

The Social Aspect of Integrative Urban Practice

The Immanent Character of the Urban Process

Can the urban phenomenon be defined by aerial images where one could do to understand it thoroughly is to magnify it until a single pixel covers the whole sight? Or will shrinking the image do any better? Those methods of observation seem quite inadequate because the urban phenomenon has an immanent structure and is not explicit to an out –stander’s eye. It comprises a complex network of relationships which is formed by the spatial concentration of a population on the basis of certain limits of dimension and density. It is the diffusion of the system of values, attitudes and behavior called “urban culture”. (Castells, 2002). The definition of the urban phenomenon is not the key aspect of this paper; however, the emphasis on the social dimension of this formless amalgam is ineluctable.

In their tribute to Spiro Kostof, Çelik and Favro (1994) quote the term “the urban process” and it is may be, one of most appropriate term in defining the immanent characteristics of the urban phenomenon. “The urban process” is an intriguing conflation of social, political, technical and artistic forces that generates a city’s form. The urban process is both proactive and reactive; sometimes the result of a collective mandate, at others a private prerogative; sometimes issuing from a coordinated single campaign, at others completely piecemeal; sometimes having the authority of law, at others created without sanction. One thing is certain: although historical moments in the life of a city can be isolated, the urban process never stops. The physical form can only be studied through process. Parts of a city can by some extraordinary means be designed as unified artifacts, but more commonly a city’s fabric evolves through a complex series of circumstances (Çelik, Favro and Ingersoll, 1994). This is where the main problem arises with the urban phenomenon, for it is usually evaluated more like a mechanical process where the input yields somewhat a determinable outcome, with its variables defined in financial terms. For not having a temporal origin, the urban processes can not be reduced to mechanical relations and functions. What has happened in the past effects today’s condition and will keep on effecting that of tomorrow. The financial aspect of an integrative urban practice can well be predicted but the social aspect of the same process is mostly indeterminable. Yet, there are some certain consequences to when the social aspect of urban processes are not considered. In most cases financial and social profitability are observed to be opposite mechanisms meaning that increase in one will lead to decrease in the other. The model presented here is to lay out the variables of the social profitability in an urban process and discuss the outcome when it is not included in the equation.

Private / Public : Modes of Authorial Distribution

Society is the concentration of individuals sharing things in common and linked to each other by means of this commonness. In case of the urban process, this commonness is spatial and temporal at the least. The common places are where people share and are called public places as well. The number of people who share public places is not definite where as the places shared by a definite number of people are called private. This easily made opposition has more to it when the coat of meaning covering the terms and concepts are stripped off. To Habermas (2001), we call events and occasions public when they are open to all, in contrast to closed and exclusive affairs –as when we speak of public places or public houses. But as in the expression “public building”, the term need not refer to general accessibility; the building does not even have to be open to public traffic. “Public buildings” simply house state institutions and as such are “public”. The state is the “public authority”. It owes this attribute to its task of promoting the public or common welfare of its rightful members.

Habermas (2001) goes back to the use of the words private and public in ancient Greek:

“In fully developed Greek city – state the sphere of the *polis*, which was common (*kione*) to the free citizens, was strictly separated from the sphere of the *oikos*; in the sphere of the ; in the sphere of the *oikos*, each individual is in his own realm. The political order, as is well known, rested on a patrimonial slave economy. The citizens were thus set free from productive; it was, however, their private autonomy as masters of households on which their participation in public life depended. Movable wealth and control over labor power were no more substitutes for being the master of a household and of a family than, conversely, poverty and lack of slaves would in themselves prevent admission to the *polis*. The reproduction of life, the labor of the slaves, and the service of women went on under the aegis of the master’s domination; birth and death took place in its shadow, and in the obscurity of the public space. In contrast to it, stood, in Greek self-interpretation, the public sphere as a realm of freedom and permanence. Only in the light of the public sphere did that which existed become revealed, did everything become visible to all. In the discussion among citizens issues were made topical and took on shape. In the competition among equals, the best excelled and gained their essence –the immortality of fame. Just as the wants of life and the procurement of its necessities were shamefully hidden inside the *oikos*, so the *polis* provided an open field for honorable distinction: citizens indeed interacted as equals with equals, but each did his best to excel.”

