

Review - Hotels and Highways

Written by Zeynep Gülşah Çapan

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ZEYNEP GÜLŞAH ÇAPAN, AUG 12 2020

Hotels and Highways: The Construction of Modernization Theory in Cold War Turkey

By Begüm Adalet

Stanford University Press, 2018

Begüm Adalet's book *Hotels and Highways: The Construction of Modernization Theory in Cold War Turkey* intervenes in two interrelated and important discussions. Firstly, it addresses 'travelling theories' and the translation of concepts, theories and ideas into other contexts. Secondly, it stresses how knowledge construction has material effects. The focus is on how theory is constructed and enacted through negotiations and translations, rather than being developed in its entirety in a fixed space and then being exported. Simultaneously, the book deals with the production of spaces, whether architectural or infrastructural, that accompany the construction of the meaning of modernity. Adalet concentrates on modernisation theory and takes Turkey as her case study, exploring "how Turkey served as both the template on which modernization theory was based and the object on which it was enacted" (p.3).

The first chapter presents a narrative of the emergence of modernisation theory through a discussion of the work of Dankwart Rustow. The chapter highlights how Rustow problematised teleological accounts, but also discusses the initial reaction his work received within the academic community in Turkey. The chapter underlines Rustow's position as an "uncertain translator between Turkish and American social scientists" (p.26). Social scientists such as Niyazi Berkes, Nermin Abadan, Yavuz Abadan, Şerif Mardin and Özer Ozankaya engaged with Rustow's work. For example, Nermin Abadan noted that the behaviouralist school "led many young scientists to assume that they are at the service of science, entering the mood of the scientist who is observing a successful experiment at the laboratory" (p.40). Niyazi Berkes wrote a review of Rustow's *Politics of Developing Areas* problematizing the comparative aspect of the book. Furthermore, the journal *Forum* published a variety of discussions and debates on the topic of modernization. These discussions and debates demonstrate that rather than a unidirectional export of modernization theory in a manner that had already been decided upon, modernization theory was formed through interactions, debates and translations.

The three following chapters focus on different aspects of the indices of development: empathy, mobility, and hospitality and how they were enacted within the laboratory of Turkey. Each chapter focuses on different ways in which this process took place, whether it is survey research, building of highways, or tourism. Chapter 2 focuses on the index of empathy, and how it was measured through survey research. The discussion focuses primarily on the work of Daniel Lerner and the coding of survey results according to his typology of modern, transitional, and traditional societies. Lerner's "empathy index" to 'measure' modern subjectivity was based on "the ability to imagine oneself outside of the self" (p.65), whether this meant imagining oneself as "the editor of a newspaper, in charge of a radio station, or the head of a government to the ability to imagine oneself living in a different country from one's own" (p.64). The chapter then discusses the ways in which these processes of interviewing, the questions and the assumptions they held, were questioned or negotiated at various instances. Adalet gives the example of respondents who did not engage with the questions and were not categorised as modern subjects, or respondents who expressed different opinions on the interview process or the questions. As such, she points to how "both recipients and practitioners negotiated interpretive frames as they tried to make sense of their communicative encounters" (p.73).

Chapter 3 and 4 discuss transfer of technology, expertise, and aid money through the example of highway

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construction. As Chapter 3 elaborates these processes also included a change in subjectivity from Turkish engineers who were expected to “reorient” themselves “physically, temporally, and attitudinally” (p.99). In this chapter Adalet presents the various disagreements and negotiations between aid agencies, the U.S. government, the Turkish government, and engineers. For example, in parliamentary debates there were objections about American involvement. Ahmet Ali Çınar even though appreciative of American expertise also underlined that foreign experts “should offer suggestions instead of dictates” (p.105) since it was the local engineers that could completely understand the local conditions. There were thus continued tensions and negotiations with respect to the nature of expertise and between specific and general knowledge. Chapter 4 continues with the focus on highways and discusses how their construction was related to the imagination of a modern national space. The discourse on highways underlined regional backwardness. Highways were seen as mechanisms that would connect disparate parts of the nation, thus modernising, civilising, and democratising them. These discourses became even more pronounced with respect to eastern Turkey. The building of highways in eastern Turkey was depicted as “forays into foreign territory” and a way of “making order out of chaos and modernity out of wilderness” (p.135). Moreover, the connecting of disparate areas through highways made it possible for villagers to produce for distant markets; such further economic integration established a national market. This also created an interest in the figure of the new farmer. According to these narratives, “the ‘bashful peasant’ was ‘awakening’ and ‘demanding service in return for his vote’”(p.143). Thus, the chapter underlines the relationship between the construction of highways, the creation of spaces (such as the national market), and specific subjectivities (such as the figure of the new farmer).

The fifth chapter focuses on the Istanbul Hilton Hotel as the “expression of and blueprint of Turkish hospitality” (p.161). The chapter discusses the different meanings given to the hotel and the variety of negotiations of meaning surrounding it from being a “safeguard against the perilous march of communism” to being “a turning point in the tourism industry” for the Turkish government. The chapter problematises the narrative that foreign capital and expertise was received in a linear and unchallenged manner. Adalet highlights protests from Turkish architects and parliamentary debates, demonstrating that there were critiques and negotiations at the time rather than unquestioned acceptance.

The first two chapters are an important contribution to discussions about ‘travelling theories’ and translation and demonstrate the importance of not taking theories and ideas as being fixed in time and space but as always being negotiated and translated into different contexts. As valuable as the discussions with respect to Rustow and Lerner were, the chapters would have benefited from further explorations into the meaning of ‘translation’. The following chapters focus on the different representations of the material constructions of modernization theory and the different material effects of modernization theory. Chapter 4 offers particularly fascinating insights into how the construction of ‘regional backwardness’ contributed to the silencing of ethnic difference, but even though references are made to the ‘interior colonial project’ (p.14), it is not further elaborated upon.

Adalet’s *Highways and Hotels* is an empirically rich discussion of the negotiations and translations involved when concepts, ideas and theories travel and/or are translated into different contexts. The book firstly underlines the importance of not approaching processes, theories, ideas as being imposed in a unidirectional and uniform manner but rather looking at the different negotiations, interpretations, and translations that happen throughout the process. Secondly, the book underlines the importance of analysing the material effects of knowledge production especially with respect to the production of architectural and infrastructural space.

About the author:

Zeynep Gülşah Çapan is a Lecturer at the chair group of International Relations at the University of Erfurt. Her research focuses on critical theories of international relations, history and historiography, sociology of knowledge and postcolonial and decolonial thought. Her book *Re-Writing International Relations: History and Theory Beyond Eurocentrism in Turkey* was published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2016. She has published in journals such as *Third World Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies* and has contributed several chapters to edited volumes.

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