

Strategic Planning in Turkish Local Administrations: How Participatory is it?

Türkiye'deki Yerel Yönetimlerde Stratejik Planlama Ne Kadar Katılımcı?

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Abstract

Strategic plans are more participatory, more responsive, more integrated and more empowering when compared to the traditional plans. It has been nearly 20 years since the Financial Management and Control Law in Turkey required public institutions, including municipalities, to prepare strategic plans and to apply strategic management techniques. It has been observed that most of the metropolitan municipalities in Turkey just conduct surveys in the preparation process of strategic plans without organising workshops with the participation of various stakeholders. It seems that through surveys the legal requirement of ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the preparation process is met. It is considered that the local authorities in Turkey need to revise their approach to the strategic planning process in terms of good principles of governance, especially participation.

Keywords: Strategic planning, urban planning, metropolitan municipalities in Turkey, participation, participatory strategic planning

Öz

Stratejik planlar, geleneksel kentsel planlarla kıyaslandığında daha katılımcı, ihtiyaçlara daha çok cevap veren, daha bütünleşik ve daha güçlendiricidir. Kamu Mali Yönetimi ve Kontrolü Kanununun belediyeler de dahil olmak üzere kamu kurumlarının stratejik plan hazırlamaları ve stratejik yönetim tekniklerini uygulamalarını zorunlu kılmasının üzerinden neredeyse 20 yıl geçti. Türkiye'deki yerel yönetimlerin çoğunun stratejik plan hazırlama sürecinde farklı paydaşların katılımı ile atölye çalışması düzenlemeksizin sadece anket yaptıkları görülmüştür. Paydaşların katılımını zorunlu kılan yasal şartın anket yoluyla yerine getirildiği anlaşılmıştır. Türkiye'de yerel yönetimlerin, başta katılımcılık olmak üzere iyi yönetim ilkeleri bakımından stratejik planlama sürecine yönelik yaklaşımlarını yeniden gözden geçirmeleri gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik planlama, kentsel planlama, Türkiye'deki büyükşehir belediyeleri, katılım, katılımcı stratejik planlama

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Introduction

Cities are like living organisms or organisations, which are made up of different constituents with different functions. Due to the effects of some drives such as globalisation, digitalisation, industrialisation/deindustrialisation, urbanisation and suburbanisation etc., the pace of the change has amplified tremendously in the recent decades, and the cities especially in developing countries are affected deeply by these processes. Today, we live in an increasingly urbanising world. More than half of the world population lives in cities, and it is expected that around 70% of people will have been living in cities by 2050, which means more social, economic and environmental burden on cities especially in developing countries where rapid urbanisation is still going on (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018). There are several cities in the developing countries such as Sao Paulo, Istanbul and Cairo that have a population of 15 to 20 million, dealing with crises compounded by environmental challenges and weak local governance (Watson, 2009, p.151). Uncontrolled and unplanned urban growth has limited the capacity of cities to provide services such as transportation, health care, education, energy and security (UCLG Policy Paper on Strategic Urban Development, 2017).

Traditionally, urban plans had the main objective of controlling and regulating the development of towns and cities failing to address “the challenges of rapid urbanization, poverty, exclusion, informality and vulnerability” as well as inclusiveness, social justice and sustainable development (Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning, 2007). In other words, conventional urban planning approaches were not designed to overcome today’s complicated challenges, and they cannot keep up with the pace of urban change, which is closely related to globalisation (Friedmann, 1993). Traditional urban plans were mainly prepared in line with the principles of municipal engineering and rigid master-planning paradigm (Halla, 2007, p.130).

Strategic planning requires a balance between short term needs of delivery and sustainability, multidimensional approach, participation of city dwellers and partnership with relevant stakeholders in each stage of the process (UCLG Committee on Strategic Urban Planning Policy Paper, 2009, p.5). However, the level of partnership and citizen engagement depends on the urban governance structure and political will of the city administration. Participation of the citizens and stakeholders in the preparation process is the essential element of strategic planning, which is more effective and efficient through workshops rather than surveys. Workshops are also useful in terms of mutual understanding of the issues at hand, building trust and consensus among the participants, which is quite limited through surveys. In participatory planning process, what the city administration needs is more than the collection of data, which is usually acquired through surveys, in the form of one-way feedback (Hrivnak, M. et al, 2021, p.4).

