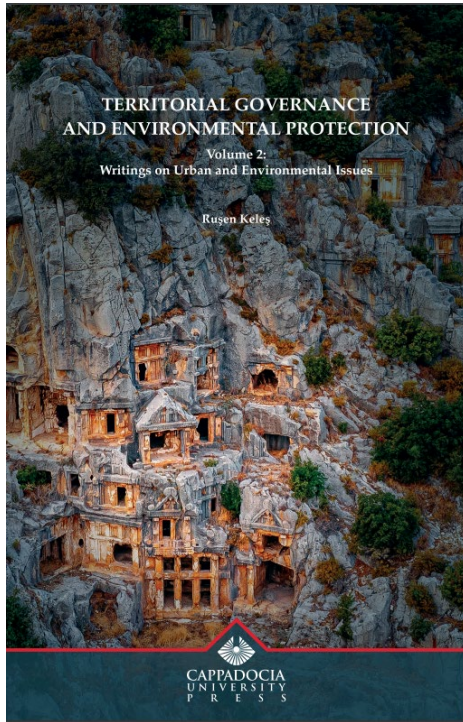

Book Review



Territorial Governance and Environmental Protection Volume 2: Writings on Urban and Environmental Issues

by Ruşen Keleş, *Nevşehir: Cappadocia University Press, 2023; 386 pp, ISBN: 978-605-4448-51-7*

As the five-year milestone for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approaches, the world faces increasing centralization, urbanization, as well as widening environmental, economic, and social challenges. To address these pressing issues effectively, local autonomy, global cooperation, and technological advances are needed. These pillars have the potential to create social, economic, and environmental resilience within smart cities fit for future generations. Yet, achieving these goals demands unified action, driven by shared ethical commitment, from political leaders, governments, professionals, and individuals worldwide. In *Territorial Governance and Environmental Protection Volume 1: Urban Sprawl and Sustainable Urbanization* (2022), Ruşen Keleş delved into the issue of urban sprawl, proposing policy solutions guided by principles of sustainability, ekistics and subsidiarity. In *Environmental Protection Volume 2: Writings on Urban and Environmental Issues* (2023), sustainability and governance take center stage, addressing challenges such

as disaster management, urban transformation projects, and the protection of historical and cultural resources.

The second volume comprises ten main topics supported by eighteen essays, which form a compilation of papers presented by Dr. Keleş at international conferences, symposia, and panels. The first two topics address ecological concerns, urban planning, the impact of globalization on local autonomy, and the complex dynamics of Turkey's relationship with the European Union. The following six main subjects focus on projects, governance practices, and policies in Turkey, offering critical reflections and comparative analyses to illuminate emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities. The final emphasis of the book is on ethical responsibilities towards future generations in a globalized world, addressing urban planning, administrative culture, territorial and local governance issues. Echoing the first volume, the second includes a rich review of literature, policies, and firsthand observations, with a focus on territorial and international milestone events. By including discussions



on Europe and Turkey, along with their policies, implementations, and practices, the text offers depth and real-world context to its overarching themes. This broad framing allows the author ample intellectual space to explore a range of Turkish approaches and practices beyond Territorial Governance and Environmental Protection.

Keleş pragmatically frames sustainable development as the guiding principle of spatial development strategy and democratic governance at all levels of authority, drawing insights from the Brundtland Commission, Rio Declaration, and European Union approaches. His emphasis on the idea that all of humanity collectively owns the assets forming a common heritage underscores the importance of addressing environmental challenges, particularly in heavily affected regions like the Black Sea, which has been the most polluted sea in the world since the Chernobyl incident. This perspective highlights the importance of establishing robust links with environmental protection systems to safeguard these critical resources. Keleş also explores the reliance on citizen activism and legal recourse in environmental protection efforts, underscoring the significance of public awareness and consciousness in ensuring sustainability amidst pressures from globalization. However, despite constitutional provisions and international agreements aimed at environmental protection, implementation remains inadequate. Keleş references Turkey's case which has ratified numerous international treaties and conventions, especially with the European Union, but has failed to implement protections. Although Keleş effectively positions sustainable development as a cornerstone for spatial development strategy and democratic governance, more emphasis is needed on the necessity for effective implementation mechanisms to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

A significant portion of the book is dedicated to case studies from Turkey concerned with urban transformation, disaster management, reflections on smart city initiatives, cooperative law, protection of cultural values, implementations of urbanization strategies, and coastal management. Two articles focus on Ankara; in the first, Keleş emphasizes the importance of inclusive planning approaches, cooperation between different administrative levels, and resident participation in urban renewal projects with the Urban Transformation Project of Northern Ankara. He highlights the historical cooperation between local and central authorities in managing squatter settlements, noting recent attempts to centralize power under entities like the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ); in the second article, regarding the Urban Transformation Project in Ankara, Keleş argues that the project lacks transparency, community engagement, and adherence to preservation principles, leading to the demolition rather than renovation of historical buildings. Through these case studies, Keleş offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with urban development in Turkey, highlighting the importance of inclusive planning, community engagement, and preservation of cultural heritage in sustainable urban transformation initiatives.