By the formation of modern state in the Roman Period, the categories private and public persisted and the public sphere as *res publica* has its renewed definition in the technical and legal sense. The private and public sphere opposition as in the ancient or modern model did not exist in the feudal structure of the middle ages. The economic organization was centered in the lord’s household and his domination. There were lower and higher “sovereignities”, eminent and less eminent prerogatives; but there was no status in which private people could step forward into a public sphere. This manorial authority was transformed into private landed property in the eighteenth century (2001) in Germany, says Habermas, as part of the liberation of peasants and the clearing of land holdings from feudal obligations (Habermas, 2001)

As for the Ottoman Empire, sultan is the representative of the absolute sovereignty that is the rule of god, and in his name, distributes the movable and real property to the citizens. From that perspective, the property could not be separated into private or public which would mean the opposition to the monist character of the sovereignty of the god in Islamic belief. The property can not be privatized for it is in privacy of the one and only power holder.

The historical examples show that the opposition between public and private is not and absolute and constructed in human thinking and strongly related to how the power is shared in a community. If we think of land as the public sphere, then the house and the authority exercised by its master must simply be considered a public authority of the second order. Thus it seems quite intelligible that “private” and “public” powers are so fused together into an indivisible unity that both are emanations from a unified authority; that they are inseparable from the land and can be treated like legitimate private rights (Habermas, 2001). The modern economical organizations depend on taxation and the property is not something to be owned privately and complimentarily for good. Private property is a right people are given by a higher authority in return of its taxable price. From this point of view space as a physical presence determined by voids and masses is freed from public or private attributes. Public and private character of a space is a code stuck over it by the authorial relationships in a society.

The authorial organization in a modern state whose purpose of being is for the welfare of the people, in a sense, is in need of giving private rights to people in return of taxes to ensure the persistence of the same power which would mean the creation of a special authorial domain that subordinates it. This public authorial existence called ‘the state’ has mutual interests, for the

more profitable a private organization is the stronger the public authority will become by means of its taxation. The inverse might not be valid for the subordinate power domain called the private organization, for though being attached to the state; it has its own purpose of keeping its own publicity intact. The amount of tax given to the state is not a relevant issue for a private organization. To keep its authorial presence, the private organization will have to maximize its profitability lowering the costs as much as possible. It is not a wonder why for a private organization's social concern to be limited with its own public sphere and shortening costs of social items like the workers' insurance and ecological investments in the first hand. The dependence of public authority to the private formations inside its own structure is its greatest weakness and dilemma.

Obstacles of Socialization in Europe and Istanbul

A list of examples in national and international scale can be made for this weakness in urban practice concerning the public authority. In the European union some attempts were made to widen the scope of urban planning, but these met many obstacles say Newman and Thornley (1996) and continue by giving examples from France and England: in Plaine Saint-Denis the communes struggled to get social needs on the agenda. The approach in Greenwich Waterfront project appeared to include a wide range of interests but in the end depended on the major landowners and on the ability to attract development finance from higher-level government. Community groups unsuccessfully fought development in London Docklands throughout the 1980's, seeking the satisfaction of community needs. Similar groups in King's Cross also found it difficult to gain access to decision-making and it was only the weakness of the property market that enabled them to have some influence. There are several attempts by national governments to broaden urban planning objectives, but these have been heavily constrained economic imperatives. In France there was continued experimentation with new urban policies. For example, the project for the Grand Stade brought increased social spending but this only occurred because of the need to present an exemplary urban project to international visitors. There is therefore limited evidence of a softening of economic objectives to include more social concerns. To Newman and Thornley (1996) the hinderer of the ability to incorporate a wider range of objectives in urban planning is the separation between the formal planning system and the social issues contained in other programmes of government. This is almost the same in the case of Istanbul and other Turkish cities. The formal system has a regulatory function and is reliant on the private sector to initiate development (Newman and Thornley, 1996)

A major issue for the future will be the extend to which the environmental concerns are translated into urban planning policy. They would carry with them the implication that a long term outlook is required and that there is a need to take account of the broader public interest. These implications lead to greater acceptance of public intervention and less reliance on the market. Environmentalism is an other issue in the future of urban planning. Across Europe environmental values have become increasingly important in local decision-making and an important factor in marketing the image of the cities (Newman and Thornley, 1996).

