



Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Planning Experience (1965-1980): Implementation of a Strategic Planning Approach

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Following the enforcement of the Urban Development Act in 1956 and the foundation of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement in 1958, the first regional plan was developed for the Eastern Marmara Region in Turkey. The regional plan, which was prepared by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement, in collaboration with the State Planning Office aimed at directing the industrial developments, the distribution of the industrial population and defining the hierarchy of urban settlements in the region respectively. The Regional Plan proposed an urban and regional infrastructure and a linear settlement development model for the Greater Istanbul area for the first time. The cities in Turkey were subject to a rapid urbanization due to a continuous flow of population from rural areas to the cities, which accelerated after 1950s. As a result, a multiplicity of new municipalities outside the existing limits of the major cities were formed, which necessitated a holistic planning in metropolitan scale. With this objective, three metropolitan planning offices were established for the major cities, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir under the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement.

In continuity with the principal decisions of the East Marmara Regional Plan, the planning studies for the Greater Metropolitan Area of Istanbul started with the foundation of Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office in 1965. The distribution of population between European and Asian sides of Istanbul metropolitan area was studied, and a linear pattern of settlement units separated by green areas was adopted in line with the regional plan. A strategic planning model was adopted in the last stage of the metropolitan planning. Based on an extensive survey, the demands of different sectors were defined. Alternative development strategies and scenarios were proposed with regard to the demands of the sectors. Beginning with the regional planning scale, the distribution of the residential and working areas, different strategies were tested with respect to their performances in achieving the initial development objectives. Based on an extensive data, projections, and regional development strategies updated, a plan that could guide the urban development policies was achieved. The metropolitan plan was completed and approved by the Ministry in July 1980.

The Metropolitan Plan of Greater Istanbul constituted the first metropolitan plan, in Turkey, where the strategic planning approach was applied by comparing alternative development strategies. However, it could not be implemented properly as the planning authority was transferred to the Greater Municipality. Yet, with its holistic approach, this metropolitan plan that defined strategies of urban development and natural and urban conservation in metropolitan scale, could have prevented unplanned, piecemeal operations if it could be implemented. In the present paper, the metropolitan planning experience of Greater Istanbul is studied with a focus on the 1980 master plan. The role of the planning decisions in the urban development of the metropolitan city will be discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Concept and methodology of Global/World Planning History, Metropolitan Planning, Strategic Planning



Introduction

The city of Istanbul, which was the capital of two empires due to its location on the maritime route that connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and forming a bridge between two continents, continues to have a strategic importance in the Eurasian geography. It is a unique city with its outstanding topography, distinct microclimate and vegetation as well as its historical identity and World heritage monuments. In spite of the fact that it has grown and extended rapidly, and exceeded its natural thresholds since the second half of the twentieth century, the city could conserve its historical silhouette and townscape values as a result of its original location, geographic and topographical properties.

The planning experience of Istanbul in modern terms started with the planning competition organised by the Municipality of Istanbul in 1933. Three planners from Germany and France were invited to submit their planning proposals for the future development of the old capital city, which had lost its status of being the capital, yet remained the most important city of Turkey, with its population and its economic activity. Following this first attempt, the French architect-planner Henri Prost was invited as planning consultant to the Municipality of Istanbul. He prepared the Master Plan of Istanbul European Side in 1937, the Plan of the Asian Side in 1939, a regional plan in 1943 and a number of development plans for different sectors of the city including the shores of Bosphorus.¹ After Henri Prost left Istanbul in 1951, a commission formed of Turkish architects and planners took over the planning of the city. This transition period was interrupted by large-scale urban operations undertaken by the Prime Minister of the period.²

While the planning works of the early Republican period perceived the city within the limits of the historical settlement, the irregular process of urbanization resulted from the massive immigration flow from rural areas to the principal cities of the country that began in 1950s, necessitated approaching the city from an upper scale. In this period, the population of Istanbul reached almost 2 million inhabitants (1.4 million in 1960 and 2.1 million in 1970), the capital Ankara and the port city of Izmir were also subject to a rapid urban development and change.³ In order to cope with this process, the Metropolitan Master Plan Offices were founded under the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement, with the decision of the Board of Ministers and National Security Council in 1965.⁴