In Turkey, municipalities started to publish their strategic plans in 2007 to fulfil the legal requirement of the law on Financial Management and Control, which urges most statutory bodies including local authorities to prepare strategic plans, as well as laws on municipalities and metropolitan municipalities (Law no: 5018, 2003; Law no.5216, 2004; Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, 2005). Although, participation is a central concept in strategic planning, it is observed that most municipalities do not put sufficient emphasis on this issue (Turan, Güler, Güler, 2013, 262). In this article, the participatory methods adopted by the municipalities in Turkey, under the two basic categories of surveys and workshops will be analysed by examining their strategic plans that cover the period between 2020–2024 to find out how participatory they are. Out of the 81 cities in Turkey, the 30 metropolitan municipalities have been selected as the cases, which have population of more than 750.000 representing around 80% of the total population in Turkey. The preliminary findings show that most of the metropolitan municipalities in Turkey prefer surveys rather than workshops, which gives an idea about the local governance in Turkey.

Strategic planning: A multidimensional concept

Urban Strategic Planning (USP), is relatively a new concept, as different from the traditional spatial planning or zoning, which lacks a long-term vision and comprehensive approach with a special focus on people’s well-being and quality of life, governance principles, inclusiveness and sustainability (Table 1). USP is used interchangeably with city development strategy although the latter is more comprehensive with a specific focus on economic growth and poverty reduction (Rasoolimanesh, 2016, p.285). USP emerged as a paradigm shift in Europe in the 1980s, and it has become prevalent in the 1990s as the current traditional master planning did not meet the needs of the cities, which faced serious social, environmental and economic problems (Healey, 1997, p.4). The main motivation behind USP was the requirement of short-term actions that are planned as part of a long-term vision (Albrechts, 2004, p.743). It is an interdisciplinary approach, which necessitates coordination and cooperation among different stakeholders to ensure more sustainable outcomes and public interest (Planning Sustainable Cities - Global Report on Human Settlements, 2009, p.20).

A catch-all definition of USP is as follows: “a public-sector-led, socio-spatial process through which a vision, actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a place is and may become” (Albrechts, 2004, p.743). It is also defined as “a systematic process involving the collection of data from the city in order to formulate a long-term vision and to translate the vision into goals, objectives, and action” (Poister & Streib, 2005, p.45). The term ‘strategic’ in USP implies the prioritisation of some aspects over others and setting the direction in line with the needs and the vision of a city. Through USP, rather than being reactive towards the existing problem, cities have a proactive approach that sees the city in a holistic way, or in other words as ‘big picture’ (Rydin, 2011, p.17). Strategic planning ensures coordination and coherence among different aspects of a city such as urban regeneration, infrastructure delivery, land use regulation and environmental sustainability (Albrechts, Healey, & Kunzma, 2003, p.113).

Strategic planning is a set of concepts, tools and methods, which needs to be adopted in a tailored manner for each city, which means that there is no fixed approach (Bryson & Roering, 1996, p.38). However, some characteristics of strategic planning are obligatory for all cities. For example, a strategic plan that changes whenever political leadership changes in a city may not yield the expected outcomes. Especially, planning infrastructure, transport and energy sectors require at least a 30-year projection, and a long-term vision, which is missing in some cities due to the mayors taking office after elections that are held once every four or five years. (Berry & Wechsler, 1995, p.159; Friedmann, 2004, p.49). The second feature of strategic planning is the participation of all stakeholders and all segments of the population in the process, including those who are socially excluded or marginalised. The legitimate value of USP depends on “a deep and well-structured process of involvement of relevant actors and the construction of consensus about information, problems to be addressed and possible solutions” (Balducci, 2004, p.49).