The urban processes in Istanbul have differences from those of European cities. First, the urbanization process was not formed as a derivative of industrialization. In other words, the urbanization in Istanbul is not initiated by the attractive industrial forces but was triggered by the repellent forces from the rural areas. In Istanbul's case, the velocity of urbanization could not catch up with the velocity of population growth, hence the urbanization process headed its way towards the formation of unplanned regions and shanty town developments within poor hygienic conditions that are far away from providing urban services of any kind (Kongar, 2001). The districts with the highest population growth rate in Istanbul in the 90's were Kağıthane with 0.16 and Ümraniye with 0.14 per year. Istanbul underwent a population explosion in the post 1950

period. The population of Istanbul rose from 1,078,000 in 1945 to 1,533,000 in 1955. The periods of the greatest population increase were 1950 -1955 and 1970 -1975 as the mechanization of agriculture prompted people to move away from rural areas into Istanbul (Sönmez, 1994). This population appears to be broken off from the “feudal values”, and have not yet become an integral part of the system of “industrial and urban values”. Within this population values like “fidelity, bravery, studiousness” have lost their meaning and the values instead like “temporal conception, cooperation, the sharing of the public domain within the given legislations” have not yet been acquired. This population giving a fight for life in the cities, in order to get use of social services has developed quite an aggressive behavioral pattern (Kongar, 2001). According to a survey carried out by the State Planning Organization, 17% of illegal housing development on public land is carried out directly by householders while 56% purchase such property from other who has previously appropriated the land illegally. This demonstrates that a large number of middleman are making illegal earnings out of selling land belonging to the Treasury, the municipality, local authorities, foundations, and the Department of Forests (Sönmez, 1994). Unfortunately not a single of the public authority’s respond to such illegal deeds can be appraised optimistically either. According to information compiled by Istanbul Governor’s Office for 1992, 850,000 dwellings in Istanbul have planning permission and 750,000 were built illegally but were subsequently awarded title deeds under land development pardons; and 450,000 are illegal.

Determinants of the Social Urban Process

The local administrations are seen in the domain where a nation’s democracy is put to the test. The shift from developmental to social local governance seems to be the common aim in the civilized world. In the study carried out for Turkey’s adaptation process to the European Union, a comparison between the Turkish local administrations and that of the city of London has been made. In the same report, some important clues can be traced out as to how the integrative processes can be more social (Aydoğan and Ekinci, 2001). The aim of this paper was stated to be the determination of social factors in urban processes and following is the discussions on those determinants that are believed to constitute the nexus of the issue in general.

Developmental vs. Social Local Governance

Different items like the poor and the worn out people’s care, health and education issues of the city’s inhabitants, utilization for the disabled can be listed out in the agenda of a social local governance where as the developmental local governance is mainly oriented to the formal planning of the city. Making incalculable unearned income over the land for the government elites and powerful landholders is the by product of such a governance like in the case of Istanbul and Turkey in general. The general tendency in the democratization and socialization of the state governance is the decentralization of the public authority throughout the local administration organs. An other continuously debated subject is on finding the ways to how public services provided by the local authorities could be carried out like it is done in the private sector . (Aydoğan and Ekinci, 2001)

Governmental support on municipal administrations

The government support and audit on local administrations is an important issue for the evenness of the local investment decisions in between different regions when the issue is considered in the national level. What lies beneath it is the intention to prevent some region’s getting into a more developed condition while others are dealing with problems waiting to be solved. The financial support provided by the central government warrants the minimal requirement of municipal services providing the local governances with a broader range of possibilities in the field of developmental, servicing and administrative actions. The determination of the amount of the government support should be tied up to objective criteria.

Such a support refers that the state perceives municipal services as services of its own. As in the case of Istanbul in particular and Turkey in general, this support has not been to the city but to the local administrators who support the political party in power at a given time (Aydoğın and Ekinci, 2001).

Role of the NGO's in the central governance

In the case of Istanbul's urban planning processes, actors in decision-making are mostly the bureaucrats and politicians who could put their individual interests in a prior position than the greater good of the public; or neglect any scientific information when urban or regional problems like the site selection for investments or the land use decisions are being resolved. Instead, the decision-makers should be selected from among technocrats, scientists, planning specialists etc. Another group that lacks presence in the integrative urban practices in the case of Istanbul is Non-Governmental Organizations. In Istanbul's case, the NGO's participation to the urban process is to make complaint against the local authorities to the government. However, in a social local governance, NGO's work side by side together with the local organs for the resolution of an urban or regional problem. Even in most cases, when the central authority intervenes the urban process the NGO's take their stand by the local administration because of the close relationship they carry out during the whole process (Aydoğın and Ekinci, 2001).

