

# Strategic Planning and Urban Transformation in Turkey<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Partial or wholesale renewal projects – sanitizing and enlivening cities – have been more widespread in recent years, both in developed and developing countries. In particular, urban transformation projects aim to enhance the quality of life and strengthen the urban economy by improving living conditions in urban areas that are suffering economic and physical blight. In this paper, we consider matters of strategic planning and urban transformation in Turkey, which is not only a candidate for full membership of the European Union but also a developing country.

**Keywords:** Urbanisation, Urban Transformation, Urban Renewal, Strategic Planning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The means and facilities that technological developments and communication networks have provided in the twenty-first century are causing significant political, social and spatial transformations at global, regional and local levels. Globalisation, rapid restructuring and the devolution of central administrative powers to local administrations characterize our world today and have increased the importance and influence of cities.

These changes in the role of cities have increased competition between urban centres. This process leads to urban transformation projects that mobilize national and local resources, thereby enlivening cities and enhancing their economies.

Spatial transformation projects undertaken for economic, political, social and cultural purposes in developed and developing countries affect each other. Today, various different transformations are observed in many countries and, as a result, cities are experiencing an evolutionary reformation.

In developed countries, simultaneous ‘strategic planning’ and ‘urban transformation’ projects are carried out, renewing and developing blighted urban areas left vacant after the relocation of dockyards, manufacturing plants and production facilities away from central urban areas. In contrast, in developing countries, the current issue is urban regeneration through transforming (illegal) shanty towns of buildings that fail to meet building regulations. In neither situation can a classical planning approach solve the problems involved.

Today, a feasible, resource-generating, flexible, sustainable, strategic approach to planning – one based on action – is the recommended way of solving planning problems. A good example of this is ‘urban transformation’ that, by restructuring the physical space of urban areas, brings economic, social and cultural development that enlivens both the city and society.

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In this paper, we first discuss the elements of strategic planning and urban transformation, the relationships between them and the action plan as an application method. Second, we evaluate Turkish urbanisation policies, applications and results in accordance with strategic planning and urban transformation approaches. As well as being of importance for policies in developing countries, observations on the Turkish experience will indicate precautions that should be taken and changes that should be made during Turkey's European Union accession process.

## **2. THE SCOPE AND ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION**

In developed countries, urban transformation has evolved into an approach to restructuring that is designed to overcome socio-economic and spatial problems in post-industrial-revolution cities. It was introduced to change, transform and enliven areas vacated when manufacturing plants, ports and dockyards were relocated out of urban centres, derelict warehousing or declining residential areas were redeveloped, or areas of historical significance enhanced. After World War II, urban transformation became an issue in Europe because of the need to repair and rebuild demolished buildings and develop bombsites as well as to improve, sanitize and enliven blighted or declining areas (Keskin, et al., 2003).

Urban transformation restructures the humans who live in urban area together with urban spaces, urban culture and urban life, and enlivens the urban economy as well as the environment. It aims to enliven not only physical spaces but also whole cities by ensuring the participation of local people, thereby causing cities to attain a new position in a globalised world.

In this globalising world, the twenty-first century is one of accelerated economic, political, social and cultural transformations, making cities the focus of global restructuring. The increased competition this engenders between cities brings transformation and renewal to physical space. Urban transformation:

- ❑ Enlivens blighted urban areas
- ❑ Develops cities in a healthy and effective way
- ❑ Strengthens the urban economy, and
- ❑ Enhances the quality of urban life and social welfare.

Urban transformation aims to ensure the planned development of a city, to furnish it with safe investment instruments based on broad participation, and to create an attractive centre. In most cases, urban transformation is realized through public- and private-sector co-operation and is generally done to replace blight with high rental-income spaces. In this way, a liveable environment is realized and, moreover, the resulting economic and social gains are shared. Thus, in developed countries, urban transformation is an initiative for creating resources for sustainable development (Sökmen 2003).