Another topic that Keleş warns about is the state of disaster management in Turkey. The text highlights

shortcomings in preparedness despite past experiences with natural disasters related to the Marmara, Duzce and Van Earthquakes. Keleş advocates for the reinforcement of local government capabilities, outlining a series of measures detailed in the Integrated Urban Development Strategy and Action Plan. These proposals span legislative reforms, risk mitigation strategies, updates to urban planning regulations, improvements to insurance systems, and upgrades to communication infrastructure, all aimed at fortifying disaster management effectiveness. Keleş's foresight extends to suggesting the decentralization of population and economic activities, as well as the integration of early warning systems and hazard maps into development planning to curtail losses, while the pivotal role of empowered local authorities in effectively managing disasters is emphasized. Nevertheless, challenges emerge from the disjointed involvement of NGOs in relief efforts and the uneven distribution of donations. Regrettably, the ongoing repercussions of the South Anatolian Earthquake on February 20, 2023, serve as a stark validation of Keleş's warnings, underlining the critical need for immediate action to address these vulnerabilities.

Moreover, Keleş claims that smart city practices hold the potential to support disaster resilience and sustainable development, including social housing and infrastructure. Yet, he also examines the global evolution of the smart city concept and its uneven adoption. While smart city initiatives promise improved service provision and governance, disparities persist between developed and developing nations in terms of technology accessibility and internet usage. In Turkey, smart city practices are predominantly concentrated in developed regions, increasing socio-economic inequalities. For these reasons, Keleş underscores the necessity of prioritizing macro-level urban development issues alongside technological innovation to ensure inclusive and ethical governance.

Discussing urbanization trends in Turkey, with a focus on the challenges and implications of rapid urban growth, particularly in Istanbul, the text highlights the imbalance between urban and rural areas, economic disparities between regions, and the impact of informal settlements on urban development. One example is Istanbul. With its experience of rapid population growth, struggles related to inadequate infrastructure and services have led to a proliferation of informal settlements and informal economic activities. Despite optimism about stabilizing population growth and regional development projects like the Southeast Anatolian Regional Development Project (GAP), concerns persist about environmental degradation, privatization, and anti-planning attitudes. He emphasizes the need for sustainable urban development and the preservation of Istanbul's historical and natural heritage amidst rapid urbanization. Additionally, Keleş discusses the need for an objective rule to guide coastal management policies in Turkey, particularly in relation to the concept of public interest.

The last topic of the book places significant emphasis on ethical duties. Keleş explores the concept of inter-generational equity and the duty to preserve natural assets for future generations, examining it from ethical, legal, and practical perspectives. He discusses various arguments, including deontological and utilitarian



viewpoints, as well as Hans Jonas's idea of responsibility toward future generations. He addresses contemporary challenges such as globalization's impact on the environment and the need for cultural shifts to promote sustainability. Also, Keleş refers to The Treaty on European Union and the Amsterdam Treaty to highlight the need for bringing political control closer to citizens. Key principles of European local governance include participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and autonomy. Institutions like the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe work to promote and protect local democracy, emphasizing human rights, cultural diversity, and democratic stability. One key claim is that Western European countries have made significant progress in local democracy, providing valuable lessons for others, including Turkey.

In sum, Keleş has been one of the most consistent academic and public figures dedicated to advancing sustainability and resilience in urban, and environmental issues in Turkey and worldwide. Many students of Professor Ruşen Keleş will recall his classroom teachings as exemplars of participatory, transparent, and ethical governance and planning. *Territorial Governance and Environmental Protection Volume 2: Writings on Urban and Environmental Issues* sheds light on the multifaceted challenges of urbanization, hazards, economics, social dynamics, politics, and environmental preservation inherent in sustainable development. It underscores the urgent need for local autonomy, global cooperation, and technological innovation to effectively address the pressing challenges confronting our world today. This volume therefore serves as a valuable resource and roadmap for academia, policymakers, local authorities and concerned citizens worldwide.

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