



LJMU Research Online

YILDIRIM OKTA, B

Urban Transformations In İstanbul During The Term Of Mayor Cemil Topuzlu

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/19609/>

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

YILDIRIM OKTA, B (2017) Urban Transformations In İstanbul During The Term Of Mayor Cemil Topuzlu. METU JOURNAL OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE, 34 (1). pp. 1-19. ISSN 0258-5316

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/>

URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN İSTANBUL DURING THE TERM OF MAYOR CEMİL TOPUZLU (1)

Birge YILDIRIM OKTA*

Received: 24.11.2013; Final Text: 21.07.2016

Keywords: Cemil Topuzlu; urban transformation; westernization; mayor; urban history.

1. This work, which was supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), is based on the author's master's thesis. The original information and arguments of the thesis have been updated and improved. The author would like to express special thanks to Hüseyin Burak Sükan for his generous help in finalizing this paper.

INTRODUCTION

To understand the significance of Cemil Topuzlu's public improvements and the impact of his policies on the urban transformation of Istanbul in a historical framework, it would be more revealing to study a longer period – beginning from the declaration of the second constitutional period (1908) extending to 1930s. It is possible to refer to this period as mostly stagnant because the prevailing wars, various rebellions and other developments leading to the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire did not allow much room to implement meaningful municipal administration or urban development (Tekeli, 1994b, 49).

Starting with the civil rebellion in 1909, 31st March, successive crises occurred and continued with World War I (WWI). WWI was not only a military defeat for Ottoman Empire but also a financial decline. Economic depression had impact on the population growth and the demographic composition of the city. In this period while the population reduced in size, the demographic structure became more homogenous (Tekeli, 1994b, 50). The city became a destination for White Russians and members of Vrangel's army during the armistice years. As the parameters changed, the daily life and the social life in the city changed promptly.

Besides the economic depression, the city also suffered from fires. The majority of the wooden building stock in the city was already destroyed by massive fires in the previous decades. The city had a long history of fires. Between 1908 and 1921 there were 14 separate fires which destroyed 19,815 buildings in total. Considering the building stock of the period, it is possible to state that %20 of the built-up area of the city must have been destroyed (Tekeli, 2001, 20). Attempts to bring building controls and the development of the street network can be seen as early as 1848 when *Ebniye Nizamnamesi* (Building Regulation) was drafted. Later, in 1858, *Sokaklara dair Nizamname* (Regulation on Streets) and in 1863, *Turuk ve Ebniye Nizamnamesi* (Street and Building Regulation) followed. These were the

* Department of Landscape Architecture,
Faculty of Architecture, Istanbul Technical
University, İstanbul, TURKEY.



Figure 1. Cemil Topuzlu

first pieces of regulation governing the urban planning and construction activities aimed at bringing some order to the growing urban fabric of İstanbul. However, the urban network was still largely made of narrow streets and cul de sacs, which helped the spread of fires among closely built wooden buildings and prevented efficient fire-fighting. Tulumacılar (small independent fire brigades), the only fire-fighting organization, were too small to cope.

In the early 20th century, infrastructure deficiencies was another important problem in İstanbul. İstanbul gas, water and sewage lines were not available in most of the streets. The lack of infrastructure was the cause of widespread public health issues. The city was suffering from epidemics. Topuzlu's career as a surgeon was certainly a major reason for his appointment as mayor. In early 20th century the lack of infrastructure in İstanbul caused serious hygiene problems and epidemics. 1910 - 1913 was one of the disastrous periods of Cholera epidemic (Ek, 1995, 56). Cholera appeared in İstanbul in 1910 and spread rapidly because of intensive human traffic in the capital. Official records state that from July 15, 1910 till January 12, 1911 cholera killed 4023 people (Ek, 1995, 56). In the disastrous conditions of 1910s İstanbul, Topuzlu – who studied medicine at a high level in Paris – was seen as a promising figure who would bring solutions to İstanbul's public health problems as mayor.

Topuzlu's appointment as mayor by Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha - the Ottoman grand vizier - almost immediately after he completed his medical education in Europe and his return to İstanbul is a reflection of the general approach in early 20th century (**Figure 1**). At the time Muhtar Pasha was looking for someone who could transform İstanbul. He had seen Topuzlu's family home, a villa in Çiftelahavuzlar District, was impressed by the architecture of the building and the landscape. The grand vizier decided that the owner of this estate should be capable of transforming the city (Topuzlu, 1951, 106):

“Last month, I was taking a stroll around Göztepe, Feneryolu and saw your villa in Çiftelahavuzlar. The architecture and the gardens attracted my attention. I thought if this man can create a miniature Europe at his home and in his gardens, then he could also transform İstanbul if he is appointed as mayor.” (Topuzlu, 1951, 106).

A critical examination of this period reveals certain parameters which shaped the urban transformation. First is the westernization of the Ottoman Empire. Westernization initiatives date back to 18th century when numerous military defeats forced Ottoman ruling class to establish relations with the Western world. Starting with Tanzimat Charter of 1839, reforms to modernize the military forces and improve educational, technological and scientific reforms were imported from the West. Eventually, Westernization process continued as a strong ideology in this period. Successful students were sent to European cities in 19th and 20th centuries hoping to promote a western intellectual atmosphere as they returned and took leading roles in the society. Topuzlu was one such student who studied medicine in Paris.

Modernization initiatives - influenced by Western intellectual traditions - brought forward social changes in urban life (Çelik, 1993, 32). Europeanization was a political goal in Ottoman Empire in early 20th century (Çelik, 1993, 18). Under the ambitious goal of modernizing İstanbul, legislation dealing with city-planning issues and administrative reforms was put in place as a first step. Starting with Tanzimat reforms and

continuing until mid-20th century - covering both of Topuzlu's mayoral terms - codification, systematization, centralization become important keywords in state policy and administrations. Urban form has transformed rapidly for providing the "modern behavior" (Çelik, 1993, 18). For this purpose, new laws and regulations were developed regarding city-planning issues in addition to the reforms in administrative issues (Tekeli, 2001). Enhanced by the new laws, the physical urban pattern of İstanbul was transformed for the creation of a regular street network, connecting monumental public squares.

RESEARCH TRIPS TO EUROPEAN CAPITALS

One basic feature distinguishing Topuzlu's "*Şehremini*" (mayoral) period from the previous periods is his attempt to cope with contemporary models (Tekeli, 1994a, 56). Following his appointment as mayor, 21 July 1912, Topuzlu sent teams to Europe for researching urban problems and planning operations (The research included the European municipal administration and planning operations as well as urban landscape of European cities. He published the reports, which were one of the first publications concerning urban problems of İstanbul. In the reports, there are examples for some solutions regarding urban problems. He presented his report to the municipality council, in which, he proposed ways of modernizing İstanbul and offered options for solving the city's problems, citing examples from European cities (Atabinen, 1914a). During Topuzlu's time, the city faced hygienic, governmental, recreational and departmental problems.