The present paper focuses on the works of the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office, created in this context. Following an overview of its initial activities, the strategic planning method applied to the planning of Istanbul in late 1970s, is presented and discussed within the limits of this paper. Despite the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan was approved in July 1980, it could not be implemented as it was planned, due to the changing governmental policies and decentralization of the planning authority in the early 1980s. However, this paper argues that the 1980 Master Plan of Greater Istanbul, which was the first metropolitan planning process conducted with a strategic planning approach in Turkey, was influential on the later planning works and deserves to be examined more in detail.⁵

The First Regional Plan and the Beginning of Metropolitan Planning

Following the period from 1950 to 1960 when liberal political discourse prevailed, the policy of planned development was adopted in the 1960s. The “Development Plans for Five Years” started to be prepared after the State Planning Organization (DPT) was founded. This organization initiated the studies to define the “hierarchy of urban settlements” and “regions of investment priority” in response to the problem of unbalanced development in the scale of the country.

The Directory of Regional Planning created under the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement founded in 1958, completed the studies of inventorying and collaborated with the State Planning Office to prevent the unbalanced development in between regions. This directory conducted the “Growth Pole Policy” studies and regional development strategies on which metropolitan planning works depended in the metropolitan areas later.

The first regional plan developed by the Ministry was the “Eastern Marmara Regional Plan,” which was the outcome of the studies held between 1960 and 1964. The Regional Plan that comprised the metropolitan area of Istanbul, adopted the premise that the growth of Istanbul was inevitable and its development had to be supported;” it also predicted “Istanbul would influence the urban settlements in its surroundings and thus would contribute to their development.”⁶



Greater Istanbul Planning Office, founded in 1966 started its studies for Istanbul Metropolitan Area that was defined as an area that comprised the whole province of Istanbul, including Gebze from the neighbouring province of Izmit. The metropolitan area was composed of the integrity of urban settlements that extended from Silivri to Ereğli on Marmara in the West. In addition to the series of urban settlements that extended linearly along the coast of Marmara Sea, the metropolitan area of Istanbul contained valuable agricultural lands, water sources protection areas, the Northern Forests, “the lungs of Istanbul” that extended to the coasts of the Black Sea and the coastal strip to be conserved with its “outstanding natural beauties,” covering also a number of semi-rural settlement areas.

The Metropolitan Planning Office pursued its studies with an outstanding leading staff and an interdisciplinary group of experts who conducted the surveys, analyses, synthesis and evaluation studies based on a comprehensive study of inventorying. From its creation to 1970s, the Office developed metropolitan planning proposals in 1/25.000 scale and opened different development strategies to discussion.⁷

In 1970s, new models of planning were searched besides the necessity of updating the data with the ever changing conditions in the Greater Metropolitan City that was rapidly crowded with a new migratory flow, grew in an irregular manner and its building density increased drastically resulting in the loss of the vernacular architecture and the green character of the city, being increasingly polluted due to uncontrolled industrial developments and wrong heating methods, and faced with the problems of transportation and accessibility because of the increasing commuting between working and living areas at the two sides of Bosphorus.

However, an incremental attitude started to prevail in the implementation instead of a holistic approach that comprehended the integrity of the metropolitan area in late 1970s. Given the urging necessity to develop principal decisions of a holistic macro plan, a higher council was created by the Ministry for the monitoring of the planning works in Istanbul. Following the reorganization of the Office, a “decision making board” in which the planners responsible from each sector actively participated was constituted.⁸

Strategic Spatial Planning Approach in the Metropolitan Planning of Istanbul (1978-1980)

In this stage of the studies, the “Strategic Spatial Planning Approach” was adopted both by the higher council and the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office. The Strategic Spatial Planning, which began to be discussed and implemented in the metropolitan planning of cities worldwide in this period, was adapted and further developed for the greater city of Istanbul by the higher council and the decision making board of the Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Office.

