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The Importance of Different Generational Features for Urban Management and Planning

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Abstract

Meeting the expectations of city residents is an issue that city authorities should focus on while carrying out planning and management activities. With the globalizing world and the diversification of the generations in the city population structure, urban planning and management are getting more and more difficult. This paper explores the expectations and perspectives of Generations X, Y, and Z, which are thought to constitute the majority of city residents nowadays. Considering that different generations have different expectations and different perspectives, city authorities should closely analyze the expectations and demands of the generations in order to meet the expectations of city residents.

Introduction

The population structure of cities is getting more diversified with new generations' arrival with new cultural and personality characteristics (Kam, 2019). According to the multi-generation theory, the members of generations born and brought up in different times and periods and who were affected by the historical, social, cultural, and political events of the time they grew up have different values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. All these differences also affect various behaviors and

perspectives. Social preferences, lifestyles, and differences affect social needs and the forms of satisfying them. Considered in this light, generations seem to be subcultures of social culture (Gürbüz, 2015; Kam, 2019).

The attitudes and orientations of the members of different generations in the cities towards their work and living environments may differ. From this perspective, we may say that the presence of different generations of people together in the same city, structuring and continuing their lives, means that the residents will have different perspectives and expectations of city administrations and plans. Tourism, production facilities, social facilities, office jobs, and the education sector are the most important income sources in the cities. To plan and manage the activities appropriately and in a way supporting urban development, it is necessary to analyze the city population structure, that is, the generational characteristics, correctly. Considering that different generations have different hobbies, social habits, and expectations, city authorities will need to analyze their generational characteristics and adjust their plans to succeed (Rondinelli, 1986; Anholt, 2013; Anholt, 2007; Kam, 2019; Gürbüz, 2015).

In light of the literature on the subject, there are differences of opinion in generations' classification. Today, three different generations are thought to make up a large majority of the world population. Although these generations are expressed with different names in different sources, they are mostly classified as Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z (Mücevher, 2015; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). In this study, the generational classification of these names and historical ranges will be discussed.

Considering that the three different generations of people in cities have different personality traits and expectations, it is a problem for city administrators to create management and planning activities in line with the expectations of members of all generations. In this study, the different generations' expectations of city administrations will be analyzed. The essay presents ideas that city administrators may use when making plans for different generations.

Generation X: How does the welfare level affect the perspective on cities?

Generation X includes people born between 1965 and 1980 (Ceylan, 2014; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Western countries built a social state and created a welfare environment by implementing Keynesian policies after World War II. This increase in welfare provided a high welfare environment for the Baby Boomers generation (1946-1964) at that time. With the oil crisis that emerged in the 1970s affecting big businesses economically, Keynesian policies ended, and they were replaced by liberal policies (Altıntuğ, 2012b; İzmirlioğlu, 2008).

Under these conditions, members of the X generation, who opened their eyes to the world in the period of economic crisis, had to pay the price of the high level of welfare that the Baby Boomers continued. Generation X was born in an environment where there was no high-level welfare, which caused them to experience future anxiety. These unfavorable conditions encouraged generation X to work hard, make careers, and earn money (Altuntuğ, 2012a: 206).

When the X generation members are examined in terms of their personal characteristics, they have high brand loyalty, are contemplative, bellicose, dynamic, and easy to be satisfied. Additionally, they love to be independent, and they are cautious and unwilling to take risks. They are advocates of radical values and are seen as an important intermediate generation as they meet technology in older age (İzmirlioğlu, 2008; Ceylan, 2014). The fall of the Berlin Wall, the Challenger Disaster, and the World Oil Crisis are among the events they witnessed (Delahoyde, 2009).

Considering this generation's characteristics, it may be said that they are happy to live in the suburbs rather than in the city centers. They are satisfied when they achieve their basic needs, as they witnessed difficult times, such as economic crises and wars. They are not as interested in technology as Generations Y and Z, which is why they may be the most willing generation to live in the suburbs. Another reason for this may be that these people, who are mostly in business life or who are retired, would prefer a quieter life after retirement.

Figure 1: Suburbs Against City Centers



Source: <https://pnghut.com/>

It is seen that members of generation X have passed through difficult times and come to today. Growing together with economic problems, they may expect investments that will keep their welfare levels high. When the personality traits are examined, these people seem to be easy to satisfy. In this respect, we may say that generating an economic welfare environment may satisfy them by ensuring they have easy access to basic services (transportation, health, education, security, cultural activities) while creating urban management plans.

Generation Y: Millennials as the youngest active labor force in the city?

Generation Y is known as the 'WHY' generation because its members question everything. It is also known as the Millennium generation (Kuru, 2014; Yüksekbiçgili, 2013; Washburn, 2000; Lammve Meeks, 2009). Generation Y includes people born between 1981 and 1995 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). They are known to be fond of freedom in the business world. These people experienced technological developments as part of their childhood; thus, technological tools are part of their lives. Generation members are very weak in their loyalty to workplaces, and it is thought they will change their jobs more than 10 times in their lifetime (Daloğlu, 2013).

Generation Y members were born when technology was intense, and this is their most important feature. Technology and computers are part of their life; they use them not only to communicate, play, and spend leisure time but also to access the information and data they want as soon as possible (Ceylan, 2014). Because information technology is developing and globalization is increasing, Generation Y members may be quickly informed about every event in the world (Daloğlu, 2013).

