

Joseph Ben Prestel,

Emotional Cities: Debates on Urban Change in Berlin and Cairo, 1860-1910

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, ix+288pp.,

ISBN-13 978-0-19879-756-2.

Scholars generally portray the urban transformation of cities within the limits of particular regions. *Emotional Cities* queries this compartmentalization of urban history by analyzing similar transformation process experienced by two cities in different regions—Cairo and Berlin—in the mid-19th century. It thus calls into question conceptions of a Western-centered universal modernization that non-Western regions are obliged to follow. The book further distinguishes itself from other studies on urban history by analyzing urban transformation through the lens of the emotions of city dwellers.

Joseph Ben Prestel argues that similar processes of urbanization in both Cairo and Berlin led to new practices and perception of “society.” In comparing the two cities, Prestel keeps his focus on the emotions of city dwellers and how they perceived the transformations taking place around them, such as the emergence of entertainment districts. Prestel treats emotions as a social category that bridges the social, the body, and the mind. Changing circumstances in the city affect

emotions, emotions are reflected in body behavior, and these behaviors turn into practices—such as prostitution and professional matchmaking—that shape the society. Thus, the inhabitants of the cities were in a circle: they shaped the society and were shaped by it. The book traces the effects of new practices on the body and the cognitive process which emerged as part of the changing city life in Berlin and Cairo during this period.

The book relies on a rich variety of sources, including newspapers, periodicals, and books published in Berlin and Cairo between 1860 and 1910, but also such unconventional sources as medical literature, which Prestel uses to study the emotional practices of the period and the trail, and police files and court records, which he uses to overcome class, gender, and other biases inherent in published sources.

Emotional Cities consists of six chapters and an introduction, conclusion, and index, as well as archival maps and photographs from Berlin and Cairo. The chapters alternate between Berlin and Cairo, which facilitates comparison between the two cities and brings the shared and distinctive experiences of people in both capitals into greater relief. Each pair of chapters deals with a specific theme: love, entertainment, and health and fitness. After the introduction, the first chapter defines the effects of migration after Napoleon's invasion of Germany that started "French" stimulation in Berlin. In this process, new practices emerged in the city such as matchmaking by personal ads to find a suitable couple and increasing dance halls that were affected the morality (*Sitte*) in Berlin according to dwellers. In the second chapter, the similar transformative phrase emerged in Cairo as a result of the reform process in the Ottoman Empire. The building program of the state to develop administrative apparatus was praised by scholars in Cairo because of its contribution to developing men's rationality (*aq̄l*). The third chapter is devoted to effects of urban change on emotions through the new entertainment streets in Berlin. Rising traffic that caused increasing nervousness, spreading disease because of prostitution and dangerousness of walking on the street of women alone were associated with losing control of emotions of city dwellers in the society as a result of the urban transformation. There were similar problems in Cairo as mentioned in the chapter four. With the emergence of new entertainment districts, there was a debate over men's lost rationality and lack of control their emotions. Chapters five and six have focused on the struggle of Berlin and Cairo with negative effects of urban transformation. In this process, it is thought that the new suburb places in Berlin and Cairo might be a solution to emerging problems.

In the introduction, the author focuses on Muhammad Nasir's book of psychology (*ilm al-nafs*) in Cairo. He was a scholar at the University of Berlin and he witnessed the urban change in both Berlin and Cairo. The development of communication between these two cities through the transportation facilities and telegraphs and during the second half of the 19th century increased the exchange of knowledge between two cities. Nasir hoped that his book would contribute to education by transferring the discussions on psychology in Berlin to Cairo. This book was published during the emergence of discussions on the importance of middle-class education in Egypt to get rid of the semi-British colonial situation. Similarly, Albert Eulenburg, scholar in Berlin, thought that his work in the field of psychology would be a solution to the adverse effects on the society caused by urban transformation.

The first chapter begins with a very romantic question: "What is love?" as a reference of the change of emotions. The story of the answer begins with changing dynamics in Berlin such as a growth of the population as a result of migration from rural areas of Prussia to the center. New practices like matchmaking personal ads and nightlife in dance halls are beginning to emerge in the city. The young Berliners, for instance, who had a desire to find a suitable spouse started to use personal ads to promote themselves in the newspapers. In an environment of emerging difficulties of communication as a part of living in a big city, this new practices of love were criticized by contemporaries to destroy the public morality (*Sitte*). The chapter has another criticism on prostitution for violating social coherent. The fact that young people who cannot get married because of the economic hardship began to use such practices was another reason for the decline in morality in the society for city dwellers. This process was called "French" stimulation as the reason for romanticism.

