

ISTANBUL 1956 AND MENDERES OPERATIONS

Hilal Tugba Ormecioglu, Ebru Kamaci

Department of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 06531
Department of City and Regional Planning, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 06531

E-mail: hilaltugba@arch.metu.edu.tr
ekamaci@arch.metu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT: Cities, especially the capital cities, are the geographies that are spatially affected by central governments rather than local ones throughout history. Are these interventions done for the sake of improving the quality of urban life under a title of 'redevelopment'? Or, are they serving for broader transformations of entire city or more? What are the economy-politics underneath the so called socio-spatially objectified urban regeneration operations?

This paper tends to deal with these issues under the case of urban redevelopment project of Istanbul highway system in 1950's named as 'Menderes Operations' because of the personal involvement of then Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, and its connections with global oil and car trade, and international funding. This will help to investigate the validity of the Marxist-Lefebvrian assumption that the relations of production produce the social relations, and social relations produce the very physicality of city space, in a reverse process with initializing effect of urban redevelopment.

Keywords – Istanbul 1956, Marshal Funds, Menderes Operations, Urban transformations

1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of the theoretical and empirical research activity of this paper is to develop an understanding of the relationship between local urban transformations and global oil and car trade under the case of the 1956 Menderes Operations which respectively altered the perceived-lived-conceived spheres of the city and finally led to a new space-time perception. The paper commences by evaluating the general overview of the Turkish Republic and Istanbul since the Ottoman Empire Period to the late 1950's. The second part of this paper presents the Menderes Period and Menderes Operations which performed in Istanbul in the 1956's. The third part of the paper focuses on the consequences of the Menderes Operations. In the line with these activities, this paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of these relations on reshaping of eastern cities.

After the long years of wars and occupation by the Allied forces, Istanbul, the capital and the richest city of the Ottoman Empire welcomed the new republic as a drained, defeated, and blood loosing. In the meantime, the population was reduced roughly the half of what it had been. -The urban population counted in 1914 census was approximately 1,203,000 and decreased to 690,857 in 1927 census.- Besides, after the war of independence, capital moved by new government to Ankara. By this decision, Istanbul not only lost its hallmark as the capital city but also most of its national and international commercial functions under a new national government and a new world economic conjecture (Tekeli, 1994). And in 27 years period, after the proclamation of republic to 1950 elections, the city had shown no significant progress in size and population except its natural growth.

During the World War II years, Turkish Government had economically and politically acted in prudence. Main aims of the government were economically to stay in stabile position and militarily to avoid from involving the war. In order to achieve these, strict economic and politic regulations applied internally and diligent politics carried out on foreign affairs.

At the end of the war, the government achieved to avoid involving the war, but had lost most of its credits both in national and international circles. Nationally, loosing the support

cost RFP (Republican Folk Party) the elections and the government; internationally, caused a threat of being globally isolated. To avoid this isolation, Turkey assented some stipulations and involved the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Funds. In return, became one of the charter members of United Nations. (Zürcher, 1995)

In 1950, when the Democratic Party and Menderes headed the poll, Turkey had already been signed some protocols with America and undertaken to do some new regulations in the bureaucratic structure of state.

2. MENDERES OPERATIONS

For Democratic Party, which was elected by utilizing the strong reaction of folk to single party rule in Ankara, Istanbul meant an alternative urban center for new era. Unlike RFP's urban based electors especially living in and around Ankara -the heard of Turkish Revolution-, DP was based on rural population and required an urban showcase of 'The Democratic Turkey's power -except for Ankara- to impress both domestic and foreign circles. Under these circumstances, Istanbul gained a special importance and interest of then government and then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes.

After a short period of preparation, operations began in September 1956 without further planning activity and despite the economic insufficiency. This was at a time when the balance of payments of the country was showing a deficit, the country was experiencing inflationary pressures and there were impediments in procuring foreign credits. And General Directorate of Highways had already been established in 1950 as a special condition of Marshall Funds and had been operating nationwide up to date.

Adnan Menderes (1956), as the honorary major of the city -a title bestowed on him at a later date- personally started the operations with the press conference.

