

EMERGING URBAN DYNAMICS: THE MAKING OF PUBLIC SPACES IN BURSA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exploring the 'emerging urban dynamics' of Bursa, constituting a primary example for the urban development of medium scale Anatolian towns. The study reveals the roots/streamlines re-shaping urban transformation of Bursa through the analysis of urban discourse of the social actors. Urban transformation and new housing projects and their urban scenario, their contribution to the quality of life and the city, the way the projects have interpreted the identity and how it has been reflected through social actors' discourse are the focus of the study. In the reading of Bursa, transformation roots have been re-defined within the context of the urban politics as well as politics of identity of Turkey in the third millennium. As an exemplary case for the medium scale Turkish cities, emerging urban dynamics of Bursa has been based on a series of populist rhetoric such as; 'the making of a trademark city', 'identity paranoia' and 'historisation'. For a broader understanding of the formation of architecture and the reproduction of the city, the study provides an alternative discussion platform in conceiving the relation between the city and social actors, non-governmental and governmental organizations as well as the media.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, the urban dynamics of Turkey have changed drastically due to the rise in the country's overall population and the acceleration of rural migration (TSI, 2009). This rapid and un-planned urbanization was initially accompanied by a chaotic housing crisis that led to the illegal implementation of squatters (*gecekondu*) on public lands and then an 'apartmentisation' process, driven by the development of mediocre building blocks. The establishment of metropolitan municipalities in 1985 followed by the establishment of the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (*Türkiye Toplu Konut İdaresi-TOKİ*) in 1990 was the tipping point for the transformation of medium-scale Turkish cities, paving the way for the construction of a large number of mass housing projects following a similar typology. Currently, the process of housing production has been combined with a large number of architectural and urban transformation projects of the most dilapidated areas as well as post-industrial sites. During the rapid urbanisation, the cultural identity, social, economic and physical layers have been ignored and the synthesis of the internal dynamics have been neglected in nationwide. All these, combined with the winds of globalisation, have become crucial factors in the physicalisation of the cities (Keyder, Öncü, 1994; Keyder, 2005), and Bursa has been no exception.

In this context, industrialized Bursa, a former imperial city with a population over a million, has been a locomotive *milieu* for the rapid development of the urban transformation projects. With its geographic location and close relations to Istanbul, the city of Bursa constitutes a primary platform of urbanization for the medium scale Anatolian towns, and it is worth to study as an exemplary case. Since the 1970s, the industrial city has welcomed the foreign investments, but, unlike Istanbul, there is no emergence of multi-national investments in the public field. In the globalizing period, it is also possible to read the dynamics of Bursa through Castell's (1997) notion on the "space of flows". With the geographic location close to Istanbul and the presence of transport alternatives, in particular, Bursa makes a difference: urban and social mobility reflecting the flow, the transfer and share of knowledge, information, finance, and people, have been primary dynamics of globalizing Bursa. On one hand, Bursa has searched for and developed an independent urban identity (independent and different from Istanbul, in particular), on the other hand, being at the periphery of Istanbul, the emergence of public spaces is very reminiscent of the metropolitan context of

Istanbul. In the period of the “space of flows”, factories have been developed in Bursa, whereas the headquarters have been relocated in Istanbul with their up-scale architectural language.

Within the politics of space and politics of identity in the third millennium in Turkey, in the context of the urban transformation projects at Bursa, a new discussion of spatiality - visibility of projects- emerged. Spatiality (the making visible of the space of the city of Bursa to its inhabitants) has emerged as the ideological approach of urban modernization, in which the cultural, social and physical structure has been ignored. This shift is not simply a literal translation of a Western thing. In the context of the Turkish politics and economics, urban transformation projects have paved way to new urban and architectural identities in public spaces, characterized by visibility, rapidity and the accumulation of capital, surrounded by a specific representational rhetoric. In the rapid urban transformation, it is vital to read the urban space not only in terms of globalization but also on the basis of local dynamics, urban actors and their discourse (Sassen, 2001, Öktem, 2005, Keyman, 2010).