Turkish newspaper Sabah, on 5 February 1914, reported Topuzlu's proposals. According to this report, European style initiatives were expected to start soon. The report said the initiatives were based on research made by Topuzlu and municipal officials during their visits to Europe. Another report, written jointly by the Head of Kadıköy Council, Celal Esad and the Head of Technical Commission, Ahmed Cevdet Bey, (entitled: *Şehremaneti Celilesine, 329 Senesinde Avrupaya Vuku Bulan Seyahatimiz Esnasında Tedrikat-ı Fenniye'ye Ait Rapor*) comprised seven sections: The Roads, The Sewage, Wholesale Markets, The Street Cleaning, The Slaughterhouses, The Fire Brigade and The Plan. The report included their observations in Milan, Paris, Pest, Munich, Zurich, Vienna, Berlin, and Bucharest and discussed ways of how İstanbul can be modernized (Arseven and Cevdet, 1912).

Historian Reşit Saffet Atabinen, in an article dated 29 March 1914, says that Topuzlu improved İstanbul by building parks and gardens and claims that Topuzlu, who is a medical expert, aimed to build an infrastructure that would support healthier living conditions in İstanbul - that was the purpose of his visit to Europe:

"He probably observed and very well understood how the public felt, so he did some window-dressing such as building roads and squares, opening parks and gardens. At the same time, he felt the need to research and learn how big cities in Europe are managed so that he can prepare a municipal development program, aiming to provide general healthcare in particular, as well peace and comfort for the people of İstanbul." (Atabinen, 1914a).

A detailed statement by Topuzlu about the European trips also appeared in Sabah newspaper. He said, his teams examined the public service establishments and the management structures of large cities. The main

2. Popularly known as Yenibahçe the river in Kasımpaşa was named Lykos in Byzantium Period. In Ottoman Period it was named as Bayrampaşa.

concern was how to protect the public health. They also made observations about city development strategies. Topuzlu said his priority was to find funds for the projects. Infrastructural problems were the main reason of the anti-hygienic conditions in İstanbul. There was almost no sewer network. Lack of this infrastructure was causing serious hygiene problems and frequent sewer explosions in the city. Contaminated wastewater was pouring into the Kasımpaşa, Tatavla and Yenibahçe rivers, spreading infections (2). Topuzlu, being a doctor, was putting health first. He stated that it was important for him to achieve the right conditions for protecting the public health. He underlined the priorities such as provision of clean water, improving damp conditions by creating spaces which take direct sunlight and employing trained workers to build pavements (Atabinen, 1914a).

The report on the findings of visits to Europe was presented to the municipality and its recommendations were implemented both during Topuzlu's term and by his successors. The ideal of building a European city drew the attention of contemporary intellectuals and, as the initiatives for transforming the city progressed, it also attracted criticism from time to time.

Atabinen (1914b), in an article published in Sabah newspaper, questioned the logic behind trying to copy European cities. He stated that development which means physically imitating European cities is not a solution (Atabinen, 1914b). Instead he suggested revising the education system in guidance of European models. Atabinen (1914b) stated the objective of transforming a city should be providing comfort and happiness for citizens and that objective cannot be achieved by copying European traditions.

İSTANBUL AT THE TIME OF CEMİL TOPUZLU

During the period of Topuzlu and generally in the period covered by this paper the prevailing financial crisis did not allow a transformation of urban structure based on a master design (Tekeli, 1995, 53). The transformation of İstanbul similar to western capitalist models with the influence of contemporary technology evolved on a fragmental basis. Administrative and legislative reforms of Topuzlu were more radical than the physical transformation of the urban layout. Topuzlu's grand ideas, such as the transportation network and wide avenues connecting public squares, could only be realized through small-scale, piecemeal operations.

Topuzlu found solutions to lack of finance. He increased the budget revenues of the municipality by bringing into force a temporary tax law *Şehr-i Rüsum-u Belediye* (Municipal Tax) in 1912. This helped an increase of municipal income by %10. Additionally, between 1913-1916, another law, *Munzam Kesirler* (additional percentages) concerning the building permits and taxes, was enacted, which increased the municipal income by 4 times to cover the expenses of making the city map. Moreover, he borrowed from Periye Bank one million gold coins for the development activities (Tekeli, 1995, 54).

During his first term, 21 August 1912 - 7 November 1914, Topuzlu went ahead with his reforms, following the research of European cities. Topuzlu's urban developments can be analyzed in two main topics; regulation of urban services and the structuring and development of the city. Accordingly, Topuzlu started with organizing the municipality itself. Rules and regulations about how the mayor's office would be

organized and how it would work, were drawn from the documents of Paris Municipality but the translation of these documents contained widespread errors. Prior to the re-organization of the second constitutional period, and in line with the old municipality act, İstanbul was divided into 20 municipal districts which all had their own local mayors and assemblies, in which a successful level of urban administration could not be achieved. In 1912, following the temporary law, Dersaadet Teşkilat Belediyesi (Organization of Dersaadet Municipality) Topuzlu gathered all of these under one central office which had a new structure comprising nine departments including the finance and health departments, also a department responsible for parks and gardens; other departments responsible for legal and technical matters, as well as logistics and cleaning. He also reformed the central executive board. The city was divided to the following departments: Bakırköy, Fatih, Eminönü, Sarıyer, Beykoz, Üsküdar, Kadıköy, Adalar where six members were elected from each to establish *Cemiyet-i Umumiye-i Belediye*. The administrative organization of Topuzlu remained in force till 1930 (Tekeli, 1995, 53; Tümerkan, 1946, 157).

These organizational changes attracted both positive and negative comment but he continued with his initiatives regardless and introduced a municipal tax law. He appointed executive managers and deputy managers who he described as “hard-working, productive and dependable civil servants” (Topuzlu, 1951, 117). In addition, for regulating the urban services, he replaced the old, inadequate regulations with a new, comprehensive set of rules, intending to stop all kinds of corruption. The new rules included, for example, a requirement for keeping a glazed display cabinet in front of the shop for merchants who sold foodstuff and other specific rules for baker shops. Bakers had to comply with strict hygiene rules such as keeping a clean shop and the practice of kneading the dough with feet was banned. They were also asked to stop extending the long handle of their oven peels out of the shop door or shop window into the street when taking the bread out of the oven. A long list of banned practices was announced: content of food products should not be fraudulent; stale food should not be offered; the practice of injecting air into chicken to make them look plump was banned; the sale of lamb, liver and tripe in the open was banned, transporting meat on a man’s back as well as cutting wood in the street were also banned. New Regulations and codes of practice were introduced. Regulations covered issues such as transporting building materials on the back of camels as well as the use of lidded zinc boxes in front of houses for household rubbish. The new regulations were published in newspapers and were posted around the city (Topuzlu, 1951, 118).

At the beginning of Topuzlu’s term, the municipal documents and archives were disorganized. This state of chaos prevented any reasonable level of accounting, making it impossible to control the operations - even tracing a document or a piece of regulation was out of question. Topuzlu recruited two officials from the state finance department and asked them to organize the documents and establish a proper filing system. Within two months, the accounting records and documents were organized. The code of law and municipal regulations were published by Osman Nuri Ergin as eight volumes, entitled “*Mecelle-i Umur-i Belediye*” (Ergin, 1922). These changes and reorganization lasted well into the Republican era. New municipal office buildings were built and large houses were acquired for the nine municipal departments. Villas were rented in Üsküdar, Anadoluhisarı and Büyükkada (the Prince Island) to house the municipal departments. Two

other municipal buildings in Fatih and Kadıköy were designed by the architect Yervant Terziyan (Kutun, 1994, 261).