'We could not obtain 300 million dollar loan from America. We suffered two years of draught and this year's harvest has not been very good one either. We may even have to import wheat. But Turkey's resources are now mobilized; the country will become self-sufficient... We are going through a difficult period as a government, but there are no impediments ahead...'

It is not possible to leave the streets of Istanbul which have been patterned for carriage when city was inhabited by 700.000 people as they are... The city is going to be joined from suburb to suburb, for example from Topkapi to the Bosphorus by avenues of equal perfection...

Let it be known that we are undertaking all these projects at a time when it has been asserted that the power of action by state and by the government have gone bankrupt.'

As can be read clearly from his speech, Prime Minister Menderes personalized this extensive urban transformation as a political prestige issue. Renovation of Istanbul as a contemporary city would be a concrete edifice of his modern Turkey ideal. Therefore the operations were personally supervised by Prime Minister Menderes from the very beginning with an unwritten program under the influence of his political objectives and his own image of a modern city.



Figure 1. Prime Minister Menderes in expropriation site
(Source: www.tarihvakfi.org.tr/haberler/haberayrinti.asp)

Meanwhile Professor Hans Högg, who designed the city plans of Hanover and Munich, was invited to prepare plans for Istanbul in 1957. But the operations had already begun when he started to study; therefore, his work between the 1957s and 1960s was a sort of ‘rationalizing the Menderes Operations after they had been executed’. (Tekeli 1994)

Operations began from the historic peninsula. Ten new roads constructed or widened on the area at the cost of demolition of historical surroundings. During the construction, many fountains, mescits and mosques had been removed or displaced. Construction of roads in historic peninsula can be classified in three phases; first one is the construction of 50 meters wide Londra Asphalt as a part of Edirne–Istanbul highway connecting Yesilkoy airport to city. Prime Minister Menderes (1956) had announced the importance of this road in his speech with the following statements:

‘...It is important to welcome those who come from Europe via Highway from Trakya or from Yesilköy airport and lead them to the city by first class road and prevent both friend and foe from entering the city through an area which resembles a backward medieval town...’

Second one was the Sirkeci-Florya shore road constructed tangent to the shore line of Marmara Sea. This 22 km long shore road was the only completely new construction while others were enlarging and extending of existing roads.

Third phase was the construction of the roads inside the walls. Most important of them were Vatan and Millet avenues, starting from outside the city walls and connected to Aksaray square. The others were: Ordu Avenue, Fevzi Pasa Avenue, Yeniçeri Avenue, Ankara Ankara Avenue, Atatürk Avenue, Divanyolu, and Aksaray-Yenikapi road. Menderes defined Atatürk Avenue with the following words:

