

## An Example of Art-Culture Policy City : Eskişehir

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### Abstract

*Eskişehir is a Phrygia city which is known as Dorylaion in Greek and Dorylaeum in Latin in documents and in mediaeval era, located at the centre of important roads, famous for its thermal baths and prosperous in commerce. Dorylaion-Şahöyük had a major role in the Byzantine Empire defence against Seljuk Empire but it came under the dominance of Seljuks after the defeat of Byzantine Emperor Immanuel Kommonos by The Seljuk Sultan II. Kılıçaslan in 1176. Odunpazarı, which is the first residential area of the current Eskişehir, was located in a hilly and earthquake-resistant area where there were mostly Ottoman houses. In time, it slid to a plain land and became a city with narrow avenues lack of aesthetics and greenery. It is impossible for a city in this position to breathe. Governments, shifting education systems, culture and art have had destructive effects on urbanization more than constructive ones. Every mayor has made some contributions but most of them remained passive in designing. The ones who had wide perspectives of art were prevented because of their politic visions. Still, there are some who worked hard for their cities, implemented their revolutionary designs and they will go on. It will be given in this article with comparison that how Yılmaz Büyükerşen shaped the surface of city with magic fingers, how redesigned it and how he carried his experiences from past to the future.*

**Keyword:** Art policy city, Eskişehir

### Introduction

Eskişehir has been efficient for localization in every era since it was located on fertile land which Sakarya river and its tributaries. Being close to cultural centers of Anatolian and Aegean at a vital point led this region become a cultural centre. Eskişehir was known as Dorylaion (Greek) and Dorylaum (Latin) in ancient and medieval eras. Dorylaion is known as a Phrygia city which became rich in trading and it is famous with its thermal baths at the centre of important roads and Doryleos is shown as the builder of the city in archaic resources. However, in Phrygia Kingdom, mostly mentioned king was Midas, who lived in 14th B.C., ruled Phrygia for 600 years and became powerful, rich and aggressive. According to the myth, Gods punishes Midas with the curse of “transforming the objects whichever he touches into gold” as a result of his aggressiveness. Midas is pleased with this situation until he hugs his daughter and makes her gold. Then, God Dionysus, to save him from this curse, lets Midas to swim and sunbathe in his own river Pantolus. After that, the alluvium of river Pantolus becomes gold.

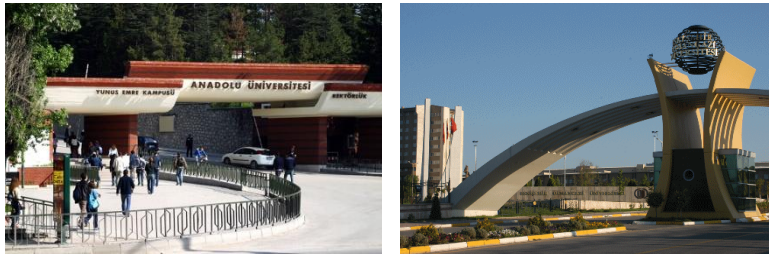


Pictures 1-2: Yazılıkaya-King Midas

According to the second common myth; Midas is offered to be the jury of the music competition between Apollon and Satyr Marsyas (Silenus).

He is threatened by Satyr and Apollon. However, Midas decides objectively. Apollon loses the competition and gets mad at Midas so he turns Midas' ears into donkey ears. Midas hides his ears from everyone with his hat. One day, his barber sees his ears but swears to keep his secret. Nevertheless, he cannot keep and shouts it to the reedies. From the reedies "Midas' ears are donkey ears" is heard. So, everyone learns Midas' secret. This tragedy ends with Apollon's forgiving of Midas. Apollon gives Midas' ears back. Despite its powerful political structure, Phrygia Kingdom whose centre is Gordion around Polatlı, collapsed by the invasion of the Kimmerians from the Caucasus. Then, Eskişehir came under the dominance of Greek, Rome, Arab, Seljuk and Ottoman Empire. Ottomans had been effective until the Turkish War of Independence but King Konstantine and his army burnt the city and withdrew with the declaration of Republic.