Associative Development Plans

This is in short the regional and geological basins planning, an issue which Istanbul in particular and Turkey in general has been longing for years. It is an application, which enables different municipalities sharing the same region and effecting each other, to plan their own cities within a harmonious development strategy. The most important aspect of this application is that the people's, investors' and NGOs' participation in the making of it is an absolute necessity (Aydoğın and Ekinci, 2001).

Infrastructure / superstructure decision-making

One of the most negative issue in Istanbul's urban planning process especially in creating development possibilities in new sites is to take superstructural issues into consideration in the decision-making processes, and neglecting the infrastructural issues such as the supply of the social and technical equipments and the accessibility to the municipal services. This way, many Turkish cities and particularly Istanbul is filled with apartment blocks that rise in the middle of open fields. Similarly, sectors such as tourism and industry could build their installations in regions having no infrastructural formation. Such buildings for giving irreversible damages to the natural environment and being pushed away from rational use always tend to have a bad effect on the national economy. To avoid that, plans should not be accepted unless their infrastructural costs are guaranteed. This way, land speculation can be stopped and development plans can be carried out coherently with the local services (Aydoğın and Ekinci, 2001).

Public Transport, Pedestrianization and Public Open Spaces

Istanbul is invaded by the motorways. The physical distinction between sidewalks and motorways is not clear. One quarter of Turkey's motor vehicles are registered in Istanbul which accounted 27.4% of total traffic accidents and 9% of all road deaths in 1991. (Sönmez, 1994) The vehicle density is very high, parking facilities are not adequate and almost on every street there is car parking on the sideways. It is a medium which leaves no chance for pedestrian traffic. The motorways surrounding the city from all sides is a serious physical threshold that limits the relation of the inhabitants with the Marmara Sea and the Bosphorus Strait. Even the sea penetrates into every corner in the city, the share of the sea transport in Istanbul life has been steadily dropping. Currently ferries account for only 8.4% of the total. With the introduction of high speed trams, the share of rail transport is now nearly 7%. (Sönmez 1994). Those

statistics show that the transportation is loaded up on land which makes the situation for pedestrians even worse. The main squares like Beşiktaş, Eminönü, Karaköy, Sirkeci, Kadıköy and Taksim, are smashed under the heavy load of vehicle traffic and they can not serve as public open spaces. . Pedestrianization should not be taken only as the closing down of a street completely to vehicle traffic. Differently , it is the improvement of the streets' conditions for pedestrians like the clearing of sideways from car parking, and widening and providing them with enough number of traffic signs and banners to make the motorway – sideway distinction clear. Bicycle ways should be introduced into Istanbul traffic and the use of bicycles should be encouraged. (i.e. on the ferry transport a bicycle is for one ticket and at least it could be for free). In many societies, the public open spaces consistently had a major role as important components of the urban environment, and as principal generators of local identity and sense of place. They are associated with, and often construct the image of, urban settlements in which they primarily interpret both the physical setting and the distribution of activities. Within city centers, this role is magnified. Public open spaces become of particular significance, they are regarded as fundamental component of the public domain, and as an important public amenity (Abdel – Salam, 1996). Another important issue in public open spaces is the equipment of them with proper functions as Mumford (1956) states in the example of a formal park design in place of Cadman Plaza in New York. Otherwise these spaces, like in the case of the Haliç coastal area rehabilitation will turn out to be vast, non-living open areas with many people passing them by but never wanting to experience.

Housing

The main issue in social urban practice concerning housing in Istanbul is that more than half of the whole housing stock's being illegal. People living in those houses are poor, however, the social housing projects carried out in the late 80's and 90's were sold to people from middle and higher income groups. It is hard to define such a housing project as 'social' because the main purpose should be to make people from lower income groups become householders.

