

Power Struggles in the Production of and Changing Perceptions Over the Contemporary Public Space: An Insight Toward Experienced Reality 2016

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Abstract

Cities have been invaded by the tools of the capitalist systems which transform the built environment while leaving the scars of this transformation on the societies. The demands of market forces generate new life styles and social contexts reshaped via relations of power and expression of political and economic hegemony. The nature of urban landscape, particularly the condition of public spaces, has shifted towards most profitable use while private interests have taken over public spaces and contemporary public spaces have emerged such as shopping malls.

This study contributes to the debates that explore the 'veiled' side of planning and hegemonic relations of power in decision making processes that actually in a strong relation with cultural structuring and traditional praxis of a community. In addition, the study has a comprehensive approach by exploring societal influences emerging through power relations and their reflections on contemporary public spaces via exploring perceptions. The study conducts an investigation using qualitative methods and adopting case study approach via three shopping malls from Ankara (Turkey) to answer how urban power relations are generated and become effective on planning and production of contemporary public spaces and how the perceptions upon these public spaces are being transformed? Therefore, the study is founded on two main themes as pillars: *power relations and public spaces*. In addition, the empirical chapters at the end are set in parallel with the research objectives and data is gathered via archive analysis of the municipalities and interviews conducted with key informants and users of the selected cases.

The thesis concludes with contributions to the fields of policy and theory through the above mentioned themes. On one hand, it emphasises the urgent necessity for a comprehensive transformation in Turkish planning structure, on the other hand draws an attention to the inefficiency of 'western' literature to elucidate different cultures and power relations that shape the cities of those cultures. In addition, the study also

highlighted that the nature of the public space is changing while engendering further change in the perception of the public.