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## Conference Paper

# Local Agenda 21 and Practices in Turkey

43rd Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Peripheries, Centres, and Spatial Development in the New Europe", 27th - 30th August 2003, Jyväskylä, Finland

### Provided in Cooperation with:

European Regional Science Association (ERSA)

*Suggested Citation:* Yigiter, Reyhan; Yirmibesoglu, Funda (2003) : Local Agenda 21 and Practices in Turkey, 43rd Congress of the European Regional Science Association: "Peripheries, Centres, and Spatial Development in the New Europe", 27th - 30th August 2003, Jyväskylä, Finland, European Regional Science Association (ERSA), Louvain-la-Neuve

This Version is available at:

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**ERSA 2003 CONGRESS**  
**LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND PRACTICES IN TURKEY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The concept of “Sustainable Development” first came up in the National Development and Environment Conference” held in 1992 in Rio and the action plan known as “Agenda 21” was constituted in the “World Summit”. The mentioned program is a comprehensive document assigning responsibility on governments, nongovernmental organizations, local administrations, UN organizations, and development organizations and all persons and institutions that have influence on the environment. Within this framework, this study aims to evaluate the necessity of urban transformation appearing in our country in different dimensions within the framework of “Local Agenda 21” where different actors can also be included.

The paper aims to approach the issues not only from the point of view of state but from the point of view of all actors to whom responsibility is assigned while mentioning the implementation in Turkey by assessing the philosophy of Local Agenda 21 Program. The implementation of the Harran Municipality implementing the Local Agenda 21 program was investigated within this scope. The level of achievement of the Local Agenda 21 adopted in Turkey and policies in the reviewed sample implementation were assessed.

The paper includes proposals that will allow all local administrations in Turkey to query their own programs within the framework of the local Agenda 21 action program in a manner to participate in the process of urban transformation, to come up with local sustainable development policies and establish short and long term strategic plans aimed at solving problems.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Globalization that is the consequence of increased mobility of people, development in the field of communication, great increase in commercial relations and capital flow and technological developments, created new opportunities for the sustainable growth and development of the world economy and especially of developing countries. All countries are provided with an opportunity to share the experiences of others and learn from their successes and also an atmosphere is created where ideals, cultural values and aspirations are maintained mutually. On the other hand, we go through a process where poverty, unemployment and social disengagement is intensive besides the rapidly developing process of transformation and arrangement. Furthermore, the global transformations in the world economy also transform the social development parameters and hence urban development (United Nations, 1995).

Economic growth and the processes of opening up to the world is lived in Turkey as well with rapid urbanization, and metropolitanization and the social and economic problems caused by the process of development that the country is now going through is reflected to the process of urban transformation.

The negative consequences of perceiving urban development as the development of industry and employment leads to the distortion of historical and traditional urban texture and even their extinction. Therefore, besides the industrial and employment opportunities bringing diversity to the cities and making them privileged places, attention should be given and measures need to be taken to preserve the social, cultural and location diversifications and values (Meshur, 2001).

The paper aims to deal with and assess the necessity of urban transformation observed in different dimensions in our country, within the framework of “Local Agenda 21” where different actors can also participate. For this purpose, general information will be provided about the philosophy of the Local Agenda 21 Program and its implementations in the world and its implementation in Turkey will be assessed. It is aimed to approach the matter not only from the point of view of the state but also from the point of view of all actors having responsibility and from the point of our planning process. The work carried out in the Harran Municipality implementing the Local Agenda 21 program was analyzed within this scope. The extend to which the goals of the Local Agenda 21 implemented in Turkey and the policies were achieved were assessed in this study.

## **2. THE PROCESS OF PLANNING AND ITS PROBLEMS IN TURKEY**

Many different establishments from administrative, economic, social aspects etc are observed in the history of our country with the declaration of Republic and this transformation along with the policies adopted, plans and implementations bring along spatial differentiations both for the country as a whole and especially in the big cities. The paper investigates the planning works determined by state policy since the declaration of the Republic until date and a historical assessment for determining the factors and the senior level decisions according to which the cities are constituted is made.

