

THE EMBRYO OF AN URBAN BACKBONE: THE ISTANBUL-LONDON ROAD

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Abstract

D-100 state highway (still E-5 in everyday language) which is remembered mostly due to traffic accidents was in fact an important transportation backbone and infrastructure investment, which totally changed the macroform of post-Prost Istanbul. D-100 highway was completed in 1973 with the opening of the Bosphorus Bridge and its *connecting freeways*; and actually after 1974 when the Halic Bridge was put into service. In accordance with the criticisms of urbanists and architects of that period in UCTEA (**Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects**), the first bridge has created new demands and in 1988 second Bosphorus Bridge was opened. At the present time, the construction of third Bosphorus Bridge is finished and it's put into service.

D-100 highway played an important role in the non-egalitarian, uncontrolled and uneven urbanization of Istanbul. Despite this consequence, the idea of a continuous automobile road between Asia and Europe had different motivations and different names in each period starting with 1930s: while the European countries were dreaming of an easy connection to their colonies, the new Republic of Turkey was requesting international recognition and also some income from tourism. During the Second World War, the highway (*Londra Asfaltı*) was important for military transportation and also as a residential device against a possible Nazi occupation. In 1950s rapid Americanisation of social life and modernization of agriculture, the highway (Boulevard of Marshall or the New London Motorway+Ankara Motorway) was an important integration element for domestic market and also symbol for a suburban life with individual automobiles. In this period the New London Highway was listed as part of European Road-5 in the 1950 Geneva Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries and at the same time performed as a land speculation device. In 1960s planned economic system "E-5" was designed and conceptualized as a transportation backbone, which was going to be used as a regional planning device. After 1975 AGR(European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries) and 1977 TEM(Trans-European Motorways) E-5 was abolished and became D-100. After 1980s D-100 was not a peripheral road anymore but an internal congested road in the globalizing city of Istanbul.

D-100 was conceptualized by Luigi Piccinato both during the planning process in İller Bankası (1958) and also in the 1967 report of Great Istanbul Master Plan as a "backbone" (*colonne vertébrale*) *bordering the city as a peripheral road and also connecting it to the surrounding territories to create an open modern city plan. Following this organicist metaphor, this paper will briefly investigate the change of the London Motorway as an embryo in Istanbul during 1930-1960.*

Keywords: *London-Istanbul Highway; E-5; D-100; urbanization; modernization; Turkey*

The [hi]story of London Highway starts with an eight-pointed plan proposed by British Automobile Association(AA) in Dolmabahçe Palace during the annual general meeting of Alliance Internationale de Tourisme(AIT) in 1930. Only the first three points of the plan involved actual road building work and the remaining points were implementations like special signs, maps and hotel improvements. With its starting point and destination, the suggested plan was bearing the mark of British colonial intents (Badenoch, 2007). In the future, the idea of a touristic road reaching colonies was going to become a part of Istanbul's urbanization problem:

"With the proposal of AA and the support of Turkish and Hungarian Touring Clubs, the wish to construct a road starting from Calais in the north of France and arriving Istanbul was accepted by the other members and a work plan was organized in order to realize it. The opening of this road, which was going to be named as "London-Calcutta Itinerary", initiated the idea of improving international roads in Europe hierarchically and laid the

foundations of D-100 highway traversing Turkey in the west-east direction.” (Evcin, 2014)

On Dec.11, 1931, Cumhuriyet reports that a nine meters wide automobile road connecting eight European countries was in process and the aim of the British Automobile Association was to extend the road until the city of Kalkutta at the other end of India. At the AIT meeting held in 1932, the proposals of Calcutta and Cape Town extensions from Istanbul were fleshed out. Even the Dutch added their own imperial vision by proposing an extension to their colonies in Indonesia, although the road did not pass through the Netherlands. These meetings were taken serious, hence a committee for construction was established at the meeting held in 1935 in Budapest featuring ministers of the respective national governments, as well as representatives of the International Red Cross (and later the director of the League of Nations Section on Communication and Transport). Almost every country at the meeting in Budapest had adopted the London-Istanbul road into its national road-building scheme. As well as being a service for rich tourists, it was also a way of dealing with the economic crisis of 1929 via constructing new roads and organizing the old ones. Most of the countries were considering the road project as a part of their national employment project. There was also the hope that the increase of car traffic between countries might increase also the wealth, so that many of the road planners were dreaming of mass automobilisation. In particular, the consolidation of the connection of country side with urban centers, would enable farmers to sell their products in broader markets. The principles laid down in 1935 were foreseeing the construction of roads also for freight traffic, however tourism with idyllic views was in contradiction with it. While in 1937 there were laws for private vehicles, no agreement for trade was made (Badenoch, 2007).