In this context, based on the trends of development, the planning team defined the thresholds and limits of urban development and the problems and potentials, and developed “the urban and metropolitan development scenario” for the target year of 1995. The decision making committee formed from the team of planners of the Metropolitan Planning Office developed a set of “strategic development objectives” in line with the main goal of planning and the scenario of development defined. The aim of the planning was defined with one single sentence, in accordance with a strategic spatial planning approach and stated as: “increasing the international significance of metropolitan Istanbul for the benefit of the country, without losing the city’s particular values nationally and internationally renown.”⁹

Amongst the strategic development objectives defined in the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan, the following planning principles amongst the principles listed on the master plan document are to be emphasized in particular;

- *“Integration of Istanbul metropolitan area with Marmara Region and the development plan of the country,*
- *Meticulous protection of the water sources of Istanbul by the conservation belts determined,*
- *Conservation of natural, historical and cultural values and resources,*
- *Benefitting from the energy resources at an optimum level together with the consideration of the principle of not to create environmental problems,*
- *Programming the provision of housing in consideration with real needs and demands determined,*



- *Being selective among different sectors in the working sectors in the metropolitan area in accordance with the employment program of the country,*
- *Planning of industrial areas in consideration with the balanced distribution of working areas, the location and functional pollution,*
- *Provision of the balanced distribution of the main central business district (CBD) and sub-centres in the whole metropolitan area,*
- *Balanced distribution of the recreation potential, proportionately to the population; excluding Northern Forests as the lungs of the metropolis, from settlement tendencies and meticulous protection of the ecological balance in these areas,*
- *Decreasing the cost of working oriented trips to the society, maximizing the means of railway and maritime transportation in the whole metropolitan area and increasing the means of public transportation.”¹⁰*

It is interesting to observe that in this plan, no alternative development strategy that included the Second Bridge on the Bosphorus was proposed despite the increasing daily trips between Asian and European sides. The first Bosphorus Bridge was constructed between 1970-1973, while the metropolitan planning studies continued and functioned with its connections, as the main transportation channel between the two sides. The metropolitan plan adopted this connection as the main transportation structure that served the whole metropolitan city

Increasing the number of crossings between the two sides of Bosphorus, either by a bridge or a tunnel, was not among the principal decisions of 1980 Metropolitan Plan. In addition to the assumption that the connections to be provided by the construction of such big structures would further increase the amount of the transportation demands, damaging the calm of the settlements on the Bosphorus, negative effects on the maritime transportation, and more important than these, stimulating the urban development towards North, harming the invaluable water sources and the extinction of the ecological corridors were enumerated as important inconveniences.¹¹

In order to test the level of success of each alternative development strategy, the team of planners did the evaluation by using the goals achievement matrix. A set of measurable criteria were defined and used in the evaluation of the alternative development strategies, produced in the previous phase of the planning process.

In this process, the principal decisions of the regional planning at the upper level were taken as determining in the metropolitan planning studies. Therefore, the decisions of the Eastern Marmara Regional Plan were revised in consideration with the developments that occurred in the past fifteen years.¹² The decision of the Regional Plan to support the urban development of Istanbul metropolitan area in line with the existing tendencies, and to sustain the urban growth with the assumption that it would have a positive impact on the development of the surrounding settlements was reconsidered, and the decision to redistribute the population working in the industries was maintained.

In the stage of defining alternative development strategies, the planning team applied a method in stages. The method, which was further developed by the members of the decision making committee, was based on the diversification of the alternative development strategies in regional scale that were found successful, by further developing them in the scale of the whole metropolitan area. The study groups were asked to develop the sectorial master plan schemas that highlighted the development goals of the sectors that they studied in addition to the urban and regional land uses and preferences of location, based on the inventories in which the socio-economic, cultural, natural and environmental data and information on the conservation and utilization equilibrium were updated.

Among the alternative regional development strategies, the strategies, which limited the metropolitan development and predicted population transfer outside the metropolitan area, and those that foresaw the development in satellite settlements were discussed. In metropolitan scale, searching different means of benefiting from the existing potential enabled developing different alternatives; the cost dimension became determining the level of surpassing the thresholds that were defined.

Among the alternative strategies that were defined according to the sectorial weight, the industrial development oriented strategy, and the alternative that aimed at benefiting from the services at the utmost level and the conservation-recreation oriented alternatives prevailed. In the transportation-accessibility oriented strategy, the



alternatives that aimed at benefiting from the urban and metropolitan public transportation and the railway came to the fore.

