social activities taking place there.

Sairinen and Kumpulainen (2006) argue the importance of considering how one experiences the blue space. A plan can consider how one views, hears, tastes, and/or touches the blue space, or realize their presence to it. The way to experience urban blue space is different for everyone and this can have an effect on who are, in the end, benefiting from the presence of the blue space (Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006). Therefore, the third criterion is whether the plan adequately addresses the way different Istanbulites sense their presence to the blue space.

Urban blue space should not only be a shared public space, but also a natural space where ecology can thrive (Wessells, 2014). Regeneration initiatives often take place at post-industrial waterfronts, where soil and water are contaminated. Environmental remediation and a concern for environmental sustainability are necessary to enjoy, or keep enjoying, the benefits of urban blue space (Avni, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020). It follows that the regeneration of urban blue space should not neglect the ecological, so the fourth criterion is whether the plan ensures the remediation or protection of the natural environment.

Differing geographies means that some areas are more prone to environmental risks than others. Urban blue space is particularly prone to environmental hazards due to, for example, climate change (Avni & Teschner, 2019). An important aspect of distributive justice is that burdens and

risks should be equally distributed among society (Soja, 2009). Therefore, environmental risks should be prevented or mitigated (Avni, 2017). The fifth criterion is whether the plan works towards preventing environmental risks.

Improved environmental conditions and decreased environmental risks can result in tradeoffs with distributive justice concerns as well. Especially improved environmental conditions are likely to raise land prices in the area (Avni, 2017). This process is called gentrification and is likely to exclude some residents from the area (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020), or even cause the forced displacement of residents to other areas (Avni, 2017). Increased land prices are thus a heavy burden, and residents should be protected against the negative effects of gentrification. The sixth criterion is whether the plan considers the consequences of increased land prices and protects Istanbulites against potential negative effects.

Building further on gentrification, market forces of neoliberal policies result in the most efficient use of land and resources. The most efficient use is usually not the most just use. Small, local businesses are an example of a low revenue-intensive land use. Both Fainstein (2010) and Wessells (2014) argue that equitable cities should endorse policies that give room to small businesses, since these are more locally rooted than large companies. Therefore, the seventh criterion is whether the plan ensures that small, local businesses can exist.

Finally, it should be noted that urban blue space has an important role for the entire city, due to, for example, health benefits, transportation, and the possibilities for blue space activities such as water sports (Wessells, 2014). Fainstein (2010) argues that in a just city, new development must consider the function of the area compared to the wider urban fabric. When talking about urban blue space, also the regional scale becomes necessary to consider. The catchment basin of urban blue space often transcends the city scale, while the ecological benefits might even transcend the regional scale (Wessells, 2014). The eighth and final criterion is whether the plan considers the function of the area with respect to the wider region, and develops ways to strengthen the connections.

### 2.4 Urban blue space regeneration from a procedural justice perspective

Procedural justice is, although not exclusively, about participation in decision-making. Here, the infamous ladder of participation by Sherry Arnstein is relevant. Arnstein (1969) proposes a ladder to evaluate participation in which she defines eight different levels, where the highest level of participation is called 'citizen control' and the lowest level is called 'manipulation'. The ladder can function as a tool to determine how power is distributed in decision-making. Procedural justice also has close ties with communicative rationality, a concept first developed by Jürgen Habermas (Healey, 1996). Patsy Healey calls this communicative planning theory, which boils down to the notion that: "*…the stronger the role of disadvantaged groups in policy decisions, the more re-distributional will be the outcomes; thus, broad participation and deliberation should produce more just outcomes"* (Fainstein, 2014, p. 7). Closely related, deliberative democracy refers to the idea that participants to deliberations will adjust their initial ideas to reach a consensus. Healey (1996) argues that to achieve inclusive planning and participation for spatial strategy formation, it is also important to consider access to justice and transparency. In Fainstein's 'just city', procedural justice has a similar meaning as the just city dimension of democracy. Fainstein argues that residents, unable to participate in decision-making, should be represented by someone else (Fainstein, 2010). So, here, procedural justice means 'the representative and transparent negotiation and planning of urban blue space, where everyone is able to participate in the decision-making process'. In the next paragraphs, I will review the selected studies from this perspective to define evaluation criteria for procedural justice.

A deep examination of the distribution of benefits and burdens in space must also assess the process that has determined this distribution (Low & Iveson, 2019). Although the ideas on how to achieve a fair process of participatory planning differ, there is consensus that participatory planning will yield more just outcomes (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Wessells, 2014; Avni, 2017;

Fainstein, 2010). The first criterion for procedural justice, is then whether the decision-making is done in a participatory way.

However, participatory decision-making is not enough to respect procedural justice. Wessells (2014) notes that on the Seattle waterfront the participatory planning process imagined itself value-neutral, but actually replicated existing power dynamics. Wessells (2014) further argues that true representation can only be reached if urban planners would actively reach out to disadvantaged social groups, and the ones that are unable to participate by themselves. Going even further, Fainstein (2010) makes the case that everyone who is reached, but still unable to participate, should be represented by others. The second criterion is thus one of representation. It asks whether the developers have purposefully reached out to Istanbulites with a low ability to participate, and if the ones who are unable to participate were represented by someone else.

Healey (1996) makes the case that within communicative planning, transparency is an important goal to create more just environments. Also Walker (2012) argues that procedural justice is about access to information and transparency. Avni (2017) relates this more specifically to urban blue space regeneration and argues that especially transparency about the allocation of revenues is often lacking. The third criterion is, therefore, whether the developers are transparent about decisions, especially related to revenues, and if all Istanbulites have access to information regarding the planning process.

When considering the public space aspect of urban blue space, Nikšič & Sezer (2017) note that decisions about the physical design of space are also relevant. The physical design of space can be appealing to some social groups, but repellent to others. These other groups would then not feel included in the space, even though they might have been represented in the decision-making process (Nikšič & Sezer). Therefore, the fourth and final criterion for procedural justice is whether the physical space is designed in collaboration with a representative group of Istanbulites.

### 2.5 Urban blue space regeneration from a recognition justice perspective

Recognition justice has been described as the most elusive concept of the three (van Uffelen, 2022). Philosophers Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser have most well-known developed theories of recognition justice. Honneth (2004) interprets true recognition as the validation of personal- or group identity. Honneth (2004) calls this approach to recognition 'self-realization'. True recognition should: *"...[be] enabling the formation of personal identity for all members of society"* (Honneth, 2004, p. 356). This also implies the importance of recognizing how space forms local identities of individuals and groups. Fraser (2001) has a slightly different approach to recognition justice, calling it the 'status model of recognition'. It assumes recognition justice to include the recognition of a social group's cultural values, potential past injustices, and past histories (Fraser, 2001). Recognition justice has close ties with diversity in Fainstein's just city. Fainstein (2010) argues that group differences should be recognized rather than suppressed. Public policy should affirm differences between different social groups (Fainstein, 2010). Recognition justice here means 'the recognition of structural vulnerability of minorities or groups that suffered from past injustices, the prioritization of these groups in urban blue space development, and the recognition that space forms local identities'. In the next paragraphs, I will review the selected studies from this perspective to define evaluation criteria for recognition justice.

From the discussion of recognition justice it becomes clear that a regeneration plan should acknowledge local histories of discrimination and marginalization. Wessells (2014) argues that social power is concentrated with the ones that belong to the historical and cultural majority. Within urban blue space regeneration it is often the ones that have been living next to post-industrial, contaminated sites that do not profit from the regeneration itself (Avni & Fischler, 2020). These histories must be considered, or recognized, for development to cater to recognition justice. Also Fainstein (2010) and Avni (2017) argue that policies and regeneration plans should give special attention to social groups that historically suffered from discrimination. The first criterion is, thus, whether the plan recognizes possible local histories of discrimination or marginalization of Istanbulites, and gives special attention to them.

Some social groups suffer similar misrecognition, but not due to historical injustices. Misrecognition also takes place due to the discrimination of identities (Honneth, 2004). Often the ones with differing racial, class, or gender backgrounds are more vulnerable than the ones belonging to the majority (Avni, 2017; Fraser, 2001). As a result, they have less opportunities to benefit from public urban amenities (Fainstein, 2010), such as urban blue space. The second criterion is whether the plan gives special attention to racial, class, gender, or other minorities.

Urban blue space regeneration that caters to the needs of a diverse population, should plan for a variety of land uses (Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Fainstein, 2010). It is challenging to determine how much land use mix is desired by the population. Here, the concept of the social production of space can be useful (Wessells, 2014). A development plan can consider how space will be produced by the activities taking place, to prevent social fragmentation (Sairninen & Kumpulainen, 2006). Furthermore, Avni (2017) argues that to prevent social fragmentation, the plan should aim for at least some free and affordable land uses. The third criterion for recognition justice assesses whether the plan proposes a variety of land uses, including free and affordable ones, while considering how space is produced by the activities taking place.

Recognition justice means enabling identities for all members of society (Honneth, 2004). Urban blue space often has a distinct meaning for everyone. For some, certain blue space activities such as water sports might be of value, while for others natural or cultural aspects are more valuable. To recognize all different blue space identities, Sairinen and Kumpulainen (2006) argue that a plan should consider the meaning of the blue space for all local members of society. The fourth criterion is whether the plan recognizes and protects the meaning of the blue space for the diversity of Istanbulites.

Building further on identities, cultural aspects play a large role in the formation of identities (Fraser, 2001). Urban blue space often has a history as a vibrant historical port, and it is likely that this function played its part in forming the identity of the area. Such areas usually contain many historical buildings that remain as a memory to the past, and can be described as cultural heritage. To preserve these cultures, and recognize these local identities, Avni (2017) argues that it is necessary to preserve cultural heritage. The fifth and final criterion is whether the plan ensures the protection of cultural heritage. See table 1 on the next page for an overview of the framework.

*Table 1: 17 spatial justice criteria for evaluating an urban blue space regeneration plan.*

| **Dimension of spatial justice** | Criteria | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Distributive justice | 1.1 The plan ensures that all Istanbulites have access to urban amenities, including affordable housing, affordable and accessible transportation, and decent work. | Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006; Avni, 2017; Fainstein, 2010 |
| | 1.2 The plan ensures that all Istanbulites have access to the urban blue space and the social activities taking place there. | Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Wessells, 2014; Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006; Avni, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020 |
| | 1.3 The plan adequately addresses the way different Isanbulites sense their presence to the blue space. | Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006 |
| | 1.4 The plan ensures the remediation or protection of the natural environment. | Wessells, 2014; Avni, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020 |
| | 1.5 The plan works towards preventing environmental risks. | Avni, 2017 |
| | 1.6 The plan considers the consequences of increased land prices and protects Istanbulites against potential negative effects. | Avni, 2017; Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Avni & Fischler, 2020 |
| | 1.7 The plan ensures that small, local businesses can exist. | Wessells, 2014; Fainstein, 2010 |
| | 1.8 The plan considers the function of the area with respect to the wider region, and develops ways to strengthen the connections. | Wessells, 2014; Fainstein, 2010 |
| 2. Procedural justice | 2.1 The decision-making is done in a participatory way. | Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Wessells, 2014; Avni, 2017; Low & Iveson, 2019; Fainstein, 2010 |
| | 2.2 The developers have purposefully reached out to Istanbulites with a low ability to participate, and if the ones who are unable to participate were represented by someone else. | Wessells, 2014; Fainstein, 2010 |
| | 2.3 The developers are transparent about decisions, especially related to revenues, and all Istanbulites have access to information regarding the planning process. | Avni, 2017; Walker, 2012; Healey, 1996 |
| | 2.4 The physical space is designed in collaboration with a representative group of Istanbulites. | Nikšič & Sezer, 2017 |
| 3. Recognition justice | 3.1 The plan recognizes possible local histories of discrimination or marginalization of Istanbulites, and gives special attention to them. | Wessells, 2014; Avni & Fischler, 2020; Avni, 2017; Fainstein, 2010 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 3.2 The plan gives special attention to racial, class, gender, or other minorities. | Avni, 2017; Fraser, 2001; Honneth, 2004 |
| | 3.3 The plan proposes a variety of land uses, including free and affordable ones, while considering how space is produced by the activities taking place. | Nikšič & Sezer, 2017; Avni, 2017; Fainstein, 2010; Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006 |
| | 3.4 The plan recognizes and protects the meaning of the blue space for the diversity of Istanbulites. | Sairinen & Kumpulainen, 2006; Honneth, 2004 |
| | 3.5 The plan ensures the protection of cultural heritage. | Avni, 2017 |

## 3. Methodology

This research project aims to answer the research question: *To what extent does the plan for Haliçport cater to distributive-, procedural-, and recognition spatial justice?* To this end, a spatial justice lens was used to analyze the urban blue space regeneration called Haliçport. The discussion of this case has three main goals. First, to create an understanding to what extent spatial justice was considered by the plan. Second, to discover where challenges and opportunities for spatial justice at Haliçport lie. Third, to reflect on the potential of using spatial justice as a framework to evaluate policy plans for urban blue space regeneration. In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological approach, the study area, and the specific methods for data collection and analysis. Finally, I will make some comments about the trustworthiness of the research and my positionality as a researcher.

### 3.1 Methodological approach

This research was done with a constructivist research philosophy. Constructivism assumes that multiple realities exist, based on people's own beliefs (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Reality is thus subjective. Constructivism assumes that knowledge comes from the interpretation of subjective evidence (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A constructivist approach was chosen, because justice is context-dependent (Iveson, 2011). Taking this approach, the research is based on the interpretation of qualitative data. Multiple qualitative methods were used to create an in-depth understanding of Haliçport – a process that is called triangulation. While not being a method of validation, the concept of triangulation is an alternative to validation. It gives a researcher the tools to judge information from multiple perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Data inquiry was done in three main phases. First, an exploratory phase aimed at understanding the background of the area and of Haliçport. The goal of this phase was to understand the legal and institutional context, and to determine precise data collection methods. The second phase can be described as the data collection phase, while the third phase is the data analysis phase. The first and second phases have not been linear, but the process of exploring and collecting data has been an iterative process. See figure 3 for a schematic view of the methodology.

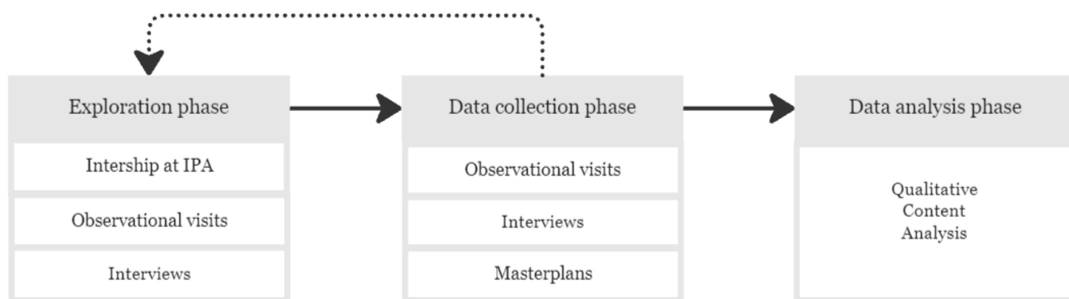



*Figure 3: Schematic view of the methodology.*

### 3.2 Study area

The project area of Haliçport constitutes 252.000 m2 around the historical Haliç docks (Sehir Planlama Müdürlügü, 2022). The project area (figure 4, next page) lies within the administrative boundaries of the metropolitan region of Istanbul, and within Istanbul it belongs to the local administration of Beyoğlu district (figure 5, next page). Beyoğlu is one of thirty-nine local districts (municipalities) of the wider metropolitan municipality of Istanbul, and can be defined as the study area. While the area of Haliçport is only a part of Beyoğlu district, the consequences of Haliçport can be experienced by the population of the wider district as well. Hence, on several occasions also the surroundings of Haliçport were studied.