As a result of urban transformation, city locations change their characteristics along with their structural changes (Tekeli 2003). The study of this process should take into consideration the conditions specific to each country because there are a great variety of reasons for urban transformation. These reasons share some similarities between countries but also show a number of differences. Reasons specific to developing countries include the need to reduce the devastating effects of natural disasters such as earthquakes, to protect historical heritage and to transform shanty towns. Economic, cultural, political and social differences between countries of varying levels of development also increase in the number of such reasons.

While every proposal to transform a space should be evaluated in detail within a planning system, this requirement and discipline is distinctly lacking in developing countries. Furthermore, in such countries it is impossible to solve urban problems through authoritarian planning that is limited in scope and

under centralized management. Therefore, in Turkey and other developing countries, there is a need to replace a traditional understanding of planning with new planning approaches. Strategic planning, which perceives cities as spaces of permanent transformation, cannot be avoided.

### **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN SUSTAINABLE URBANISATION**

Sustainable urbanisation requires resetting the planning system and providing an effective supervisory system. To attain this, the planning system must be strategic and flexible in nature, action-based, participatory and capable of using advanced means of implementation (İBB 2003).

Strategic planning is an integrated, modern approach to planning that aims to achieve economic, cultural and social change and reconstruction, either throughout a city or in designated districts (Konuk 2003). In essence, it is a resource-generating, initiative-based means of development that yields an integrated set of actions. It is an approach that integrates the projects, transformations the dynamics envisaged for the city into a combined, harmonized whole. Strategic planning is a tool that assumes full responsibility for the process of change and regenerates the space involved by ensuring public participation and exhibiting the necessary participation and openness.

In this context, urban transformation is an important step within action plans with defined strategic targets. Thus, it is an initiative-invoking, resource-generating tool for sustainable strategic planning and one of the most important methods of implementation employed in the realisation of such plans.

### **4. ACTION PLAN**

An action plan includes research on the policies and strategies related to urban transformation as well as actions to cause their realisation. To achieve this, the following facets need to be modelled separately:

- ❑ Urban transformation project and implementation programs
- ❑ Management structure of the project, and
- ❑ Financing of the project.

Thus, urban transformation projects have a complex structure in which these facets are handled in combination with one another and where broad participation is achieved. European experiences of these projects reveal that their success depends on handling them within a national strategy and their adoption as state policy. Further, urban transformation projects must make compromises on the principles of strategic planning and public interest and, unless an agreement is reached among the project parties and the support of the central government obtained, such projects will be difficult to realize (Keskin, et al., 2003). This evaluation holds true for urbanisation applications in Turkey. However, the period since the 1923 proclamation of the Turkish Republic must be analyzed to obtain a more detailed evaluation.

## **5. URBANISATION POLICIES IN TURKEY**

### **5.1. History**

The reforms that affect every aspect of social life in Turkey started with the 1923 proclamation of the Turkish Republic, which emerged after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, after being in existence for 622 years from 1299 to 1922. Following 1923, Ankara was the first city to experience the affects, including spatial ones, of these reforms. Sixteen days after the proclamation of the Republic, Ankara was designated the capital city and it was completely renewed by 1932 under a zoning plan prepared by the German architect Prof. Herman Jansen. This urban transformation work in Ankara, carried out under government auspices, involved not only the construction of public buildings, social facilities and infrastructure, but also enlivened the city's economic, social and cultural life. As such, it served as a model to all the other cities of Turkey.

Despite the comprehensive legal arrangements covering zoning, planning and ownership of real estate that were made during the founding years of the Turkish Republic, only Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir out of a total of 61 provincial centres experienced extensive urban transformation. Up to 1950, there was no significant increase in the percentage of the population living in urban centres: in 1927, 24.2 per cent lived in urban centres and in 1950, 25.0 per cent. In the years following 1950, however, the percentage of the population living in urban centres increased rapidly, reaching 64.9 per cent in 2000.

