

THE DILEMMA OF CULTURAL HERITAGE - URBAN RENEWAL: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE AND FENER-BALAT

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ABSTRACT

The structural changes and transformations observed in all aspects of society in the last thirty years have affected the settlement areas of cities deeply. While managing such transformations is becoming increasingly difficult, the government is aiming to reduce its regulating role day by day. Therefore, while the holistic perspective of modern planning is being replaced by fragmented institutional systems, piecemeal projects are becoming more widespread. The planning and project development efforts of over 20 institutions all disregarding one another is the outcome of the last thirty years in Turkey. The year 2000 marks a turning point in this context. The urban interventions that have been focusing on improving the urban infrastructure and organising the housing areas located at the outskirts, are concentrating on the regeneration of city centres in the last ten years. It is especially the historical housing areas, due to their location and cultural heritage advantages that are being perceived as exceedingly attractive areas for investment. Amongst the existing legal arrangements, the Law on Renewal that defines the limits of the urban interventions in areas of preservation and the projects developed alongside the law have been widely discussed in the public domain in the last five years. This article deliberates on the Law on Renewal and the critiques directed towards it, as well as two project areas with points of criticism. Both of the project areas are located in the Historical Peninsula of Istanbul, enlisted in the UNESCO World Heritage List. A comparative analysis of 'Süleymaniye Renewal Area' and 'Fener-Balat Renewal Area', the project development processes of which have been continuing since 2008 and both awaiting implementation, is pursued. The physical and socio-economic effects that will be created through these two distinct projects with different approaches and models of implementation are evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, cities have been facing transformations, conflicts, decomposition and competing opportunities at an unprecedented rate. On the other hand, foresights that there will be an accumulation of population in cities all over the world are becoming more and more confident, even if population growth rates in all countries decline (UNFPA, 2009). This is a clear sign that the problems in city centres and urban fringes mentioned above will be increasing ever more. The public authorities' approach of seeking a solution to the situation solely through private sector investments becomes an attitude evident worldwide, and notions such as social state and common good fade gradually away (Newman&Thornley, 1997). While the holistic perspective of modern planning is replaced by fragmented institutional systems, piecemeal projects devised in this context are becoming more widespread. The new economic policies of the 90s emerging out of the escalating global competition environment were based on the public-private sector partnerships in the market economy (Newman&Thornly, 2005). Istanbul, a city where these trends are experienced at their full, is a prime city leaving the second and third big cities of Turkey far behind. The public and investment sectors that have been promoting Istanbul as a world city from 1980s onwards are still developing similar roles 30 years later. Instead of being cautious due to the economical and physical problems faced around the world today, paths that would produce short-term results are preferred and projects with the mentality of the 1980s are developed. The investments focusing on urban centres amongst these projects emerge with demands for tourism, offices and residences in areas of historical heritage (Enlil, 2000). The transformation experienced since the 1990s in these areas, abandoned by their initial owners and neglected in the last sixty years, has changed shape from the beginning of the year 2000, and the process of state initiated gentrification has gained acceleration (Islam, 2009).

It is generally agreed that there are mainly three typological periods of interventions in built environments of cities in Turkey. The first one of these is the period between 1950 and 1980; a time span starting with the rapid urbanisation in Turkey and continuing till the structural transformations in 1980. The fundamental characteristics of this period could be summarised as; providing the squatter housing areas at the outskirts with physical infrastructure and at the same time abandoning the city centres. The period starting from 1980 and stretching till the year 2000 is characterized by the execution of rehabilitation development plans to recuperate squatter areas and the gradual gentrification of historical areas without any outside intervention. The period starting from the year 2000 is categorised through the development of gated communities within the urban boundaries and the state initiated gentrification of historical residential areas (Ataöv&Osmay, 2007).

THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN INTERVENTIONS

As of 2010, the discussions on problems of cities in Turkey have started to concentrate on the urban interventions and methods of intervention (Özden, 2001). The fact that the notion of urban rehabilitation is no longer popular and that the discourse of urban regeneration is perceived to be covering all areas and a key for solving all possible problems are among the most discussed issues of the last ten years (Tekeli, 2003). Another indicator of this period is the fragmentation of the authorities and powers of established planning institutions to various different institutions and the corrosion of notions and institutions of modern planning (Göksu, 2008). The foundations of these processes lie at the structural transformations that Turkey has undergone in the 1980s. The private sector inclined structure of the laws on urban interventions enacted after the 1980s and the deregulation tendencies of the state have become a lot more evident after the year 2000. The types of plans that have no vertical and horizontal links to other plans, and that are mostly only sector based have reached 60 in number (Duygulu, 2009). The independent planning and project development efforts of more than 20 institutions, all disregarding one another, have led the planning environment into chaos. The Law on the Encouragement of Tourism, The Law of Coastlines and the law that regulates privatisation are the most obvious examples of this process. Furthermore, various laws focusing on urban regeneration concentrate on the act of demolishing and rebuilding in settlement areas, thus providing a framework from a property perspective alone. Together with the changes enacted in the Law on Housing Development in 2004 and the Law of Local Authorities in 2005, significant powers on the regeneration of urban settlement areas were granted to municipalities and the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ). The law most discussed is the "Law on the Conservation through Renewal and Preservation through Use of Decrepit Historical and Cultural Assets" (aka. Law on Renewal) numbered 5366, enacted on 05.07.2005. The fact that the operation area of this law is the historical heritage areas further heats the debates. For the law defines the interventions in these historical sites through acts of demolition and rebuilding. The criticisms directed to the law since its enactment are all initially concerning its content. A second aspect of the criticisms is directed at the projects developed for the regeneration areas of Istanbul, which are enunciated through the decision of the Cabinet upon the nominations of local authorities of mainly Beyoğlu and Fatih that are located in the historical parts of the city (Dinçer, et al., 2008).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA AND ITS PROBLEMS

One of the issues that lie behind the debates concerning the law on renewal is the evolution process that urban conservation areas have gone through in Turkey. This process could be traced all the way back to the Regulations on Historical Works of Art (Asar-ı Atika Nizamnameleri), a product of the reformation / westernisation efforts of the Ottoman State starting in the latter half of the 1800s. These regulations that were first devised as rules to be followed in archaeological excavations and the procedures in handling the findings of these excavations were later on expanded to include rules of conserving monuments and monumental structures (Madran, 2002). This law that has maintained its original form into the times of the Republic was in use until 1970 and was implemented through the Supreme Council of Historical Assets and Monuments, established in 1951. It was not until 1970s that this law; limited to the conservation of monumental structures and only perfect structures of civil architecture; was replaced by a new law on

conservation broadened to include conservation areas and all sorts of civil structures (Güçhan&Kurul, 2009). In this context, the transformation process of the historical residential areas since 1950s has to be evaluated. In this process the local inhabitants have gradually left the historical spaces where they dwelled, moving into the modern neighbourhoods of the city. On the other hand, these historical structures were divided into smaller units to become cheap housing stock for those migrating from rural areas into the city. This transformation triggered the degeneration, deterioration and even destruction of civil structures that were not perceived as a cultural asset at the time.

The Law of Historical Assets that was enacted in the year 1971 has broadened the perception of cultural assets, which was until then limited to monumental structures, to include civil structures. It has also introduced the notion of conservation areas, paving the way towards a holistic approach in conservation. However, due to the lack of issues such as resource allocation for conservation, technical support and knowledge back up in the institutional structure, the practice of conservation was hindered (Gülersoy-Zeren, et al., 2008). Even though the Council of Historical Assets and Monuments has registered 417 conservation areas, 3442 monumental structures and 6815 civil structures between the years 1973-1982 (Ahunbay, 1996), it was not possible to preserve these structures and areas to the full extent. The fact that it takes too long to produce the conservation plans after an area is designated as a conservation area, and that these areas are destroyed either due to lack of attention or on purpose are issues that even local authorities complain about, and in the year of 1980 there was not even one urban conservation area whose conservation plan was finalised and executed (Zeren, 1981 and Zeren, 1990). The structural transformation that was experienced in all aspects of life in Turkey during the period starting in 1980 has also affected the conservation field and with the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets enacted in 1983 a new system was established. However, financial resources necessary to preserve civil structures were again not created through this law and therefore this requirement was not met until 2004. Within the bounds of this law the Supreme Council of Historical Assets and Monuments was replaced with the Supreme Council for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets. This council was in time expanded with the addition of regional councils into the system, both making it more accessible and localising its services.

