



From an Industrial Site to a Congress and Cultural Center: Merinos Case, Bursa, Turkey

Sibel POLAT, PhD. Student
Uludag University, Turkey
sibelpolat77@yahoo.com

Yasemin ERBİL, PhD. Student
Uludag University, Turkey
yaseminerbil@uludag.edu.tr

In recent years, most of the cities in Turkey have been in an urban transformation process because of the different urban policies especially about urban regeneration concept similar to many other cities in the world. Urban regeneration is a comprehensive process which leads to the lasting solutions of economic, physical, social and environmental problems of urban districts. The most fundamental aims of this concept are to prevent the physical decay and to supply the sustainability of historical texture, to revitalize the economic life, to improve the quality of architecture and urban life, to stimulate the cultural dynamics and to enable the participation of relevant actors in all scales of the regeneration process. However some of these aims gain importance according to the context of the project. In this scope, Bursa Merinos Urban Regeneration Project which is one of the "urban regeneration!" projects implemented in Bursa, can be respected as an important example because of the Merinos Wool Textile Factory which is an industrial architectural heritage of the Republican period.

Merinos Factory, covering an area of 27 hectares, is located on the İzmir-Ankara highway in the Osmangazi District of Bursa. It was established in 1938 by Atatürk in order to supply the cotton wool demand in Turkey. It played a vital role for Bursa, which was the center of silk production throughout the history, to become the textile center of Turkey. However in 1980s lack of investments for new technology reduced its competitiveness with the private sector and in 1991 Merinos Factory was taken in the privatization programme. The factory, which operated with low capacity, was transferred to Bursa Metropolitan Municipality in 2004, to be planned as a cultural and recreational area. However in 2006 a fire destroyed five historical cotton warehouses in the factory area.

By a decision given by the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa envisaged that the Merinos Factory and the surrounding areas had to be regenerated by creating new functions. In this scope building surveys were completed and design projects for the district were prepared. Implementations were started in 2007 for the new Merinos Park and Atatürk Culture and Congress Center and some of the functions of the project area have been active since the year 2008.

Thus the aim of this study is to evaluate the Merinos Project in terms of urban transformation of Bursa. Methods used in this study are the examination of written sources, interviews with competent persons from relevant institutions about the planning activities in the District and simple observations about the implementations in the project area.

In the first part of the paper, the factors effecting in the urban transformation process and the urban regeneration concept, in the second part the brief history of urban regeneration in Turkey and Bursa, in the third part the history of the Merinos District and all of the planning and designing activities in the District are going to be discussed respectively and finally all of the works in the District and the role of the Merinos as a public space is going to be evaluated in terms of urban regeneration concept.

KEY WORDS: Urban regeneration, republican period, industrial heritage sites, public space, congress and cultural center.