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Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.

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Gendering Space, Security and Surveillance in Istanbul

Asalet TULAZ

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University Of Kent,
Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NZ

asalett@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study intended to question whether surveillance is an indispensable tool for security or not as well as its positive and negative affects on people's personal security. The point of departure is whether people willingly accept being surveilled for their security or not, in Turkey context and the focus group of the field research is women in Istanbul. The consequence affects of surveillance on public space, the cities in neo-liberal era and the policies that magnify fear and threat and as a result, the inescapable potential of surveillance and spatial segregation are also other subjects matter.

Introduction

In today's cities, surveillance become a more common and internalized tool for control that spreads to everyday life with the assistance of new technologies. Numerous surveillance techniques –which also function as a ‘social sorting’ tool- for security reasons such as electronic surveillance at work, cameras in public spaces, etc. become an ordinary part of a modern individual. On the other hand, security becomes a dramatically rising sector in cities. Security measures are more obvious in the cities because it is believed that city life brings a high rate of insecurity -and as a result, inescapable potential of surveillance-.

Although these improved surveillance techniques have no more than 10 years of history, nowadays surveillance is accepted as an indispensable tool for security. However it will be more rational and realistic if security is accepted as a justification of surveillance especially in the neo-liberal cities where social inequality, exclusion and polarization brought about spatial and social segregation and where fear and threats are magnified by the media and crime control. While surveillance seems to provide a basic level of security, it also carries the task of control at the same time.

In this study, surveillance is examined as an urban experience. As Lyon indicates, surveillance in the city is “multi- faceted and multi- layered” (Lyon, 2005: 51). It has both “protection and direction”, “care and control” (Lyon, 2005:3). On one hand, surveillance functions as a kind of ‘social sorting’ (Lyon, 2002:22) process, on the other, it controls deviant behaviour; reduces crime and keeps cities secure (Koskela, 2003:295). That is to say, the advantages of surveillance for its subject are real, palpable and undeniable (Lyon, 2005:4). But one should also examine the “other effects accompany the positive face of surveillance” (Lyon, 2005: 53); in other words, the costs and the domain of its positive effects.

Surveillance mostly functions as an exclusion mode for the dangerous individuals, groups, and specific social clusters (Topal, 2006: 7-8) within the urban space such as the youth, the

homeless, political activists or immigrants and minorities. For example as Koskela tells, “being ‘black’ ensures a high rate of scrutiny” (2003: 301).

Norris and Armstrong (1999: 155) found out in their research in Britain that black people were ‘twice as likely to be surveilled for no apparent reason’ than white. (in Koskela, 2003: 301)

But as was referred before, surveillance is “multi-faceted”. The security based surveillance mostly targets “dangerous groups” or individuals, but this doesn’t mean the remaining part of the society is out of domain. From one moment to the other the target can be changed. It depends on who wants the data: the travel agency or the bank, the police station or the school, a new applied job employee or a store manager, the city hall or the embassy (Lyon, 2005). One moment surveillance could provide security while being a threat on the next.

Surveillance, Knowledge, Power and Space

In order to understand the importance of surveillance, it should be analyzed within the knowledge/power networks, since it does not only gather or find information and knowledge but also creates, produces and controls it (Allen, 1994; Koskela, 2003; Topal, 2006) and it renders power immanent. The vital question is: what surveillance adds to power or in other words, how power benefits from surveillance.

Power operates with knowledge and requires it. The relation between power and knowledge is mutual; gathering knowledge is a form of maintaining control. (Koskela, 2003: 304). As a social product, space also should be analyzed within the social context and power/knowledge networks within which it is produced and formed. Space is crucial for comprehending the social/power relations and also it is the fundamental basis for the exercise of power (Koskela, 2003: 295). As a social product, different forms of space are created by different forms of power in different social contexts.

The physical space of city has symbolic meanings, connotations and is associated with images that users attributed to it in history. From a square to a street, urban space reflects the social relations and power networks. Since the empirical focus of this study is based on women in the city within the security and surveillance contexts; which places are secure and which are not according to women, is another concern of the study.

Urban space includes a variety of social relations and power networks. As a social product, produced by power-knowledge networks and social relations, space has different meanings for different groups. These different versions of space, the production and reproduction of it are closely related to the knowledge of the space. The production of knowledge by power is possible within the production of discourse. Space as a social product has many symbolic meanings that depend on

discourse which means different to various groups and people. Perception of any symbolic meaning of a space depends on historical background and the users' social and psychological conditions. For instance, security perception of a place depends on time, users' ages, gender, cultural background, and so on. As an example, the very same place which is completely considered as secure by a man can surely be insecure for a woman.

Information on the field research and participants

Although it is true that surveillance embraces all people regardless of their gender, it is also a fact that surveillance is relative to gender, class, age, race etc. like security. Therefore the field search of the study is conducted on women in Istanbul because security is a gendered issue and there is a general acknowledgement that women are accepted to be more vulnerable and threatened than men. Security is a multifold and a very problematic issue for women. Thereby, the study intended to question whether surveillance is approved for personal security or not which can be well questioned within women's cases.

Within the study, 8 in-depth interviews were conducted in Turkish, in Istanbul with single living and professional women¹. It is aimed to comprehend the women's perceptions of public space, fear, violence, security, surveillance, and so forth in urban space.