Another attempt of Topuzlu was the preparation of the city map as a basis for the development of the city. In the beginning of the 20th century there were partial or large scale maps of the city. Stolpe map showing the development of the city till 1880, Turuk maps for the regulation of fire areas were all local maps drawn for small scale operations. However, local district maps were never joined together to cover the whole city until Topuzlu's time. Towards the end of the 19th century, there were several pictures and maps - which were generally regarded as "plans" - but these maps only represented particular areas of the city and did not cover all of İstanbul (Tapan, 1998).

The first preparation for drawing a complete base map of the city started during the period of the mayor Ziver Bey, when Bouvard was invited to İstanbul for the urban planning of the city. Bouvard recommended the base map of the city for preparing an urban plan. Eventually, in 1910 studies started for the preparation of a base map by a French firm (Ergin, 2007, 320). However, the prevailing wars prevented the completion of the city map. In continuation of this process, Topuzlu announced a competition for the map of İstanbul. The competition was advertised in European newspapers. A German company, *Deutches Holstadt Kontakt* - which produced plans for many American cities - was given the contract (Tekeli, 1995, 57). An article in Sabah in February 1914 reports the competition for the map. According to the newspaper, once the city map is completed there would be another competition to draw the development plan for the city (Atabinen, 1914b). Topuzlu explains that the process was similar to modern European cities. A general map would be drawn first, then a competition would be held to choose the best development plan for the city and a new law would support this development plan so that all developmental projects would be subject to the prescriptions of the plan. He says, in this way, lack of control and arbitrary actions - such as destroying previous developments just because people or the new mayor didn't like them - will end (Atabinen, 1914b). Later, a new company *Deutches Syndikat für Stadtebualiche Arbeiten* took over the map contract. All measurements and data were collected by this firm and sent to Germany, and the plans were drawn there. Known as the "German Blues", these maps were drawn to various scales such as 1/500, 1/1000, 1/2000 but did not contain contour lines (isohypses) for elevation (Tekeli, 1994a). The map data was written in French and although street names, development centers and public buildings were named, they did not show details of property plots (Tekeli, 1994a). The firm was renamed as "*Societe Anonyme Ottomane d'Etude et D'Enterprises Urbaine*" after 1914. Within a month, World War I broke out and their work remained incomplete. In his memoirs, Topuzlu states that the cost reached 30,000 gold coins and the plans formed the basis for work carried out by Henry Prost (1951, 167). In early 20th century partial planning activities started in parallel to the preparation of the base map. During the period of the mayor Halil Ethem Bey (1909-1910) Auric, the chief engineer for Lyon municipality, was invited to İstanbul and appointed as the head of municipality's technical committee for a three-year term. Following the period of Topuzlu, Auric developed the plans for redeveloping areas destroyed by various fires around the city. Aksaray, Çırçır, İshakpaşa and Beyazıt fire areas were planned during this period. He proposed avenues such as Yenikapı-Unkapanı, Aksaray-Beyazıt which have been opened under his recommendation. He also proposed to link

Galata to Süleymaniye by a suspension bridge hanging over Haliç (Tekeli, 1994b, 58). It is also believed that he prepared development plans and reports for the whole of the city but these plans seem to have been lost (Tapan, 1998).

In the early 20th century, an important operation in order to solve the sanitary problems and thereby to prevent cholera and other epidemics was the covering of open brooks polluting Golden Horn. In the period of *Şhremini* (mayor) Tefik Bey (1911-1912), Kasımpaşa Brook was covered partially with the aim of linking new development areas to business center of Galata. This operation was completed during the term of Topuzlu as the mayor along with covering of Tatavla and Yenibahce rivers, which were posing serious health risks. Topuzlu also invited two English engineers who had designed the sewerage system in Cairo (Topuzlu, 1951, 128). An international competition was organized to draw a preliminary project to improve the sewerage system, especially in areas devastated by fire such as Çırçır-Fatih, Mercan-Aksaray, İshakpaşa-Sultanahmet. The new plans for sewerage systems included reconstruction of roads. Topuzlu also widened the Karaköy Street, resurfacing the old Albanian paving stones with modern cobblestones and rearranging the electric tramline. Karaköy street's 7.5 meters width did not allow the trams to reach the Galata bridge. The Borsa House, situated at the east end of the street was acquired from the Ministry of Finance and was demolished. Half of the plot was used to widen the street enabling the extension of the tramline. Shops were built on the remaining part of the plot. The road's width was increased to 20 meters, extending from Ayasofya square, downhill to Salkımsöğüt and reaching Karaköy. The tram, pulled by horses in 1878, started to run by electric in 1912. New tramlines were installed on the newly paved roads. According to Ergin, after replacing the dusty roads and old style paving stones, İstanbul's main streets became pleasant spaces (cited in Tapan, 1998).

During his term as mayor, majority of Topuzlu's work consisted of the squares and parks he built. It was important for him to create green spaces where social interaction can take place and where - as Topuzlu puts it - people can breathe (Topuzlu, 1951, 130). His enthusiasm to create parks and squares on the eve of the WWI and at a time when the Ottoman state was collapsing has drawn attention and attracted criticism. At his time, parks were not a part of Ottoman tradition and were rather seen as a European concept. During his first term as mayor, Topuzlu renovated the Kısıklı Gardens at Çamlıca as well as Doğançılar Park and opened them for public use. He also acquired the outer gardens of the Topkapı Palace from the Royal Treasury in 1912 with the intention of turning the gardens into a public park. Monsieur Deruvan, an expert creator of gardens of the time, designed the new Park. However, there was strong criticism in the press when Topuzlu had a four-hundred-year-old tree cut down to make way for the park's main arterial road: "Cemil Paşa is cutting historic trees to make space for his gardens" was a common headline newspapers used for their stories (Kemaleddin, 1913a). Mimar Kemaleddin, in *Türk Yurdu* magazine wrote an article strongly criticizing Topuzlu's actions (cited in Topuzlu, 1951, 134):

"Oh, the most magnificent city of Islam! The most valuable and important piece of the world! They are trying to resemble you to Bucharest of Rumania because our money is spent in other causes and is not enough to build a city similar to Vienna of Austria. They are demolishing a whole history and cutting down historic trees, they are breaking the bones of your departed

citizens and will bury your debris under the roads - long, boring, ugly roads which cut through your heart." (Kemalettin, 1913a).

