

A Criticism on Historic Preservation in Süleymaniye Neighbourhood, Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

All kinds of qualitative and quantitative products, which are designed and created by people during historical periods, provide production of urban history and city's character. People, who live in together in the same place, always depend and protect the area where they live. This depending and protection point us belonging to the living place. All kinds of social and physical regulations have contributed to the formation of today's urban history.

Throughout history, Istanbul has hosted to different cultures and emperors, which are Byzantine, Roman and Ottoman Empires. It has a strong historical background. In a city, which is important like Istanbul, the most important and difficult thing is protection and preserving of historical and cultural urban systems. The most known icon of Istanbul, Historical Peninsula has rapidly being lost its natural and cultural beauties, had some deteriorations.

Actually, the main reason of this deterioration is a growth and rapid urbanization in Turkey. Despite the fact that there is an increasing population of Istanbul, Historic Peninsula's night population has been decreasing. Due to its touristic potential, this area's night and day populations differ from each other. It is obvious that the place is being turned into a touristic, manufacturing and service sectors main location rather than a housing area. At most, the change has been felt in Süleymaniye.

In the past times, Süleymaniye was the most preferred quarter by ottoman elites and high income groups but nowadays, there is a bad pressure and threat to the housing function from the manufacturing function.

Leaving from the housing area caused the increasing quest for renters (tenants). The new dwellers are general workers who came from the east part of Turkey and they don't feel socially or physically connected to the place, they only need a house for sleeping and basic activities. So the area has increased criminal events. The security issue costs the life in this neighbourhood, which has started to be more introverted; the concept of the neighbourhood from Turkish culture is losing its character.

In addition to the changes in urban form, existing housing stock has been demolished and transformed to another building types like shops, stores etc. In this context, with the study all the transformations and deteriorations will be examined and some proposals, partial private and building scale strategies will be developed.

KEYWORDS: Historic Preservation, Süleymaniye, Urban Regeneration, Transformation, Housing.

1 INTRODUCTION

Preservation means as the word; to protect, to keep against external influences or dangers or the action of conserving something. It also refers to the state of being kept free from destruction or any kind of danger. As well, as the entire cultural and natural heritage must be taken under control and must be preserved or protected. (Keleş, 1998)

Historic preservation is also about getting involved in saving these monuments, landscapes, and neighbourhoods that are social and physical heritages. UNESCO Says: “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.” Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. As UNESCO pointed, “preservation” must be moved into international area from national position and implementations. (whc.unesco.org, January, 2014)

There can be seen negativity that most of the historical and cultural environment preservation plans cannot be done in a right way. It may cause to be seen as a long and difficult preservation process. As in the other developing countries, in Turkey there have been seen some major problems on this process. Especially, slow and old bureaucratic procedures and some legal regulations complicate the renewal programs for the people that are the poorest living on these areas. That’s why, it is more difficult to preserve and renovate the historical areas in Turkey. On the other hand with local preservation methods and implementations, only tangible heritage can be protected. But with all preservation methods, not only physical heritage but also social heritage should be transferred to the next generations. And it should be in a sustainable way.

As the landmark of the city and centre of the ancient İstanbul, ‘Historic Peninsula’ has both natural and cultural heritages. The Historic Peninsula, on which Byzantium and Constantinople develop, was surrounded by ancient walls, built in the fifth century. Although the area is in UNESCO World Heritage List, some preservation problems and extreme deteriorations can be seen. The area has started to lose its natural and historic beauties and its own characteristics. One of the main reasons is Turkey’s rapid urbanization. While Rapid urbanization causes increasing of general population in the city, on the contrary there is a decreasing on the Historical Peninsula population. (The population of Historic Peninsula was in 1975 is 627.012, in 2013 it was 428.857) It can be seen a rapid tourist population on the daytimes. With this movement, it is losing residential area character but it is still powerful for keeping touristic character.

In addition to this change in the demographic structure of the area, there is a significant change in the social structure. In the past, The Historic Peninsula was an elite living place where generally preferred by well-educated and rich governors and big traders. After the Bosphorus side was more popular, they left from the area to the new living areas on Bosphorus thus the mansions and houses passed into the other hands. The new dwellers are mostly workers and immigrants from the east and middle Anatolia, they only want to work and earn good money, they don’t think about their houses or living sites so they don’t need to defence or protect this area. By the time the number of renters was increased. The renters are feeling it is a temporary living a temporary time on this area. So these cause some security problems and some crime incidents. With the all poor conditions, a new life is started to living that is closed to outside and introverted; Traditional Turkish Neighbourhood habits went into a dissolution process. These functional and demographic problems show us existing situation and problems of the area. In the light of these data we can say for the area, Today it confronts with the deterioration and becoming urban decay area. On this study, relationship between deterioration and preservation will be examined on Süleymaniye Area.