It is questioned how space, security and surveillance are gendered, whether surveillance increases women's security or not and whether women perceive surveillance as a beneficial tool for their everyday life security. The awareness of women on surveillance techniques, -if available- the counter strategies produced by them against surveillance, the scale of surveillance, the purpose of it and the relation of it with power mechanisms are also other debated issues.

All of the 8 participants live in different districts of Istanbul that are central (Istanbul has more than one 'centre'). Except one (Participant 1, Computer Engineer, 38), all participants live in middle and upper middle class neighbourhoods which are known to be safe and secure. This is expected because for single women being safe and secure is the most important criterion for choosing the location of their residence places. These districts can also be defined as 'women friendly' because of their highest rate of single woman households (see Figure 3). The below maps

¹ It has to be borne in mind that, the results would absolutely be different in lower class women's cases especially in a city like Istanbul where social segregation and inequality reflect to the physical place and form the spatial segregation. Because class difference creates many disparities in urban space use, participation to the public spaces, perceptions of security, risk, fear and so on. It is an observable fact that, while dealing with the problems of immigration and integration along many, after neo-liberal policies of 1980s, Istanbul became a divided city in many ways. But it was an obligation to limit the participant for the sake of study's manageability.

(see Figure 1 and Figure 2) which are produced from the statistics of 2000 census indicate the number of single woman households by Istanbul districts.

