
Spatial Inequality: The Case of Istiklal Street

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores the reasons of spatial inequality and possibility to make more just spaces. Paper attracts attention to the capitalist policies that is the main reason of spatial inequality. Moreover, capitalism needs inequalities for its sustainability. Istiklal Street as a public space is the place for investigating spatial inequality that has an history of power relations. Who has the right to the city(in this case to Istiklal Street) is the main question that is needed to be answered. Paper provokes people to make more just spaces although governmental violence and spying techniques effects the struggle for spatial justice.

KEYWORDS. Spatial Inequality, Just Spaces, Right to the City,

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1. Introduction

What spatial equality refers to is how equality as a social phenomenon is reflected in space. So the topic is briefly the relationship between the social phenomena and spatial structures. Especially in recent years spatial dimensions of justice and equality has become increasingly important. This interest is defined as 'spatial turn'. Edward Soja defines the relationship between social phenomena and spatiality in the context of 'socio-spatial causality' in his book 'Seeking Spatial Justice: "In some fields, however, such as in current debates in urban archeology and development economics, radically new ideas have been emerging from an understanding of socio - spatial causality, the powerful forces that arise from socially produced spaces such as urban agglomerations and cohesive regional economies. What can be called the stimulus of socio-spatial agglomeration is today being assertively described as the primary cause of economic development, technological innovation, and cultural creativity, one of the strongest claims ever made for urban spatial causality"(Soja, 2010). In this context according to Soja, spatial structures forms the social facts as well as social facts forms the spatial structures.

2. Spatial Structure of Inequality

The concept of inequality defines a large relationship structure. We can see these relations in different scales. The scales in which inequalities are experienced vary; like global-local, (or glocal), macro-micro,...etc. But we can say that in all scales we can experience the inequalities in daily life, and all scales are effecting each other. Soja delineates these scales; Exogenous -up to bottom systems which is developed by an exogenous effect, Endogenous, bottom-up system that is developed by an endogenous effect, and mesogenous scales which macro- micro or global-local systems close up.

The scales developed by an exogenous effect are denoted as geographical inequality. The exogenous effect here is expressing an inequality dynamic that is growing from up to bottom. For instance, if a socio-political transformation creates certain outcomes in subscales, this becomes by an exogenous effect. An example that can be given to this issue is the uprising happened in 2005 at Paris suburbs. While suburban development of Paris has been constituted for controlling the worker class in definitive territories, it radically transforms by the settlements of the lowest income people coming from ex-colonies. The uprising of 2005, has exposed the injustices that is lived in banlieus. A detailed survey about Paris banlieus and the uprising of 2005 takes place in the book of Mustafa Dikeç named Badlands of Republic.

The scales that is developed by endogenous effects come into being as some spatial distinctions in a geographical territory. These distinctions are environmental injustices, distributional injustices, ethnic and origin distinctions ..so on so forth. The city transportation system that is supplied inequally by municipality is an example of this kind of inequality scale. Edward Soja attracts attention in his book 'Seeking Spatial Justice' to the 'Bus Riders Union Case' occurred in Los Angeles. Bus Riders Union struggled for an equal distribution of bus routes in Los Angeles. They successfully sued Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) in 1994. They are the example of similar efforts that is occurring from bottom-up.

The third effect in the classification of Soja is the scales that macro and micro scales close up which presents the comprehensive view point to the spatial inequality. All the experiences of daily life are effected by the consequences of macro or micro geographical action. In order to illuminate these macro-micro scales we can call it global-local as well. There are a lot of scales between global and local like; metropolitan, national, subnational or international. For instance, the inequalities in global scales are occurring between the first and third world countries. And the consequences of these inequalities might be seen in urbanization in the form of 'gecekondü' in turkey, 'favela' in Brazil or other informal settlements in any part of world. Soja conceptualize this; "Once we talk about the globalization of injustices or the injustices of the globalization, at the same time we talk about the urbanization of the injustice or the injustices of urbanization" (Soja, 2010).