Figure 2: Smart Cities



Source: <https://pnghut.com/>

When generation Y members are examined in terms of personality traits, they appear to be open to change and innovation. However, they are also impatient and unfaithful, yet easy to be satisfied, devoted to their freedom and comfort, and have high self-confidence (Ceylan, 2014). Among the important events witnessed by Generation Y members are the Iraq War, the September 11 attack, widespread terrorism, increased violence, and drug use, and the explosion of technology (Delahoyde, 2009; Schwarz, 2008).

According to this generation's traits, it may say that they usually would rather live in urban areas (Locationbrain, 2017.11.09), where universities are located and where more work possibilities exist. These people who think that technology is part of their life would like to live in urban areas to be close to the technology infrastructure. In addition, when their features are examined, it may be seen that Millennials care about entertainment. They are aware that there are better entertainment venues in urban areas than in the suburbs, so they are more willing to live in urban areas.

Generation Y members may expect more unrestricted, technological, artistic, and marginal projects and city governments' activities. Considering the features of generation Y, we may say that their members will have expectations from the city administrations towards educational opportunities, sufficient technological infrastructure, employment, social rights, artistic activities.

Generation Z: Digital generation in a digital city?

When Generation Z is analyzed in the literature, it is impossible to find precise information about the range of years of birth of the cohort. While most researchers include those born in the mid-1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s as members, most of them describe those born in the 2000s as members (Baran, 2014). Members of Generation Z will be considered here to cover individuals who were born in 1996 and later. As can be seen from the explanation, this generation is growing day by day.

Generation Z members live in an environment with new technological developments and communication and transportation facilities. They use technology with ease, having grown up with small devices (smartphones, computers) that can always carry with them. They can establish verbal and visual communication with digital devices whenever they like, even if there are long distances between them. Therefore, with their tendency to be physically alone, they are expected to be more willing to live alone (Toruntay, 2011; Williams, 2010).

The most striking differences that distinguish Generation Z from the other generations are that they witness a period in which the technology has developed unpredictably fast, and they are the first generation whose characteristics may have been defined long before they were born (Altuntuğ, 2012a). The most prominent features of this generation are, firstly, intertwined with technology; secondly, they do not have geographical limitations; thirdly, the changed social roles of women and men; fourthly, individuality and the possibility to live alone. In light of these features, Generation Z is expected to be a generation that enjoys innovation and creativity, but that still seeks trust (İzmirlioğlu, 2008). It is thought that many things will change while these people will start their professional life (Toruntay, 2011).

We may say that Generation Z is the most open generation to change and innovation of all generations. The period in which they were born and grew up includes years in which the development rate of technology has reached an unimaginable scale and globalization has reached a high level. Thus, generation Z takes technology at the center of its life.

Measuring this generation's expectations in urban management and planning may be quite difficult compared to other generations. This is because there is not enough information in the literature about this generation, and they are still in their youth. Members of Generation Z may expect city administrators to organize and plan activities such as technological investments, build entertainment centers, organize various youth festivals.

When the characteristics of Generation Z are examined, one can see that they have a structure that may use technology very well. They are fond of their freedom, and they enjoy innovation and creativity (Toruntay, 2011; Williams, 2010). Considering these features, it may be said that these people are more willing to live in urban areas compared to Generations X and Y, and technological infrastructure may be shown to be one of their basic needs. In general, it may be said that the suburbs are insufficient in terms of technological infrastructure, social activities, entertainment centers, or job opportunities for Generation Z. All these factors make urban areas more attractive to the Z generation.

Figure 3. Digital Cities



Source: <https://pnghut.com/>

The expectations that Generation Z have of city administrators may be listed as follows: the digitalization of bureaucratic transactions, 5G infrastructure, digital payment and internet banking opportunities, online bike rental, calling the vehicle via the internet, digitalized social habits (the use of social media, access to online news), education, and security in the online environment (Doğrulupayı, 2020.07.06). Other features that Generation Z want in cities may include gender equality, LGBTI+ equality, climate sensitivity, and environmental movements, access to psychological health benefits, access to health services, security, and protest rights. How Generation Z understands that entertainment differs from other generations. Thus, city administrators should organize e-sports activities and concerts for this generation.

Conclusions

All things considered, it seems that individuals who grow up in different periods will have different value judgments and, therefore, different attitudes towards urban living. When we look at the features of Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, their characteristics seem to support this determination. With globalization, it will not be difficult to predict that the next generation will have different value judgments and cultural characteristics. As the years progress, considering the technology has reached and will reach unpredictable dimensions, it may be thought that future generations will be much more involved with technology and that the future generations' expectations of the world will change with the development of social communication networks.

For city planning and management to be successful, the population structure should be examined, and activities should be organized accordingly. As a result of the examinations, we see that the three different generations (X, Y, and Z) have different features and expectations. The fact that generations described as the future of cities have different features and expectations are factors that city administrators should not ignore. Their decisions regarding the future of the cities should be taken by considering the different characteristics and expectations of each generation. Only in this way will it be possible for the different generations, which are the most important resources of the cities, to contribute to a city's development.

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