

# Preface and Acknowledgements

This book was born out of the frustrations of a group of urban planners and researchers who have increasingly felt the inadequacy of the planning systems and policies introduced to prepare cities for the future in an increasingly neoliberalising world. As this shortfall was becoming more evident among urban policymakers, planners and researchers in different parts of the world, a group of discontent researchers sought new approaches to cope with the increasing vulnerabilities of urban systems in the wake of growing socio-economic and ecological problems, privatisation of infrastructure services, fear and distrust in society and a loss of ecological services on the one hand; and decreases in welfare services and quality of urban environments, which have been shed by the appealing business and commercial centres, office spaces and the luxurious residential areas on the other. Our main intention in this book was first to identify how far existing planning systems and practices are able to support the sustained development of urban areas and prepare them to withstand both foreseen and unforeseen changes; while a secondary aim was to discuss the alternative perspectives, systems and principles of a new planning approach. Our combined enthusiasm brought us together in a research project supported by the URBAN-NET funding scheme under the Eranet Programme of the EU.

This book is a result of a research project entitled “Sustainable Land Use Policies for Resilient Cities,” which took 2 years to complete, with additional work after the completion of the project reports. The project aimed to discuss and define sustainable land-use policies for the creation of resilient cities, which has become increasingly important in recent years since urban systems must accommodate different global influences in diverse forms and be ready to address potential uncertainties and unexpected changes. The research framework embraced the importance of “resilience thinking” in urban policies in the contexts of urban decline, socio-economic vulnerability, urban landscape degradation and institutional fragmentation.

The team was composed of four research groups from four countries, namely Portugal, Sweden, the Netherlands and Turkey, whose combined focus on the resilience concept was applied to urban planning and methods to assess resilience, especially by resorting to the definition of comparable attributes and indicators in different cities, being Istanbul, Oporto, Lisbon, Rotterdam and Stockholm.

The composition of the group of researchers, who were able to offer different perspectives and experiences from the four distinct countries of Europe, as well as a broad and in-depth knowledge of the case study cities, made the studies a real learning process for all the contributors to the project. From the very beginning this book was planned to be more than just a collection of papers, with the intention being to bring together chapters that followed a complementary approach. To achieve this, the research method to be followed by the individual researchers from different countries and cities was clearly defined, which made a comparison of the outcomes of the different studies easier. Meetings and field trips were organised in each of the case study cities, with special attention paid to the areas in which the research was to be focused. These meetings not only allowed us to understand each other's case better, but also brought us closer together as a team, working together towards a common goal. This book benefited a great deal from the respect and understanding created by this friendship. We, as the editors of the book, wish to emphasise the importance of this positive atmosphere on the quality of work. Thanks to this real team feeling, discussions were fruitful, attempts to understand and reflect the different perspectives were effective, and the completed work was detailed. We regret that we were not able to fully reflect the richness of the individual research outcomes within this book due to limitations of space, and would like to thank all of those that contributed to this book for their patience and cooperation when decreasing the several hundreds of pages to chapters of limited size, which was obviously tiring and tedious work.

We hope that the outcome will satisfy not only the contributors to the book, but also readers from different disciplines, origins and countries.

Were we successful in easing our initial frustration at the end of this research? Not exactly; however we believe that light has been thrown on possible alternative ways and means of overcoming existing and future problems, and we are confident in our belief that an alternative path exists that is based upon resilient thinking. We hope that this new perspective that we have attempted to elaborate will find reverberations in the fields of urban planning and urban research.

We would like to thank not only the colleagues that contributed to this book, but also our research assistants Deniz Altay Kaya, Melih Gürçay and Çiğdem Özonat from the Department of City and Regional Planning of the Middle East Technical University for their contributions to the preparation of this book; and to Peiwen Lu for supporting the Dutch team. Special thanks go to Dr. Dominic Stead, who initially came up with the idea to make a research proposal and put the team together. We also express our gratitude to the Urban-Net scheme for providing funding and support for our research. Many thanks also to Colin Sutcliffe for the great job he did for editing the language of the manuscript. Last, but not least, we wish to thank Evelien Bakker and Bernadette Deelen of Springer for their continuous support and flexibility during the process of creating this publication.

This book is devoted to young urban planners who will soon discover the potentials of resilience thinking for the future of our cities!



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