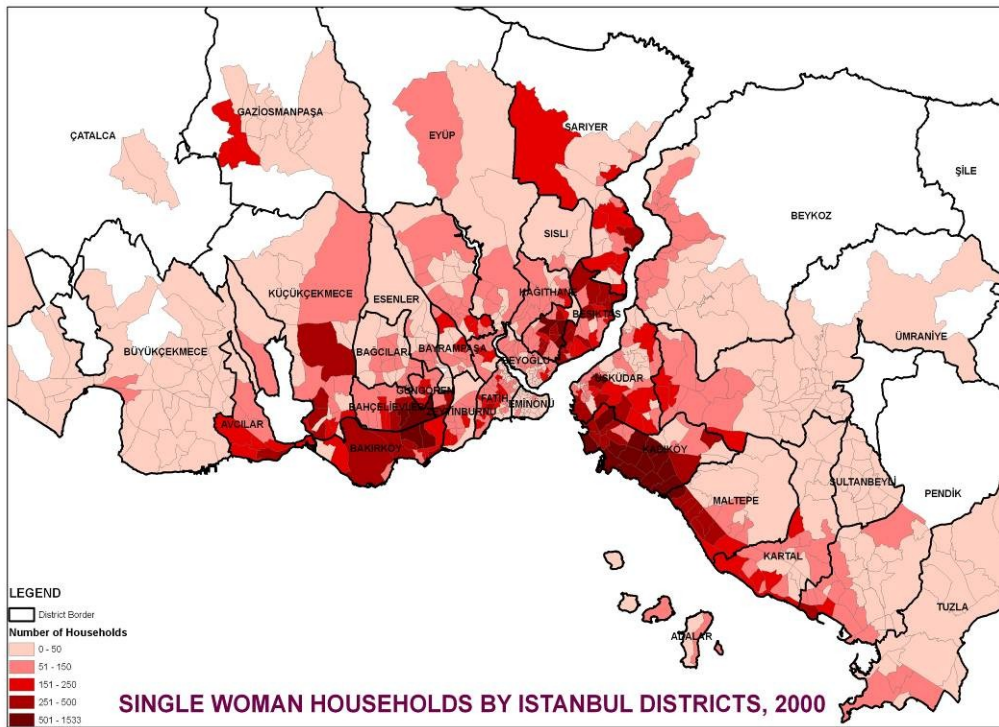


Figure 1: Single Woman Households by Istanbul Districts, 2000²

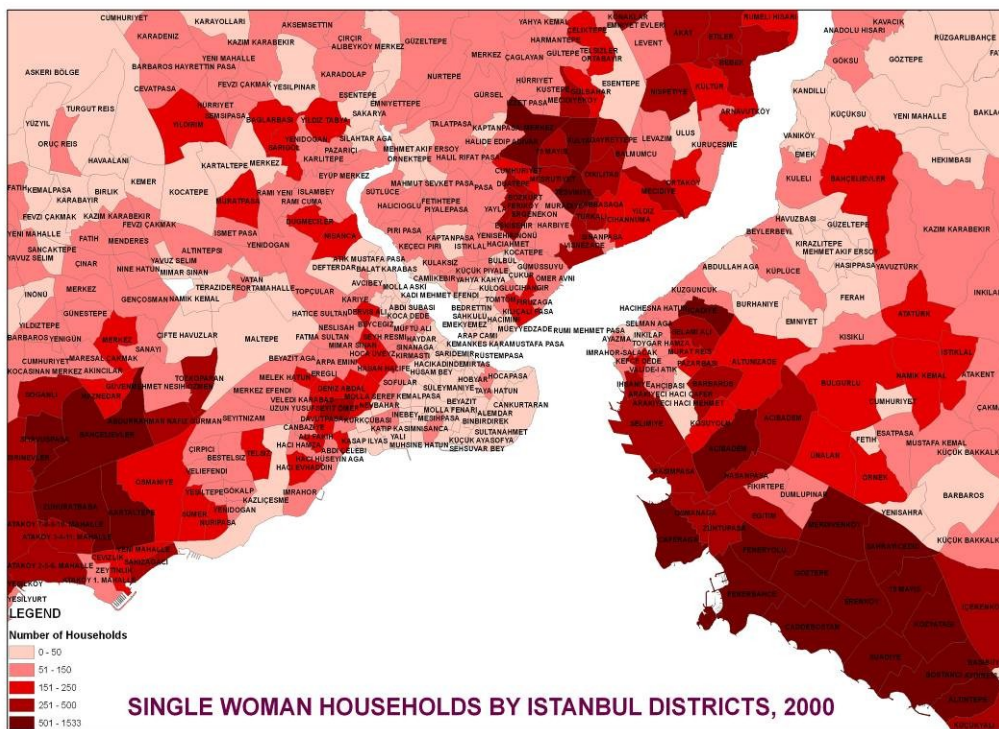


Figure 2: Single Woman Households by central districts of Istanbul, 2000

² The first five maps are prepared according to the statistical data of 2000 census gained from Turkish Statistical Institute

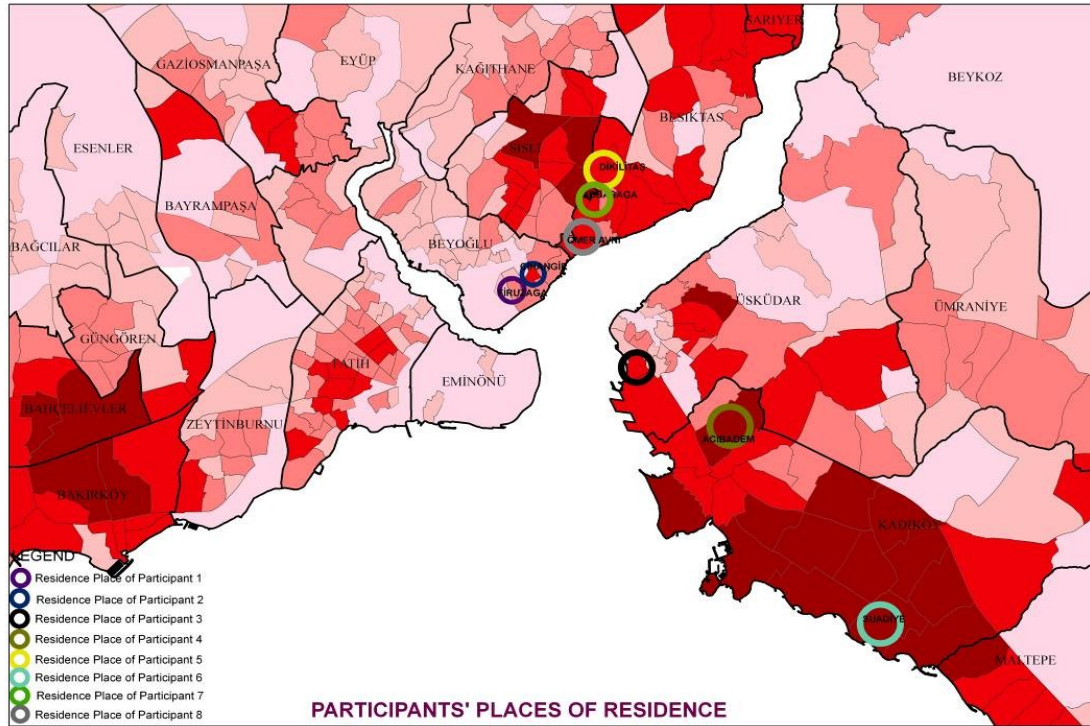


Figure 3: Participants' Places of Residence

In order to understand the participation of women in public space and use of public space, interview questions are based on public-private distinction. It is a general acknowledgement that private space connoted with woman and public with man.

Space Perceptions of Participating Women

As it is shown in other studies women are observed to be limited users of the public space and display different public use patterns than men. Public space use of women is determined according to time, risky factors, image of a place and existence of men. Therefore, instead of using “men places”, women create their own (public) places (Kaya, 2006).

The field research showed that perceptions of security of urban space differ in each woman's case. Women's interpretations of space depend on the existence of violence, threats and risks even existence of a man/men. Therefore a completely secure place for a man can surely be insecure for a woman.

While some of the participating women find a place secure some don't. A person can find a particular place insecure because of the unfamiliarity while a resident of that place find it very secure because of the social relations in the space and familiarity. All participants think that their

neighbourhoods are safe and secure and they trust the residents and tradesmen.

The perception of security in a space is also related to time. A place that might be secure for a woman in the daytime may be considered as insecure at night. “At night I feel insecure in any place except my neighbourhood” (Participant 3, *Academician*, 37)

Women’s most secure places are the neighbourhoods that they live in and familiar with. These perceptions depend on the image of a place that they have in mind.

I feel safe in my work place because it is a controlled space. Even the back streets of Beyoğlu are safe for me if it is not very late, because I know the place well. I don’t feel any insecurity in a place I know well. But if it is late and dark, I am scared of walking alone. (*Computer Engineer*, 38)

“I feel safe in my neighbourhood. But in Eminönü for instance, I feel insecure. I don’t go there very often. But if I have to, I do”. (Participant 2, *Correspondent*, 26)

“I feel safe in limited number of places and time. For example in the places I know well or I live in. In the day time and in a crowd I feel secure. And I feel insecure in deserted places at night” (*Academician*, 37).

