Neoliberalization Process of Contemporary City:
(Providing a Theoretical Model)
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Abstract:
Cities play a strategic role in contemporary neoliberal political-economic policies in spatial term. Neoliberalism is a theory that considers market-based exchange as an ethical system that can work as a guideline for all human actions. Based on neoliberal principles, the role and intervention of government in economic policies is minimized and its responsibilities towards citizen is reduced. Despite their global character, neoliberal policies as the current dominant hegemony of political-economic space have never been uniquely materialized at urban form scale. Existing economic-political contexts and the production modes defines the way neoliberalism can evolve (Actually existing neoliberalism). On the other hand neoliberalism is very systematic and re-structures the urban form in a very programed way to locate, rearrange and relocate economic institutes which leads to neoliberal restructuring project. The objective of this paper is to understand the urban form through this restructuring process. This article uses a descriptive-analytical method and mostly has relied on library-research method. The main question of the research is “how neo-liberalization process takes place across different urban contexts and in which layers?”. Question in which relies on “actually existing neo-liberalism” as a key character of “neo-liberal restructuring project”. It refers to ways in which different local contexts are embedded within wider dominant global structural grid of neo-liberal discursive command centers. It implies another key attribute, the “path dependent neo-liberalism”, the neo-liberal project defined on contextually embedded bases, elaborately rearranges, replaces and redefines the structures of existing institutional layout and subsequently transforms the shape of the city in two critical moment of neoliberal restructuring project: the “moment of destruction” and the “moment of creation”.

In all scales that destruction-creation process of neoliberalism has been materialized, cities due to their increasing strategic character have played a critical role. The central zones of cities that works as economic production-reproduction centers in Keynesian-Fordist economies have been transformed into critical points for neoliberalism restructuring due to their special character as creative and growth places and their potential for examining new policies in local and global scale no matter where they are and what economic structure they have. Three different layers of neo-liberal process in cities has been distinguished by synthesizing two theoretically different but dialectically intertwined methodological foundations (Keil and Brenner-Theodore approaches): functional layer, structural layer, “common sense revolution” layer. This synthesized theoretical frame work has conceptualized the contemporary neo-liberal transformation of city form by emphasizing the distinction between two different mechanisms of neo-liberal project, the glocalization and urbanization stages. Roger Keil explores the connection of the neoliberalism with the city via three concepts of: -1Everyday life, -2transformation of power technologies and -3political-economy. The first concept proposes a new understanding of the city via the mediation and overlapping of everyday life with global restructuring of capitalistic economy which is a new reading of the city similar to Lefebvre theory of space. In Lefebvre's view city is a spatial context within which production relationships are reproduced through everyday life of people. Therefore space is a social product that can be consumed as a commodity and he believes that modern societies create specific relations between production, reproduction and consumption that are reproduced through lived spaces of everyday life. Lefebvre's concept of everyday life is a reflection of Fordist Post-war European societies which has gone through a process of transformation during Keynesian and welfare-state economies and turned into welfare-state post-Fordist society. The second concept of Keil formulates neoliberalism through the prism of Foucault idea of power and interprets it as an ideology, politics and authority. In this view, neoliberalism is not a no-state prescription but a complex of changing power technologies that can be led to three major transformations in capitalistic societies: -1interrelation of specializations and policies with emphasize on capabilities, efficiencies and knowledge marketability, -2vast privatization without public vote, and -3redefinition of state within which citizens are customers and independent market partners and are responsible for their health, success and welfare. The third Keil idea is political economy. 50 years after emergence of neoliberalism doctrine there are two historical viewpoints toward it: the first one views neoliberalism as a transitional historical period within global capitalist development and the second one is a view point that argues the relation of neoliberalism with socio-critical theories in scientific and political circles and analyze it as a separate historical period. Harvey using Lefebvre framework, distinguishes three stages of
economic transformation until post-Fordist economy. A new space in this view emerges that is intertwined with the post-industrial economy and a new economic landscape in circulation of capital, consumption and consumption is formed that is emerged out of new shapes of production. The capital accumulation leads to a new economic integration that produces a kind of social surplus. This social surplus inherited from traditional modes of production creates a new social space through transition from Fordist to post-Fordist economy that shapes the contemporary modes of living. Based on Benner and Theodore views about neoliberalism, firstly, evolvement, growth and configuration of neoliberalism has been took place in different and various shapes, spatial scales and political and historical periods and depending on the power and territorial domination of powerful classes and their inconsistent and sometimes paradoxical experiences and ideologies has been materialized in shape of specific physical or political projects (path-dependent neoliberalism). Secondly, there is no specific form of neoliberalism that can be prescribed for a certain place and neoliberalism can be defined and described as an incorporative form to the existing background consisting of political systems, social struggles and economic experiences (Actually existing neoliberalism). In Bernner and Thodore’s approach, three definition of neoliberalism in relation to the city in three different scales are provided: -neoliberalism as an urban governance quality, -neoliberalism as a political strategy for spatial issues, -neoliberalism as a form of ideology. Then structural features of neoliberalism in the city in two separated stages of neo-liberalization process i.e. glocalization and neoliberal urbanization mechanism in three different groups including spatial-physical, socio-cultural and economic-political are defined. Glocalization of neoliberalism means the sedimentation of neoliberal policies in specific scales either in a global context or a specific geographical place. Neoliberal urbanization deals with more concrete aspects of neo-liberalization that are materialized in urban contexts and only take place after the previous stage. Based on these concepts a new framework and explanation of an analytic model of neo-liberal city transformation has been emerged from discussed issues as a matrix. The columns of this matrix, consists of the layers of neo-liberal process and the rows includes integrated dimensions of city form. This model provides primitive analytic criteria for understanding the overall layers of neo-liberalization process in specific urban contexts. This model provide a basic tool for analyzing the neo-liberalization of geographical and urban places in three local, national and global scales and explains how neoliberalism influences the urban form via political-economic transformation at global scale, interference with the power technology at national scale and change in the quality of everyday life at local scale.

**Keywords:** urban political economy, contemporary city, neoliberalism, city governance, everyday life