The area taken from the Royal Treasury contained buildings and vegetable gardens. These were demolished (Topuzlu, 1951, 132). Topuzlu ordered 20 thousand trees from France, which were planted inside the new park. Halil Bey, the director of the Archeology Museum, lodged an official complaint, claiming that Topuzlu was destroying the view from the museum. Topuzlu continued with his plan, demolishing four military buildings inside the area, claiming that it was necessary to create a beautiful park. Palace walls suffered a similar fate. The wife of the French Ambassador of the time, Madam Bonpar, sent her complaint to the Palace, saying, that Topuzlu was violating historic works. As a result, the Royal Treasury sent an official communication to Topuzlu, ordering him to stop demolishing the walls and damaging the environs of the Palace (Topuzlu, 1951, 135). Topuzlu went on, regardless. The ruins of a church and a columned cistern, found during the works, were excavated and cleaned. A stoned fountain was installed on the wall of the cistern with a plaque indicating that it was the work of the municipality. Shortly after the Gülhane Park opened women were banned from the park because it was deemed that the park was "no place for social contact between men and women." (Topuzlu, 1951, 136). Topuzlu objected and, following his persistent representations, the park opened for both men and women albeit on different days (Topuzlu, 1951, 136). For the first time in Turkey, men and women could mingle socially in a public space. Although women were banned from the park - the possibility of men and women flirting in the park was deemed immoral - Topuzlu insisted otherwise. He won a limited victory when the men and women were allowed to use the park on alternate days without mixing (Topuzlu, 1951, 136).

Topuzlu's radical approach in building Gülhane Park is also apparent during the re-planning of Sultanahmet Square. The opportunity to re-organize the square came after a huge fire destroyed many houses in the area. In his memoirs, Topuzlu admits that he was happy about the opportunity the fire brought:

"A large neighborhood that stood between Ayasofya and Sultanahmet mosques curtailed the view. One night, the entire neighborhood burned down. There were rumors that I did not try putting out the fire. This is a lie. However, I will admit that I was pleased." (Topuzlu, 1951, 166).

Topuzlu did not permit the rebuilding of the houses. He requisitioned all the buildings in the fire area, including the Haseki Hamam (**Figure 2**). He believed the hamam would be in the way of his proposed symmetrical plan for the square so he intended to demolish it. His ultimate intention was to reorganize the square with a plan that would resemble the la Concorde in Paris (**Figure 3, Figure 4**):

"I intended to create an asphalt square, similar to Place de la Concorde in Paris, with a great monument in the middle - not a shapeless garden, lacking architectural esthetic." (Topuzlu, 1951, 166).

In line with Topuzlu's intention, European architects and planners drew plans for the area and Topuzlu announced a competition. Haseki Hamam - built by Architect Sinan between 1556-1557 for Hürrem Sultan - was damaged during the fire in 1912 and Topuzlu wanted to demolish this building in order to achieve his symmetrical square. His intention drew reaction from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings as well as from the intellectuals of the time. In an article, Mimar Kemalettin



Figure 2. Hagia Sophia and Haseki Bath and the Square, 1935

complains about the damage İstanbul suffered as a result of westernization initiatives:

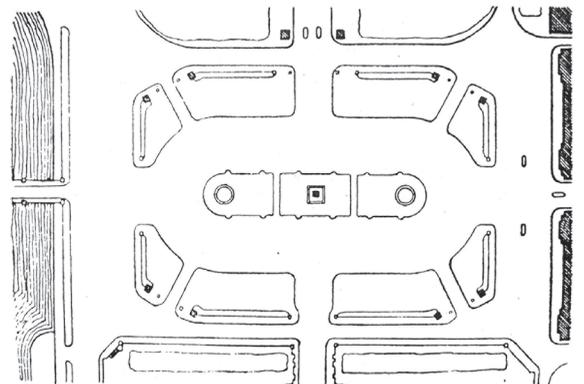
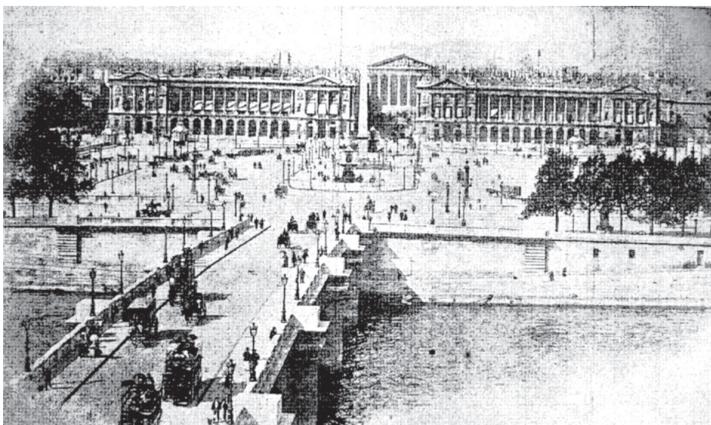
“Recently, İstanbul has been stricken with misfortune, disguised as urban development. Poor İstanbul, in this period of decline, also suffered brutal damage as a result of ignorance.” (Kemalettin, 1913b)

Individuals and societies who defended the protection of historical buildings from the destructive results of modernity were raising their voice for the first time (Tekeli, 1994b, 49-67). In article published by Türk Yurdu magazine under the headline “Damage caused by misguided implementation of urban development concept,” Mimar Kemalettin claimed that lessons were not learnt from European experience (Kemalettin, 1913a). There were bad examples in Europe when it came to developing areas damaged by fire and he strongly criticized Topuzlu for following those bad examples:

“Why don’t we want to learn from Europe’s bitter experience? Why do we insist on following the road once Europe took but later dropped after realizing it was wrong? Why do we insist on damaging our city? It is not difficult to understand why - we simply do not know what urban architecture means. It is regrettable that we haven’t studied the historical

Figure 3. Place de la Concorde

Figure 4. Plan of Place de la Concorde



development of cities. Despite this lack of knowledge and experience, we dared to transform an important city such as İstanbul, and continue regardless, with ridiculous and pitiful bravery. At the end, what we will lose is not going to be similar to what the European cities lost. This is because there is no other city comparable to İstanbul that has such an important history and as many architectural treasures". (Kemaleddin, 1913a).

Mimar Kemaleddin's criticism is still valid today, not only for Sultanahmet Square but also for other parts of the city, reminding us the various attempts during the rest of the century to reorganize not only this square but others too, which may all have started with good intentions but ended up causing a lot of damage. Still, the objections to the western style planning of Sultanahmet Square, sparked awareness for conservation, speeding up archeological work at the demolition sites. During 1913-1914, archeological work continued alongside the construction work when Divanyolu was widened to make space for the electric tramway. As a result, the ruins of the Church of St. Euphemia together with the ruins of Antiochos and Lausos Palaces and a portico running next to the Mese thoroughfare - all from the Byzantium period - were excavated.

Around the same time, İttihat ve Terakki came to power once more. They were opposed Topuzlu's initiatives. Also, Topuzlu's relations with Seyhülislam Hayri Efendi were worsened (Topuzlu, 1951, 171). Topuzlu was opposed the decision to take sides with the Allied Powers in WWI. He feared that he may face the death penalty if his thoughts were relayed to the new government. He announced his resignation saying that he needed to take his children to Switzerland for medical treatment. He left his job and settled in Geneva (Topuzlu, 1951, 191).