People tend to accept and adopt rules, plans, programs or strategies that have effect on their lives if they actively participate in the preparation of them. Local residents are especially interested in policy-making processes, which have direct effects on their daily lives. Any plan or program that is adopted in a top-down approach, without active involvement of the residents, may not have the required success as the assessment of the need is not conducted in a proper way (İkizer, 2023, p.102). Representative democracy has some limitations as it is based on elections that are held in usually once in every four or five years. The understanding of democracy in today’s world offers the communities more than voting in election in terms of involvement in the administration of local governments. Direct democracy tools such as surveys and community advisory councils, which are improved day by day through democratic innovations thanks to the developments in the field of information and communication technology, aim to overcome the limitations of the representative democracy. Such kind of tools have potential to engage the local residents in policy-making process, which may increase public confidence and legitimacy of policies. Although many local governments adopt these direct democracy tools, which is also a legal requirement in some countries including Turkey, they have the limitation of the unbalanced representation (İkizer, 2022, p.68). It is observed that middle-income and upper-income groups have higher participation in the democratic tools especially based on information and communication technologies such as e-surveys and e-referendum while low income groups’ participation is low (Kern & Hooghe, 2018; Kriesi, 2008).

Various groups have different needs, interests, life realities, social and cultural backgrounds. It is common to see strategic plans that do not take into account the public interest and wider social groups (Towards a new planning process, 1999). However, various interests need to be reconciled for the sake of the common good or strategic vision on the ground of key values. In addition, a strategic plan needs to be prepared in a holistic approach that ensures integration and coordination of different policy areas such as environment, transportation, education, health, energy etc., which requires an institutional framework (Albrechts, 2001, p.293). Actors involved in different sectors need to be active in the planning process to achieve the utmost public interest. In addition to that, the surrounding areas of urban centres also need to be considered in USP process as the cities are service centres for the surrounding urban or rural areas (UCLG Committee on Strategic Urban Planning Policy Paper, 2009).

Strategic planning can be regarded as part of urban governance, which inherently incorporates several concepts such as participation, collaboration, coordination, decentralisation, transparency, openness, accountability, inclusiveness, sustainability, subsidiarity, equity and social justice etc. (Habitat III Policy Paper 6 – Urban Spatial Strategies: Land Market and Segregation, 2016). In other words, urban governance provides the favourable basis and conditions for strategic planning in cities as it enables people to access the benefits of urban citizenship through participation in decision-making processes (The Global Campaign on Urban Governance: Concept Paper, 2002). In addition to that, broad-based ownership of the plan by the public, which is a significant factor in the success of strategic plans, is only possible through collective decision-making.

Healey (1997, p.249) describes the planning process in simple terms as follows: “participants come together, build understanding and trust among themselves, and develop ownership of the strategy”. However, it may not be so simple to achieve the implementation of this definition as governance regime, which requires bottom-up approach, joined-up thinking and horizontal integration, is not something that can be built in a short time (Stoker, 2005, p.156). Participation of stakeholders or wider social groups may serve the fulfilment of a legal obligation or a window-dressing activity that improves the image of a city unless different views are taken into account seriously. In fact, as well as other features, USP diverges from traditional master planning for its participatory, inclusive, decentralised and interactive nature.

Gender perspective is also a crucial aspect in strategic planning process. Without the participation of women in the planning process, a male-oriented plan that does not take into account women’s perspective might arise. Gender perspective cannot be ensured just through letting equal number of men and women to participate in the strategic planning. The plan itself needs to be gender-sensitive and target elimination of root causes of gender inequalities in a society through gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, which is a strategy to achieve equality between men and women, equitable resource use and equality of opportunity (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Diversity in society is reflected in a gender-sensitive barrier-free city, which offers spaces “that can be interpreted and utilized according to diverse needs” (Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development, 2011). Gender-relevant objectives are introduced on the basis of gender streaming, which is in fact a strategy of urban planning (Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development, 2013). Gender mainstreaming in planning implies that “an awareness of the varying types of living situations and interests of future users of all ages and origins be awakened and their consequences respected throughout the entire planning process” (Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development, 2011). Some structural changes based on legal provisions might be necessary such as positive discrimination and gender quotes in public and private organisations with a specific focus on the percentage of women who are in senior decision-making mechanisms.