After the declaration of Republic, the development of industry in Eskişehir gained speed thanks to the rapid increase of the city population compared to the rural population, adequate labour force, its proximity to the markets, the appropriateness of the energy and material resources and the readiness of the necessary infrastructure investments. Eskişehir has been a nationwide major source of income in agriculture with its flat and productive agricultural areas. Other vital economic resource of Eskişehir is the rich mineral deposits such as meerschaum, clay, boron salt and marble. Apart from these, the two universities in the city and the expenses of the 33,000 university students have great contributions to the city economy.



Pictures 3-4 : Anadolu University-Osmangazi University

After a period of time, the rapid growth of the city decelerated and even deteriorated in urbanization. Local administrations made some contributions as their administrative function necessitated but the problems were solved temporarily because none of the solutions were radical. When Yılmaz Büyükerşen was elected as mayor of the city in 1999, everything in Eskişehir started to change.



Picture 5 : Prof. Dr. Yılmaz Büyükerşen

Yılmaz Büyükerşen, whose father was Crimean and mother was Bulgarian, was born in 1937, he had an austere childhood but he proved his dauntless just like his name and came to this position. His future actions can be seen from his love of painting, experience of theatre first started with the Karagöz Hacivat show, his first football team, his first caricature exhibition at the age of 14 and his curiosity in journalism at high school. He entered the Aptitude Test of The Academy of Fine Arts because of his interest in painting, he passed the test but could not enrol due to the economic situation of his family. He entered the Faculty of Law at Ankara University but the principal of the Eskişehir Akşam Yüksek Ticaret School Associate Professor Orhan Oğuz convinced him to leave the faculty and enrol Büyükerşen to his school.

In this period, Büyükerşen carried on his secondary favourite job and published “Her Sabah” journal with his friends. In following years, he prepared and sent Eskişehir’s news to İstanbul journals. While studying in Academy, he founded “Student Association” and took place in every beneficial activity to Eskişehir and to the Association. He graduated from the academy, went on his career and took over the academy in 1976. After his consistent and intense studies, he turned the Academy into Anadolu University and became the rector of it. He started the first “distance learning system” and gave an education opportunity to the students who could not go to university. He founded the faculties of the departments which he had dreamed of since he was a child and gave opportunities to the citizens of Eskişehir. He was the rector of Anadolu University between 1982-1992 and made an establishment which already exists excellent. When he finished his duty, he entered politics to be able to serve the citizens of his favorite city. Büyükerşen, who is in run for the third term, dedicated himself to the improvement of Eskişehir by ignoring the other offers. Let’s introduce Eskişehir before mentioning these improvements. Starting with Odunpazarı: Odunpazarı is located at the south hills of the city and goes on to the area called Bademlik. According to a myth, the people considering to move Eskişehir hung liver pieces to the areas of Odunpazarı and current Porsuk creek and they would settle down the area where the liver would last longer.

The liver in Odunpazarı lasted longer so the first residential area of Eskişehir was Odunpazarı. Because of the fire in 1905, the little businesses of Eskişehir moved to Odunpazarı and the area also remembered as the names of the handiworks practiced there. The city has come today by protecting the Ottoman civilian structure and traditions such as twisted roads, dead-end streets, bay-windowed wooden houses. Odunpazarı houses are structured in two types. The first types have a garden at the back and they are entered from the street. The second types have a garden at the front, the houses are in the garden and they are built as single-storey, duplex or triplex. Generally, houses have a sofa and several rooms around it. If they are duplex or triplex, kitchen and storage are in the basement and they live at the top floor. At the two sides of the houses, the corner rooms with windows are so important.