The first step taken in the Republican Era for solving problems in order to attain a balanced and orderly urbanization and planning is the establishment of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing in year 1958 and the first real urban planning work started with a contest organized for Ankara in 1928 (Bingol, Gul, Sahin,1991). The local development plans made until that time are not considered as a comprehensive urban planning activity. Again, the first Directorate of Development was established in the same year in Turkey as per the law with number 1351, establishing “Ankara Provincial Directorate of Development” (Gulgec, 1991). The perspective of constructing the environment of the residence according to a plan and under the control of municipalities was brought along with the “Municipality Law” with number 1580 (Bingol, Gul, Sahin, 1991), which lead to the foundation of a municipality law (Unlu, 1982), and stricter arrangement rules were introduced about implementation with the law of “Municipality Buildings and Roads” dated 1933 and with number 2290 and along with the establishment of the Bank of Provinces, consultancy and controlling services were provided for the map, city plan and water affairs to be carried out by the municipalities. The Development Law with number 6785 determining the duties of central administrations and municipalities for planning, implementation, license and control within the boundaries of municipalities and development areas came into effect in 1956. (Gulgec, 1991), (Bingol, Gul, Sahin, 1991).

Efforts were made to form urban planning in conformity with the goals adopted for the country as a whole and the regional planning resolutions adopted according to the plan with the State Planning Organization established in the following years. The 1960's is the period when the Era of Planned Development started from the point of view of our country and the concept of planning gained a different dimension and this era is

described as a turning point by many economists, urban planners and historians of politics. While planning, organization and implementation was dealt with on a local scale before 1960, the reflection of resolutions with macro scale to the location was aimed after 1960. It was observed that especially large cities entered a new era after these resolutions as they got intense very rapidly with population increase and settlement areas developed in an unorganized manner (Yirmibesoglu, 1997).

Important developments were observed following the abolishment of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing in 1984, which was established in 1958 and the delegation of the authority to approve plans to the Municipalities with the new Development Law that came into effect on 9 November 1985. Following these changes, a gap was created in the center for urbanization and determining the residential policies and many issues such as residence, land, squatter's house, distribution of population and regional planning were abandoned.

The consequence of all these negative aspects during 1984-1991 is unhealthy and unplanned urbanization. The development plans prepared are not directed for integration with the whole, instead they are fragmented. They either lack flexibility totally or they are so flexible that the plan is degenerated. It is observed that the plans are not only inconsistent with economic and social policies, they also lack constancy among themselves (Keles, 1991), are far from coming up with solutions for the problems of the city and their only function is legalizing the established unorganized development (Ates, 1984).

Problems about the process of preservation are as follows: Not only urban planning and implementation cannot be made in our country at the same level with developed countries, but also an effective protection cannot be implemented for monumental structures, traditional single buildings and environmental scales. The planning works carried out for preserving historical surroundings carried out most of the time are assessed as being late and their dimension of implementation is found to be insufficient, the social and economic problems of our country caused by the process of development that our country is in for the time being are denoted as the basic reason of the problems lived within the process of the preservation of historical surroundings.

### 3. THE SCOPE OF LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND ITS ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF PLANNING

Local Agenda 21 establishes the path leading to sustainable development at the local level for increasing the quality of life for all people. When commitments for the “supporting capacity” of the ecosystems and the protection of the rights of future generations combine with mechanisms providing social consensus based on interactive and collaborative participation, it is observed that Local agenda 21 is not only directed at the future and is not only very comprehensive, but it is also a enterprise project (un.org).

The section where the concept of “Local Agenda 21” is introduced in Agenda 21, the importance of local administrations as the type of administration closest to the population is emphasized.

The basic goals and approaches taking part in this scope emphasize “participation”.

Four basic goals are set forth in this section:

- The initiation of a participative process for local administrations in each country with the population of their own town and consensus on a Local agenda 21 for their own city is expected.
- Increasing cooperation between the international community and local administrations and taking steps to strengthen cooperation between local administrations on an international scale is encouraged.
- Developing the level of coordination and cooperation between local administration units and representatives of other administrative management units is aimed with the purpose of enriching experience and exchange of information.
- The encouragement of development and implementation of programs that will provide the effective participation of women and youth to the decision making, planning and implementation processes.