*Figure 4: Project area within Beyoğlu. Adopted from the Landside Plan.*

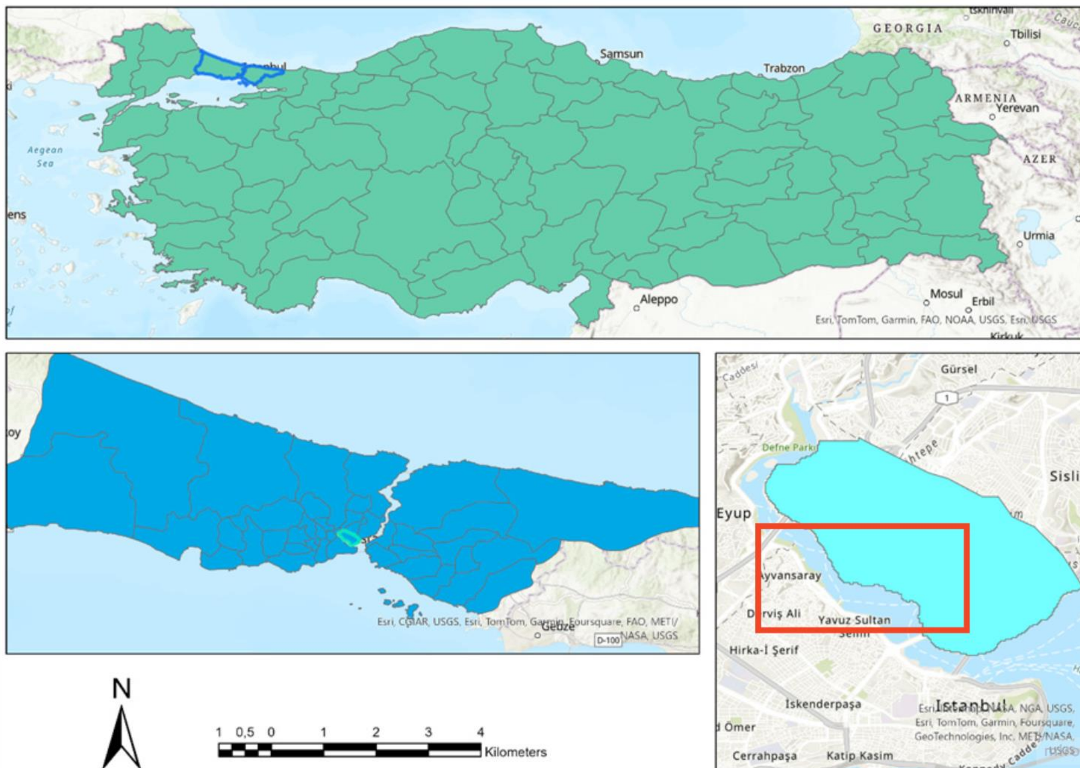



*Figure 5: Istanbul in Turkey (top), Beyoğlu in Istanbul (left), and district borders of Beyoğlu framing the contours of figure 4 (right). Source: created by author in ArcGIS, spatial data from ESRI.*

### 3.3 Exploratory phase

Familiarizing myself with the context of Haliçport was the first step of this research. The purpose was to identify the relevant stakeholders, determine the decision-making process, define suitable methods for data collection, and locate the Masterplans for Haliçport. A two-Month internship at Istanbul Planning Agency (IPA) was helpful during this phase. Many conversations with urban researchers, urban planners, urban architects, and other employees gave me an idea where I needed to look for more in-depth information about Haliçport. I also attended presentations about

creative urban design ideas for Haliç, from exchange students at Bahçeşehir University. Furthermore, I made an observational visit to Haliçport at 23rd of April. Observational visits help to understand the study area and its context, and should therefore lead to more tailored interview questions (Patton, 2015). During the observational visit, I went with the public ferry across Haliç, allowing me to view Haliçport from the water. Afterwards, I walked around the entire project area. Lastly, two interviews were done (see table 2).

*Table 2: Interviews in exploratory phase.*

| Interview No | Name | Organization | Expertise | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interview 1 | Serengül Seçmen | Bahçeşehir University | Urban planner & urban architect. Expertise in research about blue space regeneration in Istanbul | April 19, 2024 |
| Interview 2 | Aslı Erbil | Istanbul Technical University | Department of sociology, experience in research about blue space regeneration in Istanbul | April 24, 2024 |
| Interview 2 | Tansel Erbil | Mimar Sinan University | Urban and regional planner; contributor to Haliçport legal expert report | April 24, 2024 |

### 3.4 Data collection phase

After the exploratory phase, it was decided that primary data should come from two more observational visits and six semi-structured interviews, and that two Masterplans for Haliçport should be analyzed as secondary data. The Masterplans formed the basis for understanding the content of the plans, while the visits and interviews gave insights to the feasibility and trustworthiness of the plans. The methods from this phase are described in more detail than the methods from the exploratory phase, because the data obtained from the methods here was used for detailed analysis.

Observational visits to the area took place on May eight and May 22. Observational visits are prone to personal bias (Babbie, 2020). Therefore, I aimed to write down objective observations, where interpretations were left to the data analysis phase. On May eight, I went with the public ferry across Haliç towards Haliçport. From there I walked North along the Northern coast of Haliç, aiming to stay close to the urban blue space. The goal was to get an idea of the accessibility and walkability of Haliç. During the second visit, on May 22, I went into the surrounding neighborhoods to discover the atmosphere there. I went to five neighborhoods: Bedrettin, Piripaşa, Keçecipiri, Camiikebir (neighborhood of Haliçport) and Kadımehmetefendi.

Six interviews were done with a diverse range of persons with different roles and expertise related to Haliçport: Academics, civil servants, representatives of civil society organizations and a resident (see table 3, next page). The diversity of interviewees allowed for an understanding of Haliçport from different points of view. The interviews were held at a location of their choosing (table 3), to make interviewees feel comfortable. Before each interview, interview ethics were checked. All interviewees agreed with recording the interview and stated that they did not need to be anonymous. The interviewed 'person' (table 3) is displayed with either their name or function, depending on which is more suitable for the research. The interviews were done with an interview guide, with broad questions that were tailored to the background and expertise of the interviewee. The interviews were partly structured to focus on the spatial justice criteria for urban blue space regeneration, but there was room for input from the interviewees as well. Interviews that are semi-structured allow the interviewee to give more detailed answers, which

helps to understand the interviewees' thoughts and beliefs (Babbie, 2020). To achieve such understanding, I asked interviewees often to elaborate, and to give examples to support their claims. Semi-structured interviews can be time-consuming (Babbie, 2020), which is why this research is limited to six. Six interviews do not make the results generalizable, which is taken into account in the results analysis and is also not the goal of this research.

*Table 3: Interviews in data collection phase.*

| Interview No | Person | Organization | Expertise role | Date | Time | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interview 3 | Gül Köksal | Haliç Solidarity | Member of Haliç Solidarity; industrial heritage professor | May 7, 2024 | 1 hour, 30 mins | Istanbul Library Cafeteria, Kadıköy |
| Interview 4 | Employee 1 | Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality | Urban planner, worked on the spatial strategy plan for Beyoğlu district | May 14, 2024 | 1 hour, 20 mins | BİMTAŞ |
| Interview 4 | Employee 2 | Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality | Urban planner, worked on the spatial strategy plan for Beyoğlu district | May 14, 2024 | 1 hour, 20 mins | BİMTAŞ |
| Interview 4 | Employee 3 | Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality | Urban planner, worked on the spatial strategy plan for Beyoğlu district | May 14, 2024 | 1 hour, 20 mins | BİMTAŞ |
| Interview 5 | Tansel Erbil | Mimar Sinan University | Urban and regional planner; contributor to Haliçport legal expert report | May 16, 2024 | 1 hour, 30 mins | İTÜ Ayazağa Kampüsü |
| Interview 6 | Vice-president | Okmeydanı Environmental Protection & Beautification Agency (OEPBA) | Coordinating role, aiming to improve the livability of residents of the Okmeydanı area. | May 19, 2024 | 1 hour | Taksim Sütiş |
| Interview 7 | Bedrettin Resident | Haliç Solidarity | Member of Haliç Solidarity and resident of a nearby neighborhood | May 22, 2024 | 1 hour, 45 mins | Bedrettin, Dr. Bedii Gorbon Sk. NO: 8 |
| Interview 8 | Mürcella Yapıcı | TMMOB Chamber of Architects | Urban planner. Worked on Galataport and Haliçport court cases | May 23, 2024 | 1 hour, 20 mins | Tmmob Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Büyükkent Şubesi |

Lastly, two Masterplans for Haliçport, drafted by Tural Planlama in 2016, complemented the data that was used for analysis. These Masterplans describe the land use decisions, on a scale where 1mm corresponds to 1m.

### 3.5 Data analysis phase

The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is a systematic method to describe and quantify phenomena (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Large amounts of texts can be reduced to useful fragments, through coding. QCA makes it suitable to make sense of multiple large text documents such as interview transcripts. It is also a common method to evaluate Masterplans (Norton, 2008). There are two aspects that should be taken into account when doing so. First, when viewing a Masterplan as a communicative policy act, as I view the plans for Haliçport, it is necessary to distinguish between content and quality (Norton, 2008). Content focuses on the actual proposals for the area, while quality focuses on the ability of the Masterplan to bring across the land use decisions and justify the policy actions. Accordingly, during the coding rounds, I distinguished between phrases conveying meaning about content and quality. Second, it is necessary to view the Masterplan in the context of a larger policy goal to provide meaning to the analysis (Norton, 2008). This research does not aim to evaluate the 'effectiveness' of the plans and policies. It merely aims to evaluate to what extent the plans consider spatial justice. Thus, the spatial justice criteria were regarded as the goals of the Masterplans.

The interview transcripts, observational notes, and the Masterplans were uploaded to atlas.ti. Atlas.ti is a program suitable for qualitative data analysis, and allows the researcher to make a large portfolio of codes, quotations, notes, and more, to describe and categorize data. It is recommended that multiple coders participate in the coding process to prevent bias (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), but this was not possible for individual thesis research. To prevent bias to some extent, coding was done and redone in multiple rounds, both inductively and deductively. Coding was done using four guiding principles as outlined by Zhang & Wildemuth (2009). The codes should be comparable, contrasting, informative and distinctive. The first round of coding was done inductively, without using the spatial justice criteria, but with 'the research question in mind'. General themes were derived as they were presented in the texts. In the second round, the codes were optimized by deleting, merging, and adding codes. In the third round, coding was done deductively using the spatial justice criteria. The coded themes were compared and contrasted to the criteria. The criteria formed the categories, under which the themes with a strong relationship to one or more criteria were categorized.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

While validity, reliability, and objectivity are common criteria to evaluate positivist research approaches, the quality of a constructivist research approach is more commonly checked by trustworthiness (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Trustworthiness, or credibility, refers to the extent to which the real world is adequately represented by the research setup (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Factors that contributed to the trustworthiness of this research are a prolonged stay in the research area, using in-depth interviews, using multiple methods, and using the concept of triangulation. A prolonged stay in the research area allowed me to have an exploratory phase at the beginning of the research. This phase helped me to carefully select relevant interviewees. Six interviews is not a lot, but they were thorough and the interviewees were knowledgeable. Triangulation was possible where necessary, because multiple qualitative methods were used.

### 3.7 Positionality

One year ago I learned about Haliçport, and became frustrated with the plans for the area. From my observations, I thought that the area could become inaccessible to lower social classes. It seemed that Haliçport was meant for tourism development, at the expense of local residents. However, this was mostly my own speculation. I became determined to figure out what was really going on at Haliçport, which motivated me to do this research. During the research, it was not my goal to decide whether the project was 'good' or 'bad'. I evaluated the policy plans against spatial

justice, and I aimed to contribute an empirical example of a spatial justice study. During interviews I asked questions without assuming a specific viewpoint, aiming for a critical inquiry.

## 4. Geological, historical and socio-political context of Haliçport

This chapter contextualizes the study area from three points of view. The area's geology is described, emphasizing how the area is prone to earthquakes. The historical development phases of the area are described, showing how the area has undergone several stages of growth and decline, which resulted in its current diversity. Finally, the socio-political dynamics are described that illustrate how the area is undergoing rapid urban transformation, forced by the national government and aimed at the development of tourism.

### 4.1 Geology at Haliçport

Istanbul is situated on top of the North Anatolian Fault, separating the Eurasian plate from the Anatolian plate. This makes Istanbul an earthquake-prone zone. Experts have been warning that a large earthquake is bound to happen (Erdik et al., 2003), making earthquake risk assessments and earthquake-proof building strategies one of the most important criteria for urban development. In figure 6, the rock and soil types in Beyoğlu are displayed. The rock type is a factor of influence for the safety of buildings when such an event would take place. The area of Haliçport is almost exclusively categorized as alluvium, while a small part is rubble stone. Alluvium is a land type consisting of soft sediment that is especially prone to seismic damage.

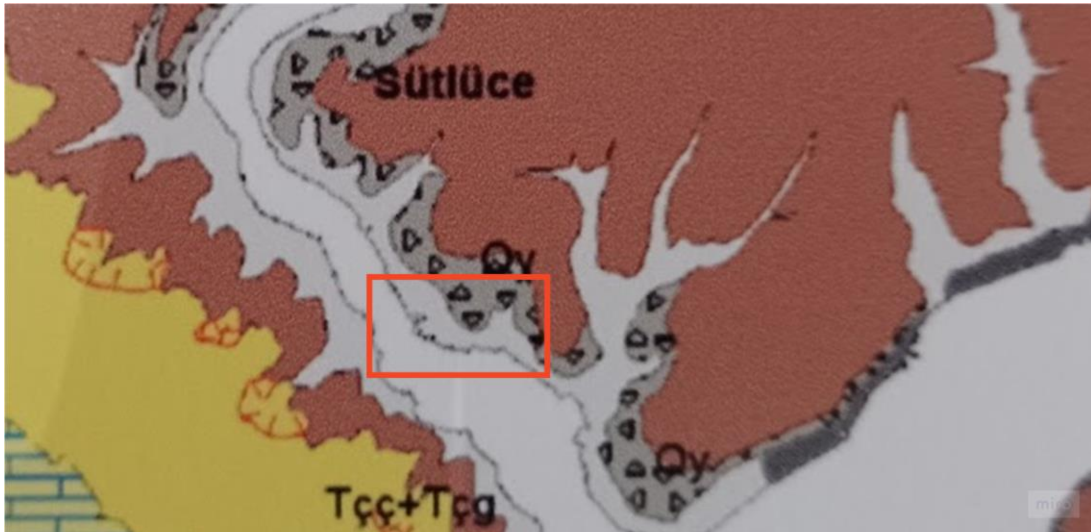



*Figure 6: Rock and soil types present in research area. Source: Earthquake exposition at IPA, April 2024.*

### 4.2 History of Haliçport

The Byzantine Empire is the name for the Eastern Roman Empire, lasting from 330 to 1453. It had Constantinople (now Istanbul) as its capital. During the Roman reign, the Southern coast of Haliç was thriving with many business-, trade-, and maritime centres lined up along the coast (Hoşgör & Yigiter, 2011). The city was conquered by the Ottomans, which meant the end of the Byzantine Empire. During the Ottoman reign, sultan Mehmed the Conqueror introduced a migration policy that intensified trade and living on the Northern coast of Haliç (study area). The Sultan also recognized the natural value of the estuary, and put in place a restoration policy to prevent pollution and erosion of the shores, resulting in widespread afforestation practices (Coleman et al., 2009). Later, in the nineteenth century, the Haliç shipyards were built on the Northern side of Haliç, and a military trade port (figure 7, next page) was created (Hoşgör & Yigiter, 2011). The two constructed shipyards were called *Camialtı* and *Taskizak*. The area developed further as commercial port and was extended as the Ottoman Empire intensified their economic activities (Onal & Zeybekoglu, 2007).