Struggle against urban poverty

A distinction between urban and rural poor can be made to understand the phenomenon better. The situation of the urban poor, especially in larger cities like Istanbul, is different from that of the rural poor. The first and the most significant feature is that the urban poor depend on cash income for survival. Most of the food, as well as cooking fuel and water has to be purchased. Housing, even a simple shack, is expensive and cheap building material is scarce. The urban poor usually live on the outskirts of cities. To get the opportunity to earn an income, most have to travel long distances and transportation is expensive. Security is another serious problem for the urban poor. Crime, violence, prostitution and epidemics are all frequent social problems in the urban context and there is no effective means to protect oneself and one's family, especially as the police force is often inadequate or corrupt. Crime and violence affect men and women differently and the problem has to be seen from a gender perspective. Especially in developing countries, a great number of the rural poor still depend on subsistence agriculture, fuelwood is available, and houses are built of local materials, most of which are free. This does not mean that life is easy. Water and fuelwood might be faraway, the water is not clean, and if the crop people may starve. School and health facilities are at long walking distances. The purpose here is not to discuss whether it is the urban or rural poor who suffer most, but to point out that the major problems for poor people in urban and rural areas are different. They need to be addressed in different ways (Tannerfeldt, 1995)

Education

The education not only of 'urban professionals', but all the other citizens must make them aware of their bodies, their society and their physical surroundings, before they are made into architects, engineers, shop keepers, lawyers or butchers. Urban education should not therefore

be confined either to a technical / professional training or to fact finding fun talks. Cities are shared by all, so should the broad awareness and knowledge of them be. By treating architects and planners as citizens and the citizens as architects and planners, their education becomes a common project far beyond the professionalism that the training of professionals instills. Education seen in this way attains a degree of nobility that increases the more it is shared. The theory and the methods proposed can therefore become at once special and sharable (Teymur, 1996).

Conclusion

As tried to be described under the 'Determinants of the Social Urban Processes', the urban practice, when made without the consideration to its social aspects, would appear to have the following costs:

- Distribution of the financial accumulation inequitably and unevenly over the different regions of the country.
- Unbalanced urban development among different regions
- Tendency of the local authorities developmental processes and shortening the quality of urban services
- The loss of openness in the accountancy of the local governance, tendency towards corruption
- The loss in the associativeness of urban plans (regional planning)
- Decrease in the amount of infrastructural services, formation of cities without foundations.
- Increase in urban poverty and security problems, the collapse of collective ethics

The social and financial profitability seem to be inversely related to each other. It has previously been shown that there are certain obstacles mobilizing the market, shareholders and the private institutions alike, in the direction to make more social investments. Therefore it is the duty of the higher-level authorities like the organs of the government to take the lead in putting more social content to the urban practices. It could be achieved both by taking legislative steps in the administrative level or by directly funding local governances.

Finally, social issues are not in the belonging or direction of a certain group, class or community. Society is everyone and as mentioned in the introduction, everyone and everything is an integral part of the urban process. No one is able to transcend it meaning that whatever happens inside that structure, without any prerogatives, will effect each and every single element that belongs it; be it public or private.

References

- Abdel-Salam, H., (1996), "Perception of Qualitative Changes in Public Open Spaces: the Case of Alexandria, Egypt", *Urban Design International*, Vol.1, No.1, March, 27
- Aydoğan, M., Ekinci, O., (2001), "Yerel Yönetim Uygulamaları", *Yerel Yönetimlerde Bir Karşılaştırma: Londra / Türkiye*, Antalya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yerel Demokrasi Yayınları, No: 2, Antalya, 15 - 62
- Castells, M., (2002), *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 21.
- Çelik, Z., Favro, D., Ingersoll D., (1994), *Streets*, university of California Press, Los Angeles, 1, 2
- Habermas, J., (2001), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1-6

- Kongar, E., (2001), “Az Gelişmişlik Sürecinde Kentsel Toprak Yağmasının Politika Üzerindeki Yozlaştırıcı Etkileri: Türkiye Örneği”, *Yerel Yönetimlerde Bir Karşılaştırma: Londra / Türkiye*, Antalya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yerel Demokrasi Yayınları, No: 2, Antalya, 7-9
- Mumford, L., (1956), *From the Ground Up*, Harvest Book, New York, 149, 150
- Newman, P., Thornley, A., (1996), *Urban Planning in Europe*, Routledge, London, 250 – 252
- Sönmez, M., (1994), *Statistical Guide to Istanbul in the 1990's*, A Publication of Greater Istanbul Municipality, Istanbul, 13,15,32,33, 64,69
- Tannerfeldt, G., (1995), *Towards an Urban World*, Sida Publications, Stockholm, 33, 34
- Teymur, N., (1996), *City as Education*, Question Press, London, 11,12