Within the scope of activities aimed at reaching the goals mentioned above, it is pointed out that each local administration should develop its own Local agenda 21’s with dialog with the population, local institutions and organizations of the private sector.

The process of Local Agenda 21 covers the development of a **vision** aimed at the sustainable future of the city, and the preparation (and then implementation) of a long

term, strategic **local action plan** that will provide the implementation of this vision. The questions of how and by whom things shall be carried out are as important as the question of what is to be done. Making the process of Local Agenda 21 open to the participation of all organized and unorganized sectors of the society, the development of policies and mechanisms encouraging participation is of great significance and priority.

The Local Agenda 21 implementation in the world and in Turkey are not carried out according to a predetermined sample, instead, different structures and methods where the unique conditions, values and priorities of each city is displayed. When the sample implementations are assessed, it is observed that there are similar processes and outputs complementing each other (geocities.com).

These common points and issues for which attention should be give for the development of participative processes cover the following:

- **Establishment of City Councils and similar structures:** Paying attention that all partners are represented sufficiently in this structure, development of methods to remove the inequality of representation among those participating individually to these councils and those participating on behalf of different groups; the representation of unorganized sections and working groups on these platforms.
- **Establishment of Working Groups or “cocoons”:** The provision of active participation of women and youth to these groups; representation of different groups; the representation of the features and priorities of the city by the working areas determined fro the groups; provision of coordination among different working groups.
- **Establishment of supporting mechanisms:** The establishment of a department or a General Secretariat to coordinate and support Local Agenda 21 in the scale of the city for this purpose.

The common points and issues that need attention from the point of outputs of the process cover the following:

- The development of a comprehensive vision for the sustainable future of the city
- Definition of the existing situation: Consensus for the definition of problem areas with priority in the city; the determination of the reasons, sources and dimensions of the problems; the preparation of a report reflecting the existing situation of the city, putting forward the relation of environment with social and economic development.

- The determination of realistic short and long term goals that can be measured for the city.
- The preparation of long term action plans and short term action plans based on the long term targets for sustainable goals that can be measured; preparation of the cost of action plans.
- The review of existing plans and programs within the framework of sustainable development goals and Local Agenda 21 principles.
- Sharing responsibilities among local partners in a balanced manner
- Preparation of a calendar incorporating various stages of the Local Agenda 21 process.
- Development of “sustainability indicators” that shall provide the assessment of implementations.

#### **4. THE PROJECT OF ENCOURAGING AND DEVELOPING “LOCAL AGENDA 21’S” IN TURKEY**

The Project of encouraging and developing Local Agenda 21’s” in Turkey has been developed by the Association of International Local Administrations, East Mediterranean and Middle East Regional Organization (IULA-EMME) ([yerelgundem21.org](http://yerelgundem21.org)).

The Project realized under the structure and with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Permanent Representation for Turkey and UNDP Capacity 21 Program was initiated in September 1997. Project Revision was initiated in October 1998 with the aim of the participation of new partners and extending the implementations to the whole country. The Project was selected as the most successful implementation among the projects supported by the Capacity 21 Program in more than 50 countries.

The Project emphasizes the comprehension of governance based on participation and partnerships within the framework of “global partnership”, which is the basis of Agenda 21. Within this framework, taking lasting steps for the development and establishment of a democratic and participative administration as a comprehension of “governance” supported by the “facilitating” and “feasible” role of local administrations, based on the power of the community and encouraging local interest groups and “equal partnerships”.



Within the framework of this approach, efforts were made for keeping the processes of Local Agenda 21 initiated in project partner cities open to the associations and foundations constituting local partners, nongovernmental organizations such as chambers of occupations and trade unions, institutions of the private sector, academic institutions, media and publishing organizations, local administrations, efforts of citizens and generally to all local community members.

Special importance is attached to policies and implementations that aim at increasing the effective participation of women to urban life and emphasizing the issue of gender in local planning and decision making processes; perceiving the youth “not only as the administrators of the future but also as the partners of today”; aiming to provide more and equal opportunities to seniors, children and the handicapped.