“I am scared of the back streets of Beyoğlu. I am scared of slums for instance. Actually, in general I am scared of anywhere after 10 pm. There isn’t any place that I feel secure at night, not even Suadiye, Etiler or Nişantaşı. (Participant 4, *Turkologist*, 43)

“I feel safe in Beşiktaş but not in every part of it. I am scared of crowd. But I think Taksim and Istiklal are safe. And I feel secure in the places I know well like Levent, Eminönü, Sultanahmet and Yeniköy. (Participant 5, *Business Manager*, 33)

“I feel insecure anywhere at night, especially dark and empty streets, unknown places,” (Participant 8, *Art Director*, 41).

All participants said that trust between people still exists in their neighbourhoods. They stated that they are pleased with their neighbourhoods which are liberal middle or upper-middle class settlements that provide them the sense of freedom and security both at the same time with balanced liberalism and social contact opportunities. They said that their neighbourhoods provide them security which is fundamental for them and at the same time they are liberal which is indispensable for them. Because as many of them stated, they wouldn’t want to live in small traditional communities for the sake of their security. People feel more secure in a place they know well. They develop relations with tradesmen, residents and mostly tend to trust them. Only Participant 1(*Computer Engineer*, 38) said that she is aware of her neighbourhood –which is reached by walking through the back streets of Beyoğlu that have always had a bad reputation of being insecure but have been changing for some time- is ‘not a hundred percent secure’ but she still trust the residents. The reason of this insecurity is because of the location. Participating women

agree that the neighbourhoods are like buffer zones. According to them, if they were attacked in their neighbourhood they would get help without asking, but in any other place in the city they think that even they ask help they wouldn't get any.

I believe that even the same person who doesn't want to help anyone in the city will behave different in his/her neighbourhood and I am sure s/he will offer help in case of an emergency. (*Academician*, 37)

Some participants define themselves being out of the traditional neighbourhood networks but they at least know and trust the grocer. Yet some of them try to construct relations with their neighbours to not feel alone and deserted in the apartment. "I try to know and get in touch with my neighbour who is also a single woman. I think this is important and we may need each other now and then." (Urban Planner, 26). All 8 participants said that they 'love' their neighbourhoods and find them secure. Participant 7 too, who had once lived in the most cosmopolitan and the most 'insecure' place, states that even in that previous neighbourhood she felt more secure than Istiklal Street or any other place in the city. Because she says, "I had my house or the grocers that I could shelter in but in Istiklal, anything can happen anytime and you don't know anyone." (Sociologists, 29)

Participating Women's Perceptions of Security

In Western countries, being black or Muslim connotes with fear, crime and terrorism. As Lyon says, visual appearance forms the basis for prejudice. Surveillance practices tend 'to inflate stereotypes' (Lyon, 2001: 63) and "reinforce existing power relations rather than challenging them" (Koskela, 2003: 301). In 'stereotype' of women it is quite different however. It is hardly deniable that this stereotype also depends on other discriminations such as being a black woman, or an Anglo-Saxon, a Muslim or a catholic etc. But as far as women are concerned as a 'gender', surveillance and security come to a very different point. According to Norris and Armstrong- in the sense of modern video surveillance- women are 'invisible as suspects' and also 'invisible as potential victims' but certainly 'visible as targets of sexual interest' (Koskela, 2002: 301). Sometimes surveillance can result harassment rather than being a protection for women (Koskela, 2003; 301, also Koskela, 2002; Hillier, 1996; Ainley, 1998; Brown, 1998). Koskela states that many incidents showing the examples of gendered abuse of control such as "improper voyeuristic use" of surveillance by police officers, soldiers, and private guards (2003: 301). Because as Koskela states, female body is still an object of a gaze in different ways than male body. Moreover, the cultural codes and politics of seeing and being seen are deeply gendered.

It is a well known fact that security is a relative phenomenon and usually the perception of safety is not related to "real security" and even sometimes mistaken as real. Security perceptions of

people depend on different conceptions. First of all they depend on familiarity and their habits; The security perceptions of participating women were mostly about their personal security and their 'body'. They perceived security on the basis of their mostly feared cases or their experiences and define the existence of security as a tool of having a better life or having higher life standards. For them, security is the absence of fear, danger, risk and threat. All 8 participants classify these threats mostly under the name of abuse, harassment and assault by a stranger. Most participating women had some scenarios in their mind about danger and insecurity in the city and in one or two cases these scenarios had become real. Most of them had an experience of sexual abuse in the street or an assault-incident. Not very surprisingly, as participants expressed, before those incidents they had no fear or anxiety. "That abuse incident was first and now I feel that it is highly possible to happen any time" (*Computer Engineer*, 38). They expressed that all these fears are now embedded in their mind; "I had absolutely no fear not even once it crossed my mind" (*Sociologist*, 29).

Each participant defined the security phenomenon according to her experiences, and possible threats in her life. Although they were aware of the lack of public security, health and social security, financial security and information security, and the existence of terror, they did not mention these factors without being asked, unless they had a related experience. They answered the question of "*What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say 'security', what is being safe means to you*" according to their experiences. For instance, Participant 1 (*Computer Engineer*, 38) who had been attacked on the street by a stranger and had a robbery incident when she first moved into her house said that 'I think safety is a feeling of being at ease in the place you live. Not to live with the feeling that something might happen to you anytime, anywhere' (*Computer Engineer*, 38). For another participant -who had to move out of one of the Prince islands because of her neighbour's irritating behaviour in winter when the island was almost empty- "security means living in a place that is near enough to reach someone in case of an emergency or whenever I need someone" (*Academician*, 37). Another one, who experienced an attempted burglary into her house, understands from safety as her personal and physical security and the protection of her property (*Correspondent*, 26).