On the reading of the urban space through the rhetoric analysis, the approach of this paper is inspired on the writings of Foucault (1969), specifically his analysis toward the “statement” (*énoncé*) which is the basic unit of discourse. In this understanding, statements themselves are not propositions, utterances, or speech acts. Rather, statements constitute a network of rules establishing what is meaningful, and these rules are the preconditions for propositions, utterances, or speech acts to have meaning. However, statements are also 'events', because, like other rules, they appear at some time. Statements depend on the conditions in which they emerge and exist within a field of discourse; the meaning of a statement is reliant on the succession of statements that precede and follow it. Foucault sets up his analysis towards a huge organized dispersion of statements, called *discursive formations* (Gutting, 1994). A discursive formation continually generates new statements, and some of these usher in changes in the discursive formation that may or may not be adopted. Therefore, to describe a discursive formation, Foucault also focuses on expelled and forgotten discourses that never happen to change the discursive formation. Their difference to the dominant discourse also describes it. In this way one can describe specific systems that determine which types of statements emerge (Jones, 1994).

Today, globalization has increased global shifts of resources, capital and people, and has intensified the competition among cities for attention, influence, markets, investments, businesses, visitors, talents and significant events. However, as a variety of urban and cultural theorists have shown, the space of the city is produced not only materially and geographically but also in the social imagination and through changing modes of cultural representation (Zukin, 1998; Donald, 1999; Harvey, 2000). Alongside with the “real” built city exists what may be called the “urban imaginary”: a coherent, historically based ensemble of representations drawn from the images of and discourse on the city as seen, heard, or read in movies, on television, in magazines, and other forms of mass media. In that sense, for an extensive evaluation of urban transformation, it is vital to interrogate the urban discourse, statements and also ‘forgotten discourses’ as pronounced by Foucault (1969).

In this framework, this paper aims at exploring the ‘urban dynamics’ of Bursa, constituting a primary example for the urban development of medium scale Anatolian towns. Reading the formation of public spaces and the city through discourse analysis is an alternative discussion platform in conceiving the relation between the individual (citizen), public spaces and the city. In the reading through ‘urban dynamics’, social actors (urban designers, architects, administrators, citizens, etc.), non-governmental and governmental organisations as well as the media are tools in the understanding of the formation of architecture and cities. As an exemplary case for the medium scale Turkish cities, the ‘urban dynamics’ in Bursa has been classified into three groups such as; ‘the making of a trademark city’, ‘identity paranoia’ (endless search for a new identity), and ‘historisation/historicism’ (the making history as a visual source to set up an architectural stage) and has been given through visual and textural representations following a brief information about Bursa and relevant urban transformation projects in the city. The research is part of an on-going ph.d study and its findings occur within a debate that is rapidly developing at the present, and in which all conclusions appear provisional.

THE RECENT URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS

Bursa is the fourth largest city of Turkey with a population over a million, as well as one of the most industrialized and culturally charged metropolitan centers in the country. The city is the center of the Turkish automotive industry with factories of motor vehicle producers as well as automotive parts producers. The textile and food industries are equally strong, with international and national brands, as well as fresh and canned food industries. The industry makes the city attractive for migrants in the pursuit of a better life in comparison to other medium scale cities in Turkey. In the 2020 environment plan for Bursa (BOİ, 2010), industrial development has been restricted. Controlling polluting industry and to protect Bursa plain has been projected as underlined objectives. In the 2020 environment plan, future vision for the city has been defined as ‘preserving the historical identity’ and ‘improving tourism sector’. The city is supposed to be no longer the core of a heavy industry but ‘historical-touristic identity’ is brought to forefront instead.

Within the search for a new identity and the attempts to improve tourism sector, numerous small and medium scale urban transformation projects have been anticipated by the initiation of local government, as well as private investors. In this regard, the motto of ‘being a trademark city’ has become dominant in the discourse of the local urban actors as the main future vision for the city. In order to understand intellectual basis shaping the making of urban transformation projects in the post-1980s Turkey, current transformation projects and implementations are selected to reflect the urban dynamics of Bursa (Fig.1). In this regard, *Merinos* as ‘the making of a trademark city’, *Hanlar* district and small interventions in the old city core as ‘identity paranoia’ and *Kızıyakup* as ‘historisation’ are addressed as exemplary transformation projects revealing the emerging urban dynamics (Fig.2).

