

the US-EU Turkey triangle. The entire book, but especially the third chapter that identifies European actors with different perceptions

on Turkey, balances detail with compactness and as such can be easily assigned to undergraduate students.

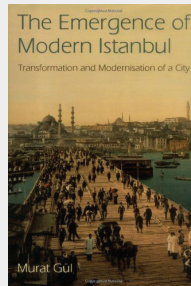
The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City

By Murat Gül

London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012, 242 pages, ISBN 9781780763743.

Reviewed by Esra Akcan

IN ISTANBUL, architectural ideas on how to transform Taksim Square can get you killed. A case in point would be the recent police violence over Gezi Park in Taksim, which began as a public protest against the undemocratic planning of the prime minister's "delirious projects" for Istanbul. Sadly and ironically, the first democratically elected prime minister in Turkey's history, Adnan Menderes, was the target of violence about half a century ago, when he was sentenced to death partially based on the charges against his urban projects in Istanbul. Murat Gül's book *The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation and Modernisation of a City* effectively tells a 150-years long story of urban transformation that culminated in the Menderes' execution. While the author devotes his most detailed last chapter, one of his major scholarly contributions and conclusion to the Menderes years, he also provides a much needed and useful synthesis of scholarly works that describe Istanbul's dramatic transformation during the late Ottoman, early Republican, and postwar Democrat Party (Menderes) periods. "Mid-nineteenth century Istanbul was chaotic, overcrowded, poorly sewered, badly administered, prone to catastrophic fires and



plagued with ineffective transportation systems. A century later the city was a metropolis with large avenues, postwar modernist architecture and city blocks which had swept away much of its traditional nineteenth century street pattern and altered its urban form." (p.1)

A clear periodization guides the chapter structure. The book moves the reader from the first "cracks" in classical Ottoman Istanbul during the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries; to the years of Mahmut II; to the ambitious modernization projects of Abdulhamid II; to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and the French planner Henri Prost's influential projects between 1933 and 1950; and finally to the rise and fall of the Democrat Party that the author divides into two periods, the early unobtrusive period and the late interventionist years under Menderes's heavy-handed guidance until 1960. The chapters on Prost and Menderes are by far the most detailed, as these are the two individuals who shaped the most influential projects and the dramatic transformations of modern Istanbul during the first half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the author leaves no chronological gaps and reserves

shorter chapters for the war and immediate postwar periods, as well as the first republican years when the neglected city shrunk and decayed.

Going through the pages, the reader can follow the city's evolution: starting with the attempts to make Istanbul's first master plan; the 1839 development policy for a proper street network and Helmuth von Moltke's part in it; the changing architectural typology with the introduction of larger palaces and military barracks; the construction of the first bridges over the Golden Horn and the many proposed projects for the first bridge(s) over the Bosphorous, including Joseph Arnodin's rail-ring bridge and the spectacular Hamidiye bridge; the establishment of the first modern municipality; the great fires of the late nineteenth century that wiped out urban neighborhoods and initiated the making of new streets; the exponentially increasing destruction of the existing buildings for the enlarged streets; the making of the urban railway system and underground tunnels; the drawing of the first cartographic map; Andre Auric's infrastructure schemes of 1910s; the installation of the water supply and the first sewage system; and the failed attempts to get a master plan from world famous architects Le Corbusier and Martin Wagner in the early years of the republic; the major urban initiatives of Prost's plan according to the modernist and secular principles of the Kemalist period.

These initiatives led to the the introduction of numerous and expansive *espaces libre* for the public such as Gezi Park, the reorganized Taksim square, the Üsküdar and Eminönü squares for which existing buldings were removed, the designation of an industrial area along the Golden Horn, and the carving out of large boulevards in the Haussmannian

fashion that turned Istanbul into a car-based city. Furthermore, Menderes' passion to leave his mark on the city, which in Gül's analysis, completed and extended Prost's proposed vision (even though his administration had terminated Prost's post). Under Mederes' administration more boulevards and squares were opened in the historical peninsula and beyond such as Ordu, Vatan and Millet avenues, the Kennedy littoral road, Karaköy and Beşiktaş squares. However, he was eventually found guilty of unlawful expropriations and forced renunciations that destroyed much of the older urban fabric and displaced large segments of the population for the sake of urban renewal.

Gül explains not only the physical transformations that changed the urban form of the city, such as the new transportation systems (railroads, boulevards and bridges), new architectural projects and open spaces (parks and squares) but also the shaping of the municipal system that determined and guided these changes. Gül's description of Istanbul is not a self-contained and isolated story of a city, instead he sets it in the historical context and political turbulence of the country as a whole. In order to explain the causes that determined Istanbul's growth or decline, one needs to understand Turkey's contemporary history, which include the investments in the new capital Ankara and Anatolian villages. To that end, Gül also describes in detail basic historical events and shares with the reader a plethora of facts about the country. This gives a framework to those readers who are unfamiliar with Turkey and enhances the book's accessibility.

For the parts that rely on a synthesis of scholarly works, Gül takes a descriptive approach and somewhat covers the diverse voices of different and especially views of younger schol-

ars. Gül's role as an author is evident in his major scholarly contribution analyzing the Yassıada trials of Menderes and the Democrat Party Administration. He analyzes one of the 19 cases, the Case of Corrupt Expropriation, commonly known as the Case of Urban Development (*İmar Davası*). Gül defends Menderes and argues that it was not the prime minister who "invented" the large roads because many of the transportation networks had previously been proposed. Some as early as the 1839 Development Plan, based on André Auric's scheme and Prost's master plan, all of which are described in detail in the book. Gül also claims that the urban transformations of the Menderes years were not single-handedly executed, as it is usually assumed and used in the charges against him during the trials. Gül explains that a permanent commission was established after Prost's removal that checked over the projects. This commission consulted with numerous experts, including architects and the municipality staff. Menderes became the target, so to speak, because he overvalued the administrative and legislative bureaucracy that Prost criticized as the reason for not being able to finish the execution of his plans. However, the more fundamental reason was the fact that the Democrat Party was able to implement the projects by using the funds provided by the US Marshall Plan. Gül

concludes: "Today many architectural and urban historians still adopt a negative attitude towards Menderes, reflecting the narrow and selective view of history generally propounded by Turkey's intelligentsia. This view of history fails to fully appreciate the need to see Menderes' involvement in the city's urban redevelopment in a wider historical context. In this sense, it can be argued that any political leader during the early postwar period, who faced the special circumstances and problems of the time and who had access to foreign economic aid would have responded to these problems in much the same way as Menderes did" (p. 177). Gül also excuses Menderes' part in the destruction of the older urban fabric and the forced displacement of the population by asserting that the consciousness for the vernacular architectural heritage had not yet been raised during the politician's time. However, this statement ignores the decades-long influential literature on the "old Turkish houses" and Istanbul's wooden houses produced by the most sophisticated authors and architects of the period, including Sedat Eldem, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Reşat Ekrem Koçu, Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar and many others. To conclude from finding and discussions of the work under review, one particular definition of modernization is a "storm of progress" from which there is not shelter.