For most of them safety is a feeling being at ease, not being agitated and not being threatened. Security is basically absence of risk of dangers, threats, abuse and harassment. Living in an "insecure apartment building, being in a strange or unfamiliar place alone, walking in the street at an inappropriate time for a women" (*Art Director*, 41) which could be after 10 or 11 pm, 'exceptional or irregular behaviours' (*Urban Planner*, 26) are some of the risky situations for women. These risks are in general based on human actions. Therefore it wouldn't be an

overstatement to say that in interviewees' cases the most feared threat for them was others' extraordinary behaviours that could be considered as dangerous.

Half of the participating women stated that if those risks and threats (abuse, harassment and assault) were eliminated then there wouldn't be many safety problems left.

Correspondent, (26): I think that elimination of those threats will solve many problems.

Turkologist, (43): Well, in the first place I think of my personal safety, and elimination of those previously mentioned risks would be enough. But since you asked now, I think of terror, accidents, and shortage. There are other issues too.

Business manager (33): Without the mentioned threats (abuse and assault) many problems would be solved and the city would be safe and secure.

As a result, it can be said that since security is a relative phenomenon and mostly loaded with symbolic meanings the perceptions of women are rather limited with their own personal safety and it is relative to the risks they have to deal within their everyday life. Due to these limited perceptions, and an additional lack of trust in security providers, most participating women, approx. three quarters of them, think that they were responsible for their own security in the first place. They think that if they behave and dress 'appropriately' (*Correspondent, 26*); if they go out at 'appropriate times' to 'appropriate places', if they 'don't walk alone at dark and if they 'don't risk themselves' (*Art Director, 41*), they 'don't create any opportunity' (*Urban Planner, 26*), if they 'behave precautious' (*Business Manager, 33*) and if they choose safe places to live, they would be safer. They think that their security depends on them and primarily they are in charge of providing their own security. They agreed that they live as they have to and as one of them stated, "Istanbul teaches you how to live" (*Art Director, 41*). From these statements, one can claim that, participant women internalize the control and have a minimum expectancy from the institutions about their security.

It can still be discussed whether these precautions would reduce the risk of being attacked and abused, but this complete 'responsibility' notion would also bring the sense of being an accomplice. If something happens, they would blame themselves for not being sufficiently precautious. Only two participants were insistent about the undeniable role of the institutional security providers whose duties are to protect the public from dangers and loss; ironically they stated that they don't trust such institutions either.

As a citizen I think I deserve a security provided by institutions either with equal life standards or with regulations. It is not about the number of police officers in a neighbourhood but about the equal access of citizens to institutional services: health, education and law and equal opportunities. It feels secure knowing that you're as equal as any other citizen to access such services. It is also about learning how to live all together and people are not

responsible for the lack of security. That neighbour of mine didn't give me a promise of being a good neighbour but the security forces do. They promise to provide my security, therefore they have authority on me which sometimes they ironically use as a violence tool upon me. (*Sociologist*, 29)

"I really think that public security should be indispensable and should really work well. This is fundamental. Public security should be provided, at the very least, for numerous women who face violence". (*Academician*, 37)

Other participants were also aware of the important role and the duty of institutions that are supposed to provide security, but in practice they were mostly hopeless about institutional security supply because they knew that in case of an emergency, they might be left alone. They agreed that police, fire brigade, hospitals, laws, regulations all have undeniable role in protecting citizens but they think that these institutions don't perform so well.

Correspondent, (26): I think of someone close, that I trust, a friend or my boyfriend. Even in case of a robbery I would call the police later. In the street, I would expect help from people. And in the neighbourhood I think I get help.

I will expect help from my neighbour or a friend. After then I can think of the police. In some situations people (strangers) also help, but if there is a woman and a man involved, they usually try not to. Maybe they can't seize the situation. It wasn't like that ten years ago, but it's changing. Alienation and individualization are deepening. In the neighbourhoods it is totally different I think. There are still some social networks remaining. (*Academician*, 37)

Computer Engineer, (38): When I was attacked I called my friend, but when the house was broken into, I called the police. I expect help from people, and I don't know about Istiklal Street, but in my neighbourhood I think they would help.

I haven't had any particular experience but I think people might help. I think the place doesn't make any difference; it is still the same if it happens at Istiklal or in my neighbourhood. Maybe in some cases they might think that it's between me and the 'particular' person and this can put them off. (*Urban Planner*, 26)

Art Director, (41): I expect help from people before police arrive but I also think they might hesitate to interfere, I know it from experience, because I do sometimes.

It is clear that in Turkey context, the main security provider institutions are perceived by women with their lack of responsibility and unreliability. This situation makes women feel more insecure.

The 'Survey of Violence and Sociological Background of Violence in Istanbul', shows that 70.2 % of Istanbul population think that police uses violence against people in political meetings. In women's case, it is even worse. The impression of police's approach against woman can be defined as 'insulting' or 'accusatory'.

