

Conservation Potential of Cultural and Natural Heritage in Istanbul: The Case of Historic Peninsula

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Introduction

Istanbul is a very rich city with significant cultural heritage of historic, aesthetic, scientific, ethnological, anthropological values reflecting a past of more than two thousand years that give the city its identity. The city of Istanbul, once the capital of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, reflects the unique values of these cultures through urban, historical, archeological and natural sites and numerous monuments and examples of civilian architecture.

The most important sites of Istanbul are located in the Historic Peninsula, the Bosphorus, Beyoğlu, Eyüp, Kadıköy, Üsküdar and the Princes' Islands. Besides these, there are other smaller sites in and outside the city. According to the data of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, there are 19,512 individual buildings officially registered as cultural assets.

Conservation Areas

Bosphorus

The Bosphorus Conservation Areas, which have a special importance with their natural and historic values, cover a large part of the Sarıyer and Beşiktaş districts on the European side and the Beykoz and Üsküdar districts on the Asian side. The Bosphorus and the historic Ottoman settlements, fishing villages and waterside palaces on and around the Bosphorus with its unique topographical formations, offer the most attractive view of Istanbul's silhouette when combined with cypress, Judas, wisteria and pine trees.

The Bosphorus is under protection by a special law, the Bosphorus Law No. 2960. With this law, the Bosphorus is divided into four areas: "Bosphorus Coastal Strip/Zone" located along the coast line, "Front View Area" (4300 ha overall) connected to the coast line and comprising the most beautiful scenery of the Bosphorus settlement, and "Bosphorus Back Scene Zone" between the frontal area and the affected area consists of the inner sections (1000 ha); and the "Influence Area/Buffer Zone" (5300 ha) defined as the area connected to the rural area and the city center. This law and its appendices evaluate the Bosphorus area as

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a recreation, tourism and housing area, and protect its green belt formed by groves, recreation areas, also prohibit the construction of new buildings on the front view area with the exception of houses in private grove areas.



Fig1. Bosphorus Coastal Strip/Zone

Sarıyer and Beykoz Natural Sites

The areas within the boundaries of the Bosphorus Beykoz and Sarıyer districts and neighboring areas that are not covered by the Bosphorus Law No. 2960 and are under the threat of dense settlements have been declared Natural Sites by the Istanbul Commission for the Protection of the cultural and Natural Assets No. 3 on 15.11.1995 and by decision No. 7755.

Beyoğlu Conservation Area

Another important urban conservation site in Istanbul is the Beyoğlu Urban Conservation Site, which was designated in 1993, has an area of 360 ha with an approximate population of 77,000. There are many churches and monasteries in the area where Levantines used to live in during the ottoman

period. Rural migrants and people with low income new live in this area which was abandoned by its owners. Work on the development plan for the protection of this area is continuing.



Fig2. Beyoğlu

Eyüp Conservation Area

Another area in Istanbul which contains numerous historical assets is Eyüp, declared an Urban Conservation Site in 1977, and measuring 180 ha with an approximate population of 30,000. Eyüp, which developed around the complex commissioned by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, plays an important role in the cultural life of Istanbul.

Kadıköy Conservation Area and Princes' Island

Kadıköy and The Princes' Islands have important features as natural and urban sites.

The princes' Islands were a summer resort in the 19th century. The Adalar district comprising of nine islands called Büyükada, Heybeliada, Burgazadası, Kınalıada and Sedefadası, Yassıada, Kaşıkadası, Sivriada and Tavşanadası, which were designated as a natural Conservation Site in 1984, one can still enjoy the magical atmosphere of the previous century. As summer resorts since the nineteenth century, the regular population of 17.550 is estimated to soar to 100.000 in summer.

The Kadıköy Urban Conservation Site with a very old history is important as it contains numerous late 19th and early 20th century examples of timber and masonry architecture. There are large and small natural, urban-natural conservation sites of city block scale in various locations in Kadıköy.

Üsküdar Conservation Area

Üsküdar, another urban site on the Asian Side of the city, is an important settlement with monumental complexes like Mihrimah Sultan, Atik Valide, Sultan Selim, timber houses, *tekkes* and *türbes*. The Büyük and Küçük Çamlıca Natural and Urban Conservation sites and historical Karacaahmet Cemetery are also in Üsküdar.

In addition to these, Bakırköy, Silivri, Küçükçekmece, Avcılar on the European side, Kartal, Pendik, Şile, Tuzla on the Asian side have conservation sites with important features. Conservation sites in Istanbul are listed in Table 1 according to their special features and locations.

Natural Conservation Areas in Istanbul

There are no national parks within the limits of Istanbul province. There are two Nature Parks, one on each side of Bosphorus, one Natural Monument and one Protection Area. Istanbul – Polonezköy Nature Park is within the boundaries of Beykoz district. In spite of the industrial developments around Polonezköy maintains its natural flora, which has characteristics of the western Mediterranean region.