Sustainability is also a central concept in strategic planning, which was rarely covered in traditional city planning. Sustainable development, which is defined as achieving development without jeopardizing the future generations’ capability to meet their needs, necessitates collaboration among all stakeholders in a city or country (Mutiarani & Siswanto, 2020, p.2). In other words, sustainability is a matter of balancing the needs of present and future generations through “allocation and use of land and other resources which are based on balanced social, economic and environmental priorities” (Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning, 2007). UN General Assembly adopted 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015 (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2020). Although only the SDG 11 on ‘Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements’ is directly related to local governments, nearly two-third of all SDGs fall under the responsibility of subnational governments (Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a successful New Urban Agenda, 2015). Today, more than half of the world population lives in urban areas, which bear more responsibility as it consumes nearly 70 % of the world’s energy and cause global carbon emissions as well as waste and pollution much more than rural areas (Papa, 2020). Unless the SDGs are localised and incorporated into strategic plans of cities with the participation and collaboration of all relevant stakeholders, it is hard to achieve sustainability or sustainable development in cities. Some cities such as New York have already incorporated the SDGs in their strategic plans and published their voluntary local reviews (UN Voluntary Local Reviews, 2020). In brief, the path towards achieving sustainability and the SDGs goes through strategic planning in cities, which is conducted by implementing governance principles, especially informed, collective decision-making.

The ‘big picture’ of the city (urban situation analysis or urban diagnosis) needs to be taken such as the state of the internal and external environment, education and health, social and economic conditions including unemployment, migration, social exclusion, social injustice etc. (Towards a new planning process, 1999). The key issues, challenges and problems of the city are identified through multi-stakeholder involvement. This stage might be combined with the next stage that includes SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Each problem needs to be defined well as treatment can only be possible if the diagnosis is correctly put. Therefore, community participation and collaboration with stakeholders through thematic workshops, citizens forums, issue-specific working groups, online or face-to-face surveys etc. need to be conducted. In this stage, not only quantitative data but also qualitative data (soft data), which is made up of experiences and ideas are collected (Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning, 2007). The main question that is answered during this phase is ‘Where are we now?’ (Guide to Municipal Strategy Development, 2001). As it is used in social work discipline, the strengths-based approach, which focuses on strengths as well as weaknesses, might be adopted by cities in this stage to further invigorate strong aspects, which might contribute to the reduction of social injustice.

All these stages are preparatory work for the next stage, which is on planning the actions. In this stage, all stakeholders seek answers to these two questions: “Where do we want to go?” and “How do we get there?” (Guide to Municipal Strategy Development, 2001). Solutions to the problems in a city need to be planned on a long-term basis, which is one of the characteristic features of strategic planning. In other words, the city needs to set its vision for the next decades, which indicates its priorities, aspiration and the position where it wants to be. The final two stages are implementation and monitoring, which necessitate political will, sufficient financial and human resources (Towards a new planning process, 1999; Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning: A Guide for Municipalities, Volume II, 2007). Strategic plans are required to include the indicators for evaluating the success of the plan, and evaluation reports indicating the progress and performance of the plan, need to be published. USP is a dynamic, proactive and flexible process with continuous self-analysis, which allows the plan to be redesigned in the face of unforeseen developments.