Martin Wagner, invited by the Municipality of Istanbul in 1935 to be a consultant to the Directorate of Development, was also mentioning in his report *İstanbul ve Havalisinin Planı* (Plan of Istanbul and Environs) the meeting held in Budapest and highlighting the commercial, military and touristic importance of a highway connecting Istanbul with her periphery:

“The city of Istanbul, as an important travel point especially for wealthy Europeans, is obliged to make available the opportunity of an uninterrupted “automobile road” arriving from Edirne to Eminönü. The London-Istanbul highway has to be extended from Ankara to Damascus and be branched into Baghdad and Cairo also. In this manner the old caravan roads will be revitalized. [...] On the other hand the countless benefits of a road reaching from Edirne and Athens to Istanbul might be summarized as follows:

- a) All the strategic plans show that the construction of a highway from Gelibolu and Edirne is an obligation.*
- b) For agricultural policy, it's necessary to built a highway towards Istanbul rendering possible the “door to door” transportation and the most low-priced and the rapid transmission of agricultural products to Istanbul.*
- c) It's also necessary for tourists coming from Europe.”*

(Wagner, 1936; Duranay,Gürsel,Uray, 1972)

In his report, under the section titled Military Roads Network, Martin Wagner put emphasis on the construction of the main roads network in relation to the protection of the country because of the motorization of the armies and translates the commercial formulation of 'door to door' into 'barracks to trench' due to military necessities. Like all the other first generation foreign urbanists, the proposal of Wagner was also not accepted. According to Bilsel (2007) Wagners' regional planning attitude, considering the hinterland of Istanbul and also the dimension of economic growth, was not evaluated as 'sufficient' by the Ministry of Public Works at that time and this rejection may be explained with the zeitgeist of the era.

After 1935 the requirement of a highway policy, beside the railroad policy of the young republic, was appearing both in newspapers and also mentioned by the ruling clique. On Sept. 27, 1937, with an opening ceremony the part from Topkapı to Lüleburgaz (155,5m in length and 7m in width) of the Istanbul-Edirne-London Road was

put into service by Ali Çetinkaya, Minister of Public Work. Although the road is called Istanbul-London Road, it was arriving in fact until Lüleburgaz. While the convoy was on his way from Topkapı to Lüleburgaz, the peasants from Silivri, Çorlu and other villages were ready on the roadside applauding and shouting to celebrate the new road. At the destination point, a big arc was constructed and under a big map of Thrace it was written:

"Roads are the blood vessels of the Republic".



Figure 1. "Istanbul-London Road: Istanbul-Lüleburgaz part of the asphalted road is opening today" in *Cumhuriyet* (left); "Istanbul-Edirne-London Road: The asphalted road was opened by the Minister of Public Work yesterday" in *Cumhuriyet* (right)

Next day, on Sept.28, 1937, in his article published in the semiofficial *RPP* (*Republican People's Party*) newspaper *Ulus*, Falih Rifki Atay points out that in some cases, not only tourism but also national security and all kind of transportation, highways might be more usefull than railroads (As, 2013). On Oct.1, 1937, in the opening speech of the Parliament, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk informs that the European tourist road departing from Istanbul is being asphalted and states that it's necessary to intensify the highway construction and advance it within a plan in order to connect the railroads to the hinterlands and improve their capacity for the national economic development (*Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*).

Before the WWII, London-Istanbul Road was considerably taking place in the international press. On March 1, 1936 *The Milwaukee Journal* declares that all the governments agreed for the road construction because of two main reasons: the first one was the income from tourists and the second one was supporting railroads for the transportation of soldiers and military supplies during the war. The article shows the Autobahnen being constructed by Adolf Hitler in Germany as a good example and informs that the London-Istanbul Road will be completed in 1940. Another article published in *The Mercury Newspaper* in 1938 reports that a large part of the road is completed despite international unrest and after the completion of the road the motorists will be able to travel with comfort from London to Istanbul in five days.