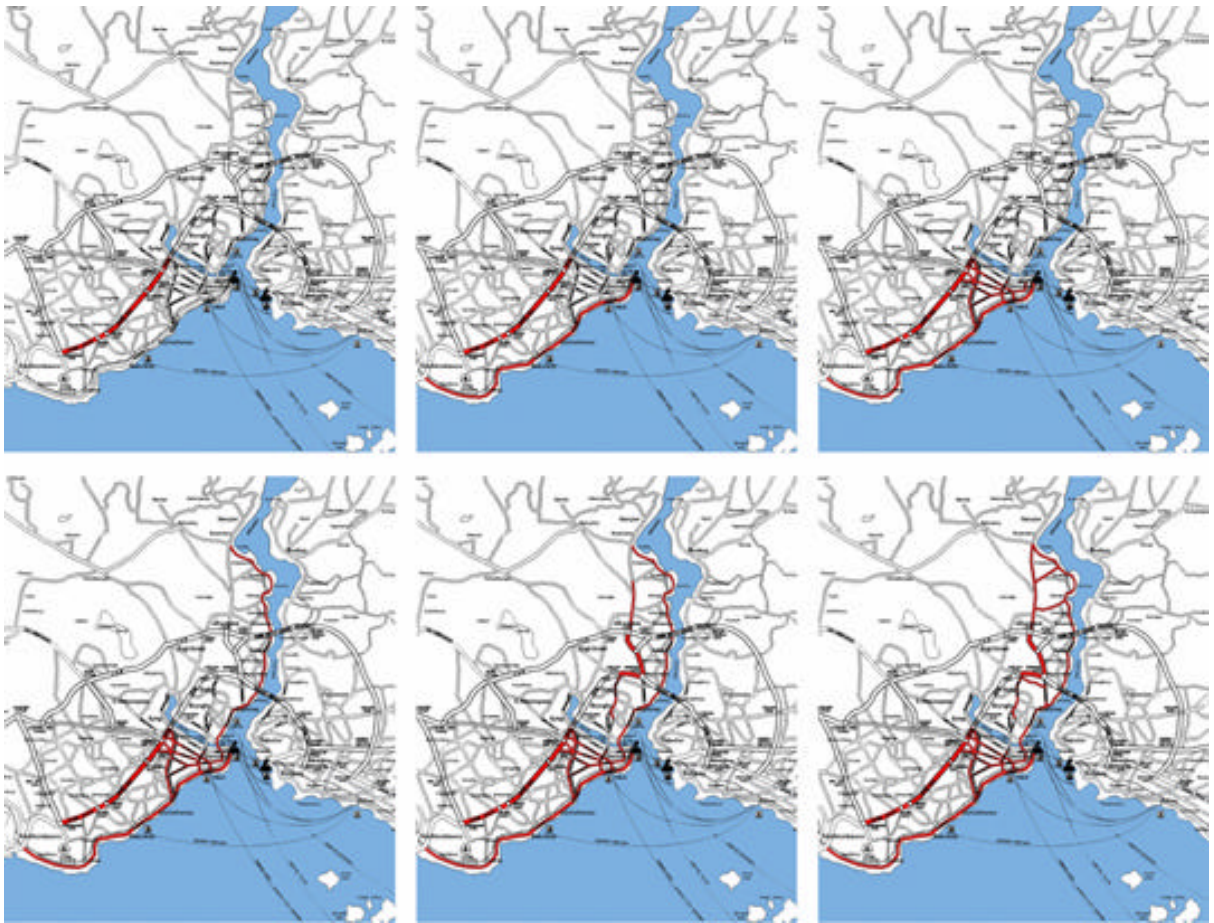
‘An imposing avenue will be opened leading to Suleymaniye Mosque. This road which will be 70 meters wide as this is the distance between the minarets of the mosque, and it will provide a majestic vista of the mosque...’ (Menderes, 1956)

The second group of the operations held in Beyoglu side, started with the construction of a new square at Karaköy. In order to create a city square, a block was removed and the area was reorganized. Then Karaköy square connected to Azapkapi and Tophane by enlarging the exiting roads. The operations in Beyoglu side, continued with the extending of the Karaköy-Tophane road as a shore road from Tophane to Büyükdere and improving its width to 30

meters by filling the sea. Menderes declared the construction of this road in the same press conference with the following words:

‘The dungeon like road leading Bosphorus will be improved. There are desolate districts alongside it, and expropriation has not been extensive along this road towards the sea...’

During the construction of shore road, urban pattern of Bosphorus was completely altered. Before the construction of shore road, the transportation between city center and villages was by seaway. The piers were acting like gates, and the village was formed perpendicularly to shore line, around a small square related to pier. After the construction of shore road, the Bosphorus villages which were in form of independent little suburbs became interconnected. And later on, the desolate districts between villages were filled with new settlements and villages disappeared.



*Figure 2. Development of Highway system during Menderes Operations
(Drawings: writers)*

Besides, the shore road not only damaged the traditional urban form of Bosphorus but also damaged the relationship of city with sea. After the construction of road, lengthwise travels along the Bosphorus by seaway reduced and soon after remained only transversals.