Some international organisations such as UN-Habitat and World Health Organisation (WHO) are interested in strategic planning as it is the path through which some of their targets can be realized in cities. For example, WHO published a comprehensive report on USP in 1999, which includes some guiding principles and methods for cities that aim to be ‘healthy’. WHO suggests cities establish a ‘trustworthy’ institution that is responsible for forming systemic partnerships with various stakeholders and community groups by implementing principles of transparency and accountability, which can be possible through facilitating access to information (Towards a new planning process, 1999). In order to sustain partnership and participation, this institution needs to be reinforced with an appropriate legal basis such as some legal instruments and provisions. Community participation or civic engagement is critical in the success of the plan as all citizens are the principal wealth of cities, and living together in a settlement requires the active involvement of all residents in issues that interest everybody. Public participation is not only taking part in the processes of identification and formulation of needs and problems, but also “implementation of public policies” with actions aimed at influencing decisions made by public representatives (Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992, p.16).

Table 1: Strategic Planning vs Conventional Planning Approaches (Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning, 2007)

Strategic planning	Conventional planning
Decentralised approach (bottom-up)	Centralised approach (top-down)
Process-oriented and action-oriented	Product-oriented (the plan)
Combination of responsive and proactive	Driven only by proactive strategies
Flexible	Rigid
Starts with consensus on issues	Starts with consensus on “power to enforce”
Planning, budgeting and implementation integrated	Planning separated from implementation (and therefore, budgeting)
Focused and selective – aims at identifying and resolving critical issues while targeting sustainable and balanced urban development in the long term	Comprehensive
Strong assessment of internal and external environment (situation)	Limited or politically motivated assessment of situation
Expects new trends, discontinuities and surprises	Assumes that current trends will continue in the future
Interactive with a range of stakeholders	Based largely on data rather than stakeholder engagement
Political/multi-stakeholder awareness and involvement	Administrative orientation and awareness
Implementation by empowerment	Implementation by directive

Strategic planning in Turkey: How participatory is it?

Rapid urbanisation in Turkey was called unhealthy and extreme as the cities were unable to absorb millions of new migrants, and the existing plans could not be implemented to a large extent (Es & Ateş, 2004, p.206). In Turkey, one out of five buildings is without construction or residential permit, meaning that no permission was granted for the construction, and Istanbul is the city with the highest number of buildings in this status, which accounts for nearly half of the buildings (Half of the buildings in Istanbul are unregistered, 2018; One out of five buildings in Turkey is unregistered, 2020). Since the 1950s, several laws, called 'zoning peace' passed from the National Parliament of Turkey, which aimed at issuing building registration certificates for the owners of the buildings without construction or residential permit in return for payment (Uşak & Yalçın, 2019, p.1). Strangely enough, due to the expectation of new 'zoning peace regulations', new buildings without construction or residential permit have kept on being built. Most of the social, economic and environmental problems, which Istanbul and other big cities in Turkey have, are consequences of rapid urbanisation (Es & Ateş, 2004, p.206).

Strategic planning, an obligation in the new public management reforms, was adopted from the private sector, and it aims at managing public organisations based on the increased level of governance and transparency (Höglund, Caicedo, Mårt, & Svårdsten, 2018, p.822). In Turkey, this obligation was introduced by the Financial Management and Control Law, which required public institutions to prepare strategic plans including municipalities and to apply strategic management techniques (Law no: 5018, 2003). Strategic planning, which is usually considered as a tool for controlling the public expenditure and budget, has been one of the basic instruments of public management for local governments in Turkey since 2003 (Demirkaya, 2015, p.15). According to the mentioned law, strategic planning is part of the strategic management, which is made up of four phases: planning, budgeting based on performance, reporting based on monitoring and evaluation, inspection and accountability (Efe, 2012, p.121). In addition to that, the law on municipalities and the law on metropolitan municipalities oblige mayors of municipalities, the population of which is over 50.000, and all metropolitan municipalities to prepare and submit strategic plans to the city council for approval within six months after the local election, and to submit activity report of the previous year to the city council in April. They are also obliged to make their budgets in line with their strategic plans (Law no.5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities, 2004; Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, 2005). Activity reports - obligatory for all local authorities irrespective of population size - are instruments of accountability as the administrative units of the municipalities headed by mayors inform city councillors and citizens about the conducted activities as well as the allocated budgets, which also reflects the implementation level of strategic plans.

