



How to Preserve and / or How to Transform: An urban Conservation Proposal for Elmadağ-Şişli District

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Istanbul, having numerous time levels, contains many historical areas, which are diverse in character while the common problem is the loss of contextual integrity especially through urban “renewal” operations threatening dilapidated historic areas which conserved the “spirit of the place” and most of their authentic building stock up to now. And it is apparent that conventional approaches will no longer meet the needs of Istanbul, a city of this scale and complexity.

Elmadağ - Şişli axis formed in the second half of the 19th century as Beyoğlu began to extend its borders. Mostly inhabited by non-Muslim groups and Ottoman elite, the architectural characteristic of the area was shaped under the effect of western architectural styles and life-styles. Following the early years of the Republic, Istanbul regained a new dynamism during the 1930s with the construction of modernist houses and apartments in the new / re-developing areas. The study area is one of these transformation zones, where mansions in gardens transformed into residential areas of apartment blocks. The axis and urban character of the site acquired its present appearance after 1950s. The residential zone facing the axis transformed into a crowded, polluted and noisy urban area consisting of multi-storey residential complexes and office blocks.

Today as Şişli is one of the most dynamic locations in the city, the change and transformation of the area seems inevitable, which at the same time is a threat. It is apparent that perception and acceptance of the area as a historical site is quite difficult since cultural properties mostly date to 20th century. It is clear that in cities having deep historical layers like Istanbul, it is more hard and delicate to convince the authorities and create public opinion for the need of preserving relatively recent past.

The aim of the paper is to propose a holistic conservation approach including physical and social aspects for Elmadağ - Şişli districts, regarding that urban preservation should undertake the responsibility to integrate the environmental, sustainability, and livability issues.

In this regard, the historical and urban development of the area that had set the grounds for the social and architectural structure was analyzed. The social and physical changes were also examined together with their causes. Various analyses focusing on actual physical and social structure were done. Thus the general character of the area and the deformations of historical structure were defined.

Basing on these historical and actual analyses and focusing on “urban renewal”, “urban transformation”, “re-generation” and “re-use” concepts, the study aims to seek an answer to “Why to accept a relatively late urban area as a historical site and how is possible to stand against destruction while giving chance to change and keep the balance without any concessions?” from the point of preservation.

KEY WORDS: Urban conservation, modern heritage, transformation in heritage, urban transformation.