

UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



1. Name of practice

Regaining street space for pedestrians

2. Location(s)

Istanbul, Ankara and other Turkish streets

3. Actors

EMBARQ World Resource Centre for Sustainable Transport

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality developed the Clean Fuels/Clean Vehicles Project

İzmir Greater Municipality and many others

4. Issues addressed/ focus

Reduction of GHG emissions, air and noise pollution control, health and public safety, faster mobility in the city.

5. Stage of implementation

2000 onwards and spreading to other cities.

6. Background

Home to 12-15 million people, according to different sources, and with over 600 new vehicles adding to the traffic jams every day, Istanbul's problem of traffic congestion has come to the fore as the number one issue facing the city. With increased congestion come increased transport-based emissions. Also Ankara, the capital of Turkey, has one of the highest car ownership levels in the country, and both ownership and usage are on the rise. The traffic problem has been compounded over the last two decades all over the country, as the local authorities have implemented extremely car-oriented schemes aimed at easing vehicular traffic flow in and around the city centre. More than 100 grade separated junctions have been built in the past 15 years, many of which are at the heart of city and have subsequently turned the city's boulevards into motorways. To make matters worse, these boulevards have also been widened to allow the addition of more lanes of traffic, further hindering pedestrian movement.

7. What was/ is being done?

Hamamonu, a district of **Ankara** containing a wealth of old Ankara houses, was the subject of a street rehabilitation programme in 2007 that saw the renovation of houses and the pedestrianisation of a number of streets. In front of this car-oriented city backdrop the Hamamonu project is rather significant, being the first time for almost 20 years that a new pedestrian zone has been bestowed upon the city.

The Kavaklıdere district of Ankara has been host to the annual "Streets are Open" Festival since 2007, aimed at increasing awareness among the general public of how they can better utilize the streets by reclaiming them from vehicular traffic, to be used for social and cultural events. The festival has been held in the district of Kavaklıdere, a central and well-known part of the city that features residential areas, shops, restaurants, cafes, parks, a playground and a number of open areas. The event was initiated by the Leo Organisation, with support from a number of the embassies located in the area: the EU Turkey Representation Office, and Kavaklıderem, a non-governmental organisation representing local residents and business owners. Sponsorship for the event was also received from a number of media organisations and local shops and businesses.

Antalya has become one of the few cities in Turkey that is actively supporting pedestrian-friendly schemes. The pedestrianisation of Cumhuriyet Square in the city centre in 2008 helped integrate the historical pedestrian district of Kaleiçi with the existing pedestrianised streets, creating a continuous car-free area and a much improved civic image for the historical town centre.

In Istanbul during four separate events, a selected residential street In Istanbul was closed to motorized traffic on a Sunday for 4 to 5 hours to demonstrate benefits of car-free living and car-free environments, and to show the residents how they can benefit from their streets as a safe open urban space. One of the most important events was an awareness-raising campaign entitled "The Streets Belong to Us". The events were carried out in a street festival style, providing residents with an opportunity to allow their children to play in safe traffic-free open areas that would usually be danger zones. The events aimed to show the residents how they can benefit from their streets as a safe open urban space. Street furniture and various art installations were displayed to illustrate alternative uses for the street space that is lost to moving or parked cars.

After previously having introduced a new and modern tram (also connecting to the airport) the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and EMBARQ initiated the Istanbul Clean Fuel Project. It also conducted a major inventory of transport based emissions to establish a baseline measurement of transport emissions in Istanbul. This initiative helped provide city officials with accurate data for the development of effective air quality and transportation policies. The Istanbul Municipality continually measures and publishes the ambient air quality in the city. However, without sector-based information on the sources of pollution it is difficult to develop effective air quality policies that target the highest polluters, and thus come up with the most cost-effective solutions. By carrying out a transport emissions inventory of public transport vehicles (buses, mini-buses, taxis, etc.), each group can understand the level of its contribution to pollution in the city, and thus can contribute to the development of mitigation measures.