Picture 6 : Restored Odunpazarı Houses (Metropolitan municipality resources)

When Odunpazarı houses which have a major role in the Eskişehir culture were about to collapse, Büyükerşen took over the area within the frame of Protection and Improvement of Odunpazarı History Project. With this project, 11 buildings were rebuilt and 3 buildings were restored. One of the renewed buildings in Odunpazarı was arranged as “Büyükerşen Belediyesi Kent Müzeleri Kompleksi” and the first modern glass arts museum of Turkey was opened in it. This museum in which works of national and foreign artists’ works are presented is one of the places should be visited in Eskişehir. The studies of opening “Yılmaz Büyükerşen Balmumu Heykeller Müzesi” and “Eskişehir Kent Müzesi” in this complex are going on. (Metropolitan municipality resources). The other restored buildings were turned into the places such as hotels, restaurants etc.



Pictures 7-8-9 : Cam Müzesi (Metropolitan municipality resources)

One of the vital symbols of Eskişehir is the Porsuk creek. It is the longest tributary of the river Sakarya (448 km). This lovely creek became dirty because of the factories and it was harmful to the environment. Also, it flooded with every rain.



After the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe report saying “It is a swamp whose ground is full of waste without any alive creatures except harmful bacterium and virus”,the creek was going to be empowered with canals and floodgates against floods and earthquakes.With a project covering an area of 13 kilometers,the creek was cleaned and empowered against these natural disasters.Also,they made a great landscaping to the both sides of it.All of the old and weak vehicles and bridges on Porsuk were both strengthened and modernized.Porsuk project has been unique in Turkey not only by cleaning a river but also by giving it new functions such as sports activities,transportation.To benefit from Porsuk in city transportation,a shipyard was established in Eskişehir,a city without a sea,and the production of Venice type Gondolas were started to supply the need of Gondola of the other cities addition to Porsuk creek.Now,Porsuk creek serves touristic tours like Amsterdam and Strasbourg and it is a good alternative for city’s transportation.On the renewed Porsuk creek,national and international aquatic sports organizations are held,on the floating platforms several concerts are given. (Metropolitan municipality resoures)



Pictures 10-11-12-13 : The Porsuk Creek in the middle of the city (Metropolitan municipality resoures)



Pictures 14-15 : İsmet İnönü Street (Metropolitan municipality resoures)

The city’s traffic became very complex due to the increasing population.Addition to the buses,shared taxis and individual automobiles,Eskişehir needed environment-friendly vehicles with more capacity.Büyükerşen found the solution as the Tram but there was a serious obstacle.What would be the money source for it? Then,he prepared a project which contains three solutions for three problems.First is to reduce the risk of earthquake for Eskişehir which is in a earthquake area,second is for the city’s transportation:local transportation and the third one is for the fresh water:fresh water projects.He presented these projects to Europe and got the credits of European Investment Bank,North Scandinavian Countries Investment Bank and AMB Ambro Bank.

These three projects were implemented and completed with these sources. Area of 45 kilometers of the transmission line which hadn't been renewed since 1936 was renewed in six months with the state's own resources. Current butt filling foundations were filled with the last technology systems, blow molding equipments were built so as to put the Kalabak Water into the overseas market and Kalabak Water were sold through the country. An analysis laboratory at the international standards were built to the foundation. The water carrier trucks were modernized completely and they became proper to the radical change in Eskişehir. (Metropolitan municipality resources)

The market hall was at the centre of the city. Instead of destroying, it was turned into Youth Centre inspired by the England Covent Garden and The Florist Hall in Hamburg. Shops, cafes and the first City Theatre were built in this place. (March 27<sup>th</sup> of 2001)



Pictures 16-17 : Youth Centre (Metropolitan municipality resources)

Addition to the structural solutions, Büyükerşen prepared cultural projects for Eskişehir. First of them was the City Theatre, second one was the State Symphony Orchestra (January 25<sup>th</sup> of 2002), third one was Turgut Özakman Stage (April 12<sup>th</sup> of 2002), fourth was the Culture Palace in which there are opera, ballet, theatre, exhibition halls. Fifth one is the ongoing building, Convention Centre in which there are convention centre with 1300 people capacity, art gallery and three-storeyed parking lot. It is planned to finish the centre before the spring of 2012.