Correspondent (26): I am afraid of the police, because they are very violent, biased and they have a high tendency to express violent attitudes. I usually attend the political meetings and protest marches and the police oppression/coercion worries me.

In 1990's yes, I was afraid of police. Actually the police force was the biggest fear of mine at that time. They were really rough and violent. I was student at the college. And very often we had to face police repression in meetings. I am not afraid of police now, I feel more sheltered, probably because of my job. I think police are more tolerant to a woman academician nowadays. They are still rough to students though. People didn't trust police in 1990's at all. But in case of an emergency, I wouldn't still expect anything from them, because they are ignorant. And I feel more insecure in a place where there are too many policemen. (*Academician, 37*)

Another participant's experience is more or less the same with the police.

No, I am not afraid of the police but I don't trust them either. I don't trust the institutions which have to protect me against dangers, accidents, etc. I called the police (this is my third house and every single of them was broken into) when my house had been robbed. And from their behaviour I didn't feel secure at all. I didn't trust them and I complained. I came home after midnight one day, I couldn't open the door, because the security chain was locked from inside. I thought the burglar might still be in so I called the police immediately. Of course they didn't come. 15 minutes later I called again and I said it's an emergency; I am locked out right now. They came slowly with a police car, through the open window they asked: "did you call the police, what is it?" They didn't even bother to park the car or get out. I got really angry and said: why don't you hurry, the burglar might still be in the house. And they got in through the back balcony's door with guns drawn. When they realized that the balcony is low enough to climb they wondered why I couldn't manage to find a youngster to let in through that balcony. I said you're getting in with your guns, how come you expect me to find someone to get in. Anyway, they wouldn't give me any chance to trust them and now, I take every single police officer's employee-number I'm involved with. (*Turkologist/Redactor, 43*)

Yes, I am afraid of them. In general, I have a bad impression about police. Because of my job, I had to get involved with police often, but it is always impossible to know how they would act. It's a group of people whom I don't trust. Ages ago, in Izmir for instance, I was with my boyfriend driving, a police officer stopped the car and etc. My boyfriend insisted that we were right. The officer took the cigarette out of my boy friend's mouth and slapped him in the face twice. This terrifies me; I mean the way he sees that he has the right to do as he wishes. You can't anticipate their limits. It changes according to individual, according to their character. Because of the uncertainty/ambiguity of their limits, of how they would use the authority they have, I am scared of them. But I am not a target for them; I mean I have nothing personal to be afraid of. (*Art Director, 41*)

In short, the interviews showed that, the security perceptions of women are relative to their experiences and the risks in their everyday life which also include other's experiences they

witnessed or known from the media. Their anxieties, worries, fears and the images that they have in mind about risks, dominate and form their security perceptions. They don't trust public security agents, most of them don't trust other people and they are trying to provide their security by themselves and by being utmost careful. They develop some strategies like not using many public spaces and public transportation, hiding the information, for example being single, from strangers or putting a window lock or a simple alarm system. Some carry pepper sprays for protection; some think that everything on them is a weapon like a handbag, an umbrella or even a needle (Sociologists, 29 and Computer Engineer, 38). Mostly they change their routes if necessary and if they don't feel secure. If a street is dark or empty/deserted they try not to use it. Taxi is one of the main secure transports for women at night. Women always keep their cell phones within easy reach and always keep in touch with friends when they are on the street or after they arrived home. These are the strategies they follow in order to feel more secure. The notion of insecurity depends on their fears and anxieties. At that point, it is important to make a clear distinction between fear and anxiety. As Ahiska expresses, fear has an object, but anxiety's only object is the subject's self (Ahiska, 1992:121). She adds that fear, that is to say in most cases anxiety is to expect the possible disasters with hopelessness. She states that, security and violence support one another and create a supply-demand chain. According to her, security forces, media and citizens who demand security, have important roles in completing this chain (Ahiska, 1992: 128).

People encounter violence and insecurity in the city, even if they don't experience it. They witness other's experiences or follow them in the media. The 'Survey of Violence and Sociological Background of Violence in Istanbul' shows that 93.5 percent of people in Istanbul think that there is a violence problem in the city which also involves police's attitudes against protesters. And three-fourths of Istanbul population don't feel secure. The reasons of this perception are multifold. First of all, it is about security forces, as Ahiska expresses; especially the police force, who constantly indicate violent incidents to justify their violence in the first place (Ahiska, 1992: 128). Second it's about the distrust in institutions and the lack of financial security, juridical security, health and social security. People mostly afraid of the unknown and, as participants stated, it is an unknown how the police would behave in case of an emergency, it is an unknown whether they will receive any help from institutions or not. They feel that their future is unknown. Because of distrust and unknown, anxieties are proliferated which bring fear into everyday life.