In answer to the growing traffic and congestion, the City of Istanbul started to implement a BRT-line in 2007. The project is supported by the World Resource Centre for Sustainable Transport (EMBARQ). Separated from the remaining traffic, the bus line is operated on a special lane and therefore is unaffected by congestion and long waiting times. The construction of the BRT-line was opened in September 2007. Originally the BRT-line was approx. 17 km long and had 14 stops. One year after its opening, the BRT-line was frequented by around 240,000 passengers daily. Due to high demand the line was extended to 29 km in 2008 and now operates between the districts Topkapi and Zincirlikuyu. As of March 2009, already more than 500,000 passengers used the line every day.

In 1984, the **Princes' Islands** off the coast of Istanbul were designated as a car free natural and urban protection area. In an area that has more than its fair share of congestion problems, the islands provide a sanctuary of clean air and zero traffic to both residents and visitors to Istanbul. The Princes' Islands are a chain of nine islands off the coast of Istanbul in the Marmara Sea, accessible by ferry from both the European and Asian sides of Istanbul.

In 2000 the **İzmir Greater Municipality** launched its "Transformation in Transportation" scheme in a bid to overhaul the public transport system, which was being under-utilised in favour of private vehicles. Carried out in two phases so far, the project is aimed at creating an integrated public transport network in İzmir, in which rail and ferry transport is to be improved and better utilised to reduce traffic on the roads, and provide a more economic and passenger-friendly system.

8. Outcomes and impacts

The subsequent growth in the number of cafes and restaurants opening in the pedestrian area in **Ankara**, and the marked increase in the number of visitors are putting this historical part of the city back on the map as a car-free and safe environment to visit. The area has begun to be known as a place where people can stroll in a pleasant environment, and where children can play and ride their bicycles.

In **Antalya**, the new local government, elected in early 2009, has made it clear that they are dedicated to transforming the automobile-oriented transport system into one that is more pedestrian-friendly, and have often repeated their commitment to further increasing the number of pedestrian areas in the city. This is an indication that the initial scheme is planned to be extended over a larger part of the city centre in the future.

A bus on the **Istanbul** BRT-line uses approximately between 0.3 and 0.4 litres of fuel for 100 km per passenger and consequently contributes hugely to the reduction of CO2 emissions.

The **Princes' Islands** are only a small-scale example of car-free living, but provide a good model of the benefits that can be drawn when all motorised vehicles are removed. The islands have become a haven of clean air and zero traffic in a city of 12 million people.

In **Izmir**, the entire system of buses, ferries and the Metro have now come under local municipality control. Recently, the local main line commuter rail system also shifted under the responsibility of the municipality from the central government, and a modern regional rail service is to be provided. The number of passengers using public transport, as recorded in 2003, has increased by 14% from 1999, equating to 36 million passengers, and after a small decrease in 2004, rose again in 2005.

9. Sustainability

All described activities represent win-win solution to most stakeholders and are therefore sustainable. Only for the "Streets are Open" Festival a major obstacle in the organisation has been the lack of support from the Greater Municipality, which turned down requests to close streets in the area to traffic for the duration. With the backing of the local authority the impact and profile of the event could be significantly enhanced.

10. Replicability

Most activities have been inspired by similar experiences elsewhere and are therefore internationally replicable by definition.

11. Documentation

The Hamamonu district of Ankara:

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2556

Ankara, The "Streets are Open" festival:

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2806

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2814

Istanbul: The Street belongs to us:

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2127

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2084

Istanbul Clean Fuel Project: http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2084

Istanbul PRT Transit; <http://www.embarq.org/en/project/istanbul-metrobus>

http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2107

Princess Islands: http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2036

Izmir: http://www.eltis.org/index.php?id=13&lang1=en&study_id=2010

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12. Credits / Source:

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