While the annual average increase in the world's population, which doubled within 40 years (1950-1990), was 1.7 per cent and the annual average population increase in Europe was 0.2 per cent, Turkey's annual average increase during the same period was 2.64 per cent. During that period (1950-1990), population urbanisation in Turkey was about double the annual rate of population growth. These figures demonstrate the rapidity of urban development experienced in Turkey. Although Turkey's population growth rate has decreased in recent years, it remains high compared with developed countries, running at an annual average population growth rate of 2.0 per cent and an urbanisation rate of 3.2 per cent from 1990 to 2000 (DIE 2003, Table 1).

Table 1: Urban Population in Turkey

| Years | Total Population | Provinces and Central Provincial Districts |            |       | Municipalities |            |       |
|-------|------------------|--|------------|-------|----------------|------------|-------|
|       |                  | No.  | Population | %     | No.            | Population | %     |
| 1927  | 13 648 270       | 391  | 3 305 879  | 24.22 | 460            | -          | -     |
| 1935  | 16 158 018       | 413  | 3 802 642  | 23.53 | 505            | 4 174 542  | 25.84 |
| 1940  | 17 820 950       | 433  | 4 346 249  | 24.39 | 549            | 4 753 304  | 26.67 |
| 1945  | 18 790 174       | 459  | 4 687 102  | 24.94 | 583            | 5 145 020  | 27.38 |
| 1950  | 20 947 188       | 485  | 5 244 337  | 25.04 | 628            | 5 768 665  | 27.54 |
| 1955  | 24 064 763       | 559  | 6 927 343  | 28.79 | 809            | 7 804 354  | 32.43 |
| 1960  | 27 754 820       | 637  | 8 859 731  | 31.92 | 995            | 9 994 644  | 36.01 |
| 1965  | 31 391 421       | 638  | 10 805 817 | 34.42 | 1062           | 12 787 663 | 40.74 |
| 1970  | 35 605 176       | 639  | 13 691 101 | 38.45 | 1303           | 16 753 979 | 47.06 |
| 1975  | 40 347 719       | 639  | 16 869 068 | 41.81 | 1654           | 20 500 442 | 50.81 |
| 1980  | 44 736 957       | 639  | 19 645 007 | 43.91 | 1725           | 25 523 604 | 57.05 |
| 1985  | 50 664 458       | 647  | 26 865 757 | 53.03 | 1703           | 31 223 447 | 61.63 |
| 1990  | 56 473 035       | 902  | 33 326 351 | 59.01 | 2053           | 37 884 455 | 67.08 |
| 1997  | 62 865 574       | 929  | 40 882 357 | 65.03 | 2827           | 48 623 460 | 77.35 |
| 2000  | 67 803 927       | 931  | 44 006 274 | 64.90 | 3228           | 53 784 377 | 79.32 |

The liberal economic policies applied since 1950 with the start of multiparty politics in Turkey have brought important structural changes. In addition to the establishment of industrial facilities close to cities and seashores, the financial support and investment facilities provided to agricultural sector have caused significant developments in the social structure and areas of social life of Turkey. Millions of people who lost jobs as a result of agricultural mechanisation migrated from rural areas to the cities. Besides the lack of adequate zoning, planning and infrastructure facilities, the cities also failed to

provide adequate housing and to create sufficient employment opportunities. As a result, in the 50 years from 1950 to 2000, urban areas experienced intensive unlawful shanty house construction. Although this process has slowed in recent years, it still continues (Köktürk 2003).

Neither the central nor local administrations have been able to impose the necessary discipline on urbanisation. Consequently, the process of urbanisation has progressed outside government and local administration supervision, control and zoning plans and under the influence of illegal actors. Therefore, Turkish cities, with Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir leading the way, are bursting with hundreds of thousands of unlawful buildings.

The struggle against shanty construction could not have been prevented and this inability has itself encouraged more migration of the poor to urban centres. Poverty has increased and continues to increase, especially in cities. This process is an outcome of the economic, social and political structure of Turkey (Keles, 1996). Post facto legalisation is accepted as the only solution to this problem, though such a move is completely against urban development principles and laws, and, for this purpose, 17 laws were passed in the 56 years from 1948 to 2004. The actual shanty town borders and the state of the occupation formed the plan. Applications for 1.5 million to 2 million buildings were submitted to benefit from the legalisation measures, according to the constitution court orders Nos. E.1986/16 and K.1986/25 of 21 October 1986. Millions of square metres of public land were sold off at low rates and the deeds of hundreds of thousands of parcels of 200m<sup>2</sup>-400m<sup>2</sup> were given to their occupiers. Now, property ownership in urban areas is one of the most important problems for strategic planning and urban transformation.