The project studies are based on two basic goals. The first goal covers the promotion of the concept of Local Agenda 21 within the scale of the country and the promotion of its effects and consequences on local “governance”. The second goal however is the establishment of mechanisms aimed at developing the planning process based on the participation of local interest groups in cities that are project partners and causing functionality for them. Hence, while the first goal deals with the promotion and spreading of Local Agenda 21 within the scale of Turkey, the second one emphasizes on the studies to be conducted in cities that are project partners.

The project has five major goals:

- An increase in the number of local administrations participating in Local Agenda 21 and the establishment of participative processes in cities that are new project partners.
- The second goal is the preparation of action plans in cities that are new project partners and their implementation in the existing ones as well.
- Campaigns aimed at informing the population on one side and international promotion on the other
- Provision of long term sustainable support for the process of Local Agenda 21
- The important function undertaken by Local Agenda 21 in the restructuring process after the earthquake in Marmara

The Association of Mediterranean Municipalities, The Association of Eastern Black Sea Municipalities, the Association of Aegean Municipalities, Association of GAP

Municipalities and the Association of the Marmara and the Bosphorus Municipalities are also among the partners of the project.

ICLEI “International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives”, WALD “World Local Administration” and Democracy Academy and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality are also among the partners that provide multidimensional support to the project. The coordination of work directed at youth however was undertaken by Habitat and the Youth Association of Agenda 21 that are among the partners of the project.

Sample implementations were initiated in a total of 23 cities at the first stage. The number of project partners is currently 46 and it is foreseen that this number reaches 50 during the term of the project and the project partners comprise of 11 municipalities in the Marmara Region, 9 municipalities in the Aegean Region, 7 municipalities in the Mediterranean Region, 4 municipalities in the Central Anatolian Region, 7 municipalities in the Black Sea Region, 5 Municipalities in the South Eastern Region and 3 municipalities in the Southeast Anatolian Region. The City Councils established under the leadership of metropolitan cities that are project partners or similar platforms function as effective participative mechanisms that bring the participants from different institutions together in a regular manner to achieve common goals. Similar structures function in many other cities that are project partners that are of different size and features. Studies for the representation of all partners within these structures in a sufficient manner, the development of methods to eliminate the imbalance of representation between those participating individually to these councils and those participating on behalf of different groups and the representation of sections that are not organized and of working groups are carried on ([iula\\_emme.org](http://iula_emme.org)).

The Working Groups or “cocoons” established in cities that are project partners, function as another important mechanism that intensifies the interest of volunteers from every sector and section to the major problem areas of the city. Special care is given for the representation of different population groups sufficiently and the provision of coordination between them.

Just like in other parts of the world, the implementations in Turkey puts forward that the success and lasting nature of Local Agenda 21 depends on the effective participation of women and youth. The Women Platform with their number increasing rapidly proceeds with their work to increase the effective participation of women to urban life ([un.org.tr](http://un.org.tr)).

Within this framework, special attention is given for creating an approach with social gender sensitivity in decision making processes and the structuring of urban governance in an equity manner while planning the future. Similarly, the Youth Assemblies established in many of the cities that are project partners constitute the dynamo of Local Agenda 21 processes.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN TURKEY – HARRAN**

Although Harran is a settlement with a small scale, it is quite significant within the scope of socioeconomic development process. Harran, preferred by communities belonging to different religions and cultures for settlement and development is a place bearing the traces of many civilizations. Today it faces a new mode of action with the starting of settled life once again and as a consequence of the economic liveliness ([yerekgundem21.org](http://yerekgundem21.org)).



Photo1. General View of Harran

The vast plains of Harran that were dry until recently are transformed into productive plains with the means of irrigation brought along by the Southeastern Anatolian Project. The project rests upon the philosophy sustainable human development, which aims to create an environment in which future generations can benefit and develop. The basic strategies of the project include fairness in development, participation, environmental protection, employment generation, spatial planning and infrastructure development ([gap.gov.tr](http://gap.gov.tr)).

This development will lead to acceleration in both economic and demographic growth in Harran and shall transform the district to an important center that contributes the economy significantly in the national scale.

Growth is a dilemma in Harran that is caught between historical and urban site and valuable agricultural land. The people in Harran wish to transfer the capital gained from agriculture to achieve development in the place where they live. However, it has a unique structure with its centenary past and with houses that have domes, which are

very few in the whole world and it should be preserved. The social effects of the rapid transformation that it goes through are worth attention.