The proliferation of historical city centres' values from the beginning of 1990s has brought about a new phase for the neglected cultural assets. This interest was triggered mainly due to the booming sector of tourism that started to transform these areas into potential areas of investment for high standard residences, offices and tourism functions for the big capital groups (Enlil, 2000). This tendency has brought about practices of recreating the historical environment that ceased to exist since the 1950s and demolishing the existing historical structures to rebuild them from scratch by local authorities and investment groups instead of rehabilitating the historical urban environment. At the same time, the increasing consideration for the concept of conservation in society from 2000 onwards has initiated counter processes. Debates stating that these areas should not only be evaluated according to their exchange value, that they also have a use value and the inhabitants' right to housing have been dominating the agenda of the last five years (BİB, 2009).

The amendments made to the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets in 2004 are new institutional configurations that ease the practice of conservation. Especially, the arrangement that directs 10% of the collected property tax to the care and restoration of cultural assets provides a solution to a problem neglected for years. Another important development is establishing offices (KUDEB) within the structure of the municipalities, employing experts of the field, specifically responsible for supervising projects and practices in conservation areas. It is through these offices that the decisions of the Councils of Conservation are implemented correctly and supervision of conservation areas is made possible. Against all these positive improvements, the enactment of the Law on Renewal numbered 5366 in 2005, led to a new extensive public debate on the concept of 'regeneration area' defined within the boundaries of conservation areas by the law.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE DEBATE ON THE LAW ON RENEWAL

The implications of the concept of renewal at an urban scale: The issue most discussed about the law numbered 5366 is the accentuated phrase ‘...conservation through renewal...’ taking place both in the title and in the article of objectives in the law. The definition of the concept of renewal on an urban scale (*urban renewal*) is ‘to demolish urban environments that have no elements worth conserving, to produce a new urban environment which would serve the requirements of the day’. Since 1980s, alongside the established concept of sustainability the notion of urban renewal has been replaced by the concept of urban regeneration in the Western countries with an emphasis on conservation and inclusive of the socio-economic aspects of the process (Görgülü et al., 2007). The fact that the Law employs the dated notion of ‘renewal’ causes concerns that the heritage areas will be demolished and built anew. On the other hand, the definition of renovation, which is used in a scale for a single building, is a certain form of implementation under the general heading of restoration (Ahunbay, 1996). The concept of ‘renewal’ when used at a building scale implies the procedures to bring a building that is no longer able to serve the requirements of today, up-to-date. The title of the law however, does not signify the conservation area at an urban scale but rather resides on the definition of ‘asset=registered structure’. This title demonstrates that the Law on Renewal does not consider ‘urban renewal’ but is limited to the intervention of ‘renewal’ on registered structures. Yet, the local authorities do not perceive the law as such; on the contrary they deal with it exactly in the opposite way, which is another reason for being concerned about the law.