After the Republic of Turkey was formed (1923), Atatürk, the founder of modern-day Turkey, similarly to Sultan Mehmed recognized the natural value of the horn-shaped estuary. Atatürk prohibited the construction of factories on its shores, allowing the rich biodiversity in the transitional zone between river and sea to continue to thrive (Coleman et al., 2009). But in spite

of this effort, following Turkey's rapid industrialization, the Henri Prost Masterplan was realized in the mid-twentieth century. The Henri Prost Masterplan (1936-1951) restructured the city through major urban transformations (Bilsel, 2011), marking Haliç an industrial zone (Hoşgör & Yigiter, 2011). The increased industrial activities and the expansion of the shipyards started a new wave of migration towards Haliç. Furthermore, the industrialization heavily polluted the urban blue space (Coleman et al., 2009).

*Figure 7: Haliç Shipyards in the 19th century. Source: Semavi Eyice Archive.*

Due to rapid economic growth, marine trade and transportation further intensified, calling for larger docks. Haydarpaşa, an area which was, at the time, further away from the central city area, gradually became Istanbul's main harbor (Erbil & Erbil, 2001). This industrial decentralization was reinforced by the construction of large infrastructure projects such as the Bosporus bridge, to move traffic away (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012). Dalan, mayor of Istanbul (1984-1989), started a top-down policy to regenerate Haliç with the aim to create a globally renowned, modern Istanbul. His regeneration attempts have successfully transformed Haliç into a cultural center by the construction of several museums. However, the regeneration initiatives have also erased historical waterfront neighborhoods (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012). Subsequent expected inflow of foreign capital has been limited, and some of the initiatives at Haliç remained half-finished (Bezmez, 2008). In short, even though Dalan forcefully started the regeneration of Haliç in the eighties, the area remains under development.

### 4.3 Current socio-political dynamics at Haliçport

As a result of the historical developments, described in the previous section, the area is characterized by a relatively high population density. The education level of the residents is classified as medium to medium-low, and the share of immigrants, both domestic and foreign, is relatively high. There is especially a large share of people from the Black Sea region in Turkey (Giresun and Rize provinces) and Antalya province. The voting behavior of residents indicates that most people (45 percent) support the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Fewer people (19 percent) support the main opposition party (CHP) (E. Sen, personal communication, IPA Statistics Office).

The ruling AKP is a political party led by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The party has a strong focus on Islamic beliefs, economic development and real-estate investments (Yilmaz, 2021). Between 1999 and 2002, Turkey was in the midst of a severe economic crisis (Temiz & Gokmen, 2009). The economic focus of AKP gained popularity and in 2002 they came to power. While in the beginning of their term many regulations were aimed at decentralizing urban

planning, from 2010 onwards, the AKP changed their policy in the opposite direction. Several laws were passed increasing the decision-making power at the national level (Kuyucu, 2018). Istanbul became subjected to neoliberal regeneration policies, driven by the national government (Woźniak, 2018). The Galataport project (figure 8) in Istanbul is an example of such a project. Galataport was a huge urban transformation initiative where the historic Karaköy waterfront transformed in a modern cruise port and shopping mall (Erbil & Erbil, 2001). The project was criticized for reducing public access to the Bosporus and its lack of participation (Erbil & Erbil, 2001).

Frustration of the public against these developments reached a climax in 2013 (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014). The government planned an urban regeneration project in Gezi Park, that would change the area from park to commercial center. Gezi Park is a centrally located park next to the famous Taksim Square. Many residents gathered to oppose the construction in the park, and their opposition evolved into an extremely violent uprising (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014). In the end they were able to protect the park. The protection of Gezi Park fueled a global movement resisting top-down neoliberal urban planning, in the heart of Istanbul (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014). However, still many similar urban transformations are taking place in the city. Beyoğlu, being one of the most historical areas of Istanbul, has especially been subject to many urban transformation projects (see figure 8). The Okmeydanı transformation project and the Beyoğlu Culture Road are examples of building initiatives that recently started (figure 8). Haliçport is also an example of such a large scale regeneration initiative in Beyoğlu. As we will see in the next chapters, Haliçport has also been received with resistance by the public and civil society groups.

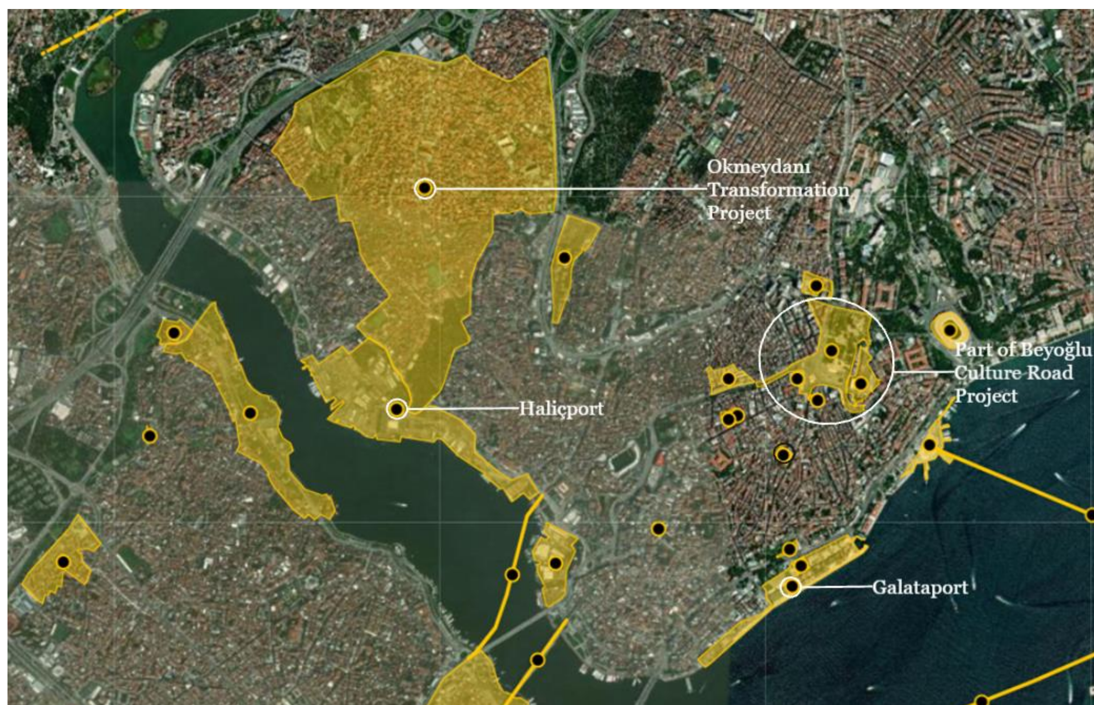



*Figure 8: Some of the recent and current large development projects in Beyoğlu. Source: Mega Istanbul, n.d.*

## 5. **Legal and institutional context of Haliçport**

Now that we understand the geological, historical, and sociopolitical context of Haliçport, I will discuss the legal and institutional context here. The aim of this section is to show the decision-making process and the roles of different stakeholders that were involved in, or left out of the process. I will specifically highlight the role of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, which facilitates urban regeneration in favor of private investors. To understand this process, and to understand the results in the next chapter, I will start this section with explaining some laws and regulations that have played an important role. The policy of *yap-işlet-devret* (built-operate-transfer (BOT)) is a financial mechanism that temporarily transfers the ownership of an area to private investors, while the regulation *özel proje alanı* (special project area) confines all decision-making power to the national government. To understand urban blue space regeneration, it is also necessary to take a look at the *Kıyı Kanununun* (Coastal Law, 1990). This law regulates the protection of the coast, but also facilitates the construction of large cruise ports. Finally, I will show a timeline of the Haliçport process highlighting noteworthy events, that emphasize the clashes between civil society and the private investors who are protected by the national government.

### 5.1 Legal framework

The BOT regulation is used for many different large development projects in Turkey, mainly related to infrastructure. Using the BOT approach, an area of land is leased to a private investor, who receives full ownership to transform the area to its needs for an agreed period of time. In most cases, the government does not demand any requirements for development (Köksal, 2013). The approach has been criticized for resulting in high governmental costs. Usually, regulations are applied that guarantee an agreed amount of profit for the investor. When these are not met, the government pays the difference ("Airports under Turkey's", 2024). Haliçport was similarly tendered using the BOT approach.

Areas where municipal urban regeneration takes place, can be determined as a special project area. Special project areas are determined when the costs of regeneration are high, in which case the municipality is not required to inform the public about the costs. Usually TOKI, the mass housing authority in Turkey, is the owner of these projects. However, since 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization can also determine special project areas and take full control (law No. 644). This process applies to Haliçport as well, as will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. The amendment from 2011 is stated as follows:

> "*To determine the procedures and principles to be followed by administrations in the improvement, renewal and transformation practices to be carried out in urban and rural areas and settlements, including slums, coastal areas and facilities, […] determined by the Council of Ministers and financial centers and similar special projects.*" (Law on the Organizations and Duties of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, 2011, p. 1).

Note that also coastal areas can be subject to this regulation.

The Coastal Law (No. 3621), dated from 1990, essentially protects the coast of Turkey to keep it accessible to the public. The objective of the law is stated as follows:

> "*This law has been arranged to determine the utilization and protection principles of sea coasts, natural and artificial lake and river banks and the coastal stripes effected from, and as continuation of, those locations by considering the natural and cultural features and towards the benefits of the society and for public good" (Coastal law, 1990, p. 1).*

So, the natural and cultural features of the coast must be protected, and furthermore: *"The coasts are open for the benefits of everyone in equal terms and freely*" (Coastal Law, 1990, p. 2). In 2004, the law was amended by adding a paragraph stating that structures that, due to their nature, cannot be developed somewhere else, such as shipyards or cruise ports, are allowed to be built along the coast. Notably, the new definition states that this will hold for both public and private development projects. Additionally, the provision states that activities making the use of such areas possible are also allowed (Coastal Law, 2004) For example, a cruise port needs

accommodation and retail buildings. These are, thus, allowed within the scope of the Coastal Law (1990).

### 5.2 Stakeholders and planning process

In Table 4, all stakeholders are classified that have had an interest in the planning process for Haliçport. Some of the stakeholders were actively involved, either by making decisions or by involving themselves in other ways. However, some stakeholders were not involved. In any case, from table 4 it becomes clear which roles the different stakeholders have had. We can see how the national, central planning agencies are involved directly with decision-maker power. We can see how local governments, several civil society organizations, and residents are not involved in the process. Finally, we can also see how civil society is involved by protesting the plan for Haliçport and taking it to court.

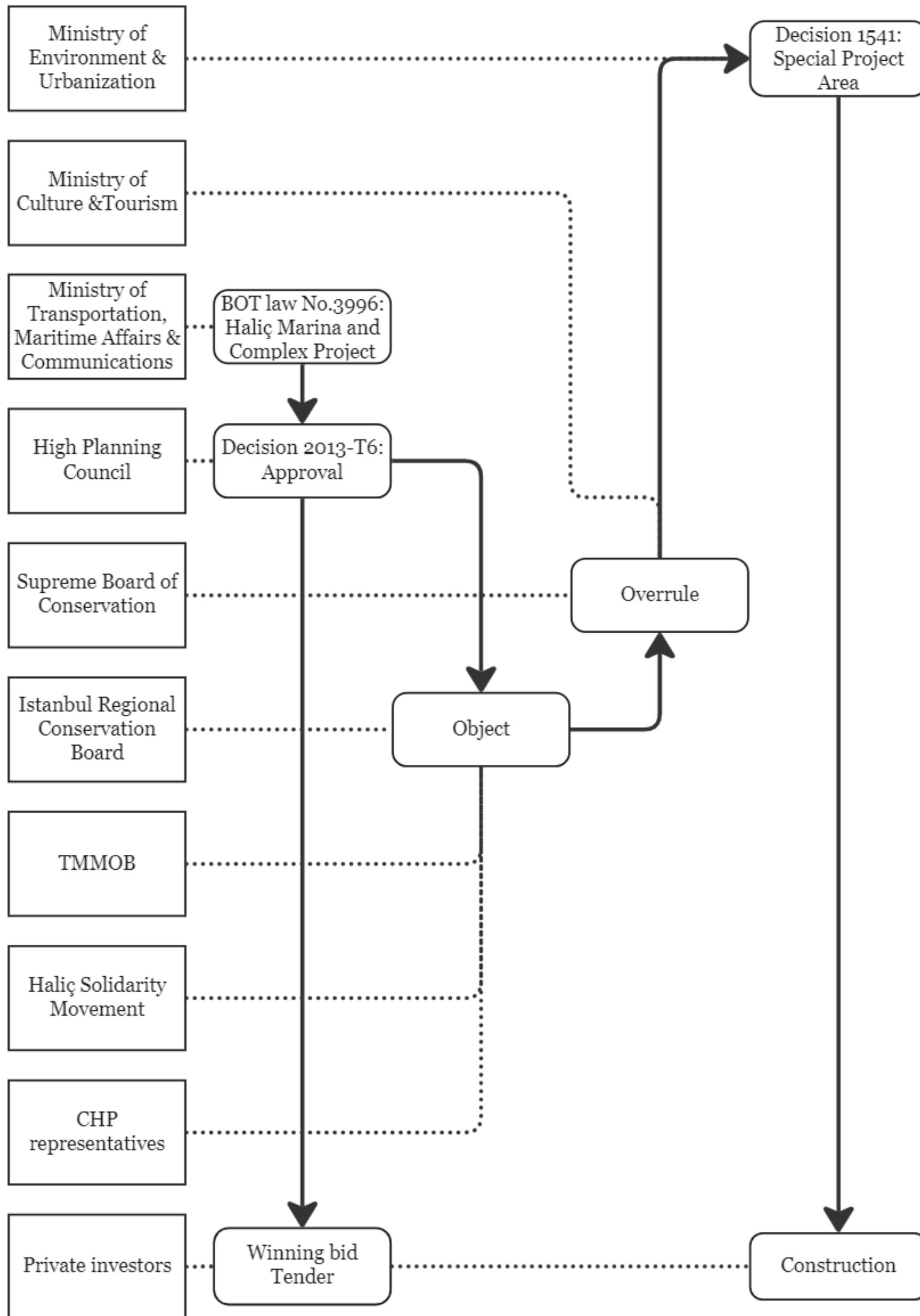
*Table 4: Classification and explanation of stakeholders and their roles.*

| Stakeholder | Cat. | Involved yes/no | Role |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ministry of Environment & Urbanization | Public | Yes | Ministry with the most authority when it comes to urban regeneration policies. It has the authority to approve and create regeneration initiatives. |
| Ministry of Culture & Tourism | Public | Yes | Responsible ministry for the conservation of cultural heritage. |
| Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs & Communications | Public | Yes | Ministry that set up the tender for Haliçport. |
| High Planning Council | Public | Yes | National governmental body consisting of the President and relevant ministers, depending on the policy field under discussion. They check if spatial plans align with the government's social and economic targets. |
| Supreme Board of Conservation | Public | Yes | National cultural heritage conservation body, under the Ministry of Culture & Tourism. |
| Istanbul Regional Conservation Board | Public | Yes | Regional cultural heritage conservation body. They have the power to approve or object to Masterplans related to their regional jurisdiction, but can be overruled by the Supreme Board of Conservation. |
| Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) | Public | No | Local government of Istanbul, excluded from the decision-making process for Haliçport. |
| Beyoğlu District Municipality | Public | No | Local government of Beyoğlu, excluded from the decision-making process for Haliçport. |
| Chamber of Architects (TMMOB) | Civil society | Yes | Labor union of architects. Have been opposing the plan for Haliçport by pursuing legal means. |

| Chamber of Urban Planners (TMMOB) | Civil society | Yes | Labor union of urban planners. Have been opposing the plan for Haliçport by pursuing legal means. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chamber of Mechanical Engineers (TMMOB) | Civil society | Yes | Labor union of mechanical engineers. Have been opposing the plan for Haliçport by pursuing legal means. |
| Haliç Solidarity Movement | Civil society | Yes | Resistance movement consisting of academics, residents, ex-shipyard workers, and more. Their collective goal is to preserve the identity of Haliç. |
| CHP representatives | Civil society | Yes | Representatives of the Istanbul local Council, from Turkey's main opposition party. Some have actively contributed to court cases against the plan for Haliçport. |
| Okmeydanı Environmental Protection & Beautification Agency (OEPBA) | Civil society | No | Organization aiming to improve the livability of the Okmeydanı area, and to come up for citizen rights. The organization is not directly involved with Haliçport, but disapproves of the project. |
| Hasköy Culture & Arts Centre | Civil society | No | Cultural center near Haliçport, where Haliç Solidarity organizes occasional meetings. |
| Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi | Civil society | No | Most prestigious university in Istanbul. Some professors help to build a case against large scale urban regeneration in Beyoğlu. |
| Residents | Other | No | Excluded from the decision-making process for Haliçport. |
| Sembol International Investment | Private | Yes | Part of the private investor group that won the tender for Haliçport. Now the temporary owners and developers of the land. |
| Ekopark Turizm | Private | Yes | Part of the private investor group that won the tender for Haliçport. Now the temporary owners and developers of the land. |
| Fine Otelcilik | Private | Yes | Part of the private investor group that won the tender for Haliçport. Now the temporary owners and developers of the land. |