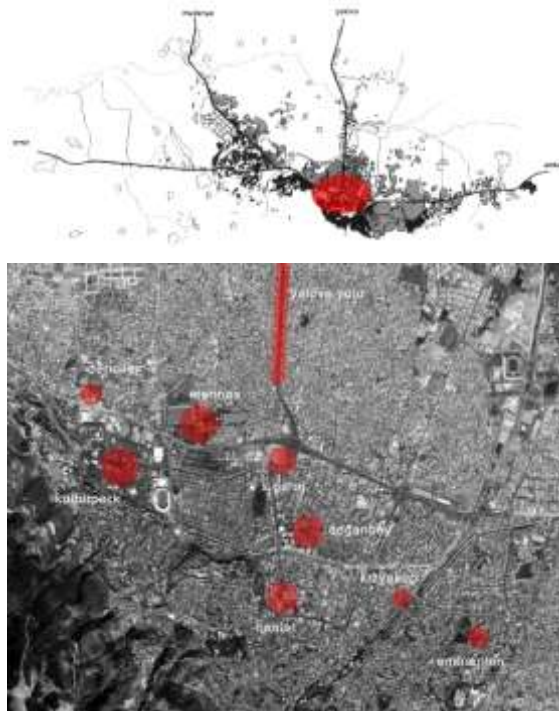


Figure 1. Inner city, areas under transformation



Figure 2. Inner city, Merinos, Hanlar and Kızıyakup districts

THE MAKING OF A TRADEMARK CITY

City branding, which is regarded as a strategic instrument to publicize a city's competitive advantages, becomes a common practice to market the city's history, quality of place, lifestyle, and culture for opportunity, prestige or power in capital accumulation in a competitive environment. Through branding the city, local urban actors hope their city's identity will merge with its commercialized image as produced by advertising, media, and cultural industries and be repurchased as if it were real. In the process, the "real" material city is altered to conform to the idealized image of the brand-name city and to facilitate its further commodification.

In medium scale Anatolian cities, the rise of 'urban branding' efforts can be interpreted as a discursive and ideological vehicle for the transformation, over the past ten years. Being a 'trademark/brand city' or becoming attractive for foreign investment, business and tourists in other words, has been at the top of local municipal agendas for some time and, through local and national media, local politicians emphasize the need for, and the potential benefits to be gained from, such status. Meanwhile, attempts to achieve this goal often manifest themselves in the form of large investments in urban transformation projects. A recent example is Bursa, where a large number of urban transformation projects in the city centre are under implementation process. Most of them were presented by the mayor and municipality as major investments in raising the profile of Bursa as a trademark city.

The ideal of being a trademark city has been the leading motto of the municipality (*Hürriyet*, 28.09.2005, '*Bursa Marka Kent Oluyor*'). Local actors have emphasized the need and the potential profits to gain for the city with this rhetoric. In this framework Merinos factory has been one of the main transformation projects of the city, supporting the local discourse. Merinos was the first factory of the new Republic founded by Atatürk in 1938. Following the privatization of 1991, in 2004 the non-functioning factory and surrounding green areas have been allocated to the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa. Since then, the massive plot of the factory (270.000 sq. m.) has been transformed into Cultural and Congress Center and implementation of the project has been drawn to close recently (Fig. 2). The project is presented in the local and national media as 'Bursa, becoming the world city', 'Bursa, being a trademark city', 'being international center for congress tourism' etc. (*Türkiye*, 04.12.2008, '*Bursa Dünya Kenti Oluyor*'). The transformation of the Merinos Factory as an international congress center has also been visioned as a trigger affect for the sub-center of the city by creating demand for five star hotels and office buildings. Currently the municipality is working on the new transformation projects to supply this prospective demand for five star hotel and office buildings, such as *Dericiler* district and the second stage transformation for the *Central Garage* area (Fig. 3).

Even though not all the medium size Anatolian cities have the same big scale project investments, their urge to be one of the 'trademark cities' could be observed in project proposals prepared by local municipalities presented in the official websites or in the local media. The ultimate goal of branding the city is

shifting the economic base from industry to tourism. However, not only the commissioning process but also the new consumption function reveals crucial questions on the ‘making of a trademark city’, which connotes a unique focus on the economic issues, neglecting the social/cultural dynamics.



Figure 2. Former textile factory in the centre of Bursa, recently transformed into ‘Merinos Congress Centre’

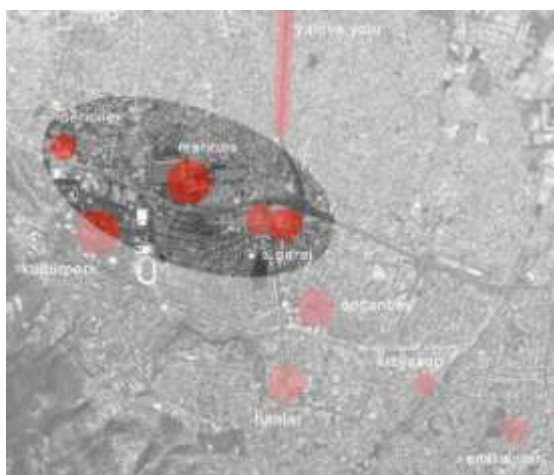


Figure 3. Central Garage and Dericiler district; transformation expanded after Merinos