The unavoidable correlation of the laws numbered 2863 and 5366: The second criticism posed to the law is due to the fact that the areas announced as ‘renewal areas’ lose their status as a conservation area and that they fall out of the scope of the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets (Dinçer, 2008). As a result of the debates continuing since 2007, it was agreed upon through legal arrangement enacted on 04.02.2009 that both laws should be applicable in these areas. In close inspection it is clear that the law numbered 5366 actually focuses on the procedures that shall be carried out by the concerned authorities only, in the areas designated to be renewal areas. Therefore, the law essentially defines the determination and designation of the renewal areas, the instructions on preliminary and application projects, and the processes of organisation, management, supervision, participation and use. These definitions, no matter how disputable their connotations might be, describe the procedures that should be performed by local authorities. The procedures that should be pursued to conserve, rehabilitate and renew the cultural assets falling in the boundaries of the renewal area should be realised according to the rules and regulations set forth by the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets.

‘Expropriation for planning purposes’ and facilitating the sale of properties to third parties: One of the most controversial subjects of the law is the interventions to the ownership of properties in renewal areas. Although the 4th article of the law states that reaching a mutual agreement should constitute the basis for evacuating, demolishing and expropriating structures, the law also allows the concerned authority to expropriate in case of not being able to reach an agreement, and in doing so the 3rd article of the Law on Expropriation, concerning expropriation ‘to realise settlement planning projects’ applies. Exercising this procedure as defined entails the act of expropriation by the authority and it also approves of the sale of the expropriated property to third parties after the renewal project is realised (Dinçer, 2008). The state of affairs therefore becomes extremely controversial in terms of public welfare and the authority is granted an absolute advantage in the process of negotiations with the landowners. The fact that this arrangement is the most fundamental base for the state initiated gentrification becomes undisputable.

The uncontrollable escalation of land value: Another problematic issue is the accelerated rise in the real estate values after an area is designated as a renewal area. The rise is realised at an attractive rate that is not that easy to come by for the current owner. However, it does not offer such a large margin of profit to the buyer in the long run. The fact that the owner no longer has strong bonds with the area and that the real estate has many joint owners are amongst the significant aspects of this exchange. The low income range of the tenants in the area, and that the area serves as a refuge to the poor (Dinçer&Enlil, 2002) are among the factors that accelerate the exchange.

Participation or notification: The 7th article titled ‘participation and public notification’ in the Regulations of the law numbered 5366 has nothing in common with the notion of participation as it is generally understood. Because the phrase ‘...to notify about the implementation...’ used in the first sentence of the article implies a centralist approach in planning and project development. This is also the implication of an authoritative planning attitude and a project development methodology where the professionals are in charge of decision making. Even the title of the article indicates a course of action in which the concerned parties are only informed about the results of the process. The second sentence of the article stating that ‘...the authority in charge could call for consultation meetings...if and when necessary...’ demonstrates that the participation and consultation processes are left fully to the initiative of the authority.

Reducing planning to the preparation of preliminary projects and interfering with the balance of the city: According to the Law on Renewal the local authorities are the sole decision makers in determining the boundaries of renewal areas, establishing the general framework of the project, choosing the institution for implementation and deciding on the financial model with which the project will be carried out. It is inevitable that the Law on Renewal, containing project descriptions concerning the physical environment alone and following a course far from the discipline of planning and planning methodology will disturb the socio-economic balances in the region (Dinçer, 2010). However, the concept of ‘conservation plan’ defined by the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets in 2004 demands researches into the cultural and socio-economical facts of the conservation area, as well as its archaeological, historical, natural, architectural and demographical character. The plans developed in accordance with the research results are expected to improve the social and economical structures of the inhabitants residing in and the businesses located at the conservation area, to propose strategies increasing employment and creating added value, and to establish regulations for conservation and use. The planning process is also expected to propose models for rehabilitation, determine renewal areas and projects, devise phases and programs of implementation, examine local ownership, formulate financing principles, and conceive participatory management models, as well as present objectives, instruments and strategies. In contrast to this contemporary description of planning, the fact that the Law on Renewal perceives the process only as an architectural project and its lack of referring to the plan decisions is one of the most important issues in the debates.