In the second chapter, Prestel focuses on Cairo, which is in the similar kind of experience. The cotton trade as a reflection of the blockade of harbors during the American Civil War provided economic wealth to the Egyptians and Cairo entered a transformative period. State bureaucratization was an important part of this process in terms of the emergence of middle-class men and increasing number of urban dwellers. During the urban transformation, the reorganization of urban space was supported because of increasing rationality of men by publications. The author refers to the adaptation of Tanzimat reforms in Egypt in the 19th century and the essential effects of new state schools of Muhammad

Ali on the middle-class men through the development of communication which contributed to rise of rationality in this social group. The different kinds of print culture, reading, and clothing were distinction of this nascent group. The influential religious scholars of the period such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Ali Mubarak, emphasized the significance of the development of rationalization which would contribute to the capacity of Muslims to interpret the religious issues, and positively assessed changes in the field of education. This chapter deals with how women were influenced by this transformation period in the city and how they were depicted as having poor rationality. The process also shaped the family structure and female members of family were alone as men had to leave the house to work in the urban construction. This process is interpreted as an increase of commercial sex of women to cope with the financial difficulties in the absence of their husbands some of these women began to work in sex industry. This process affected legal arrangements and it goes beyond the question of honor within the family boundaries and became part of courts. In the last part of the chapter, the author refers to the debates on loss of rationality of dwellers by alcohol consumption and prostitution.

The third chapter discusses emerging entertainment districts and new practices were significant part of urban transformation. As the traffic circulation was reshaping, a special hub of entertainment such as Friedrichstraße appeared in Berlin. In this process, the walking on the street became a new practice of the Berliners as a spare time activity. The author refers to the rise of publications on the city guide along with the mobility in the city. The vagabond-turned-journalist, Hans Ostwald, for instance, wrote a book series called *Großstadtdokumente* that includes observation of different groups in the city as factory workers and prostitutes. These entertainment districts turned into the popular regions for theater, romantic moments, and prostitution. As an interesting detail, guidebooks noted that for women walking alone at night) could be dangerous. According to medical reports, the rapid rhythms of city life negatively affect the bodies of the dwellers and lead to escalation of fear, anger, grief diseases, and stimulated nerves.

Azbakiyya, Egypt's major entertainment district, witnessed similar events as in Friedrichstraße. The fourth chapter focuses on the "dual city" concept, which was divided between Europe and the locals as a part of transformation after British occupation. In this chapter the author discusses the loss of rationality caused by the development of middle-class men's entertainment practices that was used by the British elites to justify the occupation of Egypt. Prestel examines

the publications on love and fear as single emotions including newspapers, magazines, and books in Egypt. Muhammad ‘Umar’s book *The Present State of the Egyptians, or the Causes of their Retrogression* is one of the examples of these publications. ‘Umar emphasized the importance of education and love for a happy marriage. Other contemporary publications underlined that middle-class city dwellers should teach “love” to others. *Al-Hilal*, *al-Muhsir*, *al-Ustadh* are some of the important publications. As a result of the British occupation, the private companies and development of transportation reshaped the city life, between 1863 and 1879 and new neighborhood relationship appeared in the city. The entertainment areas led to similar consequences; alcohol consumption, and the loss of rationality of men at the end of the nightlife. In this section, the author refers to changing urban life influenced the emotions and ultimately led to the loss of rationality has led to the decaying of patriarchy in the family. Housewives took the responsibilities of their spouses who were spending money in the nightlife that caused an important structural change in the family.

Chapters five and six deals with solution-focused discussions of two capitals with similar problems. Throughout the chapter five, Joseph Ben Prestel examines the process of reforms that were initiated to fight against the consequences of the new city practices led to rising of grievance in the society. The idea of creating suburbs as a solution for the negative effects of the city life was dominated in this period. With regard to this degeneration in the public, leading scientists of reform projects said that the urban environment made it hard for people to control their emotions, and suburbs could flourish the positive feelings and decrease nervousness. Wilhelm Bölsche, an author, who decided to leave Berlin and move to a village to prevent negative effects of the city on his body. Bölsche wrote a book criticizing city life called *Behind the World City: Friedrichshagen Thoughts about Aesthetic Culture*. Many doctors and scientists were proposing suburban living to fight nervousness caused by city life. Referring to similar discussions in London, there was another debate in the city that garden cities increase positive feelings like happiness, unlike apartments. Thus, relationships between physical movement and emotions emerged and created new forms of sports and gymnastics to increase confidence among city dwellers. As a result of the new sports activities and suburb living populations, the book emphasizes the emergence of new group of dwellers that distinguish themselves from the others. The contemporary publications that introduced green areas and the gardens as the cure for negative feelings and the transformation of Germany by reform projects are the important part of chapter five.