Türkmenbaşı Nature Park is within the Haciosman area of Şişli district. It meets the entertainment, recreation and sports needs of the Istanbul public with its flora similar to that of the Belgrade Forest and has superior aesthetic assets integrating with scenery.

Designated in 1995, the Istanbul- Subaşı Havuzlar Pınarı Natural Monuments Area is located in Çatalca, Istanbul. It is a special area within 900–1000 year old plane trees that are 15 m tall, with radii of 3, 5 m area circumferences of 17 m.

Istanbul –Göknalık Nature Preservation Area is within boundary of the Tokat village in the Beykoz district of Istanbul, conservation area of 46.5 ha. It has characteristics of a rare and

three ecosystem where the only naturally propagated fir stock is located.

All these cultural and natural riches are liable to the Law no. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Entities, amended with the laws number 3386 and 5226. Only the Bosphorus is protected with a special Bosphorus Law, no. 2960.

Historical Peninsula

Designated in 1995, the Historical Peninsula Urban and Archeological conservation site can be divided into three different areas with consideration to their level of protection and the density of historical buildings. The Topkapı Palace, where central functions are gathered, and the surroundings of the 1st Degree Archeological Site make up the first priority area, the area composed of 14 neighborhoods with a dense historic fabric is the second priority area, and the rest of the Historic Peninsula forming a large part of the historical city center of Istanbul has an approximate population of 500.000. Efforts to conserve this area, whose protection development plan was approved in 2005 and which incorporates important historic buildings and areas included in the World Heritage List, are continuing.

The Historic core of the city has always been the focal point of the Greater City of Istanbul. Today, Historic Peninsula contains City's principal historical sites. The historical core of Istanbul is situated on seven hills. That is called 'Seven-hilled City'.

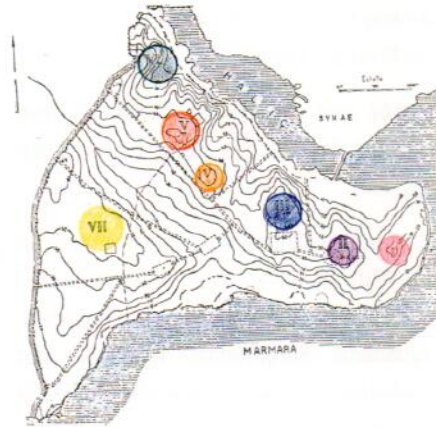


Fig3. The seven hills of Istanbul

The Historical Peninsula Urban and Archaeological Conservation Area, designated in 1995, can be described in three different sections in terms of their protection level and the number of historical monuments they contained. Such as: Topkapı Palace, Sultanahmet Square, Hagias Sophia, Sultan Hamlet Mosque Complex, The Covered Bazaar and Golden Horn Attract the large numbers of tourists. The Historical Peninsula came to be an important center in terms of trade and wholesale trade, warehouses and the small business.



Fig4. Ayasofya Museum and Sultanahmet Mosque

The core of the commercial area of Istanbul now called Kapalı Çarşı (The Grand Covered Bazaar) has played a significant role in the commercial life of Istanbul for centuries. It was founded within the city walls by Fatih Sultan Mehmet following the conquest of Istanbul.

Covered Bazaar occupies 30.7 hectares, composed of 61 streets, 4400 shops, 2195 workshops, 18 fountains, 2 core markets, 12 warehouses, 4 hans, 2200 han rooms, 2 mosques and 1 school and 1 hamam.



Fig5. Sarayburnu

The history of Istanbul begins at Sarayburnu. The majority of the civil architectural buildings raise the historical value of the district. But today its archeological value is also another important reason to make this area different and need to be conserved professionally. The city monuments like the Hippodrome, open air cisterns, the Aqueduct of Valens, land and sea walls and some parts of the Great Palace are still standing.

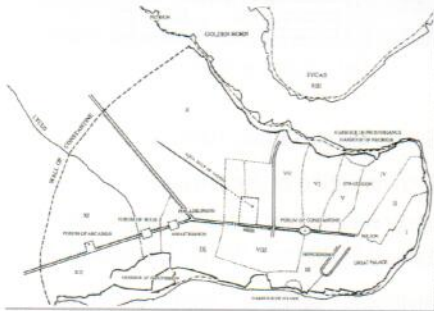


Fig6. Constantinopolis, the City of Constantine, Conjectural Plan
Doğan Kuban; *Istanbul an Urban History*