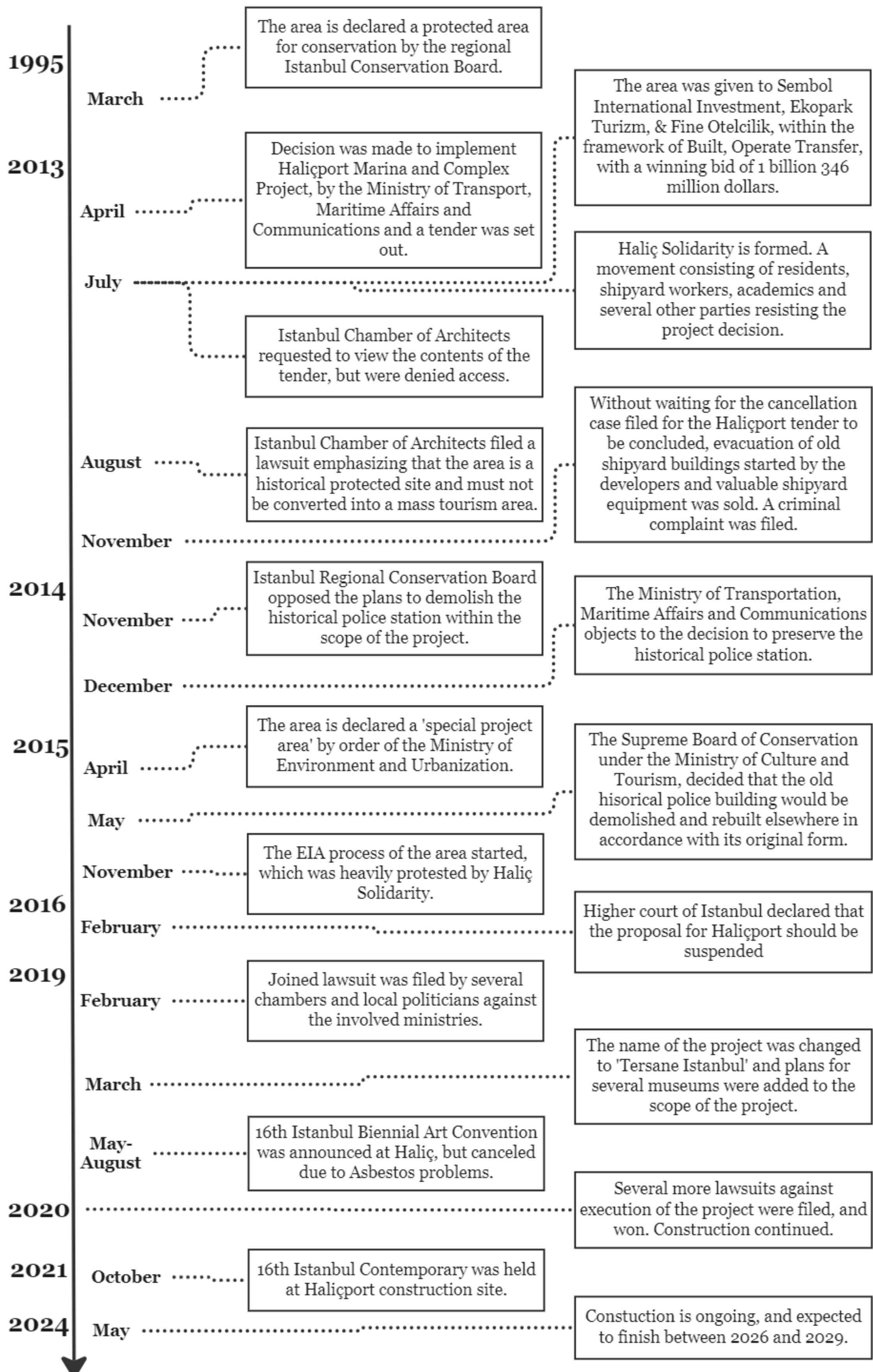
Figure 9, on the next page, visually presents the decision-making process. On the left side, the stakeholders who have been actively involved (yes, table 4) are shown. The boxes show the actions taken during the process, and interrupted lines indicate which stakeholders have been responsible. Uninterrupted lines show the flow of the process. From the diagram, we can see how there have been many objections to Haliçport, but that these were overruled by the governing bodies of the national government. As soon as the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization decided to classify the area as 'special project area', the process went directly towards construction, without interruptions.

*Figure 9: Decision-making process for Haliçport project showing stakeholder roles & power.*




On the next page, figure 10 presents a visual timeline of notable events. It starts with the protection of the area as a historical site in 1995, and ends with the notion that at this moment, construction of the project is ongoing. It should be noted that many lawsuits have been filed against the implementation of Haliçport. Also note how art expositions were held or planned in the area, how the process of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was started after construction started, and how the construction has been taking eleven years. In the tender, a construction period of four years was specified followed by a period of 45 years of 'use'.

*Figure 10: Development timeline of Haliçport project, including notable events.*



## 6. Results

We now understand the context in which Haliçport takes place from several points of view. The policy framework for urban blue space regeneration shows elements of top-down urban planning, and several stakeholders have been excluded from the decision-making process of Haliçport. Also, civil society groups have been resisting the plans of Haliçport by taking to the courts for justice, but construction has not been halted. Now we need to understand the policy plans for Haliçport in more detail. In this section, I will discuss the policy plans as outlined in the Masterplans and reflect on their feasibility. A final overview comparing the spatial justice criteria and the policy plans for Haliçport, provides an understanding to what extent these policies cater to spatial justice.

### 6.1 Introduction to the Masterplans

One of the Masterplans is related to the landside of the planning area (from now on called the 'Landside Plan'), and the other is related to the seaside of the planning area (from now on called the 'Seaside Plan'). The planning area is thus divided into two stages, see figure 11. The two Masterplans are developed by the same developers, who intend to create "*a holistic project compatible with the uses on the land side of the coastline*." (Seaside Plan, p.42). The aims of the two plans are summarized here first.

*Figure 11: Specification planning area, highlighting the two stages of development. Adopted from the Landside Plan.*

Haliçport was tendered by the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications. The tender of the ministry included the following requirements, which the developers integrated into the plan for Haliçport:

- Five hotels with a capacity of 1100 rooms.
- 600 apartment units.
- Two marinas with a capacity of 70 yachts each.
- Parking lot with capacity for 5700 vehicles.

The main premise of the Landside Pan is "*to establish a historical revival in today's city without losing its [historical] identity*" (Landside Plan, p. 30). The Landside Plan states how it has been the government's goal to improve the global image of the city: "*A project that will play an important*

*role in the goal of becoming a global center of attraction is aimed to be realized.*" (Landside Plan, p. 5). To be able to achieve this, a commercial-cultural hub is proposed, that functions as an integration zone between the historical peninsula and the Central Business District (CBD). The historical peninsula is the area where Constantinople was founded and contains the majority of the tourist attractions in Istanbul. On the one hand, the area should extend the growing CBD, while on the other hand, it should relieve the historical peninsula from tourism pressures. Furthermore, buildings and their facades should mimic the historical look of the area. A restitution analysis determined the corresponding historical building heights and facade designs. Remaking the silhouette of the area as seen from the water, accessibility to the shore and a walkable coast, and sea transportation to the area, are three of the core design values.

The aim of the Seaside Plan is to create a coastline suitable for public use, while protecting the coast: "*To enable the development of maritime transportation and tourism in Istanbul by preserving the natural structure of the Golden Horn in line with the principles of sustainability…*" (Seaside Plan, p. 42). How the natural structure is preserved is not further specified, neither are the principles of sustainability. An extensive analysis of different environmental and climatic qualities is provided, including the geology and hydrology of the area. The Seaside Plan proposes two marinas that can be reached by floating docks, several piers for marine transportation, and a floating platform that can be used for events. In general, the aim is to revive 1.5 Kilometers of waterfront and make it accessible to public use, to contribute to Istanbul's maritime transportation and tourism development, to prevent pollution caused by the shipyards, and to create recreational areas on the coast.

The policy goals of the two Masterplans can be summarized into four themes. The themes are derived from the contents of the Masterplans. While they do not cover all the contents, the themes allow to tell the story of Haliçport from a spatial justice perspective.

- Theme 1: Transform the area into a central commercial district.
- Theme 2: Contribute to marine transportation and (sea)tourism.
- Theme 3: Improve accessibility to the shore and create a walkable coast.
- Theme 4: Remake the silhouette of the area, as seen from the water.

These four themes are further discussed over the next pages.

### 6.2 Transform the area into a central commercial district

The first theme that is discussed here, is the intention of both the national government and the developers to transform the area into a central commercial district, as outlined in both Masterplans. The Landside Plan states that the main building functions should be "*hotels, apartment units, commercial units (food and beverage, entertainment, shopping) areas, etc.), office units (bank, administrative buildings, etc.), cultural facilities (museum, exhibition halls, congress center, cinema, theater etc.), a mosque with a capacity of 1000 people and [two marines with] mooring [capacity] of 70 motor yachts each.*" (Landside Plan, p. 30). Although a mosque is not a commercial building, the other buildings are focused on making a profit and turning the area into a commercial district. Note that the named cultural facilities also have a commercial element. Other ideas from the Masterplans demonstrate a concern for investment returns and profitability, such as the argumentation behind the planned floating dock system: "*they [floating docks] can be put into operation early and the return on investment is received earlier.*" (Seaside Plan, p. 43). In this section I will show the effect of the commercial transformation on the area, from various spatial justice perspectives. I will highlight how the commercial focus risks forced displacement of residents, how the process of Haliçport was neither of a participatory nature, nor transparent, and how the commercial land uses come at the expense of local businesses and the valuable cultural heritage in the area.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT: According to the developers, the commercial plan has economic advantages for the public, but interviewees fear that the corresponding urban transformation will cause the forced displacement of residents. Forced displacement leaves residents vulnerable and

could force them to not only abandon their homes, but also their livelihoods. The Seaside Plan states three main economic advantages of Haliçport: A trickle-down effect on the economy, the creation of 3000 direct- and 10.000 indirect jobs, and investments in an idle area that will be transferred to the public after 49 years (Seaside Plan, p. 51). The increased economic activity can be a driver for urban transformation in the entire area and the Landside Plan states that said transformation is important for the development of the CBD: "*Refunctioning of the historical shipyards … will be an important gain for implementing the said transformation.*" (Landside Plan, p. 18). Similarly, the interviewed employees of IMM also believe that Haliçport was primarily tendered to accelerate urban transformation in the surrounding neighborhoods. Contrary to the project area of Haliçport, those surrounding neighborhoods are densely populated where the majority of the houses are *gecekondu* (informal housing). Therefore, the aimed transformation "*is good maybe because old houses will not be earthquake resilient. But they [residents] should have the chance to also keep living in the new houses*." (IMM employee). This is a controversial topic, because the risk is that due to increased land prices, previous residents might not be able to reside in their neighborhoods anymore. This risk was also mentioned by the OEPBA vice-president. According to him, the problem goes deeper than a physical relocation. He explained how residents are forced to abandon their culture, which threatens their way of life. A relocation could mean that they cannot perform their profession anymore. He further explained that sometimes, after an urban transformation in Istanbul, some of the old residents were able to rent an apartment in the new block. However, the increased rent was a problem: "*But the rent is high, so when old residents manage to take one of the apartments, they need to sublet it because it is too expensive so they still cannot live there anyway*." (OEPBA vice-president). Neither Masterplans mention a policy for assisting current residents with increased land prices. In summary, Haliçport could trigger urban transformation in neighboring communities, but there is no provision in the Masterplans related to protecting the current population. Also, there is no attention to the vulnerability of residents during a transformation process.

PARTICIPATION: The Landside Plan states to aim for participation during the commercial transformation of Haliçport: "*An urban renewal approach with a social participation dimension should be adopted*." (Landside Plan, p. 36). A specific method or approach on how to achieve this 'social participation' is missing, but some sections of the Masterplans indicate that it has been possible to object to the plans. The ministry with the most decision-making power was the one to evaluate these objections: "*Objections made within the suspension period were evaluated by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization …. It was stated that the plans were finalized*." (Seaside Plan, p. 6). So, after evaluation, the Ministry did not find it suitable to change the policy plans based on possible objections. Besides those mentions, neither Masterplan indicates any form of participation. On the contrary, they give multiple examples of the top-down planning process for Haliçport. One example demonstrates that the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization controls land use decisions: "*The Special Project Area border is determined by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization No. 644*." (Landside Plan, p. 21). The absence of participation is also visible in the decision-making scheme of Haliçport (figure 9, section 5.2). It was already concluded from the scheme that the decision-making power lies with the ministries and other central governmental planning bodies. The local governments of Istanbul and Beyoğlu are not included, just as several civil society organizations and residents. The power of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization was also mentioned by T. Erbil: "*They have different rules, they have different regulations, but in order to avoid all this kind of regulations, central government state made some exceptions, planning exceptions, in order to clear all regulations, obstacles on the planning system*." (T. Erbil). In summary, a participation process for the commercial transformation of Haliçport has been absent.

TRANSPARENCY: Interviewees describe the transformation of Haliçport to a commercial district as non-transparent. The BOT-approach to Haliçport is especially criticized for lacking financial transparency. Individually, residents would not be able to find out what was going on: "*It is not that easy for people to get information. They can't see the plans. They can only go to the construction workers to ask them*." (Bedrettin Resident). But even for academics it is challenging to retrieve information. For example, G. Köksal is well-known to the developers, but they purposely excluded

her from information about their decisions: "*And for example, there were some protocols. They didn't send us... Okay, they didn't send us. But I worked here over 30 years. And they know me very well.*" (G. Köksal). There are more signs of a lack of transparency around Haliçport. While G. Köksal was denied access to the conservation protocols of the developers, the Istanbul Chamber of Architects was denied access to view the contents of the tender. A payment of 50,000 US Dollars was required to access information. The Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications argued that if this amount could not be paid, they were not a realistic candidate to participate in the bidding process (Köksal, 2019). An explanation for this secrecy could be that there is a lot of money at stake within the Haliçport project. The BOT-approach has been criticized for being expensive, but it is also criticized for lacking transparency. Especially regarding investments and how revenues are captured, T. Erbil argued that information is lacking: "*And we don't know the exact price of the projects. When they build maybe 1 billion US dollars, they say. But then they say it's 5 billion dollars. Nobody can do something.*" (T. Erbil). So, a lot of money was involved in the Haliçport tender to stimulate the commercial regeneration, but the national government is untransparent about the precise information.