International coalitions, like European Union, G8, G20, divide the world geography into shareholder pieces. For example European Union is the union of industrialized countries and the aim of the coalition is to create a spatial fix for capitalist activity. Spatial fix might be seen as institutional organizations, economic rules, monetary units ...etc. This is the creation of a huge market which depends on consumption. Therefore the sustainability of the system depends on per capita income, the low cost of the commodities and the enlargement of the market. The low cost of the commodities is attained by foreign workers in the Unions and production sites in the 3rd world countries. We can see the effect of this in 3rd world countries, as economy of the ex-agriculture countries are depending on production day by day, this promotes migration to cities, and this migrates living in very poor conditions in outskirts of the cities or they are occupying desolate spaces in city centers. Once the market is expanded onto the spaces of the 3rd world countries, their living area becomes the target for capitalist creative destruction. This is promoted as urban transformation in recent years as was happened in Istiklal Street.

3. The Case of Istiklal Street

Istiklal street is the well-known street of the Beyoglu region. Street connects the three popular squares in together; Taksim Square, Galata Square and Tunel Square. Beyoglu region was a rural area where some orchard houses had existed until 16. century. The establishment of foreign embassies in following centuries has influenced the development of Beyoğlu. After a while a semi-minority, semi-european(levantine) community is being constituted around these embassies. 18th and 19th centuries was the period of integration of the Ottoman economy with European economy. This integration was against local traders. And it provides some advantages to foreign traders especially to Brits. The Free Trade Agreement of 1838 was providing additional tax burden to local traders while foreign capital gain some tax advantages (Dokmeci,1990). With these advantages, a levantine and minority rooted Ottoman bourgeoisie occurred. They have built European style buildings, luxury shops opened, luxury social life and social organization? came into being. Until the proclamation of Turkish Republic, a bourgeoisie depending on foreign based capital perpetuated its efficiency.

With the proclamation of Turkish Republic, a local capital started to make plans to organize the space. Newly born Turkish government was also defending to create a local capital in the country. Lozan Agreement was one of the first actions for the placement of capital from minorities to local capitalists. Greece and Turkey accept the exchange of population which is minority in their territory by Lozan agreement. After the exchange of population a less amount of non-muslim minority stayed and continue to their trading activity until 6-7 September Case.

Istiklal Street has always a symbolic importance after the proclamation of Turkish Republic. This importance emanates from the struggle for creating a national identity. This struggle in the beginning years results with the admiration to the west. In this period a lot of foreign architect and urban planner have been invited to transform the urban substructure of the country in western style. But in midst of 20th century the paradigma has changed to the opposite direction. Nationalist approaches spaned into public opinion. This opinion did not occur spontaneously, it was the creation of the new Republican bourgeoisie. A clearance has been planned with the non-muslim minorities to expropriate their capital. This clearance was put into action in '6-7 September Case'. The Cases started on 6 September 1955 to expropriate non-muslims' properties. But the visible reason was Cyprus problem. At these years, there were problems over Cyprus Island between Turkish and Greek people. In addition, the public provoked by faux news announcing that there was a hostile attack to the house of Atatürk in Selanik. A crowded group of people who lives out of Istanbul but come to city with several reasons has been organized, armed with sticks. The day before the case, the properties of non-muslim have been signed with a cross, and on 6-7 September all their properties have been destroyed. After this case, non-muslim population has been radically decreased. "On 1924 population census there were 280 000 Rum (Greek of Turkish citizenship) in 1 million Istanbul population. But today total Rum population in İstanbul is 1500-2000" (Keskin, 2005).