In the last stage of evaluation in achieving the development strategy to be selected in urban scale, alternative urban development models in which different weights were given to the western or eastern sides of the city were discussed. The rights acquired and tendencies of development were considered in the evaluation of different alternatives. The metropolitan development strategy that was achieved at the end, is a mixed strategy which was obtained from the synthesis of the outstanding features of the development alternatives that were selected at the last stage.

Evaluation of the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan (1980)

It can be argued that Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan is the first plan prepared for directing sustainable development and growth of Greater Istanbul in metropolitan scale. In this upper scale plan, the approach for a “sustainable urban development” that looks out for the conservation and utilization equilibrium was particularly emphasized. The conservation of northern forests, fresh-water basins and surrounding agricultural lands was adopted as one of the fundamental principles of the plan. Besides forests and water sources, the protection of the ecological system and ecological corridors from the possible impacts of urban growth and expansion was particularly emphasized. This principle was set as one of the criteria that had the highest weight in the evaluation of the alternative development strategies. As a result, a linear urban growth model in east-west direction was adopted in the strategy selected¹³ in order to prevent urban sprawl and expansion towards the northern forests and other protection areas including agricultural lands and pastures. This was also the main reason of the absence of the second bridge that crosses Bosphorus on this plan. (Figure 1)

Balanced distribution of the population was one of the most significant concerns of the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Planning. The distribution of the working areas including the sub-centres and industrial areas were decided according to the evaluation of the different development strategies and scenarios set. The distribution of