Pictures 18-19-20 : Turgut Özakman Stage-Culture Palace-Convention Centre (Metropolitan municipality resources)

While he was the rector of Anadolu University, Büyükerşen got the factories which he had built in the campus produce the necessary permanent equipments. With the same perspective, he supplied the necessary equipments from the companies which were built in Eskişehir. These companies covered all of the needs of the city economically. For example; cobblestones, bridges, cab stands, lamps, ticket centers, greenhouses from which the need of tree and flower of the city is supplied, city sculptures and similar ones are supplied from these factories.

The city cemetery was moved from city centre and in this area of 132.000 m<sup>2</sup> Giant Monument Park was completed in 2002. One of the major projects of the State was the transformation of the Historical Silo Building into a hotel which were bought from Soil Products Office. The building which was in idle state was turned into a hotel, it was rented by a famous international hotel chain and with this project Eskişehir had a vital touristic bus. (Metropolitan municipality resources)



Pictures 21-22-23: Monument Park-İbis Hotel (Metropolitan municipality resources)



Sazova which was empty and lack of greenery was made a science-culture-art park in an area of 400.000 m<sup>2</sup>.In this park,there are a pool for water sports,restaurants,amphitheatre with a capacity of 1200 people,pirate ship,game groups composed of fable characters,game area for handicapped children,experiment centre including a observatory in it and fable castle which is first in Turkey.Again,an area of 270.000 m<sup>2</sup> was turned into Kent Park in which there are a beach of 350 meters length and places to rest,eat,swim.



Pictures 24-25 : Sazove science-culture-art Park (Metropolitan municipality resoures))



Pictures 26-27: Kent Park (Metropolitan municipality resoures)

By putting the projects about “Deficiency in Infrastructure of Eskişehir” in the “Urban Development Projects Package of Eskişehir”,the mayor provided the financial sources of the new infrastructure lines.With the project of Urban Development Projects,Large Infrastructure Project which was given credit by European Investment Bank and with the state’s own investments new and trouble-free infrastructure line of 1,500 km was built.Adittion to the infrastructure line,a wastewater treatment plant was built to the city.This giant plant not only purifies the city’s wastewater but also it provides most of its own electricity need from the wastewater it purifies. (Metropolitan municipality resoures).For the people who visit changed and modernized Eskişehir phaetons were produced.



Pictures 28-29 : Water sports (Metropolitan municipality resoures )



Picture 30: Wastewater Treatment Plant (Metropolitan municipality resoures )



Picture 31 : Phaetons

Büyükerşen considered scientists' warnings of drought. He built a pond within the state's own budget and he registered the new usable water basins. This 40 m height pond was built with the own engineers, technical staff and laborers of Eskişehir Su ve Kanalizasyon İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, it was completed in 6 months and its water supply reached to 4 millions m<sup>3</sup>. (Municipality resources). Thanks to the sculpture workshop of municipality in which Büyükerşen works too, the city has several sculptures.



Pictures 32-33 : Mustafa Kemal Atatürk-Malhatun

Büyükerşen ended the shame of neglecting the handicapped people by considering them in every project and made the city appropriate for those handicapped people to wander around without any help. Today, handicapped citizens can walk with ease on the pavements which have functional ramps and stones with raised surface for blind citizens. They can easily get on and get off to the low-floor Estram vehicles. Also, transportation problem of handicapped citizens are solved by the bus of handicappeds, the service for dialysis patients and minibus for the hearing-impaired people and with the special computer system which was installed in the Municipality, visual-impaired people can surf on the internet, read books and write what they want. (Metropolitan municipality resources). Eskişehir is now a "new city" and its old and dusty side was renewed and cleaned just like an aesthetic operation. Today, there are thousands of domestic and foreign tourists who want to see this city. All of them are the results of a man's determination, diligence and resistance. The citizens of Eskişehir support and wait next projects of Yılmaz Büyükerşen who has achieved his dreams for his country's benefit since he was a child.

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