After 6-7 September Case, the creation of the local bourgeoisie never happened. Instead street became the space for the people migrated from Anatolia to work in İstanbul. These immigrants occupied the houses vacated by non-muslims. They settled particularly around Tarlabası Boulevard which is today's urban transformation site. Tarlabası Boulevard is parallel to İstiklal Street. The people living here were working in İstiklal Street mostly in informal sector. With the domination of immigrant in İstiklal Street, the spaces of the street became variable. Some of the luxury shops left the street and a lot of low price shops settled. In spite of the created security paranoia, street became the most popular public space for all members of society. At the same time street became a protest area for all politic groups. The protesting character of the street is one of the main characteristic of it. This character for sure comes from the history of the struggles of hegemony over the street. But I want to inform about one specific protest demonstration that I think it created a specific place for demonstrations. This is the demonstration of a group of women who calls themselves as "Saturday Mothers". The common point of women whose sons/daughters got lost after taken into custody by police. They've started their demonstration on 27 May 1995 on Saturday at Galatasaray Square. They've occupied the same place for 30 weeks on each Saturday. They are taken into custody by police at all times. Police tried to avert them to come to the square but they have found some tactics to meet in the square. Although most of them couldn't find their son or daughter, they succeed to attract attention to the losts under police custody.

Istiklal Street and Galatasaray Square keep housing protest demonstrations and resistance fighters mostly consists of anti-capitalist movements. At the same time, the struggle for dominating the street according to the rules of capital accumulation are exist. Street is housing the fight for public space between power and resistance.

What is happening nowadays in the street is the urban transformation. In the context of the target of making İstanbul a global city, all the spaces of the city face a fast urban transformation process. Global city movement is the name of capitalist urban organization aiming to activate the capital, to absorb capital surplus. With doing so, urban transformation promoting the recreation, shopping, fun ..etc. instead of protest, resistance and activism.

At recent years, with urban transformation policies small scale trades and local brands are disappearing. In this context, a big shopping mall was built which is housing high income stores. The spaces of the small scale trades was bought by chain stores. Promoting these chain stores with some zoning advantages effects the usage of the spaces in the context of centralizing the capital. Increasing rental value plays an important role regarding this transformation.

4. Is It Possible To Create Just Spaces Under Capitalist Approaches? Is There Any Other Way of Creating Just Spaces?

The story of Istiklal Street and Beyoglu, is the extension of the spatial organization of capitalism in Istanbul. Capitalism sees the cities as places for absorbing the surplus capital. This is the reason why capitalism looks for profitable terrains in order to invest. David Harvey explores this issue in his recently published book 'Rebel Cities'; "Capitalists begin the day with a certain amount of money and end the day with more of it (as profit). The next day they have to decide what to do with the surplus money they gained the day before. They face a Faustian dilemma: reinvest to get even more money or consume their surplus away in pleasures. The coercive laws of competition force them to reinvest, because if one does not reinvest then another surely will. For a capitalist to remain a capitalist, some surplus must be reinvested to make even more surplus. Successful capitalists usually make more than enough both to reinvest in expansion and satisfy their lust for pleasure. But the result of perpetual reinvestment is the expansion of surplus production. Even more important in entails expansion at a compound rate –hence all the logistical growth curves that attach to the history of capital accumulation. The politics of capitalism are effected by the perpetual need to find profitable terrains for capitals surplus production and absorption" (Harvey, 2012).

American style ban lieu settlements is a solution to the absorption of surplus capital. Thanks to this, immobile capital started to move. Financial instruments like mortgage credits support the reconfiguration of the capital. Most of the time banks provide credits both for building and for the customers to buy the end product. The profitability of the investment depends on cheap labor force and high sell prices. In Istanbul case, labor force has been provided by the immigrants coming from Anatolia. Governmental organizations support the builders with flexible building inspections and the builders succeed to absorb their surplus capital profitably. Urban organization of Istanbul has similarities with the American ban lieu movements in 70's. High income people live outskirts of the city in highly secured gated communities while center is housing poor people for work and live. But the need to find profitable terrains perpetually for the creative destruction of capitalism make city centers the target of capitalist destruction. In this process, firstly the poor must be cleared from center, and spaces of the center must become spaces for absorbing surplus product with some architectural decors. Shopping malls are constructed, luxury shops are opened..etc. This is the conceptualization of what is happening in Istiklal Street during its development starts from 13th century. But this action never occurs willingly for both sides, mostly capitalists confronts with resistance of activists, academicians, or urban poor. In order to dismiss the resistance, governmental violence, some spy techniques like security cams in public spaces and media promotion set to work.