Why Süleymaniye was chosen as the case study:

On Süleymaniye, it can be seen, listed civil architecture and monumental heritage together. The area has different buildings from different ages and terms and it is a good sample as a traditional neighbourhood pattern. There are so many vernacular settlements and residences as traditional heritage.

More important Süleymaniye was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 and declared as a "renewal area" in 2006. (Figure 1, 2)



Figure 1, 2: Süleymaniye Area within The Historical Peninsula. (maps.google.com)

2 SULEYMANIYE DISTRICT

From the past to the present, The Historic Peninsula is the heart of the city. It was the governance centre on the terms of Ottoman Empire and Byzantium Empire. Beside these the area has a natural heritage. The Historic Peninsula was set up on the seven hills, when we look on the settlement pattern, on the hills it can be seen generally monumental buildings and on the hillsides it can be seen mostly residential areas. Süleymaniye area is on the third hill and was set up around Süleymaniye Mosque and its complex with 93 Hectare area. The first settlements were located on the hills and near the Kulliye. This Population has increased on the coastal side Haliç (Golden Horn) by the time. Süleymaniye and its Kulliye are important images and focus points for İstanbul's metropolitan area. (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Suleymaniye District (www.wikimedia.com, 2014 February)

Now, İstanbul's University Campus is located on this hill-top. The area has an irregular network system because of the slope; there can be seen different nodes with services and facilities like hospital, theatre and educational facilities. With these settlements, İstanbul has reached nowadays silhouette scheme.

Süleymaniye is an important residential area that is located in Eminönü district. With the construction of Süleymaniye Mosque and complex, the area had started to be a housing area. The traditional typical neighbourhood pattern (that has a mosque and a complex/kulliye) and vernacular timber Ottoman houses can be seen on this location. All of the timber mansions and neighbourhood pattern came from Ottoman terms. In 16th – 17th Centuries, most of the samples of vernacular architecture were destroyed by the fires, after these wild fires, all the regulations and legislations were changed. Stone and brick materials were started to be used with new construction methods. Also roads were built in widely with new methods. In 18th Century the new materials and new built typologies came, hereby the area changed into a heterogenic settlement.

In 19th Century, Süleymaniye lived radical changes. In the early 1800's, some commercial / trading activities that are especially marginal sector enterprises came into the area like paper collectors, junkmen, coffee sellers, and craftsmen like coppersmiths. In addition to these in 20th century, other crafts were added. These activities brought a new energy into the district.

On the Republic period, Suleymaniye became a new industrial district; this can be seen in the year 1934 on historical urban plans and maps. But with these industrial factories, the area lost its own character and this lead to unqualified spaces and unhealthy residential areas.

Between 1938 and 1949, according to Proust Plan, new boulevards and wide roads were opened, with increasing number of vehicles, traffic and transportation problems began to appear in the area. There was a big change on the constructed areas and new trade buildings. On one hand the development of the trade and activities and small factories were increasing, on the other hand the number of residential settlements was decreasing. The area was being seen mostly as a trading or transit space. In this period, dwellers changed and householders left from the area to outside of the city centre.

The district lost its attraction and popularity as a residential zone. Because of these functional changings, land values started to depreciate, rents and sales prices of the houses decreased. With time the area came into a settlement for low income groups and marginal sectors. On one hand we can see beautiful historic and cultural heritage, on the other hand we can see deteriorated, worn out and old built environment. This contradiction shows that Süleymaniye is under the threat of being destructed and destroyed. (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Neighbourhood in Suleymaniye (www.mimdap.org, 2014, February)

