ABSTRACT

This study elucidates the origins and evolution of urban morphologies with reference to Balikesir, a traditional town in West Anatolia, towards a better comprehension of her substratum structures through a methodology of town-plan analyses with the use of historical cartography. The structuring, permeability, legibility and transformational potential of the town is probed by means of a typo-morphological survey of various maps, plans as well as texts from the viewpoint of geometrical order.

The town of Balikesir, which was a city in transition from Ottoman Period to Early Republican Era, was exposed to a major ideological transformation required by new central authority, not only for capital city but also for other towns in order to radically influence the whole nation. Thus, E.Egli’s modernist master plan of 1944 was conceived as a perfect spatial device for the implementation of new ideas of the young republic. Yet, the plan, with his critical-historic interpretation, was, in essence, neither a sheer denial of the past and its traditions nor a rational means of controlling urban space.

Particularly, the triangular formation connecting commercial, religious, administrative and interchange centres; namely 17th century bazaar, mosque dating back to 15th century & late 19th century municipality, government, and railway station of mid-20th century, which now seem to be disconnected from the urban network, could be considered as an attempt to heal this disconnected web.

Hence, the question that remains to be asked is whether Balikesir was a planned city or her traditional urban tissue was an ideological and local resistance. Today, the resulting hybrid environment displays the typical characteristics of the fragmentation of the unified city. It is suggested that rehabilitation towards a possible return to the unified fabric of the town necessitates a critical interpretation of the episodes in the urban stratification including Egli’s modernist plan itself. Consequently, this paper highlights the value of Conzenian morphology approach in the analysis phases of contemporary town planning.