



FROM THE EDITOR

“CITIES: IDENTITIES, APPROPRIATION OF SPACE AND RESISTANCE PRACTICES”

The idea of this special issue came from a discussion about the need to bring a collective analysis in the global making of cities which is rare in urban studies in Turkey. There are assuredly many precious high-quality research on the ongoing urbanization processes and policies in different metropolitan cities of the country and this research takes largely into account the specificities of Turkish urban policies, Turkish cities, the construction of “gecekondu” neighbourhoods and the everyday life inside them. However, few research place this examples in a more global debate: What is the genesis of the current development of cities and what are the political and economic rules behind their development and their spatial organization? Which place and role is attributed to the city dwellers in this process? Do the latter seek also to create their own spatial practices and how do they invest the city. The objective of this issue is to make a modest contribution to this global debate by proposing case studies from different countries. The issue does not have the objective to focus only on urban development and urban transformation but to show rather how different everyday practices both from public actors and city dwellers contribute to the spatial appropriation of city. By making this, it would like to analyze also if the inevitable interaction between different actors create some tensions, resistances and protest.

Cities are frequently characterized by concentration of inequality, insecurity, and exploitation. They have also long represented promises of opportunity and liberation. Public decision-making in contemporary cities is full of conflict, and principles of justice is rarely the explicit basis for the resolution of disputes (Marcuse et. al., 2009).

Cities are today confronting also a more competitive global environment, and local governments have taken to place-marketing, enterprise zones, tax abatements, public-private partnerships, and new forms of local boosterism but also have reached out for new strategies of social control and workfare policies (Mayer, 2007: 91). According to Mayer, the most important goal of urban policy has become to mobilize city space as an arena for market-oriented economic growth (ibid). However, the cities and city life cannot be resumed to an economic

resource. The city is also for citizens and their needs and desires. There are rights of the citizen as an urban dweller which could be called the right to the city drawing on Henri Lefebvre. This right to the city should be complemented by the right to difference and the right to information (Marcuse, 2009: 244). For Henri Lefebvre, the core elements of the right to the city are defined as the promotion of equal access for all to the potential benefits of the city, the democratic participation of all inhabitants by decision-making processes and the realization of inhabitants' fundamental rights and liberties. Lefebvre defines the right to the city as the right of citizens and city dwellers; groups aim (based on social relations) to appear on all networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange (Lefebvre, 1996: 194–195). In other words, it signifies the citizens' right not to be marginalised in decision-making and to exist inside the city on their own terms. Lefebvre's conception of the 'right to the city' is for dwellers to retain the ability to produce their spaces without conforming to the dominant modes of spatial production and to participate in re-shaping the existing norms and forces in which space is being produced within the capitalist order, rather than being themselves engulfed in its modes (Fawaz, 2009).

However, the current city making is at the opposite side of this Lefebvrian perception of city and we are observing clearly a struggle between the perceived urban space of dwellers and the conceived urban space of political and public actors. Indeed, in many cities in the world, the neoliberal ideology dominates the decision-making process according to which the city is shaped more by the logic of the market than by the needs of its inhabitants (Balaban, 2010; Enlil, 2011). The article of Savaş Zafer Şahin sheds lights on this process focusing on the example of Turkey's public policy orientation especially its tendency to the centralization which leaves any place to the public consultation. The author analyses the city and urban space's conception from the perspective of public policy and shows how the public actors tries often to appropriate the urban space for their own objectives with motivation dramatically different than city dwellers' desires and needs. The will of decentralization in local government has had actually the objective of spatial transformation of cities more than a democratization even if the political centralization finally dominated especially with the presidency of R.T. Erdoğan. Authors as Dryzek (1996) underline that neo-liberalism values individuals who myopically pursue their material self-interest in the marketplace, not citizens who cultivate their civic virtue in the public square. As democratic decision-making tends to involve political wrangling and debate, it could take time and become an obstacle in urban governance. Collective decision processes, therefore, are not desired. This can be observed in many urban projects in Istanbul where the inhabitants are the last ones to know public decisions concerning the future of their neighbourhood. Some researchers (MacLeod, 2002; Miller, 2007; Purcell, 2008) explain that neo-liberalisation narrows the options open to decision-makers and

because of the disciplining force of the perceived need to remain globally competitive, democratic decision-making is therefore seen as slow, messy, inefficient, and not likely to produce the kind of bold entrepreneurial decisions that attract and keep capital (Erdi Lelandais, 2014). Urban governing institutions are being, therefore, increasingly 'streamlined' so they can foreclose lengthy debate and more quickly respond to market opportunities (Purcell, 2008). As a consequence, urban governments adopt ready-made policy ensembles developed in other places rather than engage the city's public in generating policy through democratic debate (ibid).

According to Bayat, this process is characterized by greater privatisation, deregulation and commodification (Bayat, 2009). This new order requires that cities be reorganized in order to make them more attractive to potential investors. Social classes with low incomes occupying old and unhealthy neighbourhoods and the inner-city gecekondu are now considered undesirable. Neo-liberal urban regeneration policies use some tools in order to legitimise this process and to reduce potential resistance channels. One of these tools is a wide range of legal mechanisms, which the government adapts according to needs and conditions. The article of Nihal Durmaz focus on one of these important legal mechanisms which is the "Disaster Law" prepared by the government after two violent earthquakes in Turkey (1999 and 2001) under the pretext that they wanted to improve the building and make it resistant to future earthquakes. The author discusses the objectives and the real function of this law in Istanbul's urbanization process with two case studies: Sarıgöl and Tozkoparan neighbourhoods. The article shows that the disaster risk become a powerful tool for the implementation of urban policies desired by the authorities. Therefore, the low-income dwellers are discriminated, they are evicted from their neighbourhood and moved to the outskirts of the city while their places are left to high-income social classes.