2.1 Legal Regulations and Actors that Affected on the District

Some regulations have been taken to protect the cultural and historical character of Süleymaniye. In 1975, with Amsterdam Manifest, especially vernacular timber mansions have been taken under control as preservation. After this manifesto, in 1976 the first historical preservation plan was accepted. On that time, lots of urban planning studies for Istanbul were prepared but none of them were implemented. In 1987, the Ministry of Culture regulated “Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection Act”. With this act some parts of the area were taken under protection. In 1992, the area was declared as a tourism district, and some of the listed buildings were expropriated and restored. In 1995, The Historic Peninsula was listed and declared as 1st degree preservation site area. After this progress Süleymaniye 2003 plans were declined. In 2011, with The Historic Peninsula preservation plan, Süleymaniye was determined as a vernacular residential area. All the planning decisions were on the preservation of the Süleymaniye timber Ottoman mansions. (Figure 5)

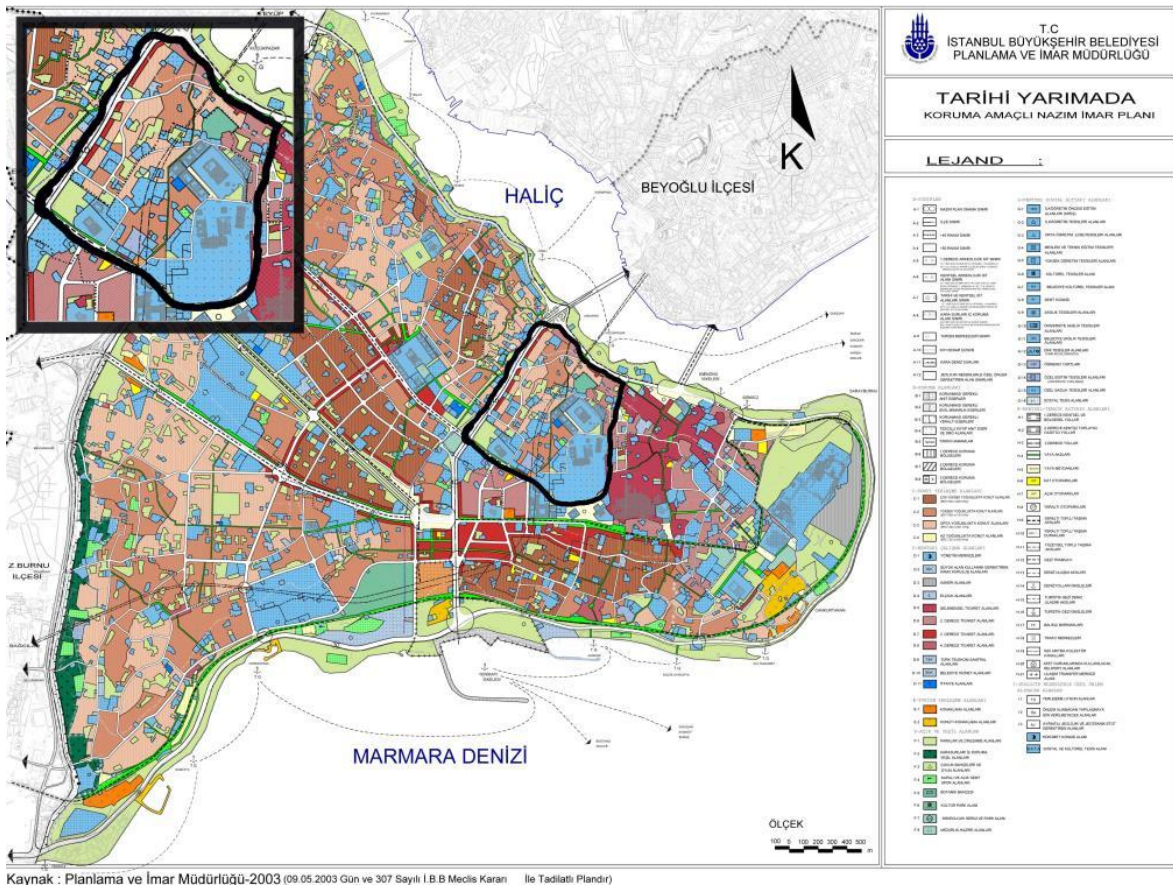


Figure 5: Reconstruction Plan for Protection (IBB Department of Planning, 2003)

“The management structure for the protection and conservation of the properties includes the shared responsibilities of national local administration and several state institutions. The approval of the Conservation Council has to be obtained for physical interventions and functional changes in registered buildings and conservation sites.” (whc.unesco.org, 2014, February).

In 2006 the Süleymaniye Region was announced as an urban renewal area by the council of minister. The plan was organized in 5 renewal areas and in 5 stages. Istanbul’s Metropolitan Municipality and Eminönü’s Municipality made an agreement on behalf of common implementation.