RENEWAL AREAS OF ISTANBUL

Nearly 10% (55 940 ha) of the land of Istanbul is registered as conservation areas by the Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets (Dinçer et al., 2009) (Figure 1). The areas that are and could be registered as urban conservation areas (897 ha) and the mixed urban conservation areas (15 481 ha) according to the law numbered 5366, add up to make up for 29% of all conservation areas. The districts of Fatih and Beyoglu both located in the historical centre of the city deserve special attention for they contain the most important conservation areas of Istanbul and also because of the pioneering role they played as municipalities in the establishment of the Law on Renewal. Figure 2 demonstrates that the location and size of the conservation areas in Beyoglu are varied while the conservation areas in Fatih are mainly located along the coastline and next to the ancient city walls, and that the largest renewal areas are the Süleymaniye historical heritage area and the Grand Bazaar area. In the process initially starting with the registration of the Beyoglu Municipality’s renewal areas on 20.02.2006, five more renewal areas were registered in the same year. The number of renewal areas registered had fallen to two in 2007 and one in 2008.

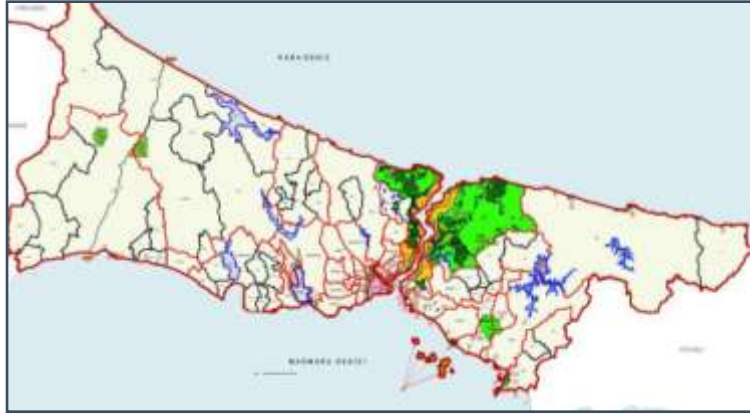


Figure 1: Spatial Distribution of Conservation Areas in Istanbul - 2005

Dinçer et al., 2009

SÜLEYMANIYE AND FENER-BALAT

Two renewal areas located within the borders of Fatih Municipality that is responsible for the government of the Historical Peninsula, where Istanbul was originally established, represent the fact that the Law on Renewal does not actually comprise of a content that oversees the process of renewal. In these two cases following very different processes for attaining projects, with different implementation and financial models the power of decision making is granted mainly to the mayor, and partially to the municipal council. The Council for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets in Istanbul Renewal Areas only has the authority to approve the architectural projects presented by the municipality. In employing this power the council is responsible for the conservation of the cultural and natural assets in the region. Its powers to make decisions on the

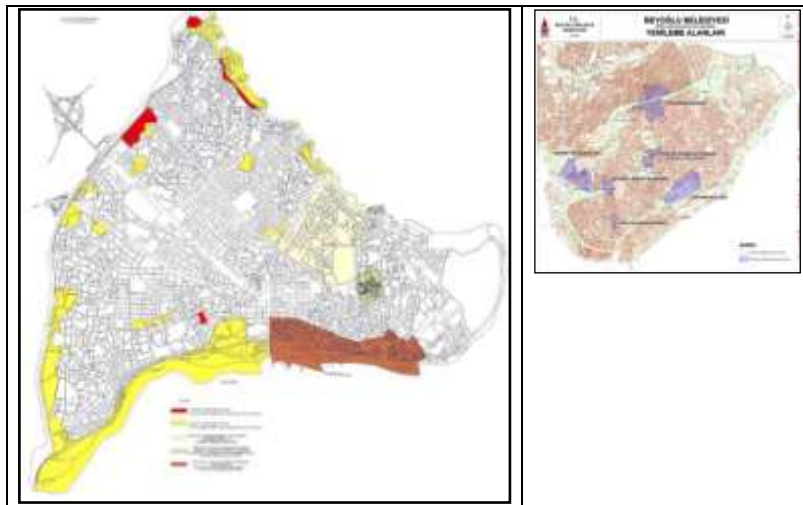


Figure 2: Conservation Areas in the Districts of Fatih and Beyoğlu (as of 01.01.2010)

