Separation and Rising Conservatism: An Assessment of Istanbul at the City Center and Periphery

Track 13
Planning for Social Justice, Equity, Gender and Identity

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City centers constitute the beginning of the urbanization adventure for migrants. The centers of the large cities of developing countries in particular are areas where all sorts of urban facilities are found in the greatest density. The use of the dilapidated and derelict housing stocks by migrants has always created an affordable environment for their process of urbanization. The diversity, quantity, and relatively high quality of the facilities located in the city center also supports the urbanization efforts of these groups.

However the development, transformation, and renewal processes of these areas that have emerged as a result of the pressure of globalization that has begun to be experienced particularly in developing large cities weakens the relatively advantageous position of migrants in the city center. The rise in a short period of time of purchase prices in the city's land market has brought about a change of hand of the building stock in the center, and the center has begun to change its function through renovation projects in cases where conditions were amenable. Some residential areas however have not been included in this transformation due to the resistance of inhabitants to this pressure to renovate, and due to the absence of fully amenable conditions.

With the increasing efficacy of the practice of protection and with its spread into wider groups within society, the migrants living in the city center have strengthened their ties of ownership with their living spaces, and began to fight for these spaces. On the other hand, the strategy of administrations of spreading their central facilities to the peripheries in order to force the inhabitants to abandon these areas has created the opposite effect, resulting in the center becoming a niche of poverty and in the migrants' becoming more introverted. It has become increasingly difficult for migrants to hold on to the urban center and to utilize the facilities of these areas.

The absence of the facilities of the center in the new residential areas where migrants who have begun to move toward the city's peripheries will live has begun to hinder the migrants' urbanization process. Migrants who are forced to move into the periphery and stay there on a continuous basis move away from urban facilities; are deprived of these services of the city due to their lack of access, and inevitably fall back on their traditional urban lifestyles. As a result, these social groups continue their rural lives in areas in the outskirts of the city without associating/being able to associate with the city at all. This process leads to the emergence of a multicultural and rural living space on the city's peripheries.

The practice of urban planning is unable to incorporate the rural lifestyle and physical spaces that form here into the city. Urban planning is helpless in the face of this development which blurs the boundaries between the city and rural areas, and enters the natural living spaces of the city on an increasing basis, destroying them. When politicians' populist approaches are added to this, the problem becomes even more insurmountable for the city. Thus, the introverted way of life of migrants who are deprived of facility areas gradually deprives the large city of its progressive and modern nature, and the city takes on a conservative and status quoist aspect. This also eviscerates city planning, rendering it dysfunctional.

On the other hand the de-industrialized big city peripheries even deepen their conservative aspect with its former industrial workers and new entrepreneurs, turning workers of yesterday into small business owners of today. In summary, the problems of traditional rural life, conservatism, and inability to urbanize are deepened even further with the de-industrialization and loss of the working class in cities, and the pressures engendered by the ever globalizing economic and cultural environments.
A new city and a new urbanite is emerging today. In the face of this, urban planning does not exhibit the necessary skill in generating a response.

This statement addresses this problem between the city center – periphery from the aspect of planning, and aims to examine it not solely as a problématique for today's large cities, but also in terms of social mobility, and changes in culture and political structure. In the peripheries of Istanbul which will be presented as the sample area of the statement, this process has been shaped under the influence of various dynamics since the 1950's. The transformation of the city center during the period between the 1950's and the 1980's into the residential area of migrants, and the city's growth with the addition of urban peripheries has been replaced by different dynamics. The pressure of renewal and transformation which began to be experienced by the city center since the 1980's has become even stronger in the 2000's. During these periods of fracturing, the migrants' bonds with the city, and their lifestyles have been reshapes. This process will be discussed in the context of migrants, lifestyle, and planning.