LOCAL BUSINESSES: Interviewees fear that it will be challenging for small businesses to exist at Haliçport, Small businesses are a low revenue-intensive land use, which does not fit the planned commercial regeneration. The fact that a large workforce used to be employed at the shipyards, caused economic activity to concentrate in the areas around Haliçport: "*This shipyard had 5000 employees. After it was closed, most of the places as coffeeplaces or hotels in the neighborhoods had to be closed and people lost their jobs.*" (Bedrettin Resident). The closed businesses are also visible when walking through the area: "*Even though the area seemed lively, I noticed many closed businesses as well. It is irregular in the city on a Wednesday.*" (field notes, May 22, 2024). Currently, Haliçport is under construction. The effect is that economic activity is halted. It could be possible that, once construction is finished, the economic investments will spread across the entire area and revive the local shops. However, it does not seem that the Haliçport tender was set out to cater to local businesses. The Masterplans do not mention this aim and, in contrast, one of the aims of the Masterplans is to create a globally renowned Istanbul, promoting the city's benefits internationally. So that is what the national government is already doing, according to the OEPBA vice-president: "*He (the AKP-member) went to France and he was advertising the new hotels, apartments, and shopping malls. Before it was even being build. As a way to legitimize it. It will draw the international businesses out.*" (OEPBA vice-president). In sum, the Masterplans do not state the intention to facilitate local businesses, while the international attention for Haliçport is likely to outcompete them.

CULURAL HERITAGE: The commercial transformation could also come at the expense of the cultural heritage that remains from the historical shipyards. The developers recognize the value of the heritage in the area: "*The planning area contains many registered cultural and natural assets.*" (Landside Plan, p. 27). To this end, they plan to "*protect the registered cultural assets as much as possible.*" (Landside Plan, p. 24). However, if new functions are required, the developers do not shy away from reconstructing historical buildings: "*These types of structures, which have completed their lifespan, should be reconstructed in line with current spatial needs.*" (Landside Plan, p. 36). Through refunctioning the space into museums and exhibition halls, the heritage will serve a commercial purpose. It becomes an industry to make a profit from. It becomes a 'heritage industry', as G. Köksal puts it nicely: "*But the values of these areas is different. Because of that, I mean, cultural heritage has changed now to culture industry. Heritage industry, industrial heritage changed to heritage industry.*" (G. Köksal). Interviewees were passionate about the value of the heritage at Haliçport, especially highlighting the industrial heritage that remains from the shipyards. M, Yapıcı put the importance of the heritage into perspective: "*This area is [the] most important industrial heritage for Istanbul, Turkey, and world.*" (M. Yapıcı). While G. Köksal stated how the protection of this heritage, allows to take valuable lessons from the previous shipyard industry: *"We are in climate crisis now and we can understand urban planning issues and see how we can solve this. It is about how we can create urban justice we should be able to understand how we got into this crisis."* (G. Köksal). So, interviewees value the cultural heritage at Haliçport and the

developers state the aim to protect it. However, the commodification of space in the new commercial district is likely to come at the expense of (some of) the heritage.

The main takeaways from theme one are summarized as follows:

1. Haliçport can trigger urban transformation in neighboring communities. These are likely to result in the forced displacement of residents.
2. Participation around the commercial transformation has been absent.
3. The national government hides information regarding financial transactions and contracts.
4. There is the risk that Haliçport will not become suitable for the establishment of small businesses.
5. The commodification of space in the new commercial district is likely to come at the expense of (some of) the cultural heritage.

### 6.3 Contribute to marine transportation and (sea)tourism

The second main theme of the Masterplans discussed here, is the aim to contribute to marine transportation and tourism. These are mentioned together, because the Seaside Plan explains how Haliçport should contribute to both. The developers want to build a *"marina that will serve the region where it is located and allow the development of sea tourism*." (Seaside Plan, p. 11). One of the plans is to add a pier to the area, which "*is intended for the docking of marine vessels such as City Lines ferries*". (Seaside Plan, p. 57). Furthermore, Haliçport should help decrease overtourism on the historical peninsula of Istanbul, where, according to the Seaside Plan, access to accommodation and touristic activities has reached its limit: "*Demand is increasing, and it is seen that the Peninsula is having difficulty in meeting these demands*." (Seaside Plan, p. 10). In this section I will show the effects of the planned tourism-oriented marine transportation on the area, from various spatial justice perspectives. I will highlight how the plan neglects the needs of residents, especially related to housing, how the evident earthquake risk is overlooked, how the closing of the shipyards could negatively affect marine transportation and the shipyard culture, and how the closing of the shipyards has left ex-shipyard workers in a vulnerable position.

HOUSING: The tourism-oriented plans for Haliçport reduce the accessibility to affordable housing for residents. Throughout the Masterplans, the focus on tourism is obvious. The Seaside Plan states the aim to "*contribute to Istanbul's maritime transportation and tourism."* (Seaside Plan, p. 42). The developers aim to create an area that can facilitate tourism, which, judging from the tender specifications, was also the aim of the national government. Interviewees mention their role as well: "*The central government is aiming to improve services for tourism, to get a more international outlook. They even invented a new word: half-public space*." (M. Yapıcı), and "*they are giving priority to the hotels and not to the residences*." (T. Erbil). The luxury investments in the once idle area, are likely to drive land-prices up. Increased land prices could give housing problems. According to employees of IMM, "*it's going to cause housing problems, rental problems, because the rents of houses are going to be valuable and are going to increase*." (IMM employee). The developers also plan to build apartments. However, from talking to the construction workers at Haliçport, it seems that these are not meant for locals: "'*The price of buying an apartment', they said while laughing, 'is around 35 million Turkish Liras'. At the time, this would be a little more than one million euros."* (Field notes, April 23, 2024). Commenting on the economic accessibility of the housing units for Istanbulites, G. Köksal stated that "*they are trying to sell the apartments to Arab sheikhs*." (G. Köksal). The developers and the national government seem convinced that investments in the tourism sector are necessary, and do not contribute to increasing access to housing for Istanbulites.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS: The developers do not seem to be concerned with protecting residents against environmental risks. Rather, the provisions in the Masterplans are focused on protecting the planned tourism facilities, such as the yacht marinas. Extensive hydrological and oceanographic analyses were done to determine how the yachts can be prevented from wave damage. It was determined that floating structures are the best solution to prevent "*serious*

*discomfort for moored yachts*." (Seaside Plan, p. 40). Although the seismic risks in the area are acknowledged in both Masterplans, it is unclear how these risks will be taken into account while constructing. The soil in the area is soft, and interviewees fear that building on this ground would cause serious environmental risks: "*The ground is soft, so [we want] no high buildings. Haliç is like a scale. If you build on one side of the golden horn, the other side will rise a bit. It is not safe. We are waiting [for] a big earthquake, we need to protect our shores and with that the people.*" (M. Yapıcı), and "*the foundation of the ground under Haliç it is [sic] like a swamp. If we build heavy buildings here, the sea level increases. Every year the ground level decreases by half a centimeter. It can be a problem.*" (Bedrettin Resident). So, the evident earthquake risk is not adequately addressed, while there is also the climate risk of rising sea levels.

MARINE TRANSPORTATION: Besides the marine transportation that should boost tourism, the developers also plan to build a public ferry pier. It is a good thing, but some interviewees believe that the closing of the shipyards at Haliçport is harmful for the culture in the neighborhoods and for marine transportation in Istanbul. The long history of the shipyards at Haliçport has made marine transportation an important cultural aspect. The planned pier for public transport is welcome: "*Istanbul is a water city. Water transportation is so important*." (G. Köksal). However, it is too little too late. The closing of the shipyards is not understood: "*You must use it as a shipyard*." (M. Yapıcı). Not only the transportation is important to interviewees, the whole area is connected to the shipyards: "*You cannot decouple the neighborhood and shipyard. The whole neighborhood is built around the shipyard*." (Bedrettin Resident). While not being a part of the Masterplans, the closing of the shipyards can be regarded as a driver for Haliçport. The closed shipyards paved the way for the start of the regeneration project. It is interesting to take a closer look at the dynamics around the closing of the shipyards. G. Köksal, M. Yapıcı and the Bedrettin Resident mentioned that the bridge across Haliç used to be able to open, so ships could pass. However, after a renovation, the national government said that it could not do that anymore. It became the start of the decline of the shipyards, that could not be reached anymore by most ships. Slowly the shipyard activities were moved to Tuzla: "*For operation, it opened. But it is interesting. Because they said [the] tersane (shipyard) couldn't work here. Because it is not effective. And then the bridge cannot open anymore. But then they want to use this [as a] yacht area*." (G. Köksal). The new shipyard at Tuzla is still producing the ships for the public ferry lines, but Haliç Solidarity fears that the shipbuilding knowledge that had accumulated at the old shipyards was left behind. G. Köksal mentioned that the new shipyard is not safe from a potential earthquake, while the old ones have survived many heavy earthquakes in the past. Furthermore, she mentioned that there have been several deadly accidents with workers in the new area due to safety problems. In sum, Haliç Solidarity fears that the new shipyard will not be able to produce the same amount and level of ships as the old shipyards. It is clear that the shipyards have an important meaning.

VULNERABLE RESIDENTS: The Masterplans do not pay attention to protecting vulnerable groups of residents, which is criticized by interviewees. They highlight the vulnerability of the Istanbulites that currently live and work in the area. IMM employees explain that these are especially the ex-shipyard workers: "*This region consists of the workers, the retirement workers and their families who worked in the [...] shipyards*." (IMM employee). These residents are the ones who built the neighborhoods around Haliçport from scratch. The OEPBA vice-president showed his concern for the future of the residents, stating that *"the most vulnerable are the residents who are living and working in the area, and are embedded in the neighborhood life*." (OEPBA vice-president). The residents can be vulnerable due to forced displacement, environmental risks, or the harsh environment for local businesses. The Masterplans do not share this concern. For a plan to give special attention to certain vulnerable groups, it should assess who the vulnerable are. Furthermore, it should determine how special attention could be organized, to prevent further marginalization. This requires extensive knowledge of past and current social dynamics in the area. The Masterplans dedicate some sections to such analyses, but their social analysis is limited. The absence of participation also indicates a lack of interest in the social dynamics of the area. The discussion here, demonstrates that the Masterplans do not pay attention to vulnerable residents in the area.

The main takeaways from theme two are summarized as follows:

1. Haliçport disregards the housing needs of residents and instead favors the tourism sector.
2. The earthquake risk is not adequately addressed, just as the climate risk of rising sea levels.
3. The shipyards have an important meaning to the interviewees, and some fear that closing the shipyards has had consequences for the production of marine vessels in Istanbul.
4. Vulnerable residents are overlooked in the policy plans for Haliçport.

### 6.4 Improve accessibility to the shore and create a walkable coast

The third theme discussed here is accessibility. In the Masterplans, different goals related to accessibility are mentioned. The developers aim to increase accessibility *"primarily in terms of pedestrian and vehicle traffic*" (Landside Plan, p. 31), and to make the "*Golden Horn coast a walkable urban shore*." (Landside Plan, p. 34). To this end, the Landside Plan outlines some pedestrian axes, and a "*parking space for 1 vehicle will be allocated for every 30 m2 of construction area*." (Landside Plan, p. 25). In this section I will show the dynamics related to the accessibility of Haliçport and the urban blue space from various spatial justice perspectives. I will highlight how interviewees have little trust that the blue space at Haliçport will remain accessible, how the Coastal Law (1990) is losing its function to protect the coast, how civil society is resisting the plans in multiple ways, how the resistance can be seen as a symptom of a lack of participation, and how the proposed policies for environmental preservation and continuity of the coast are questionable.

ACCESSIBILITY: Some interviewees do not trust that Haliçport will improve accessibility. M. Yapıcı, T. Erbil, and G. Köksal shared a concern that the area will become inaccessible to certain groups of Istanbulites, based on the example set by Galataport. Galataport was supposed to stay accessible to everyone, but slowly more restrictions were added. Now, it has become impossible to access the blue space at Galataport without going through X-ray security. Enhanced security measures give the private developers the opportunity to control space, reducing the 'publicness' of space. Talking about accessibility, also IMM employees made the comparison: "*They said [it] also for Galataport, they said before [that it would be publicly accessible], but now you should enter [through] security*." (IMM employees). It is interesting how IMM employees have critical views on these two projects initiated by the national government. It seems that there is some tension between the two levels of government. Haliçport and Galataport share a history where the central state got heavily involved in urban planning, with a strong focus on tourism development. It does not seem unlikely that, in the future, accessibility might also decrease at Haliçport. Additionally, the Landside Plan contains some concrete proposals that allow the developers, and owners, of the area to control space. Signaling devices are described that can be used to control circulation (Landside Plan, p. 41) and the graphical presentation of in-project pedestrian access shows several limitations for pedestrians (see Landside Plan p. 79). In sum, there is little trust that Haliçport will become accessible to all Istanbulites.

COASTAL LAW: The Coastal Law (1990), was intended to protect the coast for public use. However, due to new provisions, the protective function is slowly disappearing. The accessibility goals of Haliçport, as stated in the Masterplans, are often preceded by a sentence as: "*To meet the entertainment, recreation, and travel needs of the public within the scope of Article 14 of the Coastal Law […]"* (Seaside Plan p. 58). During the joint lawsuit of 2019, the court requested an expert report judging whether Haliçport's plan was lawful or not. The experts concluded that the plan would inherently go against several cultural conservation policies, but the Coastal Law (1990) was not violated. The law has become widely interpreted due to recent additions, as explained by T. Erbil: "*It has to be publicly accessible. Traditionally, you can build some parks, open spaces, shipyards, and anything related to marine use or marine. But they changed that, and added cruise ports. Technically, it's marine-related, you know. So…"* (T. Erbil). He argues that these regulations make urban planning in Istanbul challenging, because all the additional regulations resulted in a confusing policy framework. He thinks the high politicization of the policy framework is one of the reasons: "*One of the biggest challenges is that it's so politicized.*" (T. Erbil). So, even though the

Coastal Law (1990) ensures access and public use of blue spaces, it has become possible to build cruise ports and other tourism-related buildings on the coast. Therefore, the marinas proposed in the Masterplans are also, technically, not in violation of the Coastal Law (1990).

RESISTANCE: Even though Haliçport is not in violation of the Coastal Law (1990), civil society turned frequently to the courts for justice and is resisting the policy plans for Haliçport in other ways as well. During the court cases against the plan, the courts have always put the plaintiffs in their rights, meaning that the plans were suspended and required revisions. One of the required revisions was to clarify transportation axes within the project area, as this was unclear to the court. Subsequently, the planners made minor revisions. These needed to be reviewed by the court again, and again. This process was explained by many interviewees. G. Köksal stated that there is a difference between paper and reality: "*Yes, even if you win this lawsuit, they do a lot of things on site. They do many things even though they lost the lawsuit. It does not mean anything in the real world*." (G. Köksal). M. Yapıcı also thinks it is a problem: "*There is a little [bit of] trouble with our court system.*" (M. Yapıcı). T. Erbil explained how this process is likely intentional. It is used as a way to slow the process down, aiming to finish construction before a real cancelation of the project can be decided: "*It's very open to abuse. They can make it go really slow. So that by the time that the final decision is made, it's already finished*." (T. Erbil). The developers cannot control the court's decisions, but they can go through this process over and over again. The Landside Plan even states that when the court cancelled the plan, they had already filed for reapproval to prevent the process from being interrupted (Landside Plan, p. 20). Besides taking to the courts for justice, Haliç Solidarity has been resisting the plans in other ways. For example, they are active on social media to raise awareness about the lack of transparency and participation, and they organized several meetings to discuss the plans for Haliçport. G. Köksal stated that there have been some public meetings about the plans for Haliçport, but that these were not taken seriously by the developers. Despite construction going on as usual, resistance against the project has not been pointless. According to G. Köksal, the developers changed their proposal in 2019, in an attempt to improve the public opinion about the project. Haliçport was renamed as 'Tersane' and plans for several museums were added. It shows how Haliç Solidarity was able to influence the plans, but they remained critical calling it "*culture washing*" (G. Köksal). It is interesting that Haliç Solidarity has also been resisting municipal regeneration initiatives. A project next to Haliçport was also criticized for culture washing: "*Municipality is doing like that also. In Halic Tersane site. Municipality opened here cultural center. Cultural museum also*." (G. Köksal).