Map1. Location of Southeastern Anatolia Region and Sanliurfa - Harran (gap.gov.tr)

The Municipality and the Governorship bearing responsibility for the development of the district with sensitivity could not achieve any development for establishing a balance between “living-preserving” despite all their efforts to develop living conditions and to establish the infrastructure.



Photo 2 . Traditional Harran Houses

Although Harran lives the dilemmas mentioned above, it is lucky since the adverse effects of growth are not yet felt in an intensive manner on the environment and the society. The study of "Local Agenda 21 for Harran” carried out within this framework

aims to deal with development by establishing a long term and participative vision within the framework of sustainable development and minimize negative points.

The settlement of Harran located in the middle of the Harran Plain became a district in 1987 and it started to develop as an urban center with the municipality established. However, it is still a center with dominant rural characteristics.

Harran ranks 830 among 858 districts in the country according to the socioeconomic development ranking research prepared by the State Planning Institution (DPT, 2000). It ranks last among the districts of Sanliurfa in terms of development. When its socio-cultural and economic structure is evaluated it is observed that although Harran functions mainly as a close system, it starts to open up slowly with the modifications gone through and it started to develop relations with other centers.

Harran has close urban, commercial, social and cultural relations with Sanliurfa. The income increase lived in Harran is transferred to Sanliurfa in an intensive manner. However the population of Harran is quite willing to have some services to be provided there by making investments in the city.

### **Tendencies of Urbanization in Harran and Planning Activities**

A slow transformation from rural life to urban life is taking place within the development process of Harran. The implementation movements and plans also developed in parallel to this process.

A disorder caused by the preference of families to live in separate places as tribal groups at the disengagement stage of tribes is observed. However, this disorder started to get smaller in the last years and the places of settlement combine. While rural settlements are transformed into villages gradually, the increasing heterogeneous nature of settlements caused the establishment of social and commercial institutions in the units of settlements established in the previous years (GAP, 1996).

Although Harran is an old and historical region, it could not have a development plan until 1992 since it was used as a rural settlement for many years. Within the framework of the development plan made in 1992, a more intensive use is foreseen for the areas where the existing residences are located and the development of a new settlement area in the eastern part of the city with low quality soil is planned. The height of buildings permitted in areas reserved for construction is 2 floors.



Photo 3 . Harran and Its Environs

There is an increasing need for residences and buildings in Harran within the framework of the current developments. However, despite this request of development, the area reserved for urban development in the district is quite limited. Besides the residential areas with typical Harran houses, the regions registered as “urban and archeological site area” are also among the major limiting factors. On the other hand, productive land that is the basis of the economy of Harran based on agriculture is also another important factor limiting the area of development.



Photo 4 . Traditional Harran House

### **Infrastructure and Investments**

When intercity transportation is considered, it gains importance for the transportation of agricultural and industrial products within and outside the region and making them

reach export markets (GAP Bulletin, 1994; 1996). The district of Harran that is currently of 40 km distance to Sanliurfa is connected to the city center by an asphalt road. Railroad passes through the Syrian border. Transportation takes place normally during seasons with little rain in rural settlements and it is difficult in rainy seasons because the infrastructure is not sufficient (Dogany, F., 1994). However, the investments to be made in transportation within the framework of GAP will also affect accessibility to the district of Harran. Within this framework, a transportation plan focusing first on highways and then on railway after 2005 has been developed.

### **The Existing and Possible Environmental Problems**

It is observed that no major environmental problems are observed in Harran that is within the process of transformation from rural to urban settlement, however, it is also expected that many environmental transformations will be lived in the region that is under the influence of GAP Studies need to be carried out about what these modifications may be and how possible problems should be solved.

Climate changes caused by irrigation and dam lakes, modifications in the structure of soil and water regime is expected in the region and changes in flora and fauna are foreseen as a consequence of these. Besides these modifications expressed in general, it is considered that the most important environmental problems expected in the regions shall be caused by agricultural activities. Harran that is an important agricultural center is at a very critical stage from this point. Studies are conducted in the district to increase the level of consciousness in the district especially about agricultural spreading. Farmer training center and the Agricultural Faculty of Harran University carry out this important task.