In this plan the region was determined as a residential area. All the small factories and marginal sectors in the region have been decentralized. Social facility and service areas have been organized for such as health, education and administrative functions. (Department of Environmental Protection & Development)

As in the other renewal plans, this project was passed over to the local people who have been living there. The spatial quality was ignored and it was not juxtaposed from the beginning. In the first implementation area, approximately 600 people living. This community consisted of low income people that were living in low quality dwellings, and did not have enough budgets for paying newly built houses on the same location or to maintain or renovate their houses. On one hand existing dwellers cannot afford them, on the other hand Law No. 5366 expropriation regulations caused displacement of the local community. The area that kiptaş paid for and had economic right on, was started to demolish in 2006. This demolishment was centred on an area on which there are listed buildings, especially of traditional heritage.



Figure 6: Demolished buildings in the Süleymaniye Region, 2009

2.2 Increasing Commercial Areas / Decreasing Residential Areas

The Süleymaniye Region has the same social and economic activities as those of the Historic Peninsula. Trade activity centres developed during the formation of the Historic Peninsula and also the Süleymaniye is an extension of that. Süleymaniye is also one of the important housing area in the Eminönü district. Increasing the trade activities threats onto residential areas in Süleymaniye.

IMC Trade centre is one of the biggest wholesale centres in the Süleymaniye region, and also there were many little product companies and factories that had unhealthy working and living conditions, worn out and poor quality working areas. The living quality was decreasing, because of the air and environment pollution caused by these sectors.

With the renewal project, as articles of the law, the buildings that couldn't fulfil the small production needs were demolished. This caused arising incompatibility and inadaptability with the traditional pattern of neighbourhood, building typology and materials. The IMC and the other small production buildings also caused damages like traffic problems and jam.

When we look at the the Süleymaniye District map, we can see the commercial area with its %39 rate, the residential area with % 26 rates, and the production areas with %16 rate. These production areas are a menace to the living quality (which includes unhealthy sectors; plastic, leather, metal working) Spreading of small production factories, the storage buildings and informal constructions started to be seen. Trade in IMC is only by wholesale so IMC and its neighbourhood can only live by day not by night. On the coastal region, transportation is easier than inner sides; it provides activity of coastal trade settlement. This can be seen by the ages in Süleymaniye after opening new roads to the innercity, trade shops and small producers have spread into residential areas and this sprawl destroyed the district's own character.

Nowadays, housing settlements that are preserving their patterns and functions are as a “pure housing zone” keeping only % 26 rate and they are pressed by the other storage buildings. When we look at zoning variety; we can list educational buildings, health buildings and urban service areas. Although there are too many services and facilities for the local people, they do not seem to be enough to serve them.

Süleymaniye is a listed (protected) area. There are too many civil architecture and monumental buildings, and at the same time there are too many underground (subsoil) monuments.

3 ACCORDING TO THE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

In this study, to understand the progress and process of the transformation, surveys and interviews were done with the people living in Süleymaniye. The survey was done among 180 people that are %3 of Süleymaniye population. This study focused on the views and opinions of the locals; what they think about Süleymaniye? How should be organized with locals and municipality? What they feel when they live in there? Mostly the answers of these questions were examined.

According to results, as academicians and researchers, local people identified the most problematic area is ‘preservation’. They think this is a municipality problem and they are not responsible for the natural and built environment. There is unconsciousness about the living there. This is the first reason of all the other problems. During the survey, local users generally talked about negative sides of Süleymaniye they also complained about crime, theft and insecurity. We can say that if there is no enough night population there can be insecure situations and dwellers cannot feel safe. Nowadays workers who migrated from the east Turkey have formed local population. Migration links with dependence directly. If the users don’t feel comfort and peace there, they cannot feel where their house is. But in Süleymaniye the best thing that we saw in the neighbourhood, all neighbours are still collaborating with each other and this shows us there is a strength solidary. Participated organizations can be easier with this relationship.

4 PROSOPALS AFTER CASE STUDY

Small factories and commercial storages outspreaded in the area so quickly that, this created a pressure on residential area in the distinct and lead to aging and deterioration. In order to stop this pressure commercial activities and production facilities must be removed from the area. Kiptaş’s implementation policy mainly focuses on the destroying and rebuilding rather than protecting and preserving. Local population are forced out of their homes. There is no human-oriented policy that defends the rights of the local residents. As a result, those people see this project as a threat for their dwellings and life.