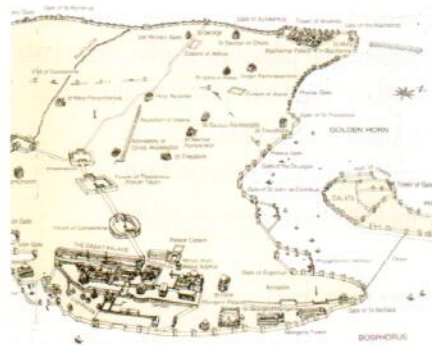


Fig7. Location of Palace Region stretched out from Ayasofya to coastline (Kayra, 1990)

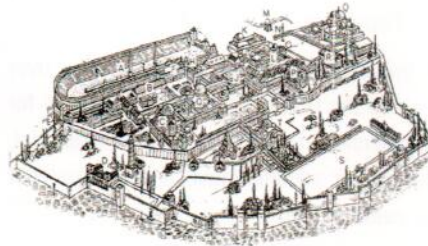


Fig8. Reconstruction of Palace



Fig9. The underground cistern

During the Ottoman rule, imperial religious architectural complexes and social centers were constructed by Sultans. The first master plan of the city had been made by Moltke during the Ottoman Imperial Period at Mahmut II era. (1808-39)

In the late 1920's the impacts of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the new Republic era that chose Ankara as the capital of Turkish Republic, changed the administrative

feature of the city. Beginning of the Turkish Republic era planning studies had been carried out by foreign planners. These are:

- H. Elgötz plan in 1933,
- Prof. Henry Prost's plan in 1936,
- Prof I. Piccinato's plan in 1960-67

Elgötz Plan, 1933

The first plan that was chosen by means of a competition to have a chance of implementation was the Elgötz's Plan during the Republican Era in 1933.

In this plan, the Historic Peninsula hills overlooking the Golden Horn were proposed for commercial, Topkapı for heavy industrial, Beyazıt for administrative and Sultanahmet for cultural uses.

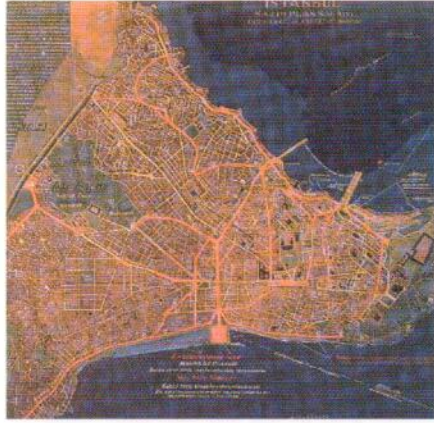


Fig10. Elgötz Plan-1933

Widening of existing roads; coastal roads on the Golden Horn and Marmara shores, bridges between Karaköy-Eminönü, Unkapanı-Azapkapı and Eyüp-Sütlüce were also envisaged in this plan

Prost Plan, 1936

The Prost Plan, dated 1936, had very significant impacts on the spatial development of the Historic Peninsula.

The important conservation principles in the plan were the renewal of the Galata Bridge by replacing it over the Golden Horn and creating new arrangements at the both ends of the bridge; conserving Sarayburnu by purifying warehouse and depot functions; conserving and improving archaeological sites around the Sultanahmet region.

Another important principle of the plan was the proposal of 9.50 m building height limitation for 40+ altitudes to preserve the silhouette of the Historic Peninsula (Prost, 1937).



Fig11. Prost Plan, Harita Müdürlüğü plan arşivi

Suriçi Master Plan, 1964

A combination of the previous plans and an integrated approach was the aim of the 1964 dated 1/5000 scale Walled City Master Plan. Historical buildings were projected for conservation in their original state but there was a functional proposal for them. The Golden

Horn and Marmara shores were envisaged as a protocol area and divided into two parts as the low-density residential area that highly occupied with historical buildings and the high-density residential area for new developments.

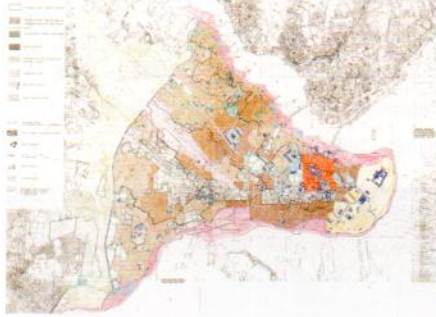


Fig12. Suriçi Master Planı, Harita Müdürlüğü plan arşivi

The World Heritage Site of Istanbul

The World Heritage site of Istanbul, inscribed in 1985, is composed of four areas, best known for their monumental complexes, notably Hagia Sophia and the Süleymaniye Mosque, and the rampard.

Sultanahmet Mosque and Archaeological Park also were included on the List to stop the decaying of that significant surrounding.