Third, it is about the role of media who creates an atmosphere of fear by packing and labelling violence, arousing the basic fears and awakens the needs of security (Ahiska, 1992: 128). Last, this is about people who demand for security because of that awakened need. Yet, it is a deserved demand. However, in most cases people also tend to use violence and they want the criminals to be punished more extremely or even they want to punish them on their own. According

to the results of the above mentioned survey, 93.9 percent of Istanbulers think that punishments for some crimes like rape, murder, laceration etc. aren't extreme enough and so they need to be toughened. And sometimes even security measures and devices may also heighten the feelings of insecurity as Beck expresses; by suggesting that there are risks that need to be controlled (Beck, 1992 in Body-Gendrot, 2000: 242)

Most participating women have experienced some basic level of violence. Although none of them had post-traumatic effects³, most of them live in avoidance and discreetly on the basis of their security. They have spatially restricted lives. For them, the reasons of violence are cultural, economical and political. They think that poverty, unemployment, and inadequate social conditions are the main causes of the violence, harassment, abuse and robbery. "I think it's mostly economical. People live in poverty and they have nothing to lose. And of course there is a moral minimalism that creates these attitudes and approaches."(*Computer Engineer*, 38)

Participating Women's Perceptions of Surveillance

Since most of the new surveillance techniques and technologies have recently been imported, there is a different surveillance culture in Turkey than many Western countries where surveillance has long been an issue of public debate. In Turkey, surveillance technologies have been emerging for the last 5 years and most of the institutions haven't been coordinated yet. People still aren't aware of the scale of surveillance they face. It is too early to evaluate the e-Government, e-Identification, and e-Authentication infrastructures like the 'MERNIS' (Central Population Management System)⁴ which is operational since 2003 with KPS (ID Information Sharing System)⁵, and AKS (Address Record System)⁶ or like Justice Net, Pharmacy Automation System, and e-Tax Infrastructure (for further information see <http://www.epractice.eu/document/3530>) which provide management and control of citizens' information and allowing different institutions to interact with each other and exchange information. All these projects are planned to be operational at the end of 2008. Furthermore, other implementations, apart from the central

³ In fact, Participant 7 had post-traumatic effects although she doesn't define so. She couldn't go her home for 3 months after her neighbour's attack.

⁴ MERNIS assigns a unique ID-number for about 120 million Turkish citizens, both alive and deceased, which can be used in many eServices. It allows computerised birth certificates and transactions on them (Resource: <http://www.epractice.eu/document/3530>)

⁵ KPS is another function of MERNIS, which enables public agencies having appropriate security authorisations to access ID information (Resource: <http://www.epractice.eu/document/3530>)

⁶ AKS was completed by Turkish Statistical Institute by the end of 2007 and transferred to the General Directorate of Census and Citizenship. Address records are linked with the MERNIS. The system, designed to link address data with unique ID number for legal and real persons, will constitute one of the backbones of e-Government. (Resource: <http://www.epractice.eu/document/3530>)

government's, are also in force; like MOBESE, Istanbul Card⁷, and so on. But it is still early for people to judge the performance of these efforts. Therefore, people are not able to assess the issue from different aspects yet. While Istanbul Police is installing more than 500 surveillance cameras in different streets and public spaces of Istanbul, within the new system called MOBESE; "Urban Information and Security System", only some small groups express their concerns on privacy, and the potential misuse of surveillance cameras. These concerns can be multiplied. Koskela raises some of them like surveillance's negative "chilling effect" on urban life and culture, its contributions to "purification" and "homogenization" processes of urban space (Mitchell, 1995 in Koskela, 2002: 257; Davis, 1990). She also questions whether surveillance cameras are effective for the task they were to meet in the first place: to curb crime (Koskela, 2002:257). According to increasing number of studies, surveillance only has a temporary effect on urban crime and that they produce crime displacement (Flusty, 1994; Fyfe and Bannister, 1996 in Koskela, 2002:257). Koskela focuses on video surveillance which is not the only surveillance technique in urban space but the most visible and the most common one.

These all bring other related questions: who is in charge in maintaining surveillance, are they reliable, who is monitored, what kind of behaviour/appearance are monitored or are deserved to be monitored, what is regarded as deviant or dangerous, when the monitoring task is carried; everyday or only on special days like May 1, what are the other goals of surveillance apart from providing security and how is surveillance gendered?

These questions are crucial for us to comprehend the 'surveillance' in the context of Turkey, because surveillance practices and perception depend highly on the social and political context. As an urban experience, surveillance in this study is considered within changing characteristics and regimes of it. Yet in Turkey, 'new/modern surveillance' is an emerging phenomenon. Therefore it is difficult to have a detailed comparison and it is still early to know its benefits, complications as well as the disadvantages it might bring with. But it can be foreseen that along with the advantages of them, there would still be a purpose of control and potential of misuse of information that can not be disregarded.

According to Koskela surveillance is gendered not only because the field of vision is gendered or a look of an abuser can be a weapon but also because the places that are under surveillance are where women spend their most time in like shopping malls, stores, markets, public

⁷ Istanbul Card is an element of the newly installing transport system of Istanbul which includes complicated information systems as well as cameras in the busses. The card will be designed as a credit card and replace AKBIL (Smart Ticket). With little chips on them, Istanbul cards will allow the passengers' transportation patterns to be followed exactly. People will be able to use them as a credit card for shopping, paying bills and as well as a ticket. In time it will be compatible to e-governmental structures. (Resource: http://www.planlama.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3385&Itemid=51)

transport etc.(Koskela, 2002: 262). And she adds that professions that maintain surveillance (police, guards) are male dominated. Thus, at this simplest level, surveillance is, indeed, gendered: most of the persons “behind” the camera are men and most of the persons “under” surveillance are women (Koskela, 2002: 263). In Turkey, this is also the issue but less gendered. Women do not trust police and guards who maintain surveillance because they don’t trust police as an institution “I couldn’t trust the police who I called in case of an emergency, so how can I trust the camera they installed and watched?” (*Turkologist*, 43). And they think that guards that are hired by private security companies are not capable enough for providing security.