The next phase was the realization of ‘the high road’ which was proposed by Prost in his 1938 Plan. The high road was connecting Taksim to Büyükdere through Sisli by passing over the hills and lying parallel to shore road. The part of high road between Taksim and Sisli was an existing road and enlarged to 30 meters by expropriations and demolitions. Construction

of remaining part from Sisli to Büyükdere was much easier because the area hadn't been urbanized before the road. The road was connected to its parallel shore road by four beltways. These were the Barbaros Avenue from Zincirlikuyu to Besiktas, the beltway from Ayazaga to Istinye, the beltway from Hacı Osman Bayırı to Tarabya and the beltway from Hacı Osman Bayırı to Büyükdere. Later on, the function of this road would be strengthened with the construction of first big scale mass housing project in Levent. (Güvenç & Isik, 1999). The whole process of operations then published in '*Istanbul'un Kitabı (The book of Istanbul)*' by municipality in 1958 to acquaint the public.

Besides the existence of a planner and planning committee, the operations were unofficially influenced by a group of highway engineers and technicians who stemmed their power from the success of the nationwide operations of General Directorate of Highways. They pressurized the preference of transportation by motor vehicles to mass transportation by metro system. Their proposal was improvement of highway system by enlarging and paving of thoroughfares for adapting them to motor vehicles. They proposed implementing highway construction techniques and standards within the city in order to solve the inner-city traffic congestion. (Dogusan, 2004)

With the very influence of highway engineers and technician from General Directorate of Highways, the transportation system of Istanbul was solved with motor vehicle transportation approach and construction began in 1956. Immediately after the beginning of highway construction, the dissolution of tramway lines had started in 1957 with a municipal decision.

Because Menderes operation was not a planning in scientific sense; rather it was spontaneous operations formed by existing opportunities, influences and intuition, the plan had been revised several times during the operations. Therefore, this extensive regeneration process also brought a process of a large scale expropriation and demolition. During the years of operations 7.289 buildings expropriated by municipality and numerous of historical buildings removed or displaced and some of the historical buildings which were announced to be displaced like Karaköy Mescidi, got lost because of lack of planning. (Tekeli, 1994) Eventually, the operations caused irreversible damages in historical heritage and gained an uricide-like character.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF OPERATIONS

Besides many negative effects on historical heritage and traditional Bosphorus urban patterns, the most important alteration related to urban form occurred in space-time perception. The emergence of new time-distance matrix which was presented by construction of highways created many adaptation problems. In long term period, acceleration in time made long distances possible and led to the spread and expansion of city. It also affected the differentiation of living and business districts. In short term, introduced to the urban life of Istanbul the concept of speed, and created an artificial demand for motor vehicles.

As a result of the economy politics applied during the World War II, large exchange stock had been accumulated in Turkey; and this accumulation converted into machinery especially imported from America. Besides the agricultural and military vehicles, with the created artificial demand and convenient purchase price, this exchange stock was spent mostly on motor vehicles for public and private use. (Tekeli, 1980) In this period, number of private motor vehicles in Turkey increased from 3.649 in 1946, to 13.405 in 1950 and to 147.014 in 1970, and number of buses from 1.213 in 1946, to 37.581 in 1950 and to 137.581 in 1970 (Erbil, 1998). Depending on the comparison of increase in numbers private and mass transportation vehicles, it can be asserted that there is also a nationwide increase in favor of former.



Figure 3. Dolmus in 1950's (Source: Dolmusun Öyküsü)

The other notion affected the increase in demand was the dissolution of tramway lines in 1957. The tramway lines were substituted by expansion of municipality's bus fleet, and by subsidiary transportation systems like dolmus and private motor vehicles. Dolmus is a kind of shared taxi or mini bus system, operated by small enterprise without specific time table, route or stops. Although it had been an existing service in Istanbul since 1931, the rise in number of dolmus's realized after the municipality's official acceptance in 1954.



Figure 4. Two dolmus advertisements, left 70's right 80's (Source: Dolmusun Öyküsü)

The rising in private automobile usage instead of mass transportation, also led to the re-investment of Ford Motor Co. in Turkey in 1956 with Koç Co. Actually, Ford Motor Company first invested in Turkey in 1929 and opened a fabric which has a producing capacity of 48 cars in a day. But in 1934, the fabric was abolished because of lack of demand.

