

## FROM KREUZBERG TO FENER - BALAT “12 PRINCIPLES OF CONSERVATIVE URBAN RENEWAL”

### I. Objectives

*“One of the spatial outcomes of this process is the proliferation of compartments in cities. On the one hand, there are iconic projects, gentrified neighbourhoods and gated communities of the new elite. On the other hand, there are ghettos of the poor, the migrants, the unemployed and all those who are excluded from the other segments of the society.”*

*(Görgülü, Z., Enlil, Z. M., “WELCOME by the LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE (LOC))*

*“As the economic engine of the modern Turkish economy, Istanbul occupies yet another pivotal role and aspires to be one of the leading cities in the new world hierarchy of cities, which brings along a variety of problems of “integration and disintegration” to the forefront in the agenda of local administration and planning”.*

*(AN INVITATION TO ISTANBUL, Topbas, K., Mayor of Metropolitan Istanbul)*

This text includes the first evaluation and ideas about how Fener – Balat must be taken up, dependent on the experience of “Protective Urban Renewal” that is existed in “Kreuzberg” district which was in the centre of Berlin at first but it was stayed aside when the Berlin Wall was destroyed in 1961.

Fener - Balat Project aims at providing a new look for Fener and Balat through improving the living standards of the inhabitants and the rehabilitation of housing and infrastructure and the development of basic services of education, health and culture. **Principles of “Step by step Protective Urban Renewal: Kreuzberg” are tried to be improved in the sample of Fener – Balat. They are the initial and can be improved ideas.** (International Building Exhibition Berlin 1987, Pub. S.T.E.R.N. Gesellschaft der behutsamen Staderneuerung Berlin mbH.)

### II. Kreuzberg and Conservative Urban Renewal

During the late 19th century the quarter of **Kreuzberg** was a working-class area. After the Second World War many people left the damaged buildings. A population of artists, foreigners, unemployed and members of sub-cultures remained. (See Photo 1)



**PHOTO 1. KREUZBERG BEFORE WORLD WAR II**

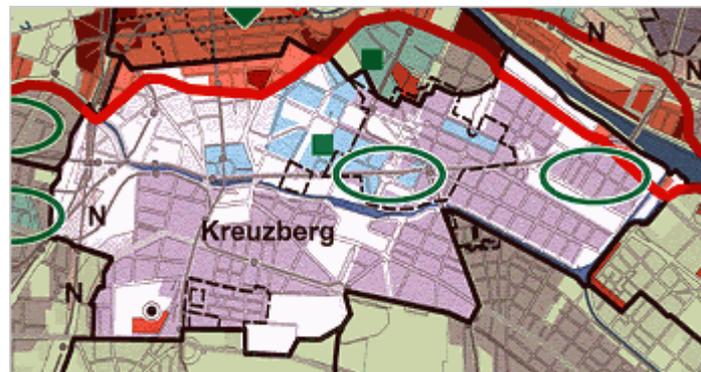
Source: [http://www.heimatsammlung.de/topo\\_unter/10/kreuzberg/kreuzberg\\_04.jpg](http://www.heimatsammlung.de/topo_unter/10/kreuzberg/kreuzberg_04.jpg)

Today it's an area rich in contrasts: luxury apartments stand next to ancient and ruined buildings. The district has many restaurants, Turkish bazaars, and an interesting selection of nightclubs, cinemas and galleries. (See Photo 2)



**PHOTO 2. CARNIVAL OF CULTURES: BERLIN KREUZBERG**

City renewal in the 1960's and 70's meant large-area demolition and new construction on the open land. Standing structures were usually destroyed. At the end of the 70's, this practice was discontinued in favour of preserving the street block structure in the existing city area. Then buildings were individually modernized or empty land was built on. The densely built-up areas were only partly torn down and interspersed with open spaces. Nevertheless, the destruction of standing structures continued. The house squatter movement in the early 80's contributed to the growing consciousness of the problem and the international building exhibition (IBA) marked the official turning away from former city renewal concepts. Twelve ground rules for a "careful urban renewal" were passed.