This is the point where spatial inequality come into being. It is the discussion regarding who has the right to the city. This discussion is materialized in public space. Public space is the creation of the people who occupy it. That is to say: people makes spaces while they are expressing themselves.

This poses a problem: to claim the right to the city is, in effect, to claim a right to something that no longer exist (if it ever truly did). Furthermore, the right to the city is an empty signifier. Everything depends on who gets to fill it with meaning. The financiers and developers can claim it, and have every right to do so. But then so can homeless and sans-papiers. We inevitably have to confront the question of whose rights are being identified, while recognizing, as Marx puts it in *Capital*, that "between equal rights force decides." The definition of right is itself an object of struggle, and that struggle has to proceed concomitantly with the struggle to materialize it (Harvey, 2012). As mentioned by Harvey above, rights are not material things, they are something that must be filled by meaning. The question of who will fill it with meaning is a complicated issue that defines the conflicts of city rights. The roots of conflict lies in the structure of relationships between people. Iris Marion Young indicates this point: "Rights are relationships, not things; they are institutionally defined rules specifying what people can do in relation to one another. Rights refer to 'doing' more than to 'having', to the social relations that enable or constrain action" (Young,1990 quoted by Mitchell, 2003,25).

That is to say, for all the importance and power of recent "end of public space" arguments, what makes a space public –a space which the cry and demand for the right to the city can be seen and heard- is often not its preordained "publicness". Rather it is when, to fulfill a pressing need, some group or another takes space and through its actions makes it public. The very act of representing one's group (or to some extent one's self) to a larger public creates a space for representation. Representation both demands space and creates space. But it rarely does so under its own choosing. And so here the desires of other groups, other individuals, other classes, together with the violent power of the state, laws about property, and the current jurisprudence on rights all have a role to play in stymieing, channeling, or promoting the "taking" and "making" of public space and the claim to representation (Mitchell, 2003, 35). In contrast with the explanation of Mitchell, under capitalist conditions, public space defines the spaces where public exist under control. During the history of urban planning, planners creates spatial disparities to control the people. The famous example of this policy is the reconstruction of Paris in the hands of Baron Haussman. But today's capitalism makes this control not with certain policies like Haussman, instead it depends on willingly controlled public. Mitchell expresses that "regional disparities depending on social differences increasingly leaves its place to organized density. The density in the megastructures, shopping malls, plazas and urban parks is being created carefully. Even, a space of social practice has been created in every spaces where public is represented thanks to planning and marketing ethos. And this policy organizes and divides social groups according to comfort and ordinance dictas instead of politic struggle" (Mitchell, 2003). The transformation of İstiklal Street aims the same: making the street the space of consumption and tourism, creating spatial structures for devoting the street to the use of a specific public. Mostly it is done by state or municipalities. Don Mitchell conceptualize this issue in his book 'The Right to the City: The fight for public space (Mitchell, 2003) with the concept of "annihilation of space by law". In some american cities, some spaces representing the capital and mid-or high income public in the context of welfare are created and their sustainability covered by law. Moreover the authority prohibits the survival strategies of homeless people, panhandlers ...etc. by law. That is to say which behaviours are accepted in public space. According to Mitchell this policies aim not only to move the homeless people to an another place but also to annihilate them. Same kind of policies are being experienced recent days in İstiklal Street. Municipality officers has expropriated the musical instruments of the musicians who make street music without permission. While there are a lot of homeless people and panhandlers 5-10 years ago, they were annihilated from the public's eye. While I

am observing Galatasaray Square recent days for my PhD thesis, I've counted more than 10 cop in civil wears against 8-10 activist dispatching paper. Increasing police power and spy cams, people who have unaccepted behaviours are signed.

Given all these, expecting from government to make the space more public, is an optimistic view point. Because modern capitalism is under coloboration with governmental organization more effective than before. Moreover the expectation of given public space is against the nature of public space as it can not be "given" but "taken". In spite of all the governmental control and the promotion of the capitalism, people still fight for public space, and this struggle exist in İstanbul as well.

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6. Biography

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