http://www.fatih.bel.tr/kate_detay.asp?id=72&tur=387

<http://www.tarlabasiyenileniyor.com/>

implementation models of the projects are extremely limited. Süleymaniye and Fener-Balat areas will be the focus of the comparative analysis. Both of these areas, different in the way they were established and in the way they developed, faced a gradual process of abandonment since 1950s with tenants replacing the landlords preceding them, and leading to the deterioration of the physical characteristics of these areas. These areas neglected for a very long time in their struggle against these problems began to be of interest to various social groups from the second half of 1990s onwards. It took another decade, until the mid 2000s, for the local authorities to develop the idea of a more extensive intervention. According to the Law on Renewal enacted on 05.07.2005 Süleymaniye area with the Cabinet decision numbered 10501 on 24.05.2006, and Fener-Balat area with the decision numbered 10961 on 13.09.2006 were registered as 'renewal

areas'. The processes that followed these decisions in the two areas were very different in terms of attaining projects, and in terms of models of organization and financing.

The formation of the identities of the areas: The determining element of the Süleymaniye quarter that has developed as a quarter of Muslim clergy (ulema) since mid 16th century, is the Süleymaniye religious complex (külliye). Süleymaniye quarter located on one of the hills of the Historical Peninsula of Istanbul, overlooking the Golden Horn was a residential area for the higher echelons of society. The fact that the Süleymaniye madrasahs (educational institutions) that form a part of the religious complex in Süleymaniye, were the highest-ranking educational facilities in the Ottoman era plays a very significant role in terms of the character of the area. As well as the specialised trade functions located along the Golden Horn and on the streets leading to the Grand Bazaar, the area also housed the Department of War (Harbiye Nezareti), the religious authority (şeyhülislamık), army barracks, hospital and various other service units. This structure implies that the quarter was not exclusively a residential area but that it remained in close contact with the Grand Bazaar, the commercial quarter and with the Palace (Istanbul Encyclopaedia, 1994).

The most significant element in the formation of the identity of Fener is that the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was founded in this quarter in the Ottoman period. It is also known that the high-ranking officials of the Ottoman state serving in international affairs (Feneris) were residing in this quarter until the mid 18th century before moving out to the coasts of the Bosphorus (Akin, 1994). Alongside the Feneris who lived in waterside mansions, no trace of which has been left to our day, was another, more modest section of society living in the area inside the city walls. The settlement structure of Fener, which was last organised due to fire caution measures in the latter half of the 19th century, had been through degenerations and transformations till the present day.

The proclamation of the republic and the early days of the republic mark a turning point for both of the quarters and the similarities between them would increase from then on. In tune with the modernised institutions and life styles, the new generation would abandon Süleymaniye in favour of the modern apartment buildings being built elsewhere. What was influential in the transformation of the identity of Fener-Balat was the way minorities were treated in Istanbul from 1950s onwards. The events of September 6th and 7th, the invasion of Cyprus and the Decree of 1964, the founding of an Israeli state have all accelerated the migration of minorities abroad. With the coming of the 1950s due to various dynamics a new process would begin affecting both quarters. Süleymaniye and Fener-Balat would be among the favourite settlement areas for the rural migrant population coming from around Anatolia. According to their skills, experience and character, a certain section of these migrants would use these areas as a stepping-stone before moving out to the city fringes to better life conditions. Those unable to make this move would continue living in these areas becoming more and more impoverished (Dinçer&Enlil, 2002). The processes of inhabiting historical heritage areas without any maintenance, the transformation of residential areas into areas of production and storage, and the poor inhabitants of these areas leaving their place to those who are even more deprived would continue until the 1980s in Istanbul. These would be marked as years of urban decay in these areas as much as in others (Gürler, 2005).