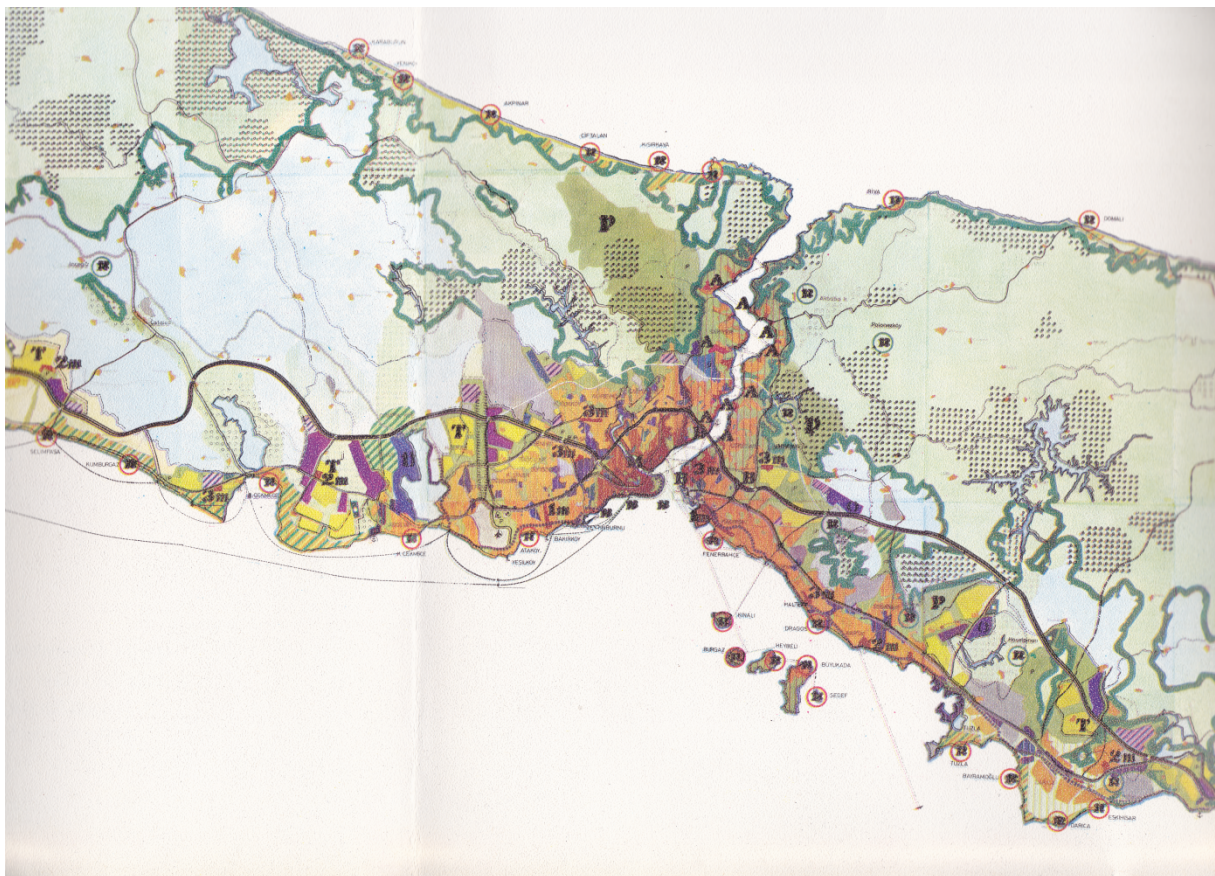


Figure 1. Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan, Istanbul Metropolitan Area Planning Office (Istanbul, 1980)



residential areas were defined in consideration with the distribution of the working areas. The distribution of the population on both sides of Bosphorus was decided in consideration with the environmental assets to be preserved, besides the consideration of existing tendencies and priorities of the development strategy selected.

In this plan, the population living in the whole metropolitan area, which was 3.7 million in 1975, was projected to reach 7.1 million in 1995. This population was distributed between the two sides of the city according to the development strategy adopted. In the western side, the population that was 2,7 millions in 1975 was projected to increase to 4.7 millions, and in the eastern side, the population that was 1.0 million was projected to reach 2.4 million inhabitants. It is important to note that, in the distribution of the new urban population foreseen for the end of the planning term, different alternative strategies were developed depending on the prediction of the quantity of trips between home and work. The weight of the population predicted in the western side can be explained by the existence of a relatively higher population in this side, and by the consideration of the existing tendencies. The evaluation of the environmental assets to be conserved and the thresholds that can be surpassed were also factors that played in the distribution of the population in both sides. It is to note here that additional restrictions need to be brought for the definition of settlement areas according to the micro-zone geological studies conducted after the 1999 earthquake.

The Implementation of the Istanbul Metropolitan Master Plan

In the program proposed for the implementation of the planning decisions of the master plan approved in July 1980, it was aimed to start the action area planning and action programming in the Strategic Priority Areas. In this context, in line with the objective to prevent irregular settlements, settlement areas for mass housing were selected in ten priority areas of the first and second degree defined by the metropolitan area master plan. In the first stage, Halkalı and Beylikdüzü in the west, and Kurtköy, Maltepe and Gebze in the east were selected; detailed spatial arrangements and the actions of expropriation and infrastructure development were initiated starting from 1981.

The transition to the new local government model of “Metropolitan Municipality” in Turkey dates back to 1984.¹⁴ Yet, substantial changes in the administrative system could only be made with a series of legislative regulations in the years 2000. During the studies of Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan, there were 34 settlements of different sizes having the status of municipality within the metropolitan area, including the Municipality of Istanbul. A number of these local governments founded outside the municipal borders of the city of Istanbul, were the municipalities of the old settlements formed around the stations of the railway lines extending on both sides. These settlements extended in time and subject to structural change. Many other new settlements, which emerged as a result of the massive immigration to the city that gained impetus after 1950, were settlements formed spontaneously without plan.

During the preparation of the master plan, according to the current legislation, the authority of preparing, making prepare, approving and revising plans was given to the related Ministry in the name of the central government, however, it was considered necessary for a democratic process to have the decision of the municipal council regarding the preparation of a plan, appropriateness of the plan to the local needs, before the approval of the Ministry. This centralist governmental polity that defined the mandate of control in planning and the implementation of the plan, has changed with the liberalization policies after 1985; the Ministry of Settlement and Reconstruction was closed down, mechanisms of central control were abolished and the municipalities were accorded the liberty to prepare, make prepare and approve plans and to direct the implementation of the plans.

Before these changes were put into effect, the Office of Neighbouring Municipalities was founded in Istanbul by the Bank of Provinces, with the objective to coordinate the preparation of urban development plans of the settlements surrounding Istanbul, with the studies of the Metropolitan Area Master Planning Office.