Pollution caused by urban development can be eliminated in Harran that is at the beginning of the urbanization process. It is emphasized that no detailed studies exist about the storage, removal and elimination of waste water however cesspools are not functional due to the rising of the base water and that the establishment of a sewer system is necessary. Besides the insufficiency of the drinking water network, it is observed that the water obtained is not in conformity with health conditions.

There is no industrial development in Harran yet, however there is demand for the beginning of industrialization in the district. The possible effects of the industrial development targeted are investigated (Harran Local Agenda 21 Report, 1999).

## **Evaluation of the “Harran Local Agenda 21” Implementations**

Harran entered a process of transformation with the effect of GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Regional Development Project) implementations (GAP, 1996). The necessary policies and tools should be determined in order for Harran to be able to remain as a city having preserved its historical and cultural characteristics and bear the effects it shall go through within the process of transformation.

Within this context, sustainability should be questioned once again with a totalitarian and participative approach. This process should include establishment of social, economic, environmental and cultural identity and long term vision of Harran with the participation of effective persons, organizations and institutions in the region. The points determined with the initial effects of urban development and in accordance with the principles of Local Agenda 21 and for Harran specifically are mentioned below (Harran Local Agenda 21 Report, 1999):

- The beginning of dilute agriculture practices lies at the basis of the process of transformation in Harran. Although this process enlivens the economy of the region, extreme irrigation and the use of agricultural input will cause pressures on land and water resources in the long run. Therefore, it is necessary to query the intensive agricultural practices once again and to evaluate them within the context of sustainability.
- One of the major consequences of the liveliness lived in the region is urbanization and the increase of population. However, since Harran is caught between valuable agricultural land and urban and historical site areas, the development of a totalitarian plan approach is important for the settlement of the population. This approach of plan should cover the preservation of existing settlements and traditional Harran houses and urban site area on one hand and determine new settlement areas on the other hand.
- The historical city that has an important place in the international platform had a significant role among the Religious Tourism programs of year 2000 and the incapacities of infrastructure and substructure appropriate for the visitors and the exhibition of the “preserved” heritage cause worries for the future of the city. It is possible to transform the district to a cultural center by enlivening the rich cultural identity that Harran had within the historical process. The work to be conducted in this manner should be evaluated with the planning approach mentioned above.



- The changes in consumption habits caused by economic development require new investments for infrastructure and development of systems.
- Economic profit does not stay in Harran. The people of Harran expect the creation of investment opportunities in order for capital to return to Harran as profit. On the other hand, the consequences of this from socioeconomic and location aspects should be evaluated.
- Another important dimension about economic and social development is increasing the level of organization in the community.
- As emphasized before, it is necessary to start environmental management studies ranging from use of land to the waste system in Harran where it is believed that the population increase and development will continue rapidly. The preservation of the two important components, agricultural and historical urban structure and preventing the newly developed activities from causing pressure on these structures should be considered.
- The city that incorporates many hints for “sustainable life” with the traditions it preserved until date and its urban architecture characteristics is also faced with the risk of losing them. While settlement that is still at a manageable level keeps “development” under control, effective solutions need to be developed for solving urgent needs. Various studies are conducted with a participative mechanism in order to manage the strong local effects of a project with a regional scale. Those that have started with local initiative are collected under the frame of “Local Agenda 21 Project” and are formed according to certain targets. The visions, priorities and needs of Harran are discussed by the people of Harran and mutual solutions are sought.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT**

Local Agenda 21 that has a past of approximately 10 years aroused interest in Turkey and effective and widespread implementations were initiated with the “Project of Encouragement and Development of Local Agenda 21”. One of the most important goals of this study is to be able to preserve the rich natural and cultural values that Anatolia has while a transformation from rural to urban is lived within the process of development. With this aim, not only should the policies and strategies be determined in the implementations made in Turkey, but also these policies and strategies should be implemented by combining with a planning process. However, the existing planning

process does not provide sufficient means to obtain successful results from the Local Agenda 21 implementations in Turkey. It is necessary to make changes and arrangements to reach flexibility and transparency in the planning process in order for the planning studies to be implemented. Local Agenda 21 can be implemented more effectively by the development of participative and flexible implementation methods and making changes.

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