PARTICIPATION: It is safe to say that participation has been absent, which also clarifies the high amount of resistance against Haliçport. To this end, Haliç Solidarity felt the need to organize several 'participatory' meetings themselves. They also invited the architects to participate: "*We invited also the architects of this project […]. And we met in the Chamber of Architects area. Actually as Halic Solidarity, we were part of a lot of meetings. And we created some meetings. We invited the people*." (G. Köksal). When directly asked to describe the participation process, the interviewed resident went even further than 'absent' to classify the process as 'manipulation', the worst level of participation in the ladder of Arnstein (1969): "*They are easily manipulating residents. They ask our opinions some times, but they still execute it without taking these opinions into account. On paper it seems they are fulfilling EU (European Union) standards, but in practice there is no participation*." (Bedrettin Resident). All the resistance discussed in the previous paragraph is indicative of a lack of participation, but also demonstrates Haliç Solidarity's will to participate.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: The Seaside Plan states the aim to preserve the natural structure of the coast, but there are some problems with the proposed policies. The developers aim to extend the waterfront by reclamation, which can harm the environmental qualities of Haliç. The Seaside Plan acknowledges the environmental impact of land reclamation: "*It is noteworthy that it [bedrock] has been damaged by uncontrolled fillings.*" (Seaside Plan, p. 36). Contradictory, the plan still aims to reduce the amount of water at Haliç. There are some more problems with the environmental preservation policies as outlined in the Masterplans. The Seaside Plan states that floating docks will be added, which are beneficial to the environment because: "*By removing floating structures, the coast can be restored to its natural state*." (Seaside Plan, p. 42). This

statement negates the aim to preserve the natural state, as it acknowledges that building floating structures affects the natural state of the coast. Furthermore, the Seaside Plan states the claim that Haliçport's plan prevents heavy pollution coming from shipyard activities. This can be classified as environmental remediation. However, it is a passive form of remediation as it assumes that time will clean the blue space from its past pollution. The whole assumption that the shipyard would be polluting the blue space is refuted by M. Yapıcı: "*They created a closed hub, as a precautionary measure. They are able to remove all pollution from there*." (M. Yapıcı). It should also be noted that the Seaside Plan does not provide any evidence to support the claim. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be executed to determine the environmental impact of certain developments. The developers did execute such an EIA, but it was done after construction already started. G. Köksal stated that Haliç Solidarity has protested the EIA, which was also criticized by M. Yapıcı: "*They are doing it the other way around, doing EIA when it is already almost finished*." (M. Yapıcı). The EIA process of the plan illustrates a low concern for environmental protection, but it should also be noted that some minor environmental measures are proposed in the Masterplans. The Landside Plan states the intention to place waste bins, to protect monumental trees, and to add different forms of urban greenery to the area (Landside Plan, p. 41). So, the developers will take minor environmental protection measures to prevent pollution in the area and increase the urban green spaces. The other policy plans for environmental protection are unsupported with evidence, while some of the plans are knowingly harming the natural environment of Haliç.

CONTINUITY: The developers aim to contribute to the continuity of the area's accessibility, but the plans are unconvincing. The Landside Plan outlines how the area will be designed with the 'principle' of continuity, and further explains that Haliçport should become *"a structure compatible with public use. Starting from Rahmi Koç Museum and continuing to Santral Istanbul, combining congress centers, universities and parks, and […]."* (Landside Plan p. 34). During an observational visit to the area, I encountered some problems with continuity – contrary to what the Landside Plan claims.

> "*First I came at the Rahmi M. Koç museum, a museum displaying industrial heritage. The museum is housed in several historical warehouses that remained from the Ottoman shipyards. The museum owns part of the urban blue space and to access the coast, a ticket was required. Further up the coast there were some public parks. It was busy with people picknicking, fishing, or running next to the waterfront. The parks were, however, a small area of the entire coast. I came across the rowing club and Haliç Congress Center. When I asked if I could go near the waterfront, they denied my request. I needed to walk around the buildings and fences. When trying to walk around it, I ended up in a car tunnel*." (Field notes, May 8, 2024).

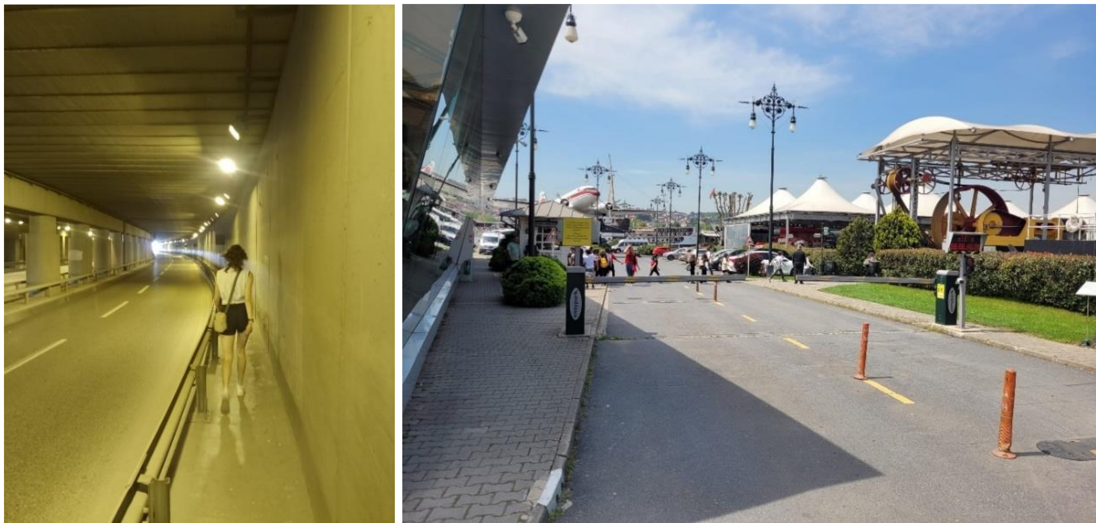


*Figure 12: Reduced accessibility along the Haliç coastline. Left: Tunnel around Haliç Congress Center. Right: Entrance of Rahmi M. Koç museum. Photographs by Author.*

My experience shows that continuity was hard to find along the Haliç coast, with a few green exceptions. The Rahmi M. Koç museum and the Haliç Congress Center were not available for public use and both prevented access to the urban blue space (figure 12, previous page). If Haliçport will take these structures as an example for public use and continuity, there is a risk that accessibility will be reduced.

The main takeaways from theme three are summarized as follows:

1. There is little trust among interviewees that Haliçport will become accessible to everyone, while there seem to be tensions between local and national governments.
2. The Coastal Law (1990) is not protecting the coast anymore. Additional regulations make the policy framework confusing.
3. Civil society has been resisting the plan in many ways, among which taking to the courts. However, it did not have much influence. The resistance seems organized, and is also critical of municipal regeneration initiatives.
4. Even though a participation process has been absent, Haliç Solidarity clearly has the will to participate.
5. The policy plans insufficiently protect the natural environment.
6. The blue space is currently lacking continuity and the plans are not likely to improve this.

### 6.5 Remake the silhouette of the area, as seen from the water

The fourth and final theme that will be discussed is related to the design of the space. One of the proposals for Haliçport is to remake the silhouette of the area, as seen from the water: "*The silhouette as perceived from various points of the historical peninsula and the shores of Eyüp [a district on the opposite shore of the planning area] as a whole is one of the most important points of the plan. The silhouette work of the plan is also registered in this context.*" (Landside Plan, pp. 30-31). This has consequences for the protection of the cultural heritage, the design process, and the land use plan. In this section I will show the effects of remaking the silhouette of the area, from various spatial justice perspectives. I will highlight how the plan to respect the area's history is untransparent, how the attention to blue space experience is limited to visual senses, and how the design policies do not consider minorities and exacerbate, rather than alleviate, social fragmentation.

TRANSPARENCY: The restitution analysis was done to mimic the look of the area during Ottoman times, but both Haliç Solidarity and the court were critical. The purpose of the analysis is stated as protecting the "*socio-cultural identity of the building as a historical document*" (Landside Plan, p. 49). The aim to protect the area's history in this way could be supported. For example, T. Erbil claims that it is "*the most historical place of the Istanbul metropolitan area.*" (T. Erbil). G. Köksal acknowledges that it can be necessary to change the function of abandoned buildings, but she was critical about the process of decision-making. She was especially frustrated by the lack of transparency: "*But for example, we couldn't see these plans also like that. We need some permission or like that.*" (G. Köksal). It was unclear to Haliç Solidarity on which historical sources the restitution analysis was based. The court also had some issues with the transparency of the restitution analysis. It concluded that the Landside Plan lacked information about the proposed floor heights, risking that they become too high and not representative of the historical silhouette (Landside Plan, p. 20). So, the restitution analysis is criticized by some as being untransparent.

VISUAL EXPERIENCE: In the plans for Haliçport, some attention is given to how Istanbulites experience their presence to the blue space. It is limited to visual experiences of the view over Haliç and the historical peninsula: "*All public will be able to benefit from the view visually and aesthetically.*" (Seaside Plan, p. 50). Another example of how the Masterplans address senses, is by proposing several artistic elements. However, there are problems with the way art is used to legitimize certain development projects in Istanbul (A. Erbil & T. Erbil, personal communication). Art, and especially museums, redefine the way we view objects. At Haliçport, this influences the way the shipyard heritage is viewed. Art is used to help commodify spaces, transforming them into places where consumerism takes place. It often reduces the diversity of visitors, creating a

more upscale area (Türkün et al., 2022). It is unclear from the Masterplans what kind of art is planned for Haliçport, but over the past years several art expositions were hosted. In sum, visual experiences of art (figure 13) risk turning the area into a commodified space.

*Figure 13: 16th Istanbul Biennal exposition. Source: Koçak, 2021.*

MINORITIES: The design for the area as outlined in the Masterplans is homogenous, and does not consider diversity and minorities. In the Seaside Plan, it is claimed that the view will be *"aesthetically pleasing*." (Seaside Plan, p.42). It is a generalized and unsupported opinion from the developers, who did not design the space in collaboration with a (representative) user group. On the other hand, the Landside Plan goes into the area's history and states how this resulted in a diverse population today: "*It has become the focus of migration from rural to urban areas due to its proximity to industrial facilities*." (Landside Plan, p. 16). It also states the specific aim to create an area that can be used by different cultures, genders and age groups. However, the proposal for achieving such an area is rather passive. In the Landside Plan, it is argued that through the regeneration of the area, a piece of land that had become idle, becomes usable. Naturally, according to the Landside Plan, more different people can benefit from it: "*It can be used by different cultures, genders and age groups through re-functioning, allowing it to be used and thus more people can benefit from it*." (Landside Plan, p. 36). Interviewees argue that this is not enough to ensure support to everyone and to respect the area's diversity, especially minorities. From the interviews, this becomes most clear when looking at class differences. There is a risk that the plan will exacerbate social fragmentation, rather than alleviate it. According to the OEPBA vice-president, "*the nature of this project, it has been more adjusted to upscale lifestyle. The houses are sold to higher classes*." (OEPBA vice-president). IMM employees fear that "*it creates so much difference, you know. If you have this next to the rest of the neighborhoods.*" (IMM employee). It is another example where IMM employees are critical about plans from the national government. In sum, according to some interviewees, the plan for Haliçport has considered minorities insufficiently: Especially class differences are disregarded.

The main takeaways from the discussion of theme four are summarized as follows:

1. The restitution analysis is aimed at reviving the area's history, but the transparency of the analysis is criticized.
2. Visual experiences of art at Haliçport risk turning the area into a commodified space.
3. The design of the space does not cater to a diversity of residents. In fact, especially minorities of low social classes are disregarded.

### 6.6 Overview of results

In the previous discussion of the four themes, derived from the policy plans for Haliçport, I have shown how the themes relate to certain elements of spatial justice. Spatial justice was conceptualized in three dimensions: Distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice. Distributive justice here means 'the fair distribution of socially valued resources, benefits and

burdens, especially those that are specific to urban blue space'. Procedural justice here means 'the representative and transparent negotiation and planning of urban blue space, where everyone is able to participate in the decision-making process'. Recognition justice here means 'the recognition of structural vulnerability of minorities or groups that suffered from past injustices, the prioritization of these groups in urban blue space development, and the recognition that space forms local identities'. Eight criteria for distributive-, four for procedural-, and five for recognition justice were drafted to guide the spatial justice analysis of urban blue space regeneration. In figures 14, 15 and 16, the results of this research are summarized for each of the spatial justice criteria.

*Figure 14: Overview of results, in relation to the distributive spatial justice criteria.*

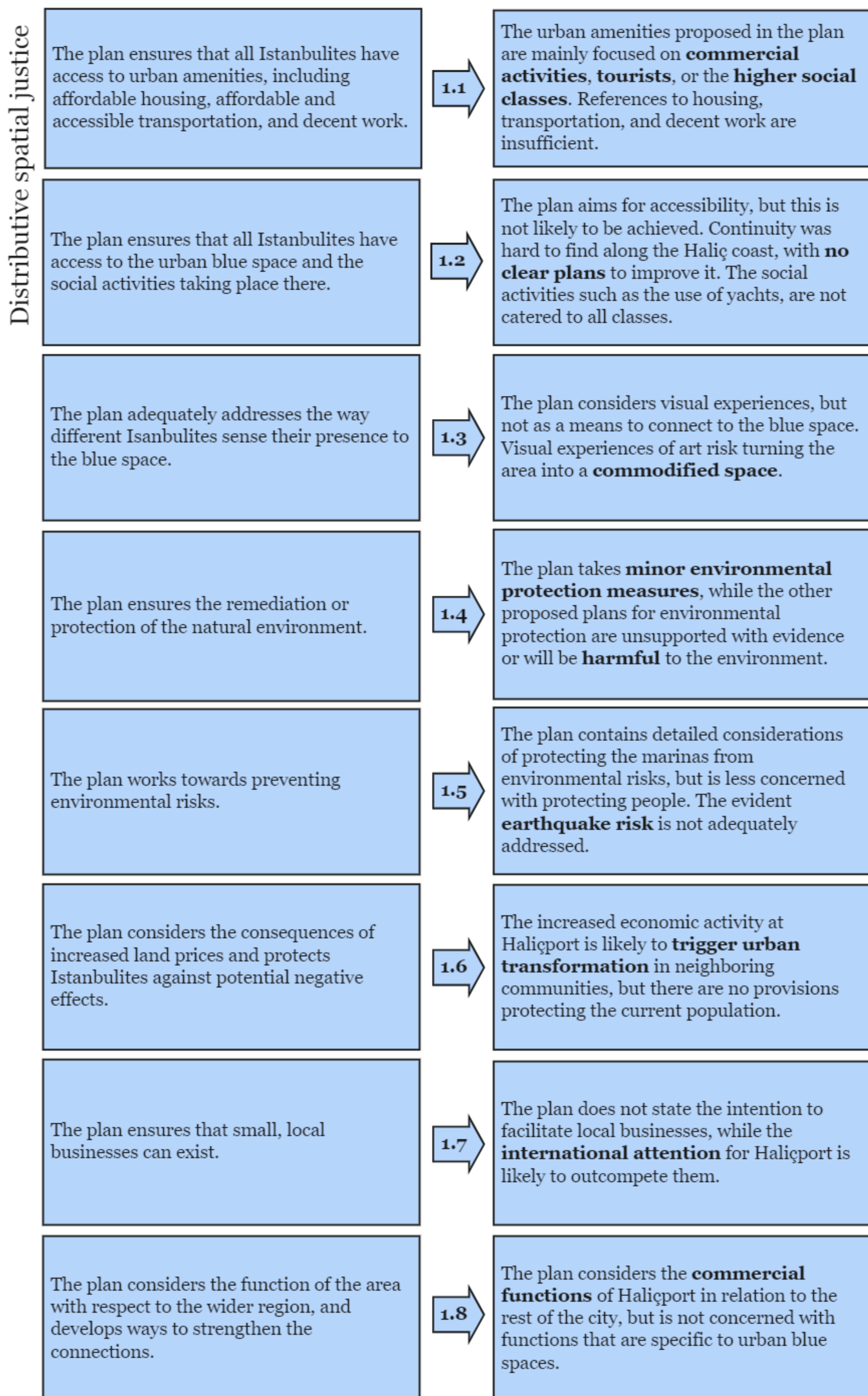


*Figure 15: Overview of results, in relation to the procedural spatial justice criteria.*

