



BOOK REVIEWS

Ottoman Izmir: the rise of a cosmopolitan port, 1840-1880 by *Sibel Zandi-Sayek*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA, 2012, 273 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-6601-0.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Izmir developed into a major international commercial port within the milieu of the Ottoman Empire. This book elegantly explores various forces behind Izmir's urban change in light of its not only having status as a 'good harbour and crossroads location between Asia Minor and the Mediterranean', but also as a consequence of the 'dynamic structures of power' found within the city and nation (p. 3).

A number of themes and concepts are used to structure the book: 'state sovereignty, citizen subjectivity and constitution of modern public' (p.188). There are four main chapters, in addition to instructive, long introductory and epilogue sections. The ever-shifting and contingent nature of the formative period of the city is an important theme. Zandi-Sayek illustrates how the design of the city was not promoted as a coherent or crystallized product by a single group within local society. Processes between the 'global economy and centralizing state bureaucracy in the shaping of Izmir' (p. 44) are elucidated, and the growth of the city under the influence of local needs, national politics and global forces operating within the Ottoman Empire is critically analysed. The urban environment is not read merely as a spatial configuration but rather as a complex and intense setting for interaction among institutional structures and diverse patterns of civic engagement. 'The role of built environment as the locus around which notions of public good and public nuisance were forged and legitimated' (p. 191) is highlighted.

Following an explanation of technical matters relating to the study, the book commences with an introductory section that includes the foundation of Ottoman cities and salient characteristics of the

multi-ethno-religious demography of Izmir. The first chapter, entitled 'Defining citizenship', focuses on modern regimes of property rights and citizenship, and emergent tensions between the Ottoman state and privileged individuals and groups. The second chapter, 'Ordering the streets', examines the emergence of modern urban services. The third chapter, 'Shaping the waterfront', discusses divergent interests and priorities regarding capital-intensive infrastructural ventures in Izmir with reference to the construction of the city's quay. The last chapter, 'Performing community', investigates how an alliance between public rituals and the form of the built environment was formed 'to generate and sustain divergent socio-political identities' (p. 46).

Key factors affecting the shaping of the city's urban form are discussed. For example, in consideration of the waterfront, the roles of both public works and local debates about the 'public good' are examined so that their influence on shaping the city's form can be understood. In the chapter on the formation of community, the intricate relationship between urban rituals and urban spaces is revealed through a concise study dealing with traces of religious and national events, for example the Corpus Christi procession of 1842.

Arguments and observations on the issues shaping Izmir's environment are gathered in the Epilogue. There is also a very extensive bibliography of urban studies relating to Mediterranean and Ottoman cities as well as on Izmir itself.

Though indirectly leaning upon the Conzenian approach to urban morphology, *Ottoman Izmir* successfully provides a detailed explanation of the socio-spatial foundations of urban transformation within a city that is significant in both the historical Ottoman context and in the present-day Asian-European scene. The author tackles the issue of urban change from the perspective of how a modern city came into being: 'the territorialisation of sovereignty, the changes in the definition of

citizenship and the rise of the public sphere reveal unmistakable parallels between the experiences of Izmir and those of contemporary cities across the globe' (p. 193). Good quality maps are provided as well as a variety of analytical visuals, so that cartographic sources such as those produced by Graves (c. 1836), Georgiades (c.1885), Storari (c. 1855), and Saad (c.1876) can be read with reference to morphological transformations. Other visual materials have been painstakingly compiled from rare collections or significant archives.

Zandi-Sayek approaches sources both as historian and detective, meticulously and judiciously weaving together civic and cultural events and aspects of the built environment. There are parallels with *Civic realism* by P. G. Rowe (1997) in regard to the relation between civic matters and the built environment (Cetin, 2000), and Zandi-Sayek's book may be of special interest to readers familiar with the work of Rowe.

This book successfully addresses a variety of issues that shaped Izmir during a significant era in its past. It is a major contribution to the literature on Izmir, and for scholars wishing to study the socio-spatial dimensions of urban form more generally it is an excellent starting point.

References

- Cetin, M. (2000) Review of *Civic realism* by P. G. Rowe, *Urban Morphology* 4, 38-9.
 Rowe, P. G. (1997) *Civic realism* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA).

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The greatest grid: the master plan of Manhattan 1811-2011 edited by *Hilary Ballon*, Museum of the City of New York and Columbia University Press, New York, USA, 2012, 226 pp. ISBN 978-0-23115-990-6.

The principle by which urban streets and ownership plots are arranged with geometrical gridiron regularity, situating urban life within repetitive modules of rectangular demarcation, reaches back to antiquity. Through history it has been favoured alike by dynastic rulers imposing order from above

and democratic entrepreneurs seeking personal profit from below. Yet in no region on earth has the urban grid plan been more widely nor explosively diffused than in the United States. And nowhere in America has the grid assumed so pivotal a role in the urban consciousness of a city's population and as a model for emulation elsewhere than in New York City.

Though begun with the more relaxed layout of Dutch New Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan Island, most of the city's subsequent layout became fixed in 1811 by a commission of three specially appointed city officials. As a result, the bulk of the island was laced with a street-grid without parallel. The circumstances surrounding this unique event and the significance it had for the city's development, given its historical success as a global economic centre, are the subject of this stimulating book. Created to accompany an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York celebrating the bicentennial of the Commissioners' Plan, it explores critical aspects of the plan's genesis, prolonged and contested implementation, multifarious alteration, and profound impact on the city's evolving urban life.

The book's arrangement traces that of the museum exhibit, namely thirteen major themes arranged within a broad chronological sequence: Manhattan before the grid; elements of the 1811 Plan; executing the plan by ground survey; opening the streets as public ways; selling the new ownership plots; creating open public spaces; developing the East and West Sides; restoring and reinserting Broadway as a common highway; alterations to the grid north of 155th Street; modern reforms; electric and subway infrastructure tied to the grid; and the grid in contemporary thought. The book contains in bound form much of the exhibition's substance and organization, namely clusters of graphic displays on individual topics with accompanying label text, introduced by abbreviated essays on the themes. The topical text has been written by a mix of eighteen specialists on New York's planning history drawn from the fields of architecture, architectural history, cartography, geography, history, historical preservation, journalism, urban planning, and wildlife conservation. Sprinkled among these substantive sections are seven casual 'reflections', most of them about three paragraphs in length, from 'names' associated with institutions concerned in some way with New York's built environment, including the current mayor.

Reading this book is akin to roaming the exhibition itself, except from the comfort of an