Both the Law on Municipalities and the Financial Management and Control Law require municipalities to prepare their strategic plans with the participation of relevant stakeholders. Article 41 of the Law on Municipalities require the strategic plan to be submitted to the city council to be prepared by consulting the universities, relevant chambers and relevant NGOs (Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, 2005). Participatory approach is recommended for local authorities not only in the preparation of strategic plans but also in all policy-making and policy-implementation mechanisms by relevant documents including the ad hoc reports on the local authorities which were prepared as part of the 10th and 11th Development Plans of Turkey as well as the 12th Development Plan (2014, 2018, 2023). However, participation method such as conducting survey, organising a stakeholder conference or workshops is not mentioned in both laws. It is seen that the participatory method or the idea of participation in the preparation of strategic plans has not been adopted by most of the administrators at the local level (Genç, 2009, p.6). The municipalities which do not put emphasis on the participation of relevant stakeholders in the preparation process prefer conducting surveys through letters, e-mails or websites without organising a face-to-face meeting with the stakeholders. Thinking that strategic plans are the most important documents about the future of cities, which officially show where the city aims to be after five years, it is hard to claim that the method of survey is enough to ensure the participation of stakeholders in an efficient and effective way. It is also true that the NGOs and residents do not tend to follow and monitor the preparatory process of the strategic plans (Akay, 2015, p. 11).

Strategic plans of all metropolitan municipalities in Turkey have been analysed in terms of their method of participation. As a legal requirement, strategic plans of all metropolitan municipalities are available in their websites, and all strategic plans include a section titled 'analysis of the stakeholders' (*paydaş analizi*) in line with the guide on the preparation of the strategic plans issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs in 2019 and the decree titled the 'procedures and principles about the strategic planning in the statutory bodies' (*Kamu İdarelerinde Stratejik Planlamaya İlişkin Usul ve Esaslar Hakkında Yönetmelik*) (Decree on the Procedures and Principles about the Strategic Planning in the Statutory Bodies, 2018; Guide on Strategic Planning for the Municipalities, 2019). In addition to that, activity reports of the metropolitan municipalities as well as relevant websites have been analysed as sources of additional data.

It is observed that out of the 30 metropolitan municipalities, only eleven of them, (Adana, Ankara, Balıkesir, Bursa, Denizli, Hatay, İstanbul, Mersin, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ and Van) both conducted surveys and organised workshops while the remaining 19 cities just conducted surveys without any face-to-face interviews, workshops or discussions while preparing their strategic plans covering the period of 2020-2024. It is hard to jump to the conclusion that cities that organise workshops with the participation of other stakeholders are perfect examples of participatory and democratic cities; however, it is sure that they adopt more participatory mechanisms than the cities that conduct just surveys. Or, at least, it is possible to claim that the cities that conduct just surveys with the relevant parties in a city undervalue stakeholder involvement in the preparation process of strategic planning.

It is seen in the Table 2 that all cities have conducted surveys, which are usually for citizens, stakeholders such as NGOs, *muhtars* (representatives of neighbourhoods), city administrations of central government agencies and business communities. The surveys for the citizens were usually conducted through the websites of the municipalities while most of the cities preferred to send the surveys to the other stakeholders as annex to official letters. It is not surprising that all metropolitan municipalities as well as all other city municipalities in Turkey conducted surveys as the decree issued by the Presidency of Turkey and the former decrees issued by different ministries concerning the preparation of strategic plans by all public agencies require the involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the preparation process (Official Gazette, 2021). Therefore, even if the municipalities are reluctant to adopt a participatory process in line with the principles of good governance, they must meet this legal requirement. As surveys are the easiest, cheapest and the most practical way of fulfilling this legal requirement, even if some municipalities are not interested in the ideas, demands and needs of other stakeholders, they usually conduct surveys without organising workshops.