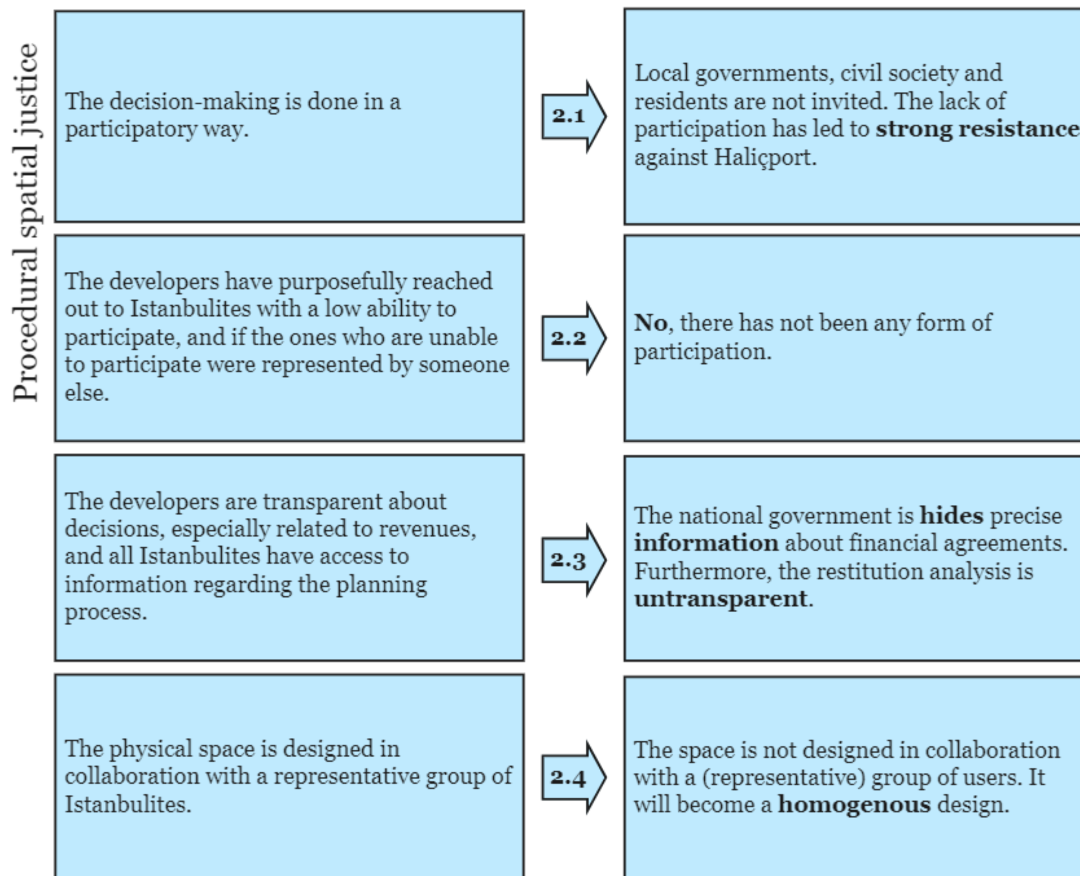
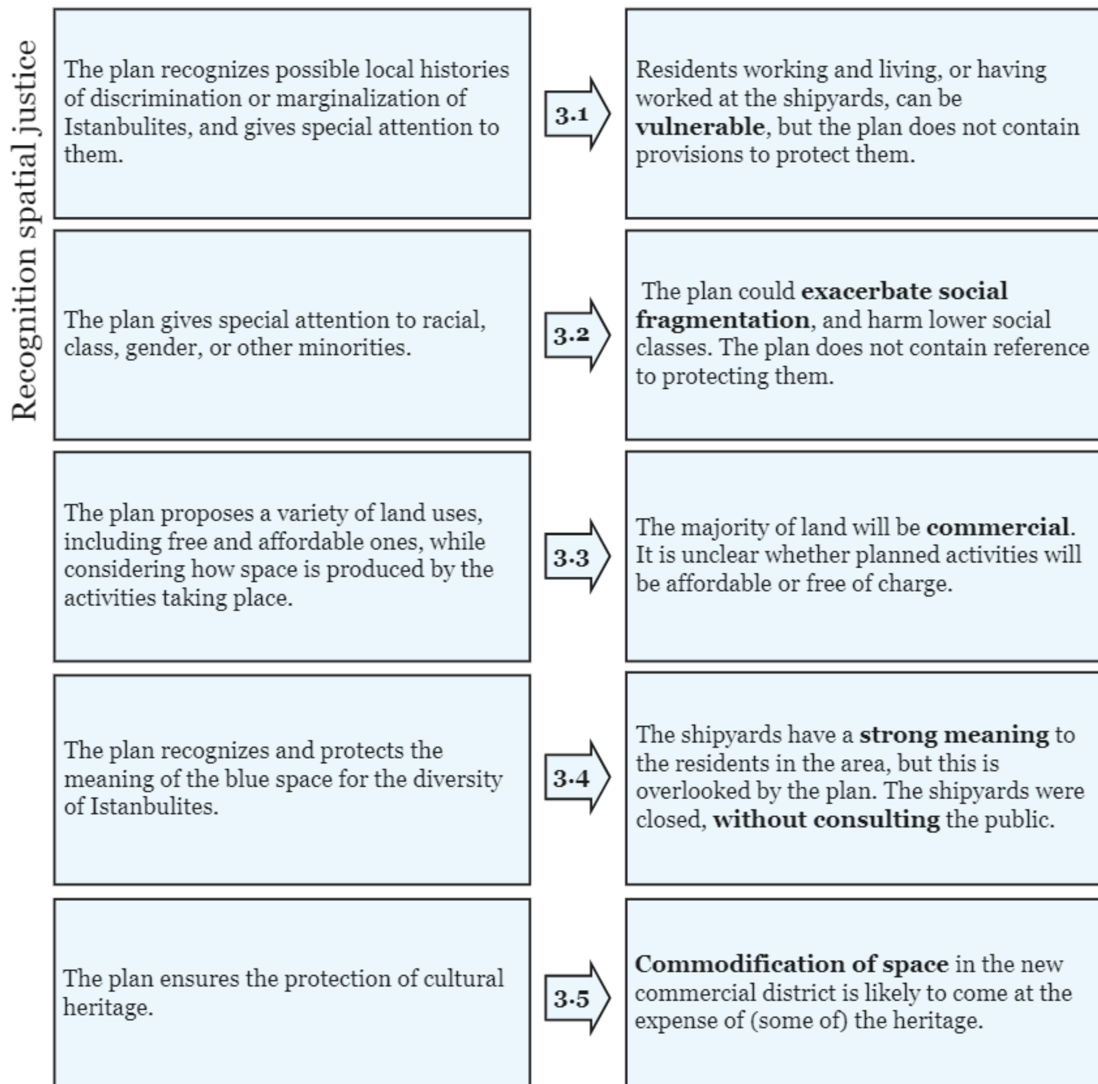


*Figure 16: Overview of results, in relation to the recognition spatial justice criteria.*



## 7. Discussion

The results, presented in the previous chapter, demonstrate that the plan for Haliçport did not prioritize spatial justice. The plan instead favors commercial development, the development of tourism, and the development of upscale urban amenities. Some of the aims in the Masterplans consider aspects of spatial justice, such as creating an accessible and walkable coast, protecting the natural environment, and protecting cultural heritage. However, the described policy actions lack clarity, are contradictory to the aims, or are not transparent. Other criteria for spatial justice are ignored in the Masterplans, such as facilitating small businesses, ensuring special attention to minorities, or creating diverse spaces that cater to a diversity of residents. The results also show that there are no plans to protect surrounding residents against possible harmful impacts of the project, such as forced displacement or increased environmental risks. Furthermore, a participatory process has been absent and resistance against Haliçport has, in vain, taken to the courts for justice. Finally, the results show tensions between the national and local governments, and a confusing policy framework for urban regeneration.

In this chapter, I will discuss and interpret the meaning of these results. First, I will compare and contrast the results with other justice-oriented studies about urban blue space regeneration. There are some differences, that can be explained by two main reasons. One, Haliçport is subjected to the will of a powerful, entrepreneurial national government and two, the policy framework for urban regeneration favors private developers. I will then explore how these two dynamics pose challenges, but also opportunities for spatial justice at Haliçport. Subsequently, I will discuss some of my observations from using the spatial justice framework, that has guided the analysis of Haliçport. Most importantly, objectively evaluating spatial justice is challenging. It means that the results of this research require a nuanced understanding. Finally, I will discuss some limitations of the research and present my recommendations, both for practice and for future research.

### 7.1 Spatial justice not a priority

The results of this research describe many policy plans that would negatively affect spatial justice at Haliçport. I will compare and contrast these with the findings of two studies: Wessells (2014) has studied urban blue space regeneration in Seattle from a fourfold perspective of justice, while Avni and Fischler (2020) have studied urban blue space regeneration in Washinton D.C from a social- and environmental justice perspective. Both studies are similar to the present study, and the results indicate some similarities as well. One finding of this research is that patterns of gentrification are likely to harm long-time residents of neighborhoods close to the area of Haliçport. Similarly, Wessells (2014) argues that the regeneration in Seattle reproduced patterns of gentrification, that would result in the displacement of minorities and cause social segregation. Both Haliçport and the Seattle blue space seem to be captured by commercial processes that favor higher social classes. An explanation could be that both cities are undergoing rapid growth, competing with other cities over the attraction of capital (Wessells, 2014).

The results of this research also show how the plan for Haliçport could result in the creation of controlled public spaces, which would harm the area's diversity of users. Interviewees compared the plan for Haliçport with the controlled public space of Galataport, which has become an area that caters to higher social classes and tourists. Avni and Fischler (2020) have discussed this process as well. They argue similarly how the creation of controlled public spaces is an effect of real estate development that caters to higher social classes (Avni & Fischler, 2020). Another finding of this research is that it is likely that low revenue-intensive land uses, such as small local businesses, will not be able to exist at Haliçport. Wessells (2014) argues that the environment for small businesses is also harsh on the Seattle waterfront, mainly because of investments in the tourism sector. Large international companies have outcompeted smaller, local businesses (Wessells, 2014); this process is also discussed in relation to Haliçport. The local government of Seattle is looking to increase its budget by increasing tax income (Wessells, 2014). The local government of Istanbul was excluded from the implementation of Haliçport, but the national government could have a similar intension.

While most research has explained urban blue space regeneration from a neoliberal governance perspective (Avni & Teschner, 2019), Brownill (2013) argues that the phenomenon should be discussed from more perspectives. In some cases, economic growth can exist next to goals related to justice (Brownill, 2013). Indeed, the plan for Haliçport contains some aims that cater to distributive justice. However, the policy plans are unlikely to achieve these aims, because the focus is too much on returns on investment. For example, the aim to protect the natural structure of the coast is overshadowed by the plans for land reclamation and floating dock systems. Contrary to the present study, some aspects of distributive justice have been notably successful elsewhere. Especially environmental remediation has been described as a success, while the creation of high-quality public spaces and decent housing have also been clear opportunities for justice (Wessells, 2014; Avni & Fischler, 2020). Avni and Fischler (2020) argue that to do justice to urban blue space regeneration, developers should explicitly include justice goals with empirical indicators to monitor progress. There have not been any explicit goals related to justice or equity in the plan for Haliçport. The plan can also not be explained by market forces or a neoliberal governance agenda alone.

Haliçport should be viewed in the context of a powerful, entrepreneurial national government. A government that favors economic growth and does not shy away from privatization policies. At Haliçport, the results show how this has resulted in tensions between local and national governments, and a policy framework that favors private developers. These dynamics mean that there are several challenges and opportunities for spatial justice at Haliçport, which are different than have been described in other contexts. These are further discussed below.

### 7.2 A powerful, entrepreneurial national government

The commercial nature of Haliçport illustrates an entrepreneurial focus of the national government, being the only actor with real decision-making power. The centralization of power is increasing in Turkey (Kuyucu, 2018), something that has always been present in the country. Before Turkey's independence (1923), Ottoman rulers favored a strong, central power in the empire (Bezmez, 2008). Once the Republic was established, centralization persisted and it was only in the 1990s that Turkey pursued decentralization policies. The result is that local governments such as Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), have generated relatively low volumes of revenue and are thus dependent on the national government for funding (Bezmez, 2008).

More recently, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been able to further centralize power through developmentalist politics. Developmentalism is described as the aspiration of developing countries to transform into prosperous capitalist states, which goes hand in hand with increased state sovereignty (Harrison, 2020). Adaman and Ukbulut (2021) describe how developmentalism is used as a strategy by AKP to prioritize economic growth, while being inconsiderate of social and environmental impacts. The popularity of AKP and the success of the centralization of power can then be attributed to the fact that many Turkey's citizens, see economic growth as the first indicator of prosperity and political success (Adaman & Ukbulut, 2021). Therefore, pursuing developmentalist policies, of which Haliçport seems to be an iteration, has helped AKP to increase the central power of the government. There are no provisions that require the developers of Haliçport to protect the social or the environmental. Rather, the focus is on economic growth – classic developmentalist policy. Centralization of power is indicative for unitary states in developing countries, of which Turkey is an example (Kuyucu, 2018), making urban governance challenging (Yazar & York, 2023). It has resulted in tensions between IMM and the national government, as the latter has created a confusing policy framework that favors the private sector.

### 7.3 Tensions between the local and national governments

Yazar and York (2023) observed such tensions not only in relation to urban regeneration, but also in relation to other policy domains. Kuyucu (2018) argues that the tensions are especially obvious in the domain of urban regeneration. IMM is run by the opposition party, which exacerbates conflict with the central government, run by AKP. By designating Haliçport as a special project

area, the national government has effectively excluded IMM and the local government of Beyoğlu district from any decisions regarding implementation. Despite their exclusion, IMM does have a strong will to integrate spatial justice in urban planning in Istanbul. Urban planners from IMM drafted an extensive spatial strategy plan for Beyoğlu, using many different participation methods (Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2023). The plan's main premise is explicitly centered around spatial justice, which also includes ideas about the future for Haliçport. Their effort indicates how there are opportunities for spatial justice. The question that remains, is how IMM could still pursue spatial justice under the shadow of the national government.

While it can be challenging to implement municipal projects under the powerful, centralized Turkish government (Kuyucu, 2018), there are certain factors that can increase the chances of success. Even when local and national governments are from opposing parties, such as in Istanbul, effective coordination between local actors has shown increased success of local initiatives (Kuyucu, 2018). Kuyucu (2018) further argues that strong leadership is necessary to unite local stakeholders behind a common goal. At Haliçport, it was observed that there was a strong movement of civil society organizations that united behind a common goal. However, there are two problems. First, the interests and objectives of IMM and Haliç Solidarity do not always converge. Haliç Solidarity was also protesting a municipal regeneration initiative next to Haliçport. Second, the projects analyzed by Kuyucu were executed before 2010. In the current political climate, municipalities run by the opposition party will encounter more obstacles when pursuing urban regeneration on their own. For example, it is now prohibited for municipalities to generate their own funding through, for example, the European Union (Kuyucu, 2018). Furthermore, Turkey is officially in an indefinite state of emergency, as a consequence of the failed coup attempt in 2016. It allows the national government to pass new laws and policies that further centralize power, without interference by the opposition (Kuyucu, 2018).

It seems that for IMM to pursue urban blue space regeneration that caters to spatial justice, a new political order is necessary. The recent local elections throughout the country (March, 2024), marked a huge loss for the ruling AKP (Kirby & Kasapoglu, 2024). However, before the national government changes hands and the policies restricting municipalities are changed, the chances for IMM seem low.