I don’t trust private security companies and guards. First of all they are really desperate people for that job and mostly they come from the repressed lower classes. That uniform and gun means a lot to them and I think this is far too dangerous if you consider the human ego. If they are educated enough maybe I can trust them but I don’t think they are. (*Correspondent*, 26)

“Actually I think in a country that has terror problem, a guard in public spaces, can be daunting and necessary” (*Business Manager*, 33)

“I don’t ever trust them. I don’t even think that they are trained accordingly. Mostly it’s for show-off. I know that in case of an emergency they are incapable to even protect themselves. A very famous singer’s wife has been shot in our business centre, but our security-guards just watched. They are there, but I don’t see why.”(*Turkologist*, 43)

It is also observed that participants have confused thoughts about surveillance cameras. It is because they are really new in Turkey and in most cases they haven’t been used effectively. But at the same time women are aware of the general opinions about surveillance cameras and their benefits. On the one hand women think they can increase security but on the other hand they don’t trust the system as a whole. Cameras appear to evoke simultaneous positive and negative feelings (Koskela, 2002: 269).

I think they can be off-putting. Not only the cameras but even an apartment alarm might be deterrent. It’s not a good thing tough, because it accuses everyone and watches everyone. Still I don’t think it is indispensable. A maniac would kill someone in front of the cameras. It makes no difference. But cameras protect property; against thievery they can be useful. (*Computer Engineer*, 38)

“I don’t see them indispensable. They displace the crime. For instance if they put camera in this street, it can prevent crime here but in the next street maybe it may increase.”(Correspondent, 26)

“I don’t think they are useful. We have to wait to see the performance of MOBESE. But I don’t trust the implementation of the system in our country.” (*Turkologist*, 43)

I think they are necessary at some places. And I think they have to be hidden. They can help to find the criminals and they can be preventive. (*Business Manager*, 33)

Interviewer: Do you perceive surveillance cameras increasing your personal safety?

“I don’t feel any difference because I think they don’t make any. Camera can not prevent violence, abuse, assault etc. but maybe the bigger and organized crimes. But if they are organized they get rid of the cameras anyhow.” (*Academician*, 37)

“I feel comfortable but usually I don’t realize there is a camera in a store, still they are not for my personal safety but for the property. But if something happens, they can work; at least the criminals will be punished.” (*Art Director*, 41)

“Cameras, private guards don’t make me feel secure and I don’t think they increase my personal safety indeed. I think they are against the robbery and for the protection of property. (*Computer Engineer*, 38)

It is observed that, participants neither trust police nor do security guards who carry the task of surveillance. In the case of surveillance cameras, sometimes it is even an unknown that there is someone behind the camera watching a particular place. This notion creates a concern of getting help in the event of a need. That leads women to distrust.

Well I don’t think camera as a machine is the issue. We need a better security system in which camera can be used effectively. I don’t believe that police will intervene to a case immediately that is detected by cameras. Furthermore, if the police can’t get any result from the cameras, it will not tell them anything. (*Turkologist*, 43)

“I don’t have any problem with tools, devices, cameras. I am worried about the mentality and conditions and reasons for which cameras are used.” (*Art Director*, 41)

Some women think that in developed countries cameras are useful, not because they are monitoring and recording but the information that is recorded by them is used correctly and effectively. Therefore they agree that it is about the social and political context much more than the devices used.

I lived in London three years and I really felt safe and secure. It wasn’t about the camera; it was about the whole system. I knew that in case of an emergency police would come and help. You see, it is still the same camera but the usage is so different that in one case it can save your life while in the other it can be a threat. On the other hand, I know that in London they use them to control the population. But they prevent the crime at the same time so you can not reject it. (*Turkologist*, 43)

“In Europe it is really very common and I think as soon as people get used to the cameras (and they will if they see them on every street) it wouldn’t be any preventive at all. But still it sounds horrible to have cameras in every street. This is not the solution.” (*Sociologist*, 29)

“London is really suffocating. Everything is over systematic and you can feel that you’re under control in every moment. I always have the feeling that: this camera is watching me”
(*Academician*, 37)

Conclusion

Surveillance is multi-dimensional. People have negative and positive feelings, notions about being surveilled. On one hand they hope to be protected with the help of surveillance on the other they feel mistrust and anxiety. As far as Turkey is concerned, people are unable to assess the issue from different aspects since it is a new phenomenon. Most women think that -after a limit- it’s a privacy violation while defending its benefits at the same time. But it is clear that, the most important thing about surveillance is the institutional dimension of it. People feel more threatened or under risk if they realize a dysfunction in institutions. The distrust in institutions reproduces and multiplies fears and anxieties in general.

Surveillance perceptions of women highly depend on the social and political context. Women are mostly concerned about the institutions and they think they are not reliable. Therefore they don’t trust surveillance mechanisms because they believe that they actually are not providing any personal security.

Surveillance was considered as an urban experience and in comparison to other urban experiences of interviewees; it brings no safety in Istanbul. Women stressed that in other cities (Western cities especially in London) the issue is not the surveillance tools but the whole social and political context that shapes the security and surveillance policies. Some of women are also aware of the control purpose of surveillance but still think that as long as security is strictly provided this can be accepted.

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