In 1919, he received a telegram from Prime Minister Tevfik Paşa asking him to return to his old job. He accepted and returned but served as mayor only for about a year (Topuzlu, 1952, 198). İstanbul was under the occupation of foreign forces then. Topuzlu resigned when he felt he was not able to tolerate the interfering behavior and mistreatment by the members of the occupying powers. In this short period, he attempted to complete some of the unfinished projects from his first term but did not start any new projects. He did, however, introduce some important services such as the fire brigade and the city abattoir (slaughterhouse) which were of critical importance. The founding of the fire brigade and the opening of the slaughterhouse - just one year before the empire collapsed - attracted criticism: "Cemil Paşa is spending public money for useless aims." (Topuzlu, 1951, 178) His initiatives to protect the public were deemed unnecessary at a time when the empire was in difficulty. Topuzlu, disregarded these remarks and pressed on with determination. After his resignation as mayor, he was appointed as the minister for Public Works and Buildings in the cabinet of Damat Ferit Paşa but left for Paris when he learned there was going to be an official inquiry about his work (Topuzlu, 1951, 236).

IDEAS, DREAMS ON İSTANBUL

Topuzlu continued to think and work on ideas about modernization and development of İstanbul after his mayorship. During the mayorship of surgeon Emin Erkul (1924-1928), Topuzlu served as a member of the Development Committee, which was formed in 1925. It was a commission for the preparation of a reconstruction plan of İstanbul, consisting of Halil Ethem, director of museums and a former mayor Yusuf Razi, another former mayor, Architect Vedat Tek, consultant and specialist Dr. Grossman

and German urban planner Bau Rahtree. Reşit Saffet Atabinen, a Diplomat and an entrepreneur in tourism and Mustafa Hamdi, the director of the Harbour Company were also members of the committee. Also, between 1946-1950, Topuzlu served as a member of the Municipality Assembly (Topuzlu, 1937). This is a period when Henry Prost was already working for development projects in İstanbul and when matters such as how the city should be transformed, where the city center will be built, where the port will be moved were being debated. Topuzlu's book, published in 1937 - one year after Prost's first arrival - was named "Tomorrow's İstanbul." It began with Topuzlu's argument that İstanbul should be demolished as a whole and rebuilt in order to create a monumental city. In the book, Topuzlu explains his ideas about İstanbul's development. He gives us clues about what he intended to do and how much he achieved during his mayorship:

"In my opinion, there is no way other than a general demolishing approach. Historical buildings and monuments must be preserved and İstanbul must be rebuilt slowly in order to create a modern and civilized city. Not millions but billions of lira should be spent." (Topuzlu, 1937, 21).

Behind his destructive approach, there is a desire to achieve the standards of modern living and comfort seen in European cities, which he took as his examples. Given the circumstances of Topuzlu's time, what he had in mind could only be described as a utopian scenario. The ideal city - as visualized in Topuzlu's mind - would be well-planned, spacious with wide streets and various zones, including recreational and cultural areas. To create his ideal city, Topuzlu defended a destructive approach, which resembled Haussmann's views and actions when he recreated Paris. Topuzlu believed that the view of the mosques which form the characteristic silhouette of İstanbul should never be blocked - that they should be visible from all angles around the city (**Figure 5**):

"The mosques should be visible not only from streets and squares but also from the sea." (Topuzlu, 1937, 21).

Topuzlu wanted to copy the almost ideal, symmetrical plan of the European cities, complete with the uninterrupted view of the historical

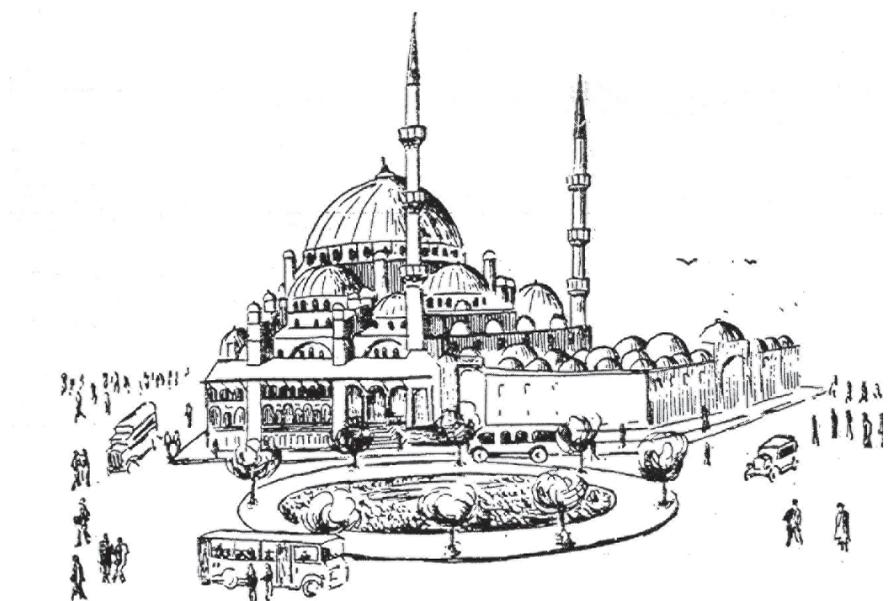


Figure 5. Topuzlu's dream of Yeni Cami and the proposed square in front of it.



Figure 6. (Left) Süleymaniye Külliyesi in 1930, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Süleymaniye Külliyesi, seen here as he proposed: surrounding buildings are demolished to create a vista for the city.

cathedrals perceived through the perspective created by wide boulevards. His approach disregards İstanbul's own historical and cultural context. In his book "Tomorrow's İstanbul," Topuzlu (1937) describes the İstanbul of his dreams with the aid of photographs of the city shot from certain angles and artist's sketches showing how the same areas will look after his proposals are implemented (Figure 6).

One proposed plan included the area stretching from Unkapanı to Yenikapı. He proposed to create open spaces and parks for İstanbul's public by removing historical city walls around Gülhane Park and walls around mosques that bordered this area. He claimed that these walls disrupted circulation on public areas. Only, historical buildings would be saved. The first example of opening public spaces had been witnessed in 1853 when cemeteries were moved out of the city. Taksim Gardens was created as the first park for public use after the removal of Christian cemeteries to Şişli. Topuzlu's proposal for creating new public spaces is a continuation of the same concept (Çelik, 1993, 18).

"All land and buildings in districts stretching from Unkapanı to Yenikapı should be gradually expropriated except Rüstem Paşa mosque near Yemiş, Yenicami mosque, a few elegant public fountains and, if desired, Vakıf Han and the new Post Office building which can remain where they are situated. Madrasah buildings, mausoleums, baths, new grocery wholesale market, fish market, walls surrounding big mosques and the ceremonial pavilion, Alay Köşkü should also be preserved. The section of the City walls around (Gülhane) park and other walls should be removed, the height of walls around small mosques - squeezed inside narrow streets - should be decreased, graveyards inside mosque gardens should be removed and replaced by trees and flowers and children's play gardens." (Topuzlu, 1937, 13).

Figure 7. (Left)Yemiş İskelesi (Yemiş Port) in 1930, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Yemiş İskelesi, representing his proposals: with a new square and the motorway with and sidewalk along the shore.