In short, the experience and results of Turkish planning policy are:

- ❑ Public lands can only be utilized inefficiently in meeting the needs and desires arising with urbanisation
- ❑ Physical and social environmental quality and quality of life has decreased
- ❑ The level of small property ownership has increased because of bad urbanisation policies
- ❑ Central and local government have failed in urban land production and housing construction
- ❑ The application of checks on the suitability of buildings according to the development plan are ineffective, resulting in horizontal single-floor unlicensed buildings being turned into vertical multi-floor constructions
- ❑ Modelling to solve the problems for urban rules and plans these constructions create cannot be performed.

Aside from these issues, much of the historical texture of modern-day Turkey, which has played host to 15 different civilisations during its history, has been destroyed. Additionally, natural riches have been significantly damaged. The legalisation of shanty houses and other illegal building has aggravated existing problems and led to the popular perception that further illegal building may also be legalised. This perception has proved well-founded because of repeated acts of post facto legalisation. Such situations are specific to developing countries and they will continue until the quality of urbanisation reaches that of developed countries. This process, however, must be definitively halted within a framework of feasible, resource creating and sustainable planning. If not, we will be left with an approach to planning that fails to address the realities and values of our times and so is incapable of solving the existing problems.

## **5.2. Turkish Development Laws and Urban Planning**

Turkey has passed three development laws in the 81 years from the 1923 establishment of the Republic to 2004:

- ❑ Development Law No. 2290 (1933)
- ❑ Development Law No. 6785 (1956), amended by Law No. 1605 (1972)

- Development Law No. 3194 (1985).

Up to 1985, authorisation for making, changing and applying development plans rested with the municipalities and governorships, while approval rested with the central administration (Ministry of Development and Housing). After 1985, full authority passed to the municipalities and, outside municipal boundaries, to governorships.

Within this process, a time and location stage creation could not be performed from macro plans to micro plans starting from the physical plans of the country. Mutual relationships could not be established between urban plannings with low and high scales, division of the lands into pieces could not be stopped, and an effective application of the plans could not be afforded. The control mechanisms of the municipalities and governorships for production of urban plannings and application processes, also, could not be constituted. Additionally, with the urban planning applications, the arbitrary application of the political and local authorities' new authority could not be prevented.

Because of the lack of planning, application and construction mechanisms allowing for the participation of every sector of the community, safe and harmonious urban centres could not be realised in Turkey. Transferring full authorisation to the local administrations was of itself insufficient to solve the problems; the local administrations also needed the competence to exercise this authority.

A complete change in Turkey's development law has now become an issue as a means to solve these urbanisation problems. The non-existence of an urbanisation and housing policy approach to urban spaces at regional and local levels is the main problem. New approaches that cover the points and principles of natural, cultural, historical, ecological and agricultural protection, and durable construction against possible disasters are needed. The mechanism which also covers strategic planning and urban transformation should be appropriated by central administration, municipalities, non-government organisations and citizens as well. The purpose is to regain the increase in the values to the public, to supply the city with enough and high quality outfit areas, to create resources for the city for refreshing itself, to apply the plans in a quite effective way. It is almost exact that these evaluations which have been approved by every sector are going to be materialized within a short period in future in Turkey.

## **6. EXAMPLES OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION**

In recent years, some urban transformation projects similar to ones in developed countries have been realized in Turkish city centres, but not in the shanty towns. There has been an evident increase in business centres, sports complexes, recreation facilities, hotels and congress-fair-cultural centres and other integrated projects constructed in blighted urban areas made vacant by the relocation of industrial facilities. The number and diversity of these projects increased after Istanbul hosted the HABITAT II Conference in June 1996. Istanbul's urban transformation projects aim to enhance the city's historical heritage while making it a centre for tourism, trade, congresses and fairs. The realisation of high prestige projects increases the city's attractiveness and allows it to compete with other cities of the world.

