

## Abstract

Mega projects have been presented throughout history; despite increasing citizen and academic criticism in recent decades. They continue to be popular choices for governments; the reasons given for this primarily relate to the symbolic political capital inherent in their deployment.

The study contributes to the existing body of literature on mega projects by examining the processes mobilised to develop megaprojects in post-2011 Turkey. The research explores government rationales regarding megaproject development centred on *'how'* mega projects are decided upon and *'why'* they are to uncover how regulatory systems and process are manipulated and ignored.

The research uses a qualitative multiple-case study approach with three case studies of mega projects in Istanbul, Turkey, all of which are located in environmentally fragile areas. Primary data comes from semi-structured interviews with key actors, including chambers (professional organizations), NGOs, lawyers, and authorities, mobilised alongside a detailed analysis of primary and secondary documentary material.

The thesis reveals how political and legal changes are executed to achieve strategic goals of the national state. It highlights underlying national and international economic, political and ideological drivers beyond the presented purposes of mega projects. It furthers our understanding of mega project decision-making by highlighting the significance of geographical political economy alongside the internal dynamics of the State in explaining mega project investments.

**Keywords:** Megaprojects, governmental decision-making, planning systems, Turkey.