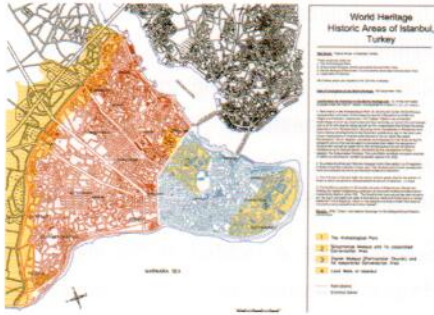


Fig13. World Heritage Site of Istanbul, Harita Müdürlüğü plan arşivi

Gündüz Özdeş Plan, 1990

The aim of the 2.11.1990 approval dated, 1/5000 scale Istanbul Historic Peninsula Conservation Master Plan of Prof. Gündüz Özdeş is defined as "presenting this peerless place to the profit of people of Istanbul, Turkey and the World by conserving unique historical, cultural and natural values and designing in a way to create a lively place by eliminating the impacts threatening the existing potentials of the area".

The "conservation-development and regeneration" principle is emphasised to clarify not only conservation but also creating the Historic Peninsula as a lively place.

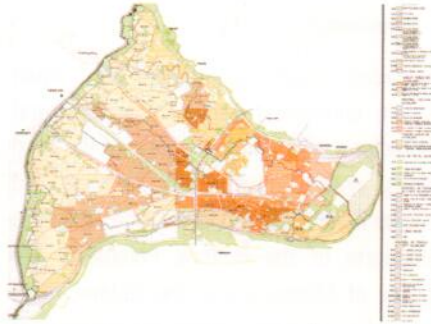


Fig14. Gündüz Özdeş Plan, 1990, Harita Müdürlüğü plan arşivi

Current Plan, 2005

The 1/5000 scaled Conservation Master Plan of the Historic Peninsula has been constituted from three conservation zones (Figure 36).

The 1st Degree Conservation Zone covers the area of Topkapı Palace, archaeological sites, mosque complexes and surroundings, major monuments and surroundings, traditional streets and urban texture

conserving its unique architectural character, cisterns, land and Marmara Sea Walls, historically important squares, major historical routes and hans.

The 2nd Degree Conservation Zone comprises traditional streets and urban texture partly conserving its unique architectural character, vegetable-gardens conserving its natural characteristics in the inner part of the Land Walls, surroundings of the 1st Degree Conservation Zones, surroundings of major monuments, and squares.

The 3rd Degree Conservation Zone is generally comprised of new buildings; there are still a few examples of monuments and civic architecture.

Degraded vegetable-gardens and urban texture conserving partly its architectural character around the inner parts of the Land Walls, areas between the 1st and 2nd Degree Conservation Zones which affect the silhouette of the Historic Peninsula, the shores of Marmara and the Golden Horn, areas above the +50 altitude and squares are in this zone's classification.

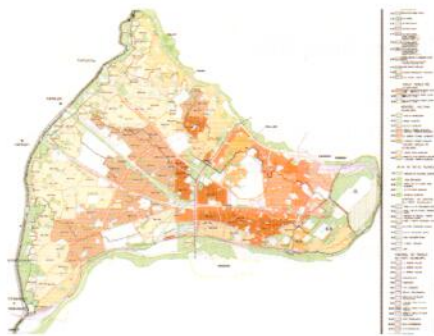


Fig15. Current Plan, 2005

Historic Neighborhood

Below, the historic districts of Istanbul Historic Peninsula namely Zeyrek, Suleymaniye, and Yenikapi are given as examples of historic neighborhood. Zeyrek, Suleymaniye and Yenikapi are three of the Historic Districts of Istanbul Historic Peninsula, where the original settlement pattern have been preserved.



Fig16. Historic neighborhood

The monumental buildings and civil architecture examples of Zeyrek and Suleymaniye all bearing importance from historical, aesthetic and architectural perspectives, are such that those have been included in the List of World Heritage Sites.

Suleymaniye is located in the middle of Historic Peninsula, one of the seven hills of Istanbul. The area as known as a distinguished residence area where the high

level bureaucrats of Ottoman Empire had lived from 16th Century up to 19th Century. The pressure of increasing business activity in Süleymaniye on the residential buildings led to demolition of traditional timber houses.



Fig17. Süleymaniye

Zeyrek is one of the historic settlement areas on the Golden Horn, built around the Pantokrator Monastery.

The inhabitants of Zeyrek have low incomes, most of them working on neighboring small

business, and form a temporary migrant population from the east and south east part of Anatolia. Most of the existing traditional buildings in Zeyrek have been subdivided and shared by more than one family.

Yenikapı-Yalı Mahallesi is located at the south shores of Historical Peninsula of Istanbul. "Yalı Mahallesi" is bounded by sea – shore of Marmara Sea on the south and railway that connects the route from İstanbul to Europe on the north. **Yalı mahallesi** is a typical historic urban quarter of old Istanbul with its timber and masonry civil architecture and its cultural inheritance. An Armenian church called "Church of Surp Tartios Partihimnios" is located in the district. The church is still in the use of its own function.



Fig18. Yenikapı-Yalı Mahallesi