*Table 1. Distribution of daily vehicular trips
(Source: The Development of Istanbul Metropolitan Area)*

	public	Small enterprise (dolmus)	private
1945	% 80.6	%18.3	%1.1
1960	%56.9	%33.5	%7.6

During the Menderes Operations ‘daily vehicular trips in the metropolitan area rose from 765.000 in 1950 to 2.050.000 in 1965’. (Tekeli, 1994) As seen from the table, in 1960, the distribution of this relative increase in intercity travels was in favor of subsidiary transportation systems. Today, this is still a continuing tendency and the main reason of traffic problem of Istanbul.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Depending on the statements of Prime Minister Menderes, it can be claimed that operations have two main objectives to be underlined: one was to solve the traffic congestion and the other was to adorn the city. However, both of these two did not aim to solve social problems like housing shortage and *gecekondu* (squatter housing) which city had been suffering. According to Tekeli (1994) the aim of Menderes Operations was to achieve a political support by solving the traffic problem that affects the daily life. On the contrary, Menderes Operations in Istanbul led to a national economic crisis and afterwards to a military intervention in 1960, instead of politic glory. The only lasting effect of these operations which reshape the very physicality of Istanbul has been on space-time perception.

Later on, this alteration led to the increase in number of automobile and oil consumption. By the construction of first bridge in 1973, the business-housing relation became totally dependent to motor vehicle transport and Istanbul became one of markets for global motor vehicles trade. (Türel, 1998)

As seen in the case of Menderes Operations, it is not possible to clearly define the agents affecting the urban transformations. Claiming that operations are only politically objectified would be as mistaken as claiming that they are directed by capitalist forces on global level. Therefore, in order to understand the very nature of urban transformations, one should consider all from relationships from macro to micro levels.

However, especially on the reshaping of eastern cities, the effects and results of so-called ‘modern life’ that visualized and imposed to global world by automobiles, highways, and grand squares images, should be more deeply considered. Because, the city would be a battle ground for various agents as long as the urban transformations have the ability to transform individual lives.

5. REFERENCES

- Anonymus, Istanbul’un Kitabı, Nesriyat ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, Istanbul
- Dogusan, N., 2004, Istanbul ‘Imar’i: 1956-1960, Istanbul Technical University, Unpublished Master Thesis
- Erbil, P., 1998, *Ulastirmanin Sefaletinden Canavar Retorigine*, Özgür Üniversite Kitapligi:15, Güncel Sorunlar Dizisi:8, Öteki Yayınevi, Ankara, 1998

- Güvenç, M. and O. Isik, 1999, *Emlak Bankasi 1926-1998*, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfi Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1999
- Menderes, A., 1956, 'Sayin Basbakan basina genis izahat verdi ve Istanbul'un Imar ve Kalkinma prensiplerini izah etti', *Iller ve Belediyeler Dergisi*, No.132, Ekim 1956, pp.645
- Tekeli, I. and T. Oktay, 1980, *Dolmusun Öyküsü*, Çevre ve Mimarlık Bilimleri Derneği, Ankara, 1980
- Tekeli, I., 1994, *The Development of Istanbul Metropolitan Area: Urban Administration and Planning*, IULA-EMME, Istanbul, 1994
- Türel, A., 1998, 'Kent ve Ulasim', 75 Yilda Degisen Kent ve Mimarlık, (ed. Yildiz Sey), Tarih Vakfi Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1998, pp 155-170
- Zürcher, E. J., 1995, *Modernlesen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, Iletisim Yayinlari, Tarih-Politika Dizisi, Istanbul, 1995

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berman, M., 2003, *Kati Olan Hersey Buharlasiyor*, Iletisim Yayınevi, Istanbul, 1998
- Berman, M., 1987, *Among the Ruins*, New Internationalist, Issue 178, available on 17.01.2005 from www.newint.org/issue178/among.htm
- Kuban, D., 1998, *Istanbul Yazilari*, Yapı-Endüstri Merkezi Yayinlari, Istanbul
- Kuban, D., 2000, *Istanbul Bir Kent Tarihi*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayinlari, Istanbul
- Koolhaas, R., 2004, *Urbicide: Selected Case Studies*, Content, Taschen, Köln, pp 40-43
- Koolhaas, R., 2004, *The Evil Architects Do*, Content, Taschen, Köln, pp 60-63
- Lefebvre, H., 1991, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing, Cambridge, 1991