Two different heritage areas becoming similar: In the 2000s, the transforming powers of the 1980s were felt deeply in both quarters. However, in Fener-Balat quarter that had experienced the effects of this power in the mid 1990s, the UNESCO and European Union funded neighbourhood revitalisation programmes could not be realised due to political debates that were taking place in those years (Fatih Municipality et al., 1998). In Süleymaniye, enlisted in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 (Gülersoy-Zeren, et al., 2008), the destruction of civil structures, setting them on fire and converting the vicinity into car parks continued at full speed throughout 2000s. The falling land and property values in both quarters and the increasing gap in the real estate price rates between these quarters and neighbouring areas made these quarters attractive potential investment areas for investors big and small, national and international alike. In this context, the 2003 local elections were crucial in attaining new prospects in these areas. And thus the Law on Renewal, with its structure making things easier

for investors and stressing on renewal more than on conservation was enacted in 2005.

The similarities and differences in project development processes: The vision developed for the Süleymaniye renewal area could be summarised as “...recreating the World Heritage Area of Süleymaniye that has been burned down, destructed, partially turned into an area of apartment buildings and being used as production and storage facilities...” It is difficult to find any trace of a discourse of globally integrated Istanbul and an approach guided by real estate values in this vision. The local authority was aiming for recreating the quarter of the religious clergy in the Ottoman times, parallel to the political vision of the central government. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, project development and implementation processes are led by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, instead of the district municipality. The project development and implementation model of Süleymaniye renewal area has not been subjected to as many discussions as other renewal areas. The project managed by the Metropolitan Municipality and that has been programmed to be implemented in five stages was planned to be carried out with the cooperation of various public institutions. 60% of the project cost would be covered by the Contributions for the Conservation of Cultural Assets, and the remaining 40% would come out of the budget of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Again 60% of the construction costs would be covered by the Contributions and the outstanding 40% would be collected through the long-term, low interest credits that the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) would grant to the property owners. This public weighted and credit granting scheme employed in Süleymaniye was considered to be a positive model in terms of protecting the historical structure and the property rights. However, a more professional approach is expected of the public authorities in terms of the management of the project. The main focus of criticisms was due to Istanbul Housing, Planning, Industry and Trade Corporation (KİPTAŞ), a venture of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, purchasing real estates within the borders of the Süleymaniye renewal area. How these real estates purchased for very low sums before the announcement of the Renewal Area would be utilised is yet to be made public. KİPTAŞ’s inconsiderate and insensitive attitude towards the historical environment in the projects it develops for the estates it purchases is a second issue that has become the subject of various debates and court cases.

In the process of registering Fener-Balat quarter as a renewal area, the presence of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy as an important political domain in the area was as influential as the physically dilapidated structures. The successful revitalisation of the UNESCO project that had initially begun in the mid 1990s was another factor triggering the municipality in developing a new project in which it would assume a more active role. A matter of criticism in the Fener-Balat renewal area project was due to Fatih Municipality putting all the services entailed in the project out to tender to the private sector. In this model where the municipality was not actively participating in the project development process, the investing private sector was granted 58% of the shares and the property owners were holding 42% of the shares. This scheme has led to the investors to become partners with the property owners in the area due to the powers vested in the local authorities to execute project implementations on their own account by the law numbered 5366. The law does not necessitate consent; in fact it grants the authority the power to expropriate in case of not being able to reach an agreement with the property owners, therefore the power to use unilateral force. Instead of making use of the public resources utilised in the Süleymaniye renewal area, Fatih Municipality opted for putting the historical heritage area out to tender without the consent of the property owners.