Istanbul-London Road was an important part of the tourism leap of modern Turkey. According to Evcin(2014) the modern tourism infrastructure, which was being established during the radical modernity period was at the same time a propaganda device. In this way a new state with poor economic conditions coming out of an independence war was going to be able to introduce her civilized qualifications in an international medium. In the conference *International Route Londres-Stamboul* which was held in 1935 in Budapest, the Turkish delegate Reşat Saffet Atabinen does not conceptualize the road as a one-way direction from the civilized West to the oriental East, but as an interpenetration of different cultures. According to Badenoch(2007) his speech was aiming to show the equal history and modernity of Turkey against the discourse of the superiority of the West, which was emphasized during the conference.



Figure 2. International newspaper articles from 1930s about London-Istanbul Highway project, interrupted due to WWII, brought to the agenda again by the United

Nations. Established in 1947, the UNECE

(United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) put forward explicitly the goal to connect all the European countries through the building of material systems (Badenoch, 2010). In July 1948, representatives of ten European countries and the United States conceptualized an international highway network within the framework of UNECE. However at the same time the United States started the Marshall Aid Plan in order to support the economic recovery and the military unification of European countries against the communist bloc (Mom, 2005). The Marshall Plan led to the creation of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) on 16 April 1948, in order to meet Marshall's request for "some agreement among the countries of Europe as to the requirements of the situation and the part those countries themselves will take". *The OEEC was assigning authority to continue work on a joint development program and in particular to control the distribution of aid. In 1961, the OEEC evolved to become the infamous OECD (OECD,2016).*

The Economic Cooperation Act, which also includes the aid to Turkey, was signed on 4 July 1948 and the law was accepted on 13 July 1948 in the Turkish parliament (Kılınçkaya, 2013). Within the scope of Marshall Aid, the guidelines of the highway policy has been determined with the report of Deputy Commissioner of the BPR(Federal Bureau of Public Roads) Harold Hilts in 1947. The so called "Hilts Report" included suggestions like education of technicians in Washington and employment of American engineers. According to this report a state highway network (23.000km) was accepted and a nine-year long plan was prepared. The General Directorate of Highways, established on 11 February 1950, was charged with the application of the highway plan (Dik, 2008). On 16 September 1950, Turkey signed the Declaration on the Construction of Main International Traffic Arteries. 4.835km long part of the accepted 54.000km long international road network was located in Turkish territories (Tekeli&İlkin, 2010). In 1954 the declaration was legalized in Turkish Parliament and the E-5 route was defined legally.

E5 London - Wien - Budapest - Beograd - Alexandroupolis - Istanbul - Ankara - Turkish-Syrian frontier:
frontière turco-syrienne:
 London - Folkestone - Dover (ferry to Calais and Oostende) - Calais - Oostende - Gent - Bruxelles - Saint-Trond - Liège - Aachen - Köln - Frankfurt a/M - Aschaffenburg - Würzburg - Nürnberg - Regensburg - Straubing - Passau - Linz - Melk - Wien - Nickelsdorf - Győr - Budapest - Szeged - Beograd - Djevdjelija - Thessaloniki - Kavalla - Alexandroupolis - Pherrai - Peplos - Ipsala - Tekirdağ - Silivri - Istanbul - Izmit - Adapazarı - Bolu - Gerede - Ankara - Aksaray - Adana - Iskenderun - (Turkish-Syrian frontier)
 Iskenderun - (frontière turco-syrienne)

Figure 3. The 1961 revised version of the Geneva Declaration signed on 16 September 1950. The route E5 from London to Turkish-Syrian frontier was also included.

The construction of the 'New London Highway' or the so called 'Boulevard of Marshall' was supervised personally by the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in 1956. It was a shortcut of the old London Highway (which was partly asphalted in 1937) and also an international touristic road connecting the airport to the city center via the famous Millet Motorway. The propaganda book *İstanbul'un Kitabı*, published to praise the 'Menderes Operations', compares the two roads in an emotionally overloaded manner and likens the old one to a "crawling reptile split into pieces". It asserts that the old road was only 6m wide, crooked and dangerous; while the new one is 50m wide, new and clean. This propaganda affected the property market as a big land speculation. Throughout the 1950s Turkish corporations like *Türk Mesken (Kollektif) Şirketi*, *Türkiye Kredili İnşaat Müessesesi*, *Bahçeli Ferah Evler Arsaları İnşaat Müessesesi* or *Türk Yapı Müessesesi* were marketing their building plots via the closeness to the New London Highway. As Zeki Sayar, the Turkish architect and editor of the magazine *Arkitekt*, states in 1953 land speculators were dividing the land from Sirkeci to Silivri into parcels and selling to people by bringing the Istanbul-London Highway forward, showing attractive advertisements and providing payment conveniences. The propaganda of the New London Highway a.k.a Boulevard of Marshall can be seen visually in the advertisement page of a land speculation firm called *İstanbul Yapı Kollektif Şirketi* already in 1953. The land is located in Avcılar Village, which was promoted as being at the intersection of the Old London Motorway and the future Boulevard of Marshall (although the old road was discredited and visualised exaggeratedly crooked). However the schema is wrong because the real intersection was going to be formed not in Avcılar but in the north of Ataköy and southeast of Bahçelievler.