After the Metropolitan Area Master Plan was approved, this Office of the Bank of Provinces, continued to prepare and make prepare implementation plans for the neighbouring municipalities, in accordance with the principal decisions of the master plan.

Epilogue

When the growth of the urban population in Istanbul is examined, it is observed that Istanbul was the “primary city” of Turkey, with its population that exceeded 1 million in 1950s. In this period, one twentieth of the



country's population lived in Istanbul. It is to note that the urban population was only 24 % of the country's population, whereas today this ratio increased to 92 %, and the metropolitan city of Istanbul, with 15 million inhabitants, shelters one fifth of the country's population. Today, it is predicted that the urbanization of the metropolitan city, which has exceeded all the natural thresholds and reached the saturation level, will finally slow down, and the population size foreseen for 2050 will remain around 17 million.

Among the predictions of Istanbul Metropolitan Area Master Plan, it is stated, "The metropolis of Istanbul will continue to maintain its property of being the biggest city of the country and of Marmara Region."¹⁵ In addition to that, in the studies on Marmara Regional Plan, it was foreseen that in the Eastern Marmara Region in which Istanbul was included, the dynamics of development of the metropolitan Istanbul, would affect the other growth poles of the region such as Bursa and Izmit, and in line with the policy of redistribution of the industrial population, new urban development poles would be created such as Bozüyük-İnönü development axis.

Based on the selected regional development strategy, and in consideration with the population projections made by the Metropolitan Planning Office in 1970s, in which the lowest limit was defined as 6.7 million and the upper limit as 9.2 millions, the population of Istanbul metropolitan area was accepted to reach 7.1 million in 1995, in conformity with the renewed goal and strategic objectives of the metropolitan development. When the population growth of Greater Istanbul at the end of the term of the 1980 Metropolitan Area Master Plan is studied, it is seen that it reached 6.6 million people in 1990 and approximately 10 million in 2000. It can be argued that this Master Plan aimed primarily at the conservation of the environment and to provide a healthy environment for a healthy urban life by the "belts of protection" that it brought to restrict the urban expansion, was based on a relatively accurate prediction of population growth.

However, today the main problem in Istanbul metropolitan area is the urban expansion and sprawl in every direction rather than the population growth. This process is accelerated with the incremental decisions such as the third bridge constructed on the very north of Bosphorus in the heart of Northern Forest, and the new international airport being built on a wetland near important water resources on the Black Sea coast. The continuing urban expansion threatens the Northern Forests, which were qualified as "the lungs of Istanbul," ecological corridors, agricultural fields, pastures and water resources, in contrary to the planning principles set in the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Area Plan almost four decades ago.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributors

Prof. Dr. S. Güven Bilsel was born in Istanbul and graduated from Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture in 1960. He participated in the program held by the Senator of Re- construction and Settlement in Berlin in 1967. He continued his graduate studies in the Master Program of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Sheffield between 1972-74 and received his Master degree (MA.TRP.) from this university with his thesis study on "Piecemeal Urban Re-development." He worked in the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement in different positions, actively participated in the Metropolitan Planning of Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa and awarded with high honour certificates. He presented papers in international meetings and symposia, and headed the Turkish National Committee in the Urban Renaissance Campaign of the European Council in Strasbourg in 1980.

Prof. Dr. Güven Bilsel received his PhD degree from Gazi University in 1987 with his thesis entitled "Planning for Strategic Priority Areas." He taught graduate and undergraduate courses at the Department of City and Regional Planning at Gazi University in Ankara. He was invited to found the City and Regional Planning Department at Erciyes University in Kayseri, where he was appointed as a full professor in 1999. He continues his teaching activity at the Department of Architecture of KTO Karatay University in Konya. He is a member of RITP Urban Design Network and the Urbanization Architecture and Town Planning Committee of the Chamber of Architects of Turkey.

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Endnotes

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⁵ The present paper is based on both written archival documents and unwritten information founded on the personal notes of Prof. Dr. Güven Bilsel who was the head of the higher council for the monitoring of the Greater Istanbul Metropolitan Plan from 1978 to 1980.

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