Out of the 11 cities that organised workshops during the preparation process of strategic planning, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İMM) deserves special attention as its strategic plan is reported to be the outcome of the most widespread participation in Turkey, with around 200.000 participants. It is also stated that İMM organized several meetings with around 2.000 stakeholders. In fact, the participatory in approach is visible in the strategic plan of İMM, from the discourse starting in the preface of the plan to the motto of the plan, which is “İstanbul is Yours, Let’s Decide its Future Together” (İMM Strategic Plan 2020-2024, 2020). Another city that attracts attention in terms of its efforts for ensuring high-level participation of stakeholders is Balıkesir. The good practice of the Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality is that the mayors of all 20 districts of Balıkesir were included in the planning process through the Supreme Board of Developing Strategy (*Strateji Geliştirme Üst Kurulu*). The city organised four regional workshops as well as a more widespread conference with the ultimate aim of aligning the strategic plan of the Metropolitan Municipality with those of the districts. In addition to that, surveys with more than 9.000 city dwellers were conducted not through websites, but face to face or on phone, which certainly ensure more reliable and effective results. Finally, it is reported that interviews were conducted with more than 1000 NGO representatives, *muhtars* (official representatives in neighbourhoods) and business people, which is again a more efficient means than surveys on internet (Strategic Plan of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, 2020-2024, 2020).

Table 2: Method of Participation for Strategic Plans of Metropolitan Municipalities in Turkey

Metropolitan Municipality	Method of Participation	
	Survey /Interview	Workshop
Adana	X	X
Ankara	X	X
Antalya	X	
Aydın	X	
Balıkesir	X/X	X
Bursa	X/X	X
Denizli	X	X
Diyarbakır	X	
Erzurum	X	
Eskişehir	X/X	
Gaziantep	X	
Hatay	X	X
İstanbul	X	X
İzmir	X	
Kahramanmaraş	X	
Kayseri	X	
Kocaeli	X	
Konya	X	
Malatya	X	
Manisa	X	
Mardin	X	
Mersin	X	X
Muğla	X	
Ordu	X	
Sakarya	X	
Samsun	X	
Şanlıurfa	X	X
Tekirdağ	X	X
Trabzon	X	
Van	X	X (no detailed information)

Conclusion

What makes strategic planning different from the traditional planning is that it has a decentralised approach (bottom up) which requires the participation of all relevant stakeholders while the latter has a centralised approach (top down). The distinguishing characteristic of strategic planning is that it is responsive to the needs and demands of the stakeholders as well as being interactive with the stakeholders while the traditional planning is largely based on data rather than stakeholder engagement. The multi-stakeholder strategic planning focuses on an assessment of both internal and external environment while the traditional planning is more administration and internal assessment oriented.

It has been observed that out of the 30 Metropolitan Municipalities which have population of more than 750.000 representing around 80% of the total population in Turkey, only 11 of them conduct workshops with the relevant stakeholders in the preparation process of strategic planning while the remaining 19 cities just conduct surveys in an attempt to meet the legal requirement of ensuring participation. When we consider all these distinguishing aspects of strategic planning, it is possible to note that municipalities in Turkey that do not ensure full participation of stakeholders are close to the understanding of traditional planning rather than strategic planning, and it is recommended that they revise their approach to strategic planning in line with the principles of good governance, especially participation. The so-called e-democracy tools can be used more often to ensure the participation of the residents in the preparation process of the strategic plan without disregarding the fact that on line participatory democracy tools are not used by the entire population. An effective advertisement campaign seems to be essential through billboards and other platforms to encourage the participation of the residents as it is not possible to convince people in participating in this process without being cognizant of the strategic plans as well as the power and necessity of expressing thoughts, ideas, demands and critics about the urban policies. Therefore, before expecting the city residents to participate in the planning process, raising awareness campaigns need to be held, targeting not only adults but also children in primary schools. It is also recommended to organise extensive workshops with the participation of all stakeholders in the city such as NGOs, statutory bodies, business communities, universities and research centers without excluding any of them. Further research is essential to analyse the factors that affect the participation of the city residents and the stakeholders in the process of the preparation of the strategic plans in metropolitan cities, which might reveal the reasons behind the low participation in some cities.

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