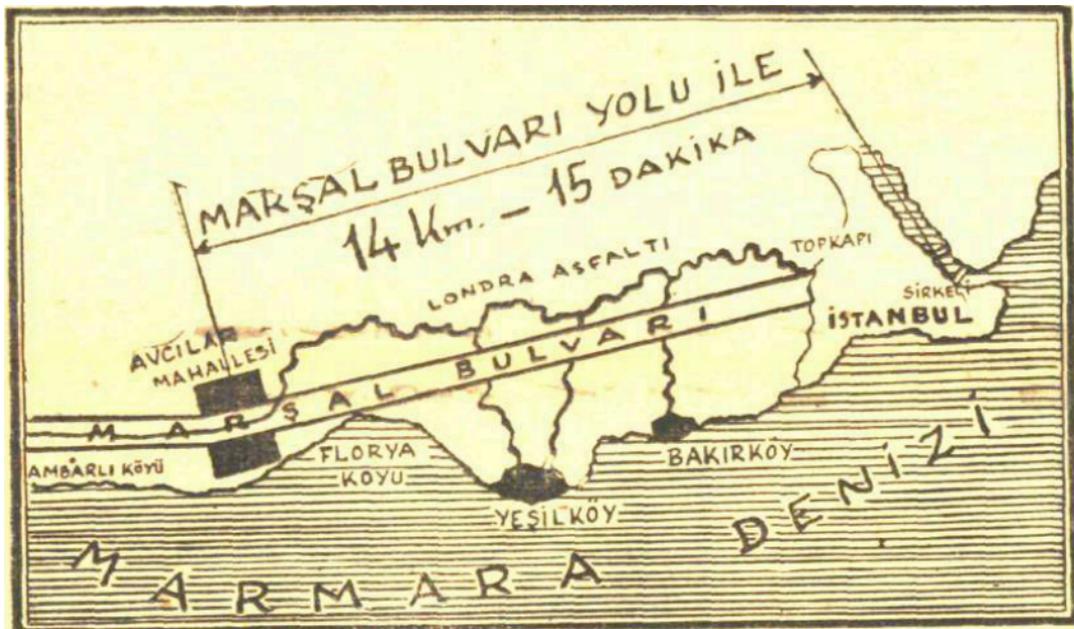


Figure 4. Schema illustrating the old Londra Asfaltı and the new Marşal Bulvarı in the advertisement of İstanbul Yapı Kollektif Şirketi

In fact Bahçelievler and Ataköy was going to be established exactly in that period and designate the area. First, at the beginning of the 1950s Bahçeli Evler started a land speculation activity around itself and than after 1957 the Ataköy Settlement started to urbanize the area around the intersection of the old and the new Istanbul-London highways. While the north of the Boulevard was urbanizing mostly by land speculation and *yap-satçılık*, in the south Ataköy Settlement was being constructed by the partnership of Real Estate *Credit Bank and Istanbul Municipality*. *The project was supervised again by Adnan Menderes and Italian urbanist Luigi Piccinato was working as a consultant.*

In 1958 Luigi Piccinato started to work in İller Bankası in order to prepare a master plan for Istanbul. While in the previous plans London Highway was rather a touristic and commercial road connecting the city center to the airport, Piccinato was considering it as a backbone (*colonne vertébrale*) *decentralizing the city in the east-west direction. It was going to connect the London Highway and the Ankara Highway via a suspended Bridge on Bosphorus in order to create a linear and open urban development axis. According to Tekeli (2013) the proposal of Piccinato was defending a kind of antithesis of the previous city plans and was differentiated from them in two basic points: firstly, it was not restraining itself within the city limits but was trying to find a solution through a regional spatial organization. Secondly, it was rejecting the attitude of the all post-1930s planning studies, which were trying to unite and concentrate the scattered city via rail and sea transportation. Instead Piccinatos' proposal was trying to create a decentralized, open and linear system.*

The urbanistic principles of Piccinato were followed also in the planned economic period after 1960 coup d'état and despite the criticisms of urbanists and architects in UCTEA and public protests against the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge, the contract of the engineering projects of the bridge were awarded to Freeman, Fox and Partners in February 1968. On 29 October 1973 the first Bosphorus Bridge connecting the Asian and European parts of the city was opened. In 1974 the third Halic Bridge was also put into service and in the year 1976 the rest of the connecting beltways were completed.

