

Editorial

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In the last century, Turkey has encountered many urban issues as a consequence of an increasingly urban population characterized by its heterogeneity (diversity). Expansion of urban areas, intensification of developments within existing cities and towns, and the continued proliferation of high-rise and other intensive building types have resulted in the deterioration of the overall character of cities, and the ongoing loss of natural and socio-cultural resources. A multiplicity of design and planning issues is currently to be found in Turkish cities which also face an array of complex challenges in different domains. This complex and challenging situation prompted us to compose this special issue, which marks the return of the *Ekistics* journal following a pause of thirteen years. I am delighted to have put together the first issue of the journal in its renewed form with an updated title: *Ekistics and the New Habitat*.

Following a thorough evaluation process, the current special issue has brought together seven articles and a book review that address different planning and urban design issues. Organized around the generic themes of urban and landscape development, sustainability, urban public spaces, liveability and imageability, our authors approach these themes using a variety of research methods and case studies from Turkish cities.

In the opening article on sustainable cities in the future in Turkey, Oktay (2020) suggests that urban planning and design should be seen as a process through which the habitats are consciously shaped and managed in line with the requirements of sustainability. In this context, the author reminds us that although urbanism and architecture based on ecological principles have a long history, the rigorous translation into action of the principles of environmental sustainability remains of critical importance. The author further argues that in an era of globalization, the need for social sustainability and increased sensitivity to local contexts becomes even more critical than ever. Accordingly, the article is a critical assessment of contemporary paradigms of sustainable urbanism considered in light of the current realities of world cities, using the traditional Turkish (Ottoman) city as a model to provide an analysis of the ecological and social concerns governing urban formation. The author concludes by drawing lessons for sustainable urbanism from both contemporary and traditional approaches, highlighting the importance of sensitivity to the local, while recommending possible deviations from human-centred approaches due to impacts of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the prevailing conditions beginning to emerge from it. In this very contemporary sense, then, Oktay (2020) points out the need to balance the competing future demands of public health and the environment with ecological and social-cultural concerns.

The second article in this special issue, “Eco-Villages as Sustainable Human Habitats: Challenges and Conflicts in Turkey” focuses our attention on eco-village initiatives founded on the dream of creating a sustainable and self-sufficient community. Güleriyüz Çohadar and Dostoglu (2020) assess the villages’ respective success in terms of their fulfilment of ecological and social dimensions of sustainability. Carrying out personal interviews in four selected eco-villages in Turkey, the authors point out that, rather than facing physical problems owing to the residents’ isolation from their social and professional lives, the existing eco-villages must contend with economic and social problems. Güleriyüz Çohadar and Dostoglu (2020) propose that even though eco-villages’ core principle of ecological sustainability may differ from the principles of traditional villages, eco-village initiatives would benefit from an increased awareness of the social elements of traditional villages and could learn from their shared solutions to common sustainability problems.

The need for affordable housing is still a major issue in developing countries, including Turkey. Since housing areas are where environmental problems most impact people’s quality of life, the planning and design of sustainable housing environments requires a sensitive approach. Paşalar, Demir and Hallowell (2020) explore this issue in the context of affordable housing in Turkey; exploring the idea that truly affordable housing is only possible through a multidisciplinary approach that caters for both affordability and sustainability. The article advocates a comprehensive integrated approach to affordable and sustainable housing development, as it has the added advantage of reducing costs in other areas, such as energy consumption, transportation, healthcare, work opportunities, life cycle and maintenance expenditures, and so forth. Examining four housing projects developed by the Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) in two prominent Turkish cities, the authors conclude that integrating sustainability goals and assessment parameters into new affordable housing developments can improve not only the long-term economic viability of the operation of the housing development but also the economic and social sustainability of its inhabitants.

Access to urban nature and green landscapes is important for urban resilience in both the short- and long-term; access to such spaces helps to maintain physical and mental health in the short-term and to sustain general urban resilience in the long-term. Sert and Bütüner (2020) dwell on the fragmented and shrunken landscape fabric of Ankara to provide a critical reading of the changing landscapes of the city. Their analysis reveals the potential that remains for framing integrative urban strategy-making. In this context, the authors point to the critical role played by landscape policy-making and recent landscape theory in the adoption of new positions in the face of urban challenges. They further highlight the need for the development of coherent land use and landscape strategies, in opposition to the destructive impacts of urban policies on landscape fabric. Their analysis of the changing landscapes of Ankara is discussed referring to three cases that reveal the need for the generation of landscape infrastructure, reconceived as an urban landscape. This new conception could form the basis of solutions to apparent problems

such as flooding, air and basin pollution, but also unnoticed challenges such as the effects of climate change, preservation of endemic species, and the city's livability.

Based on the fact that walking not only has environmental, emotional and health benefits, but also is key to social connectedness and liveability, walkability is one of the essential qualities of sustainable and healthy habitats. However, while urban planners and designers have long been working to increase walkability in big cities, the challenge has always been to compete with the dominance of vehicle traffic. Turkish cities are no exception to this. Akkar Ercan and Belge (2020) explore the concept of walkability and provide an assessment model to measure the level of the walkability of a given place. The findings of their research and case study in the historic city centre of Mersin indicate that walkability is multi-dimensional and qualitatively and quantitatively measurable. Dwelling on the hypothesis that there is a need for a dynamic, flexible, human-centred and inclusive planning and design approach for addressing today's complex problems and future requirements of cities, the authors offer an alternative to a top-down and centralist approach. The paper is expected to contribute to the decision-making process, as it provides a practical means for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners to assess and score the walkability level of a given space, thereby identifying the strengths and weaknesses of specific urban areas.

Seçmen and Türkoğlu (2020) explore the spatial characteristics of urban waterfronts of Istanbul, the transcontinental city straddling the Bosphorus Strait, which separates Europe and Asia between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. Interrogating the transformation of the city's historic waterfronts in parallel to the urban development process since the 19th century, the authors claim that the five historic waterfronts - namely Eminönü, Karaköy, Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Beşiktaş - have not been developed as a part of a holistic planning approach. They subsequently develop five parameters for the evaluation of the spatial characteristics of open spaces on urban waterfronts: 'water-based environment', 'connectivity and continuity', 'imageability', 'compatibility' and 'looseness'. The findings of their research revealed that the historical waterfronts in Istanbul while contributing to the overall image of the city, lack important spatial qualities such as positive interaction with water, accessibility via public transportation, adequate pedestrian access, and diversity of spaces and uses.

In the final article by Mutman and Yorgancıoğlu (2020), the urban transformation strategy implemented in Istanbul over the past 15 years is identified as a tool to promote the 'new' urban discourse and the cityscape. In this context, the authors decode and analyze the actors, roles, and branding images of selected urban projects which were concentrated on a top-down planning approach. The results of the study suggest that the re-reading of the city and its 'new' Istanbul image enables us to easily recognize representations of political power that were developed through a construction practice using simulations of historical images and manipulating spaces for 'the new', 'the iconic', and 'the gigantic'. The authors then point out a connection between these initiatives (following the common path of configuring the city according to a top-down planning strategy), and one of Tafuri's arguments concerning Istanbul which insists that the city is 'devoid of social and individual utopia' due to capitalist-development-led practices, played out as 'the drama of architecture' (Tafuri, 1998, p. 3-4).

Taken together, the articles in this issue may not fully cover all points of interest regarding urbanism and the new habitat in Turkey. However, they certainly give academic researchers, policymakers, developers, and citizens a clear view of a range of timely issues that require more attention and investigation in future urban developments and/or redevelopments.

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