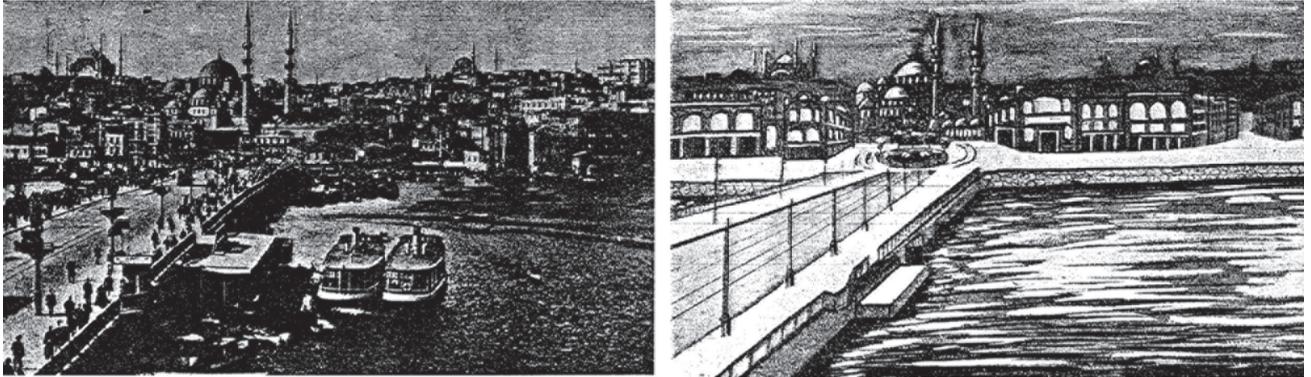


Figure 8. (Left)Yeni Cami in 1930, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Yeni Cami and the square: his plans included a new square with the new modern buildings and a wide rotunda in the middle, as it would be seen from the Galata Bridge.

In "Tomorrow's İstanbul," the photographs of some İstanbul districts and the sketches showing Topuzlu's impression of how these districts will look after transformation, reveal what Topuzlu had in mind (**Figure 7**). According to Topuzlu, these are areas of critical importance and the photographs show how they looked in 1937 (Topuzlu, 1937, 35).

The sketch on the book's cover is an artist's impression of how the area around Yeni Cami would look after the the Imperial Pavilion and the public fountain would be removed. The sketch shows what a person, approaching to Eminönü from the Galata Bridge, would see - uninterrupted view of the Yeni Cami mosque, as Topuzlu proposed (**Figure 8**). This concept is reminiscent of the Abdülhamit period when Joseph Antoine Bouvard was invited to İstanbul. Bouvard drew plans to transform Eminönü and Beyazıt squares even before arriving to the city. His plans, which lacked any topographical reference, proposed creating big squares providing clear views of the monuments - very similar to Topuzlu's ideas - and ignored other dynamics of the city.

Topuzlu was aware of the reaction he attracted from many contemporary architects, such as Mimar Kemaleddin, and members of the Society for Protecting Historical Buildings. Still, he believed, he would be justified in demolishing some buildings of historical value in order to build the city of his dreams - very similar to the example of Haussmann (Topuzlu, 1937, 19):

"I am aware that some architects and the members of the protection society - which is exceedingly conservative - will not support my ideas; they will even accuse me of vandalism. However, as we try to build and reorganize the city to meet modern criteria, we should be prepared to sacrifice many buildings of little historical and architectural value." (Topuzlu, 1937, 19)

Topuzlu, argues that the Fountain of Abdulhamit I, should be removed from the Eminönü area as a part of the new city plans:

"If the future plan of İstanbul requires this fountain to be removed then it should be removed to another place without hesitation. The İş Bank building conceals one side of the fountain completely anyway. It is possible to move this fountain to a suitable place without damaging its architectural characteristics." (Topuzlu, 1937, 19)

In Topuzlu's sketch there are no buildings around Yenicami. The dense and chaotic weave, which is so characteristic of İstanbul, is removed. The square, which has been Topuzlu's dream, is seen in front of Yenicami (**Figure 9**). The rowboats and launches are removed from the waterfront. The sketch shows a road for motorcars along the embankment. The proposed plan - shown in the sketch - was partially implemented as a

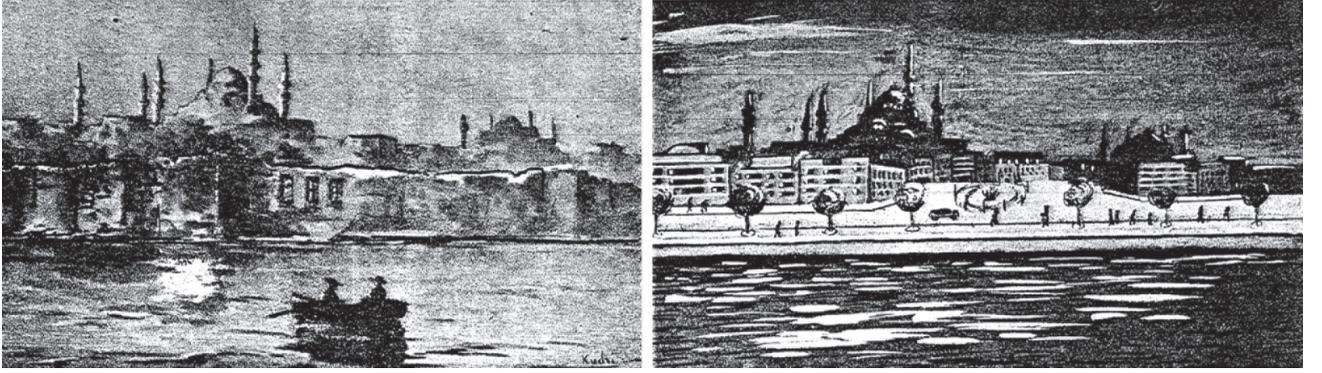


Figure 9. (Left) Hagia Sophia Museum in 1930, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Hagia Sophia as he proposed: its surroundings are cleared making it more visible from the shore, a new vista for the city.

part of Prost's plan. Prost talked about the development of this area in his presentation to a conference. He stated that Eminönü Square was opened by removing numerous dwellings, which were in disrepair and ruins, from around the Valide Sultan Camii, Sultan's apartment and Misir Çarşısı (Egyptian Market) enabling unobstructed view of these beautiful buildings at the end of the Galata Bridge. He confirmed that they would, shortly, begin working on the picturesque vista from Eminönü to Beyazıt - a similar work done for the Süleymaniye and Rüstem Paşa mosques - with the aim of opening up the exceptionally elegant panorama of the Bosphorus (Prost, 1948).

Topuzlu's proposals for Topkapı Palace and its surrounds were very similar to Prost's proposals. He believed all Ottoman buildings, such as tombs, madrasas, baths, museums should be removed and only buildings of the classical antiquity and Byzantium period should be saved. He proposed to demolish all new buildings to make way for new squares and avenues (**Figure 9**):

"The Medical School below the Topkapı Palace, the weapons depots, the Gülhane Hospital, the grand hammam (Haseki Hammam) in Ayasofya (Sultanahmet) square as well as all the tombs, the madrasas and the detention house inside the courtyards of Ayasofya and Sultanahmet mosques together with all the houses around the area should be demolished. Also, the Mint building and the castle walls, as well as the buildings with unsuitable architectural style which all block the beautiful view of the Byzantine monument which houses the Military Museum (the Aya Irini Church) from the sea and from the bridge should be demolished. Only Çinili Köşk can be excepted. These areas should be appropriated and cleared to build new squares, roads and gardens, creating a civilized city.