Although the idea of a highway bridge for automobiles was circulating since 1930s it was put as an urban planning principle by Luigi Piccinato. He was expecting that this urban backbone was going to limit the growth towards the north and protect the Northern Forests of Istanbul. However in a very short period of time, the E-5 started to change the macroform of the city. After 1975 AGR(European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries) and 1977 TEM(Trans-European Motorways) agreements the E-5 route was abolished and it became a state road called D-100. After 1980s D-100 was not an international peripheral road anymore but an internal congested road in the globalizing city of Istanbul. The embryo of this highway can still be find in today's maps of İstanbul with the name of Eski Londra Asfaltı Caddesi (The Old London Motorway Avenue).

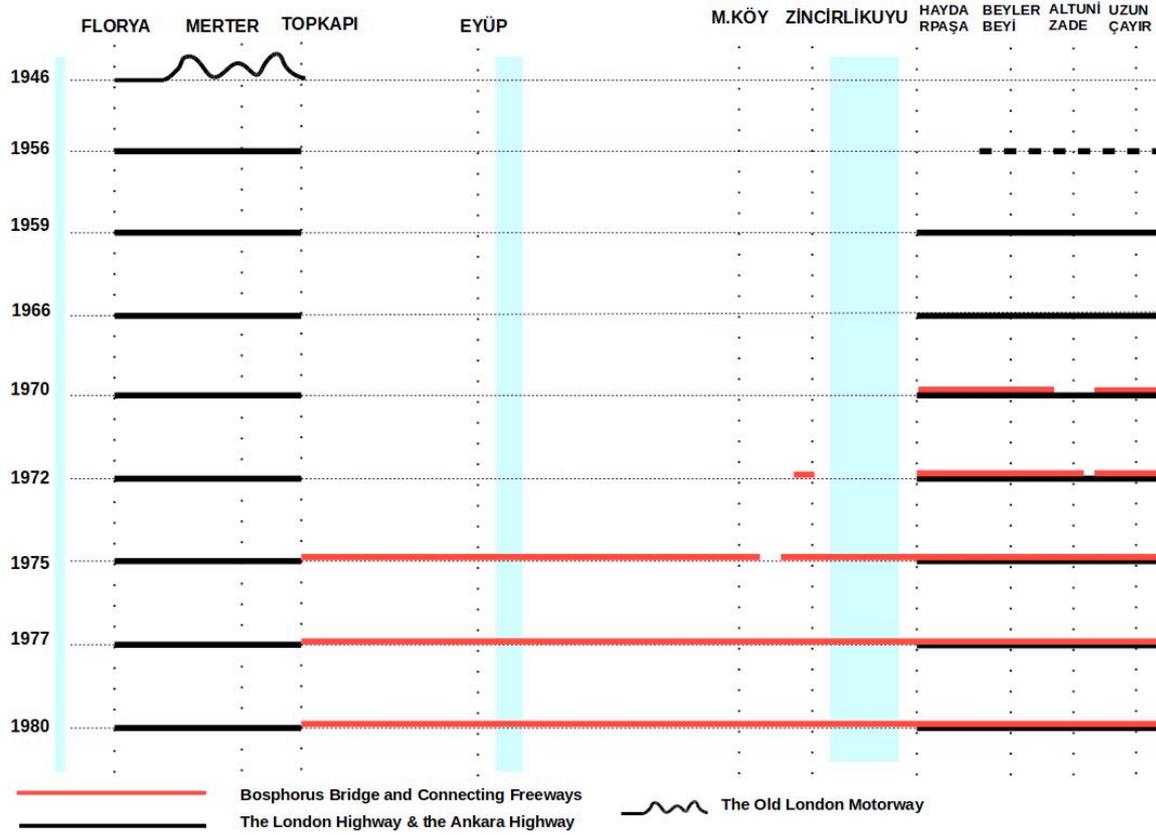


Table 1. The construction timeline of the E-5 Highway in Istanbul

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