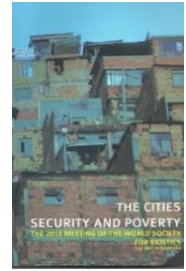


The Cities, Security and Poverty

Meltem Yılmaz & H. Çağatay Keskinok (eds.) (2015)
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The 2013 Meeting of the World Society for Ekistics was held in Ankara, Turkey around the theme of 'The Cities, Security and Poverty'¹. The proceedings from this international meeting, edited by Meltem Yılmaz and H. Çağatay Keskinok, form an overarching account of the changing power relations in a globalized world, discussing their socio-spatial implications for human settlements with particular reference to the key issues of the weakening public sphere and communality, increasing socio-spatial fragmentation and inequalities, and emerging security problems related to both political insurgencies and environmental degradation. Although the content of the book is not structured around certain sub-headings or themes, it is possible to categorize the 18 distinctive contributions as follows: (i) changing power relations and their implications on the public sphere; (ii) spatial manifestations of changing power relations and urban segregation; (iii) crime and security problems in urban spaces; (iv) ecological transitions, sustainability issues and environmental disasters.

As a parallel to the meeting's main emphasis on power issues and their socio-spatial implications, Luca Muscara wisely posits the notion of 'power' as being at the centre of ongoing discussions regarding the socio-spatial fragmentation of contemporary urban space; highlighting the inevitable relationship between political power and Urban Studies. Muscara's inclusive approach contextualizes two distinctive urban theories within that supposition – Jean Gottmann's Megalopolis and Constantinos Doxiadis' Ekistics. This implies that the study of human settlements exceeds the act of mere problem-solving as it has an explicitly political role to play in the development of social cohesion and peace. In that sense, Baykan Gunay's 2013 C.A. Doxiadis Lecture on the spatial history of Ankara provides a clear example of the Turkish state's political desire to create a modern society and new spatial organization through the planning of a new capital city. Arguing similarly that cities are beyond mere physical artefacts, Duygu Cihanger and Burak Büyükcivelek critically evaluate the Gezi Park Movement, one of the recent political urban movements which has emerged in Turkey, discussing its social implications with respect to an increased awareness of the importance of social cohesion, the public sphere, democracy, and the right to access the city itself. In addition, Pelin Yıldız and Berrak Erdal's discussions on the notion of 'speed' as one of the parameters of the contemporary public sphere aid the reader to understand the enduring transition from

communality to individuality in urban life, and add another conceptual dimension to the analysis to grasp the importance of emerging political uprisings that reflect the changing power relations in Turkish cities.

Spatial manifestations of changing power relations are discussed widely by a substantial number of articles with respect to spatial fragmentation, physical segregation and current urban transformation practices in Turkey. In this respect, Duygu Koca's comprehensive investigation of 'gated communities' makes a significant contribution to the discussion of spatial fragmentation in Istanbul. Exploring emerging patterns of segregated residential architecture in relation to different socio-economic groups reveals the deepening impacts and changing dimensions of socio-spatial segregation in Turkish cities. Similarly, Ufuk Poyraz and Merve Önder bring the issue of destructive spatial interventions to the attention of readers and point out to the homogenization of urban spaces, exclusion of others and deepening spatial segregations between different and variously powerful groups in society.

Following the discussions of changing power relations and their socio-spatial implications, Diren Kocakuşak and Zuhal Nağçakar's conceptualization of urban crime as a measure of security illustrates the necessity of considering both the main socio-economic driving forces and existing spatial factors to address security concerns in cities. Addressing the same issue, Ayhan Melih Tezcan conceptualizes urban security within the 'territoriality' discussion and points out the changing means of territorial order - privatization of public spaces, emerging 'gated communities' and shopping malls – as symptoms of struggles over security and power in contemporary urban spaces.

Environmental challenges and the negative externalities of ecological transitions form another dimension of the discussion around the issues of security, inequality and sustainability. In this context, Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis' comprehensive account of the notion of 'biopolis' outlines an overarching framework for the realization of an environmentally sustainable and livable city. Arvanitis emphasizes the necessity of an ecological planning approach. In contrast, Rıza Fatih Mendilcioğlu's critical inquiry into large-scale ecological architectural projects focused on natural concerns finds that socio-economic and equity issues do not receive enough attention. In this respect, Bilge Sayıl Onaran and Emine Nur Ozanözgü

¹ Book cover image sourced at:

<http://www.openaccess.hacettepe.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11655/11815/tcsap.jpg?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

suggest that culture and identity are complementary and necessary for the realization of true sustainability. This approach helps readers come to grips with the multi-dimensional complexities involved in developing environmentally secure, sustainable, and just cities. Ezgi Orhan's study on post-disaster spatial planning practices in Turkey, on the other hand, critically evaluates the changing understandings of environmental security and investigates the effects of post-disaster practices on spatial and social fragmentation in earthquake-hit cities of Turkey.

To conclude, then, this comprehensive compilation brings to the forefront the problematic issues related to power, security and poverty by highlighting the recent socio-spatial experiences in Turkish cities. The multi-dimensional and fruitful discussion - including wide-ranging debates about the weakening public sphere, deepening socio-spatial inequalities and spatial segregations, emerging security problems and environmental concerns - presents an informative and stimulating overview that offers a framework for changing power relations and their socio-spatial manifestations in contemporary urban spaces. This inclusive compilation offers a fresh outlook to the emerging problems of Turkish cities and deserves to be read by the widest possible audience.

Onur Tümtürk

University of Melbourne, Australia