Figure 10. (Left) Galata Tower, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Galata Tower and its shore: fish sellers are cleared and the old disordered buildings are removed showing his vision for the shore.

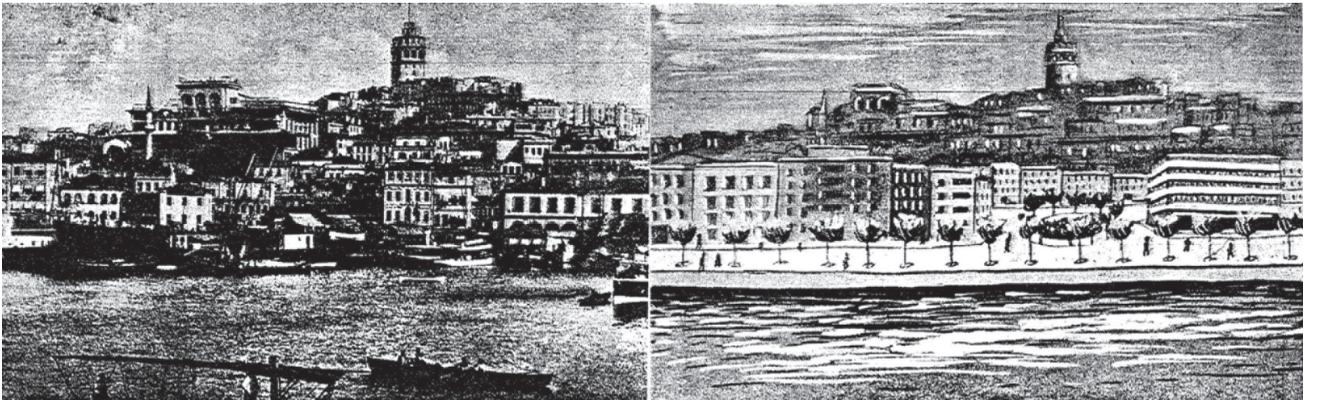




Figure 11. (Left) The view of İstanbul from Yenikapi in 1930s, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of the same view of İstanbul from Yenikapi with the new road near the shore.

Also, the old Byzantine palace and the hippodrome should be excavated.” (Topuzlu, 1937, 20)

Topuzlu's proposals included a new sewage network, as well as new electricity, gas and water supply - all installed in canals underneath the roads with easy access without the need to dig the pavements. He also believed in introducing buses and trolleybuses for public transport, replacing the tram. He intended to widen the narrow İstanbul streets by demolishing whole neighborhoods. Topuzlu also proposed roads running along the waterfront, bordered with trees and landscaped areas - very similar to how, many stretches of the waterfront look today (**Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12**).

Topuzlu is highly critical of the construction of two buildings: the Botanical Faculty next to the Suleymaniye Mosque and the Vocational School for Girls beside the Sultan Selim Mosque. He also expresses his pleasure at the destruction of the Darulfunun (built to house the university at first and then used as the courthouse), which was designed by Fossati brothers and erected between Ayasofya and Sultanahmet mosques:

“Until a few years ago, the view of İstanbul from the sea or from Kadikoy included the Courthouse, squeezed between the Ayasofya and Sultanahmet mosques and its architectural style was not suitable for that area. One could see that it spoiled the magnificent view. A fire destroyed the courthouse and the space between the two mosques was cleared. Thank god, this ugly sight is not there anymore.” (Topuzlu, 1937, 21)

Figure 12. (Left) Balık Pazarı in 1930s, (Right) Topuzlu's drawing of Balık Pazarı as he proposed: a new and Europeanized trade centre.

Topuzlu says the buildings, which stood around the Yeni Valide Mosque were in disrepair. He adds that the removal of these buildings allowed a clear view of the mosque across the Üsküdar pier. He argues that a better



view of the mosque can be achieved even from Besiktaş across the water, if the Üsküdar pier house is also removed. Similarly, he argues that, in Besiktaş itself, the Besiktaş pier and the Naval Museum should be moved elsewhere so that a clear space is gained in front of the Sinan Paşa Mosque (Topuzlu, 1937, 21).

Another idea Topuzlu defended was the building of docks along the waterfront stretching from Azapkapı to Dolmabahçe. To this end, he proposed to demolish all buildings in the area except important historical buildings and the buildings in Bankalar Street. He also proposed the construction of a funicular railway between Fındıklı and Cihangir - very similar to the one that opened in 2006 between Taksim and Kabataş.

Topuzlu also wanted to demolish all the wooden houses along the Bosphorus, including the wooden houses in Kuzguncuk, Beylerbeyi, Çengelköy, Kandilli, Rumelihisar, Besiktaş, Arnavutköy and Bebek districts. In their stead, he proposed a forested area peppered with garden villas. According to him the docks should continue well into the Bosphorus banks (Topuzlu, 1937, 22).

Topuzlu may have compared the cathedrals to mosques and therefore wanted to create large public spaces around mosques, similar to the symmetrical squares around cathedrals in European cities. This may be the reason behind his wish to create uninterrupted views of big mosques and monuments. His aim to achieve the same perspective created by wide avenues and large squares found in European cities and their proportions was an unrealistic proposal for Istanbul – it meant divorcing Istanbul from its historical and cultural context.

CONCLUSION

On the eve of 20th century, İstanbul was in a transition process when the city was also in financial and social crisis due to wars and invasions. The city's administrators were looking for solutions to urban problems within the limited context of capital accumulation and municipal revenues. Topuzlu was one of these political figures facing similar problems like previous mayors. He was very much influenced from contemporary western urban planning and administration models. He aimed to undertake large-scale projects. Generally, far from the dreams or decisions of the political figures, the process of financial accumulation defined the urban patterns of the city. Although this statement is generally true for the early 20th century, it is possible to state that during the period of Mayor Topuzlu, as a political actor, he was able to finance and realize some of his projects and become an important figure in transforming the urban pattern and the administration of İstanbul. Topuzlu's radical proposals and implementations are parallel to his contemporaries. Starting with the Tanzimat Period, and looking at previous planning proposals at this time, it is possible to illustrate the ideal urban image of the time under the idea of modernization. Helmuth Von Moltke proposed new arteries in 1839, Arnodin proposed a ring road for İstanbul in 1900, Joseph Antoine Bouvard planned grandiose projects for Eminönü, Beyazıt, Sultanahmet in 1902 but all of these remained largely on paper. Such projects reflect the ideology of the time and illustrate the main themes of urban planning of late Ottoman Empire. While proposing solutions for the problems of the city - such as hygiene and fire risk, regulating the street network, creating an efficient transportation system - the administrators always turned to solutions

found in European models. The excessive passion to build a more regular urban image, created a representational urban space in which the codes were imported from Europe. Topuzlu's ideal city was Paris. Adaptation of this image to İstanbul was an imposition of aesthetic values and legislations of a different culture, which alienated local inhabitants from urban life. It is possible to detect this alienation in some of the implemented projects such as Güllhane Park. Topuzlu aimed to create a greater European İstanbul by composing parks, by building boulevards leading to huge public squares and monuments.