While there is this massive and neoliberal urbanization process which could leave us to think that there is any place to citizens' initiatives, we are at the same time observing some vibrant initiatives and citizen campaigns as it was the case in Gezi Park or Indignados movement in Spain. The first view gives the impression that citizens lose all power they could have to participate in decision-making process and to invest urban space according to their own inspirations, we observe however many subjective initiatives in order to exist in the city and to express his identity. In other words, we observe many ways in many cities in the world that given legal and citizenship rules defined by the States are encountered and contested through the spatial practices of everyday life, through what Michel de Certeau calls the 'tactics' of making do, the "innumerable practices through which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (de Certeau, 1984: xiv). According to Anna Secor, "viewing citizenship as a technique of spatial organization (in de Certeau's terms, a

‘strategy’)", many different examples "show how the identities of ‘citizen’ and ‘stranger’ become markers, staking out positions in the contests over rights and belonging that take place through city spaces. Citizenship as a ‘strategy’ works to define and lay claim to a bounded space of belonging delimited against an exteriority" (2004: 353).

In this sense, Amanda Dias’s study in this issue provides elements about the spatial organization of Muslim communities in Brasil’s Rio de Janeiro. Her article shows how the Islam gained progressively visibility in public space by the construction of fifty mosques and over eighty Islamic institutions in the country. The article shed lights on the ways a new religious actor which does not traditionally have an important expression in a given society emerges in the religious urban landscape of the city. For example, some places in the city were invested by Arab cultural elements that characterized them as an ethnic space to the point that non-Arabs refereed to this area as ‘Little Turkey” which is a clear example of what Secor defined above as a “bounded space of belonging”. Also, the Tijuca neighbourhood become a gathering place for all Muslims in Rio because of the proximity of the mosque. The religious sonic presence in the city becomes also a tool for the symbolic control of space in the city for this community.

Assaf Dahdah and Annika Dippel provide another perspective on the relationship between belonging and space from the case of newly arrived migrants especially Syrians in two European cities: Marseille and Berlin. Based on an ethnographic analysis, their article focuses on the settlement process of refugees. According to Dahdah and Dippel, the authorities use the formal and informal existing urban structures as an accommodation system like squats, furnished hostels and social housing in the central district and in the outskirts of the cities. The authors investigate if through different ways this situation generates a marginalization process and maintain the newly arrived migrants in a precarious relation to space and society. They show therefore different tactics of these migrants especially the use of social networks and charitable organizations in order to overcome system’s dysfunctions and to minimize social and administrative precariousness for strengthening their urban insertion.

Gülçin Erdi focuses on the women’s place in urban space with the case study of Dikmen Valley, an informal neighbourhood in Ankara. Her article underlines that while women are always a part of the construction of urban space, their presence in urban settlements has been made often invisible as women’s place is deemed to be in private home environment (caring for the children and running the household) according to gender-based division of labor. However, in many cases, women were able to organize themselves, to oppose to the current spatial organization of the city and especially their invisible space in everyday life. The

case of Dikmen Valley's women shows clearly that even several difficulties and obstacles women face, they are sometimes able to find ways of emancipation against these obstacles which was in their cases an urban transformation project threatening their neighbourhood and therefore their everyday life, social ties and networks. In their mobilisation process, the practical and daily needs of women are transformed into strategic needs such as defense of their home. This process ensures their survival strategies and resistance in a political sense. The fact that they perceive their homes and the neighbourhood as a common public space composed of informal networks of communication and solidarity leads to the conquest of the city and allows them to reclaim a place in public spaces.

Finally, in the last article, Bénédicte Florin explores ordinary survival tactics and resistance of a rarely studied social group which are waste pickers in Istanbul. She shows how they organize their work and develop solidarities in order to struggle against the privatization of waste system in this city in order to exist and to work freely in urban space. Their case shows another facet of neoliberal city which is the conditions of workers for which the urban space constitutes the place of work and how the neoliberal system attempts to make them invisible in everyday life. According to Florin, as in most other countries, the "informal" waste-pickers of Istanbul are characterized by a "social indignity" and plural stigma. But the examination of their everyday social and professional practices reveals small daily battles to earn a livelihood in a brutal context of political reforms. In order to adapt and get round the obstacles confronting them, these waste-pickers adopt all sorts of small tactics to defend themselves and legitimize their position in the city and in urban society.

Different articles in this issue scrutinize to some extent various neoliberal practices in the urban patterns they also help us to grasp what kind of space these practices are able to provide or not. Each article devoted also some time to understanding and picturing how individuals, social groups or organisations deal with their everyday life. Mayer et al. underline that homeless, the undocumented, the welfare-dependent, workers in informal economies and migrants have widely divergent experiences which therefore create different experiences of resistance and struggle, especially at the micro-level and are often invisible (Erdi and Şentürk, 2017: 5). The articles of this issue consist of cases illustrating different forms of individual or group expression which could be considered as a resistance aiming to create alternative ways of life and/or organization within the neoliberal development of the city.

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