The contents of the renewal projects: The project content of the Süleymaniye and Fener-Balat Renewal Areas are as far apart as their implementation models. In Süleymaniye renewal area, the project is implemented by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Department of Historical Environment Conservation in accordance with the regulations of the Historical Peninsula Conservation Plan. The Conservation Plan is the outcome of meticulous analytical investigations carried out throughout a preparation process of nearly ten years. The aim of the renewal project is to revitalise the degraded and lost civil housing structure of Süleymaniye. However, in Süleymaniye, the most destructed quarter in the Historical Peninsula, decrepit and dilapidated cultural assets that managed to survive, concrete apartment buildings not fitting with the historical environment, trade blocks and public buildings exist side by side. When such a varied and complex urban structure is multiplied by demolitions, fires, structures built against the regulations of the conservation

council and illegal structures, the problems posed by the area have expanded drastically. The structures of primary concern in the renewal project are the surviving cultural assets and the project's principal aim is to realise the restoration of these structures. The most critical matter in this group of structures is the necessity of proficient experts and appropriate materials. The second group of structures is the cultural assets that have been demolished or destructed due to ill practice, on which documents or information could be attained. The reconstruction projects of these structures are being prepared and the implementations of these reconstructions are amongst the most publicly discussed issues. The third and final group of structures is defined as the new structures that will be constructed on empty sites with no information about the earlier structures and those that will be built to replace the poor quality structures. In this group of structures the problematic of new structures within a historical environment is a seriously debatable issue. Extensive, widely participated and long-term endeavours are necessary to be able to rescue the widely destroyed civil structure of Süleymaniye.

The founding principal of the Fener-Balat renewal project is based on the fact that the historical building stock of the area has been neglected for a very long time, and that the area has a high risk factor in terms of earthquakes. Therefore, the project adopted the approach in which all structures irrespective of their historical character will be demolished to be reconstructed, keeping the original features of their facades, and at the same time two or three buildings will be joined, to be designed anew according to the requirements of their prospective users. This approach suggesting that the only way to conserve the dilapidated historical structures is to construct newly built replicas, as well as the practice of creating a totally new landscape within the boundaries of a conservation area was seriously criticised by academic spheres and certain groups within the profession.

WERE THERE ANY LESSONS LEARNT FROM THESE EXPERIENCES

The investments made in Istanbul since the 1980s both rapidly consume the outskirts and investigate opportunities for intervention on historical areas. This is due to the increasing interest in urban heritage areas globally as well as the increasing cost of expanding to the outskirts. In the year 2010, when most of the development areas in the outskirts have been exhausted, the governing authorities are turning to historical spaces, developing projects and envisaging goals of rapidly changing and transforming the heritage areas. Therefore, the year 2005 when the law numbered 5366 was enacted and the year 2006 when renewal areas were registered are critically significant. These legal infrastructures were finalised two years after the local election of 2003 and the project preparation process was initiated. The goal was to face the local elections of 2008 having these historical spaces re-produced. However, at the end of the two years it was becoming apparent that the amount of input in settled areas and in areas of historical heritage was enormous and that managing projects in these areas were not that simple. In the year 2010, Süleymaniye and Fener-Balat areas are both awaiting implementation. Local authorities are hoping to be more cautious after the initial mistakes made at the first implementation of the Law on Renewal in Sulukule, they are trying to calculate their moves more accurately. What is critical here is the ability to produce the right lessons out of these experiences. Therefore, those aiming to realise interventions on historical urban environments should keep in mind that;

- The era of urban interventions that did not place the humankind in the centre is over. After the five years experience made in Turkey the subject should be readdressed with the human in mind.
- The era of demolishing historical heritage areas to rebuild replicas of the original structures is also over. These areas should not be considered as structures to be decorated and polished but as a reflection of the accumulation of the traces of years, otherwise they would be devoid of any value.
- The influence of urban interventions is multi-faceted and it emanates throughout society. Therefore, every care should be taken to eliminate the chance of a process initiated with assumed good intentions in one corner of the urban environment, to cause ill reflections in another part of the society. Which in turn calls for meticulous planning and management.

- The fact that with every action today a trace, a document is left for the future should not be overlooked. Therefore, the governing authorities must share with the public their project aims, their practices, the meetings with concerned parties and the agreements they reach without any concessions.

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