Topuzlu was able to implement only a part of proposals but the transformation he achieved had a lasting impact making him an important political figure in the history of the city. Many of this work survived until today and became a part of İstanbul's character.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ARSEVEN, C. E., CEVDET, A. (1912) *Şehr emanet-i celilesine 329 senesinde Avrupa'ya vuku bulan seyahatimiz esnasındaki tetkikat-ı fenniye ait rapor*, Ahmet İhsan ve Sürekası Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, İstanbul.
- ATABİNEN, R., S. (1914a) İstanbul Güzelleşiyor, Parklar Münâsebetiyle Alemdağı Hattı, *Sabah Gazetesi*, April 11.
- ATABİNEN, R., S. (1914b) Şehremini Paşa'nın Beyanatı Münasebeti İle, *Sabah Gazetesi*, January, 24.
- ATABİNEN, R., S. (1914c) Belediye İşleri Raporlar Münâsebetiyle, *Sabah Gazetesi*, June 26.
- ÇELİK, Z. (1993) *The Remaking of İstanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- EK, U. (1995) Cholera epidemics in the Ottoman Empire during 1910-1913 and relevant events, *The New History of Medicine Studies* (1) 55-65.
- ERGİN, N., O. (1922) *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediye, Cemiyet-i Umumiye-i Belediye*, Matbaa-i Osmaniye, İstanbul.
- ERGİN, O., (2007) *İstanbul Şehreminleri Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanları 1855-1928*, eds. A. N. Galitekin, İşaret Yayınları, İstanbul.
- KEMALEDDİN., M. (1913a) İmar-ı Belde Fikrinin Yanlış Tatbikatından Mütevellit Tahrifat, *Türk Yurdu* (3) 490-5.
- KEMALEDDİN., M. (1913b) Eski İstanbul ve İmar-ı Belde Belası, *Türk Yurdu* (12) 381-4.
- KUTUN, B. (1994) Fatih Belediyesi, *Dünden Bugün'e İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.3, Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı Ortak Yayını, İstanbul; 261.
- NUTKU, Ö. (1969) *Darülbedayi'nin Elli Yılı*, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara.
- ERGİN, O., N. (1922) *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediye, Cemiyet-i Umumiye-i Belediye*, Matbaa-i Osmaniye, İstanbul.
- ERGİN, O., (2007) *İstanbul Şehreminleri Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanları 1855-1928*, eds. A. N. Galitekin, İşaret Yayınları, İstanbul.
- PROST, H. (1948) İstanbul, *Arkitekt* 5(6) 110-2.

- TAPAN, M. (1998) İstanbul'un Kenstel Planlamasının Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Planlama Eylemleri, 75. *Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık*, eds. Y. Sey, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul; 75-88.
- TEKELİ, İ. (1994a) Haritalar, *Dünden Bugün'e İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.4, Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı Ortak Yayını, İstanbul; 556-60.
- TEKELİ, İ. (1994b) *The development of the İstanbul Metropolitan Area: Urban Administration and Planning*, IULA_EMME (Uluslar arası yerel Yönetimler Birliği, Doğu Akdeniz ve Ortadoğu Bölge Teşkilatı), İstanbul; 49-67.
- TEKELİ, İ. (1995) Bir Modernite Projesi olarak Türkiye'de Kent Planlaması, *Ege Mimarlık* 16(2) 51-5.
- TEKELİ, İ. (2001) *Modernite Aşılırken Kent Planlaması*, İmge Kitapevi, Ankara; 9-34.
- TOPUZLU, C. (1937) *Yarımkı İstanbul*, Kenan Basımevi ve Kılış Fabrikası, İstanbul.
- TOPUZLU, C. (1939) *Eski Şehremini Cemil Topuzlu'nun Başından Geçenler*, A. Halit Kitap Evi, İstanbul.
- TOPUZLU, C. (1951) *İstibdat - Meşrutiyet - Cumhuriyet Devirlerinde 80 Yıllık Hatıralarım*, Güven Basım ve Yayınevi, İstanbul.
- TÜMERKAN, S. (1946) *Türkiye'de Belediyeler*, İçişleri Bakanlığı, İstanbul.

URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN İSTANBUL DURING THE TERM OF MAYOR CEMİL TOPUZLU (1)

This article examines the impact of urban transformation and development policies of Mayor Cemil Topuzlu in Istanbul. Topuzlu served two terms as mayor of Istanbul. His first term was on the eve of World War I. His second term coincided with the last year of Turkish War of Independence. These were times when the Ottoman Empire experienced financial crisis as a consequence of wars it fought and the losses it suffered. Despite this unfavourable background, Topuzlu's policies played an important part in the transformation of Istanbul. Topuzlu stayed in Paris as a student of medicine and had already been impressed by urban development projects he witnessed during his stay. When he became mayor, he set out to transform Istanbul into a "European" city. He started wide-ranging expropriation, demolition and development projects. His policies, which were based on "imported" concepts caused controversy and attracted criticism from public and intellectuals of the time. In this article, examples of debate and criticism are quoted from newspapers and other publications of the time. Also, the impact of his transformation policies on the historical and traditional fabric is investigated.

Alındı: 24.11.2013; **Son Metin:** 21.07.2016

Anahtar Sözcükler: Cemil Topuzlu; kentsel dönüşüm; batılılaşma; şehremini; kent tarihi.

CEMİL TOPUZLU DÖNEMİNDE İSTANBUL'DA KENTSEL DÖNÜŞÜM

Bu makalede belediye başkanı Cemil Topuzlu'nun İstanbul'da gerçekleştirdiği kentsel dönüşüm ve imar hareketleri incelenmektedir. Topuzlu, önce I. Dünya Savaşının arifesinde, daha sonra Kurtuluş Savaşının son yılında, iki kez İstanbul Belediye başkanlığı görevi yapmıştır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun savaşlar ve kayıplar nedeniyle finansal krizler yaşadığı dönemlerde görev yapan Topuzlu, olumsuz koşullara rağmen fikir ve uygulamaları ile İstanbul'un dönüşümünde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Tıp eğitimi için bulunduğu Paris'teki şehircilik uygulamalarından etkilenen Topuzlu, İstanbul'u "Avrupalı" bir kente dönüştürmek istemiştir. Topuzlu'nun bu amaçla giriştiği kamulaştırma ve imar hareketleri kamuoyunda tartışmalara yol açmış ve bazı aydınların eleştirilerine hedef olmuştur. Bu makalede, tartışma ve eleştirilerden örnekler zamanın gazetelerinden ve diğer yayınlarından aktarılmakta ve Topuzlu'nun "ithal" kavramlara dayanan girişimlerinin kentin tarihi ve dokusuna etkisi sorgulanmaktadır.

BİRGE YILDIRIM OKTA; B.Arch, M.Arch, PhD.

Received her bachelor's degree in architecture and master's degree in history of architecture from İstanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture in 2005 and 2009 respectively. Earned her Ph.D. degree in landscape architecture from the same univeristy in 2014. Currently continuing her research on niche theory and production of public as a visiting scholar in Columbia University, Department of Philosophy. Her research interests include urban history, urban transformations, public space and social movements. birgeyildirim@gmail.com