### 7.4 A policy framework skewed towards private developers

This national government has not constrained private developers' ambitions at Haliçport, even when detrimental to the public good. In fact, the government adopted a facilitating role where it transferred implementation power to the private developers. Haliçport seems to be an iteration of what Harvey (2004) calls 'accumulation by dispossession', where public land is dispossessed to make way for economic growth. Also, Haliçport seems to be an iteration of what Harvey (2006) describes as the process whereby surplus capital is invested in real estate, transforming it into physical, fixed assets, often as a means to absorb excess capital and sustain profitability in capitalist economies. In this sense, the policy plan for Haliçport is a means to achieve economic growth on public land, by fixing profits in the development of real estate. The privatization of public land at Haliçport causes profits to concentrate in the hands of the private developers. The build-operate-transfer (BOT)-approach to development is the main strategy resulting in the skewed power relation between public and private urban planners. Haliçport was tendered using the BOT-approach, making the developers the owners of the area for a period of 49 years. It poses challenges to spatial justice.

The disproportionate power of the developers is likely to lead to socioeconomic segregation. Machala and Koelemaij (2019) analyzed urban blue space regeneration in Serbia and Slovakia, unitary states as well. They also describe a disproportionate amount of power of the private developers, and highlight the spatial justice risks when single developers are in control (Machala & Koelemaij, 2019). They argue that policies increasing the power of private developers, contribute to segregated socioeconomic realities (Machala & Koelemaij, 2019). In contrast, the developers of Haliçport claim that their commercial investments contribute to the economy and therefore benefit everyone, due to the trickle-down growth effect. However, scholars have long

argued the contrary. The trickle-down growth narrative tends to contribute to economic segregation (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991), posing challenges to spatial justice. Fainstein (2010) argues that there is no inherent contradiction between economic growth and justice, but job creation should be regulated, and revenues should be invested in public goods. The plan for Haliçport is opaque about both.

Not only the BOT-approach is skewed towards the private developers. The results of this research also indicate how additions to the Coastal Law (1990) facilitate private urban regeneration. By adding new regulations and provisions to the policy framework, it has become quite confusing. The increasingly confusing policy framework has inadvertently given opponents to private urban regeneration in Istanbul some tools to resist through the courts, as most policies are now subject to multiple interpretations. Courts in Istanbul have stopped many regeneration initiatives between 2004 and 2019, because of the ill-designed policy framework (Kuyucu, 2022). It seems that here, there are some opportunities to pursue spatial justice. The courts have also judged some aspects of the plan for Haliçport as problematic, but in this case the courts' influence has been minimal. Perhaps the sheer size of Haliçport has made the success of the development too important.

In sum, several policies disproportionately transfer power to private developers, which is likely to result in socioeconomic segregation. The confusing policy framework might give opponents the opportunity to pursue spatial justice through the courts, but not at Haliçport.

### 7.5 Reflections on the spatial justice framework

In this study, I used spatial justice as a framework to evaluate the plans for Haliçport. While the framework has helped me to analyze many different concerns related to spatial justice, it is important to stress that creating objective criteria to 'measure' spatial justice is a challenging task (Feitosa et al., 2024). Furthermore, I want to stress that gathering data to demonstrate spatial (in)justice is an equally challenging task (Feitosa et al., 2024). It should be acknowledged that using different criteria, would result in exposing different issues of (in)justice. The methodology of this research, then, did not 'measure' spatial justice. Still, it provided me with different perspectives on how to analyze the policy plans and their potential effects on the city and its residents. So, justice is dependent on the context (Iveson, 2011) and the specific method of evaluation that I chose. Following the above, I do not want to suggest that the analysis, guided by the spatial justice framework, has resulted in a comprehensive assessment of spatial justice at Haliçport. Rather, it helped me to identify dynamics that have a high chance of resulting in spatial (in)justice. It means that the criteria and the results require a nuanced understanding.

Spatial justice was conceptualized into three dimensions: Distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice. While some scholars integrate procedural- and recognition justice in their work (van Uffelen, 2022), separating the two has been helpful for the evaluation of Haliçport. Young (2008) argues that treating everyone equally and adopting a representative participation process, does not yield true inclusive decision-making. Young argues that group differences, especially in relation to minorities and other vulnerable groups, are suppressed by more process. For example, urban blue space regeneration in Seattle has been subject to an extensive participation project (Wessells, 2014). However, Wessells (2014) argues that despite the participation, the regeneration reproduced unjust outcomes for minorities. It suggests a clear tradeoff between process and recognition. This tradeoff was not observed in this research, because procedural- and recognition justice were treated as different dimensions. From a procedural justice perspective, the results indicate that a participation process has been absent. From a recognition justice perspective, the policy plans for Haliçport do not recognize vulnerable residents or include policies that give special attention to them. It shows the benefit of including both procedural- and recognition justice for evaluating the policy plans for an area. A plan should provide special attention to vulnerable residents, whether the process has been just or not.

Moreover, the results suggest that some dynamics are relevant to discuss from both a distributive- and a recognition justice perspective. For example, adequately addressing how different

Istanbulites sense their presence to the blue space was a criterion for distributive justice. Different spatial elements that allow Istanbulites to sense their presence to the blue space, should be distributed equally. But there are likely to be many differences in how they feel this presence, making it also an interesting discussion from a recognition justice point of view. Also, protection against increased land prices was a criterion for distributive justice. However, the results of this research suggest that some residents are more vulnerable to potential forced displacement. This dynamic should, thus, also be discussed from a recognition justice perspective. Similarly, the protection of cultural heritage was a criterion for recognition justice. The results indicate that there is a risk that the developers will transform the industrial heritage into a heritage industry. This commodification of heritage is relevant to discuss from a distributive justice perspective as well. These examples highlight the challenge of using the spatial justice framework. It has been challenging to categorize findings and even criteria under specific dimensions of justice. It suggests that the dimensions used in this research are intertwined, but they cannot be reduced to mean the same. It is then also not necessary to categorize certain findings under a single dimension. Rather, the dimensions complement each other to highlight different concerns. Fraser (2001) argued that justice needs to be conceptualized into multiple dimensions, without reducing one to the other, to be able to create an encompassing definition of justice. This is, thus, actually a strength of the framework, as the dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Discussing Haliçport from different perspectives, resulted in an extensive evaluation of spatial justice.

I also want to discuss some aspects that more specifically relate to the spatial justice criteria used. The criteria were derived from integrating the definitions for distributive-, procedural-, and recognition justice with selected studies about urban blue space regeneration. Generally speaking, the criteria have sufficiently guided the spatial justice evaluation of Haliçport. However, some aspects that seem relevant for urban blue space were not included. Referring to the waterfront as an urban blue space, foregrounds that the water should also be a place where ecology can thrive (Wessells, 2014). The results of this research, indeed, indicate the importance of protecting the natural environment of Haliç. Although I have used one criterion related to environmental protection, it has not explicitly focused on the abilities of plants and animals to exist in the blue space. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2014) has called for a definition of spatial justice as overcoming the conflict between bodies to be in the same space. This perspective on spatial justice has been criticized for focusing only on the spatiality of justice, losing its social context (Madanipour et al., 2022). However, it makes sense to pay more attention to non-human bodies when discussing spatial justice in relation to urban blue space.

Another aspect that was not included in the framework, is related to intergenerational justice. Intergenerational justice stems from the idea that future generations should be protected from those effects (Tremmel, 2009). This dimension of justice becomes crucial for urban blue space due to the effects of climate change. The results of this research suggest that Haliç is vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. In politics in general, and policymaking in particular, there is a lot of discussion about who owes what to whom, but intergenerational justice is the basic argument behind modern-day policies for sustainable development (Tremmel, 2009). Recognition justice was conceptualized to include patterns of historical discrimination, based on the argument of Fraser (2001). While this is necessary, recognition justice could also include a criterion that recognizes the vulnerability of future generations. Especially when talking about urban blue space.

### 7.6 Limitations

Here, I want to discuss several limitations of this research. One limitation is that the criteria for spatial justice have not been benchmarked, as discussed to some extent in the previous section. It has, at times, made it challenging to judge whether the plan for Haliçport sufficiently considers a criterion. While benchmarking spatial justice is challenging, benchmarking specific aspects of the framework is more doable. For example, accessibility to the blue space could be benchmarked in terms of walkability, distance to the blue space from public amenities, or the travel time from different parts of the city to the blue space. More specific measurements would have been valuable, but the analysis of spatial justice presented here still allowed for an interpretation and

evaluation of the policy plans. In this study, the criteria were more of a guide for analysis. Having such guiding criteria made it possible to touch upon relevant elements of spatial justice and urban blue space regeneration.

Second, I want to discuss bias based on the methodology. Qualitative content analysis is dependent on the interpretations of the researcher (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In this research there has been only one perspective on the data interpretation, which might reduce the credibility of the research. More credibility could have been obtained by having multiple coders (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), although this also has its disadvantages. With multiple coders, a streamlined coding process is necessary to obtain comparable results (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). To minimize bias to some extent in this research, coding was done in multiple rounds, but it should be acknowledged that preventing all bias is not possible. In the end, I do not believe having multiple perspectives or coders would have changed the outcomes of this research significantly. The data demonstrating the commercial focus of Haliçport has been abundant.

Third, I want to reflect on the limited time for this research. Spatial justice concerns are often not 'visible' and could, over time, entrench social dynamics. For example, Acar et al. (2015) found that some effects of the Galataport urban transformation became visible only after 14 years. They found that investments had increased considerably and that urban amenities were accessible only to middle-high and high-income groups (Acar et al., 2015). While it would be valuable, it is important to stress that this research has not analyzed any outcome of Haliçport. Therefore, the results of this research are meaningful in relation to evaluating policy plans, or drafting new plans. Assessing the outcome of a certain regeneration initiative requires a different approach, and a considerable time span.

Finally, the number of conducted interviews has been limited. Residents have been regarded as the main stakeholder group that spatial justice should cater to, but interviews with residents have been limited. However, the interviewed resident was a representative of Haliç Solidarity, representing many more residents with his opinions. Also, the OEPBA represents residents and actively comes up for their rights. The results of these interviews were, thus, not taken lightly. Interviews with urban planners that drafted the Masterplans, or with one of the private developers of Haliçport, could also have been valuable. It would have provided a new perspective to this research. However, the developers did not respond to my invites, and the urban planners refused an interview even when I came to the doorstep of their office. It is unfortunate, but their refusal supports the results of this research regarding transparency. In summary, the results of this research have been somewhat limited by the available time and the opaqueness of the planning process. The opaqueness of the process is also a result of the research.

### 7.7 Recommendations

Before moving towards the final chapter where I present the conclusions, I want to make several recommendations. First, I want to make some practical recommendations. In the previous sections, I argued how the dominant focus on economic growth, the increasing centralization of power, and the developer-centered policy framework pose challenges to spatial justice at Haliçport. I also argued how the current political climate in Turkey makes it challenging to change any of that. Therefore, I want to make some recommendations specifically for the plan for Haliçport. The recommendations propose changes to the plan that would likely result in a more spatially just Haliçport. While there are many points for improvement, I will highlight the ones that are most evident based on the results of this research. The majority of these can be directly devised from the results, but I think it is important to articulate the specific points for improvement here. This results in twelve recommendations, meant for the developers of Haliçport. Second, I will present seven recommendations for future research.

**Recommendations for spatial justice at Haliçport:**

- The developers should adopt a participation process to determine how the plans can be changed to do justice to the important meaning of the shipyards. In doing so, the developers should purposefully reach out to Istanbulites with a low ability to participate.

- The developers should conduct an extensive social analysis. The analysis should identify minority groups and residents who are vulnerable to the economic effects of Haliçport, due to local histories of marginalization. The plan should then give special attention to them, to ensure their vitality with adequate support when Haliçport opens to the public.
- The developers should provide publicly accessible information on their plans for the area, the costs of their plans, how they will capture revenues, which jobs will be created and for whom.
- The developers should increase the amount of affordable and free land-uses, so that all Istanbulites will be able to enjoy the area.
- The developers should plan for more social and affordable housing, which would decrease the risk of social segregation at Haliçport.
- The developers should refrain from installing signaling devices at Haliçport, that could be used to control the space. It would improve future accessibility at Haliçport.
- The developers should remove the limitations for pedestrian access, to improve the accessibility to Haliç for all Istanbulites.
- The developers should include the construction of facilities for different blue space activities, besides the yacht facilities, based on the interests of different Istanbulites. This would also improve the accessibility to Haliç for all Istanbulites.
- The developers should refrain from land reclamation in Haliç, to prevent environmental damage.
- The developers should decrease the weight of their constructions, to prevent environmental risks. Furthermore, they should adopt building strategies that are earthquake resistant.
- The developers should facilitate the presence of local businesses, for example by renting the commercial buildings for low prices to local entrepreneurs.

**Recommendations for future research:**

- Future research could focus on empirical research in more different contexts. Spatial justice is context-dependent, and most research about urban blue space regeneration is centered in Europe, the U.S., and Australia. This research has shown that there are different challenges for spatial justice in the context of Istanbul. It will be valuable to extend the database.
- Future research could further operationalize the framework used here. The criteria have been useful for analysis, but benchmarking the criteria could improve analysis. Future research should keep in mind though, that benchmarking will be dependent on the context.
- Future research could include a criterion related to the presence of non-human bodies. Urban blue space implies the importance of ecology, so the framework used here could be extended to focus on spatial justice for non-human bodies.
- Future research could include a criterion related to the recognition of future generations. Urban blue space is sensitive to the effects of climate change. It implies that a criterion related to the potential vulnerability of future generations, could be a valuable addition to the framework used here.
- Future research could conduct more interviews with residents. More resident perspectives would have been a valuable addition to the results of this research, as more perspectives reveal the potential justice concerns of a larger population. When conducting similar research in a different setting, it is also recommended to increase the number of resident interviews as compared to this research.
- Future research could include the perspective of the developers of Haliçport. While it will be challenging, including the perspective of the developers might uncover interesting dynamics that were not observed in this research. When conducting similar research in a different setting, it is also recommended to include the developer perspective.
- Future research at Haliçport specifically, could evaluate the outcomes of the policy plans for Haliçport after, for example 14 years. A post-evaluation from a spatial justice

perspective, can reflect on possible effects that could not be identified by evaluating the policy plans.

## 8. Conclusions

This thesis has aimed to find an answer to the question to what extent the plan for Haliçport caters to distributive-, procedural-, and recognition spatial justice. The answer is simple, in that the developers of Haliçport have not made spatial justice a priority. The underlying reasons are, however, more complex. The entrepreneurial national government relies on developmentalist politics, striving for economic growth with little regard for the 'social' and the 'environmental'. Their entrepreneurial focus has gone hand in hand with a growing centralization of power, making urban governance challenging.

It resulted in tensions between the local and the national governments, and a policy framework that favors private developers. The local government of Istanbul is more motivated to do justice to urban blue space, but constrained by the authoritarian political climate. The urban regeneration policies instead favor private developers, which is likely to result in socioeconomic segregation at Haliçport. While this thesis identified many points for improvement at Haliçport, it might be too late for any major changes. Construction is expected to finish within a few years, even though resistance against the project is fierce. Before a new political order is achieved, privatization of public urban blue space could intensify reducing the chances for spatial justice.

This thesis has surfaced new challenges for spatial justice in the context of Istanbul, and that spatial justice offers a refreshing perspective on urban blue space regeneration. Even though the spatial justice framework used here can be improved, the concept seems useful to evaluate urban blue space regeneration. Now the knowledge base on spatial justice and urban blue space regeneration needs to be expanded further, to find out how, also in the global South, the transition towards spatial justice can materialize in concrete policy action.

This thesis does not stem hopeful for the future of Haliçport. However, the strong resistance movement and slowly changing political climate might increase the chances for spatial justice at Istanbul's other blue spaces. In any case, urban planners from the local government remain positive. They said that "*there is something to do actually, the intention is the important thing here*". The intention to bring urban blue space back to the people of Istanbul. Because urban blue space is precious, especially for the water city that is Istanbul.

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