IDENTITY PARANOIA

In Bursa, the emergence of transformation projects is reminiscent of spatialisation of high capitalism witnessed in Western European cities, in New York in the 1980s and in London in 1990s, (Fainstein, Gordon, Harloe, 1992), and Istanbul in the late 1990s and 2000s, in particular (Keyder, Öncü, 1994). A normal interpretation of urbanisation in Bursa since the mid-1990s would be as straightforward market-led global investment attempt on a western pattern. However, while following the Western forms, they take on a particular inflection when they appear in Bursa. Within the politics of space and politics of identity in the third millennium in Turkey, in the context of urban transformation at Bursa, a new discussion of spatiality -visibility of projects- emerged. Spatiality (the making visible of the space of the city of Bursa to its inhabitants) has emerged as the ideological approach of urban modernisation, in which the cultural, social and physical structure has been ignored. This shift is not simply a literal translation of a Western thing. In the context of the Turkish politics and economics, emerging ‘urban dynamics’ have paved way to new urban and architectural identities in recent projects, characterised by visibility, rapidity and the accumulation of capital, surrounded by a specific representational rhetoric. In this regard, in the architectural and urban revitalisation projects, the nostalgia for the Ottoman past has been combined by a discourse of ‘search of identity’ has raised crucial questions on the vision of the local administrations as well as the social actors.

With a multiplicity of layers, identity changes over time and with context (Tanyeli, 2007). However, the rather overworked concept of ‘identity’, and/or the never-ending quest for personal identity may have different connotations in terms of architecture. In medium size Turkish cities, in general massive numbers of immigrants create a heterogeneous demographic structure. Concerned lest the emerging social identities prove problematic and jeopardize their ‘trademark’ status, those who push through municipal projects seek to paper over the cracks by deploying the rhetoric of ‘regenerating the lost identity’. With the rise of populist

and political Islam linked to Turkish ethnicity, blended since the 1980s with the invocation of a glorious Ottoman past, in most medium-scale Anatolian cities, historic buildings are presently undergoing restoration with the aim of regaining the so-called 'lost identity'.

As Jacobs stated (1998), identity construction mechanisms also operate as the logic of many more modest urban transformations such as streetscaping, place making and community arts projects. Some of these transformations assist in the selling of cities, but some may be addressing alternate agendas such as building identity or facilitating political formations among severely marginalized groups. Recently, in the middle of the main square of Bursa, 25 years old Clock Tower has been reconstructed with the decoration of Turkish flag, Ottoman arm, İznik ceramics, historic symbols for textile, automotive and finally the clock itself, reassembling the desired elements in an orchestrated pastiche. Changing colorful led lights during the night add the final layer to 'diversity' by hosting past and future together (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Heykel Clock Tower, before and after reconstruction

In this regard, *Hanlar Bölgesi* is the center of the discourse of local actors. 'Turning the city into a living museum', 'preserving the identity of district', 'surviving the history' are the quotes relevant to *Hanlar Bölgesi* from the Mayor of the city, published in different dates in local newspapers (*Olay* 08.12.2008, *Türkiye'nin en önemli Açık Hava Müzesi*). In the web site of the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, a projected image for the district has been published announcing expropriation of 21 hectare space surrounding the *Hanlar* which needs investment of 75 million dollars (Fig. 5). Following the local elections, the new mayor postponed the project and proposed smaller interventions throughout the area (demolishing some of the surrounding areas for parking of tourist buses, covering the bazaar with glass and wooden made structures, etc.) The *Hanlar* district project is remaining on the agenda of local actors for a longtime period as the key project for 'regaining the lost identity of Bursa'. With this objective, either small or big scale interventions will be applied to the area in near future. By cleaning the area and revealing the district, the city will be 'regaining the lost identity' and will 'become an attractive city for tourists'. The question is to what extent the locals can use the new re-use/revitalization projects. What extent the locals can be integrated with the new vision of the city? Neglecting former use of spaces and shifting the hybrid structure of city center into a touristic zone may be pushing the citizens into the isolated life style in gated communities located at the periphery of the city.