In this study, a need for a new approach is noticed. This new approach would better be a human-oriented one. There must be better alternatives than forcing locals out of their neighbourhood. As a first step, target groups can be defined for participation. Target groups may include landlords, proprietor and renters.

Financial resources must be used for those people who are living in the area in the first place. One way of using this Financial Resources could be building up a low interest bank credit options for people who are forced out of the area, so that they can find a better place to live. It is obvious that bank credit system is not a good option for low income group even if interests are low, and in that case monetary funds may help. Second step could be an organized case study. All physical interventions and deteriorations must be determined and examined. Schedules and inventories of the buildings must be updated and every building need must be listed. Primary goal of this organization must be preserving civil architectural heritage of the area.

1. Step: Maintenance and basic renovations on the buildings.
2. Step: Restoration projects and implementations must be applied.

3. Step: The buildings that were demolished without historical documents should be reconstructed. After the renewal of the listed buildings, the existing traditional neighbourhood pattern should be rehabilitated in accordance with the plan decisions.

After all those renovations and building activities, the welfare level of the users and locals should be increased. They need a permanent economic source for lifetime, they need a job; the area should be strengthened with employment. In accordance with the plan this district is an important touristic zone. This may help the employment in the neighbourhood by double usage of pension's boutique hotel and house.

Restaurants, jewellers, cinema and theatre saloons and traditional handcrafts shops should be organized in the neighbourhood, if the locals take the advantages of the neighbourhood's economy they can keep and preserve their settlements. This way there will be a feeling of belonging to the district. There should be an amount of alternatives to activate the neighbourhood like national or international festivals, music organizations, and they should help developing an image of Süleymaniye.

In all those projects, voices of the people who live in the neighbourhood must be listened. They must be encouraged to participate in this project. Along with physical and economical approaches, social activities should be organized in the area, too. Nongovernmental areas and associations should be organized for the information of the preservation and the heritage. The press media and publications, of the preservation subject should be kept active.

5 CONCLUSION

In Turkey, the preservation phenomenon began with the preservation and protection of the monumental heritage. After that, it focused on the monument and its region. With the Urban Renewal Act in 2005, significant implementations and projects started to be seen on the historical urban sites. With the notion of urban renewal, sustainability of cultural memory is intended to be created. Urban renewal shouldn't be perceived as a tool only for the spatial quality. This is not linked only with the space, it is also linked with the social and economic activities. Preservation must be handled on the physical, social and cultural assets together.

Deterioration on the historical places is seen when the standards and qualities decrease by assorted reasons. The problem generally can be seen on the districts, which have economic weakness and low income and social groups living there. On all solutions for deterioration, physical and social structure must be thought together. The first goal should be to protect these historical areas and increase the life quality, physically and socially. Urban renovation can only be a way to achieve this aim with the right policies. Lack of awareness of preservation and protection is the main problem.

Süleymaniye which is examined with deterioration and urban renewal subjects and themes has a serious value about vernacular mansion architecture, which we can see only a little part of nowadays. With the misuse of the land and social changes, rapid urbanization caused urban problems. With these density problems transportation is affected harmfully. Traditional street pattern was deteriorated, although the zone has a renewal plan, it did not implement. Housing settlement zones turned into trade, storage zones with the time. The area lost its own character. (Figure 7)



Figure 7: Süleymaniye Neighbourhood (www.anadoluajans.com, 2013, April.)

Although Süleymaniye is listed as world heritage by UNESCO, it is living a deterioration process now. As a result of this study, some proposals have been prepared for organizational approaches as listed below:

The trades and shops and small productions factories that threat the housing zones, should be removed from the area, the priority of the renovation and maintenance should be on listed housing buildings, the priority of the listed buildings should be on the maintenance. Demolished listed buildings should be reconstructed according to the inventories. The buildings that are unsuitable for the traditional pattern should be examined and restricted. Economic activity and employment should become active. Education and health services should be qualified and socio-cultural facilities should be established. In this way the users must be ensured of the ownership of the area. In all phases of the projects, locals and dwellers should be a participant. Information and consciousness programs should be done to the users.

As a final note, all the process should be in detailed and public. The projects in which there is participation by all actors on every phase can be successful in urban renewal areas.

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