The results of previous urban transformation projects (Table 2) show that public- and private-sector partnership in these projects is more common in city centre areas, where urban restructuring is more attractive and the rental returns highest. This situation leads to the criticism that it makes urban transformation projects into a means of rent sharing. Attention is also called to the fact that these city centre projects could not be fully integrated with the physical and social structure of their surrounding environments.

When the process of urban transformation is examined nationwide, we see a great diversity of transformation processes. We expect this diversification to continue. A draft law has been prepared to

‘transform’ the eyesore of shanty homes along the Protocol Road, which connects Esenboğa Airport with the centre of Ankara, Turkey’s capital. An urban renewal and transformation project competition for Kadıköy, an important central location of Istanbul, has concluded and will be materialized soon. Furthermore, the Urban Transformation and New Settlements Office, established within Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, is preparing an urban transformation project for the Pera and Galata Tower districts, both unique parts of the city’s historical fabric.

We must, however, point out that both the work completed and that planned demonstrate the need for introducing the necessary legal arrangements covering the concepts of strategic planning and urban transformation.

Table 2: Samples of Urban Transformation Projects

| Project                             | Owner of Plot                                     | Number of Shanty Houses | Project Partnership Model        |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Portakal Valley (Ankara)            | Municipality<br>Private Persons (67 shareholders) | 76 units                | Private Company                  |
| Dikmen Valley (Ankara)              | Treasury  | 330 units               | Project Decision Board           |
| Zafer Plaza (Bursa)                 | Municipality<br>Private Persons (86 shareholders) | None                    | Power Granted to Mayor           |
| Zafertepe Shanty Houses Development | Treasury<br>Private Person                        | Shanty Town             | Co-operative                     |
| Roman Quarter Transformation        | Municipality                                      | 80 units                | Inhabitants-Focused Organisation |
| Tekel Houses Transformation         | Private Persons (257 shareholders)                | None                    | Commission                       |
| Dericiler Area Transformation       | Private Persons (250 shareholders)                | None                    | Association                      |
| Mudanya Crossroads Area Development | Private Persons (400 shareholders)                | None                    | Power Granted to Mayor           |

(Source: Göksu 2003)

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The process of urban transformation in Turkey could not be realized solely through the use of zoning plans. However, if the country’s development is not accomplished, the consequences will be grave. In developing countries like Turkey, which are lacking adequate resources, urban transformation projects are impossible without the support of the central administration. However, local administrations’ involvement in planning and implementation are crucial for the success of urban transformation projects.

For Turkey, the most significant result to be drawn from the relationship between strategic planning and urban transformation is that the country must lose no time in solving its problems related to economic, social, cultural and political development. In addition, the development laws must be completely overhauled to include strategic planning and urban transformation approaches.

Moreover, local people, instead of facing displacement, must have the opportunity to participate in the urban transformation process and to enjoy the resulting benefits. Unless spatial and economic transformations include social transformation, they cannot be successful. The following are essential:

- ❑ Re-establishment of relations between central and local administrations
- ❑ Increasing the leading role of local administrations
- ❑ Participation of local people in the project preparation and implementation processes
- ❑ Ensuring public- and private-sector co-operation.

Behind all urban transformation projects there must be a long-term development plan based on a modern, strategic approach to planning. Instead of city-wide transformation plans and projects covering the whole city, small-scale plans and projects are widespread. Due to financing difficulties, the preference is towards self-financing projects.

The authors believe that knowledge of Turkey's experiences will be useful to other developing countries because the evolution of Turkey's urbanisation policy can contribute to the urban reforms in those countries.

In conclusion, Turkey's development and planning system should be reformed and the legal, financial, technical and administrative infrastructure of planning and urban transformation projects must be consolidated within the local administration system.

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