Figure 5. Hanlar District, right; existing situation, left; projected image by former local Municipality

HISTORISATION

Having had concerns about the emerging social identities, besides ‘being a trademark’, municipal projects use rhetoric of ‘regenerating the lost identity’. Old city centres are in the process of restoration works with the objective of regaining the lost identity and making the city attractive for tourist flow. This restoration works mainly focused on Ottoman buildings and city centres in Bursa, Gaziantep and Antalya are being reconstructed with either big or small interventions depending on the economical power of the local municipality. Besides the restoration of historic buildings, in Bursa, Kayseri and Antalya, ‘City Museum’s are opened demonstrating the history of the city, again with reference to Ottoman past only.



Figure 6. Restoration of city walls in the historic core

The new transformation projects, on one hand, offers new technology and a new image for the new century; on the other hand, they present the emergence of making history as a visual source to set up an architectural stage, which indicate a commercial historisation. Examples of ‘nostalgia’ could be observed in reconstruction of local and religious identities, often imagined from abroad, that go beyond and often against the restoration of surviving mixed urban fabric. The restoration of City Walls in the city center of Bursa for instance, (Fig. 6), is represented in the local media as “being distinctive with glorious history of the city” (*Olay*, 02.05.2008) which caused the large-scale demolishing of surrounded housing area. Another example is *Kızıyakup* urban transformation project (Fig. 7), started with the intention of making recreational area in the center, turned out to be ‘History Park’ of the city during the implementation phase with the discourse of “making the history of the city visible to its inhabitants” (*Bursa Hakimiyet*, 21.03.2009). Many other small scale interventions are also taking place in the city center, all combined with the nostalgia of being a former imperial city.



Figure 7. Kızıyakup urban transformation project turned out to be ‘History Park’ after implementation

However, it is crucial to consider that nostalgia produces subjective visions of afflicted imagination that tend to colonize the realm of politics, history and everyday perception. The nostalgic viewpoint does not allow us to see anything beyond ‘nostalgia’ and is often closely linked to local and central politics.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Recent urban transformation projects of Bursa have been accompanied by a series of populist rhetorics and images for the re-making of a new identity for the former imperial city. The stated streamlines/routes are derived from the analysis of the local actors’ discourse and the review of the local and national media. In this process, ‘being a trademark city’, ‘identity paranoia’ and ‘historisation’ have been defined as the primary streamlines/routes of the urban discourse for re-structuring the city of Bursa. The city has witnessed the physicalisation of numerous urban transformation projects during the last ten years. However, the process of

commissioning and imitating Western examples surrounded by abovementioned rhetorics has neglected the existing multi-layered cultural, social, economic and physical features. In contemporary Turkey, a similar process has been observed in nationwide.

What is critical in Bursa is the city's two distinctive characteristic which accelerates the transformation. On the one hand, being at the periphery of Istanbul, the emergence of urban transformation projects is very reminiscent of the metropolitan context of Istanbul and due to the improved industry, the city has the necessary capital for implementation of large-scale transformation projects. On the other hand, since the number of local actors in Bursa are less than the metropolitan areas, decision mechanisms are operating in a fast manner due to the lack of diverse oppositions and the only limitation for realization of projects appears to be the economical power of the local municipality. These internal dynamics makes the urban transformation of Bursa faster than the other medium-size Anatolian cities. During this rapid transformation phase, together with global and local dynamics, it is considered critical to examine the urban actors' discourse and how they influence the emergence and physicalization of urban transformation projects.

Similarly to Bursa, medium-size Anatolian cities such as Antalya, Kayseri, Eskişehir and Gaziantep, with populations of around 1.5 million, have experienced particularly rapid transformation since the 1980s because their established industries (textiles, automobile, construction and food production) and thriving economies provide local municipalities with the power and capital necessary to effect such large-scale change. While their geographical positions located in different regions of the country, their transformation demonstrates similarity in terms of physical urban environment. They also act as an accelerator for the transformation of the smaller cities in their periphery. While metropolitan cities of the country such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara have been going through transformation process with its own dynamics, medium size Anatolian cities have experiencing more accelerated urban transformation as exemplified in terms of Bursa.

Nevertheless, large scaled urban transformation projects are creating opportunities for cities or countries which did not or could not have fully implemented master plans in their history. Especially after 1990s, an intensive urban transformation project phase has been started in Turkish cities, reminding the mass housing project phase (TOKİ) in 1980s. In the medium scale cities in Turkey, along with its problematic areas, this restructuring phase demonstrates a profound dynamism in the cities and creates a foundation for young architects in a future sense. In that intensive transformation period, it is considered critical to have a distance from the populist rhetorics such as the making of a trademark city, building identity or historicalisation. To have an objective attitude towards restructuring of the cities with an awareness of the existing inner dynamics of each city and to transform it with the contemporary needs of citizens are found crucial.

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