**MAP 1. KREUZBERG AREA IN BERLIN**

Source: <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/stadtentwicklungsplanung/pix/kreuzberg.gif>

Central elements: participation of the affected parties, socially-compatible rehabilitation methods, preservation of the building substance.

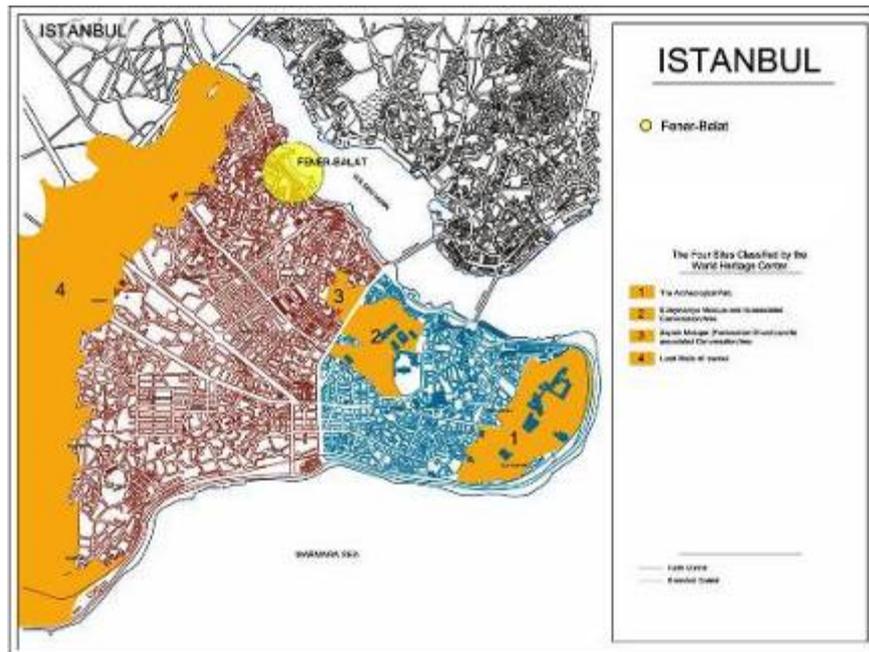
The rehabilitation contract was signed in 1983. In 1986 the building work began. In 1991 the buildings were largely restored. In this process exemplary ecological elements (energy, water, greenery, and waste, building materials) were developed. (See Map 1)



### **III. Rehabilitation of Fener and Balat Districts of Istanbul**

In his memoirs "From Balat to Batyam", Eli Saul, a Jewish writer who was born and grown up in Fener-Balat, describes the area, which is known as one of the richest residential and cultural centres of the old Istanbul, in the following words...

*"From 1900 to 1950, Balat looked like a small Jewish town. The Jews formed the majority of the inhabitants. They had about ten synagogues and more than one hundred rabbis. The doctors and the dentists were all Jewish. All the firemen in Balat where there was often a fire were Jewish. The shops except three sellers of roasted chickpeas at Leblebiciler Street were owned by Jews.*



**MAP 2 : FENER – BALAT LOCATION IN OLD ISTANBUL PENINSULA**

Source: <http://fenerbalat.org/index.php>

Balat used to divide into two parts: "**Arieto Balat**" (**Inner Balat**) and "**Afuera Balat**" (**Outer Balat**). One walked from Balat towards Edirnekapi, one could see Turkish families. The Greeks used to live at the high street and side streets from Balat towards Fener. A few Greek families had settled among the Jews around the Ayistrati Church and few in Inner Balat. The Armenian community used to live around two Armenian churches. There were Persians who had shops in Balat, selling herbs, folk remedies and small wares and notions.

The Bulgarian families were engaged in dairy business, producing delicious cream. There were also a few Albanian families living in Balat, selling vegetables in the street, singing and shouting praisingly of the vegetables they carried in large wicker baskets mounted on horses or mules. The Albanians used to sell also hot salep (a hot drink made with powdered orchids) and ashura (a pudding made with cereals, sugar, raisins and various other dried fruits) in winter mornings..." (See Map 2 – Fener-Balat location in Istanbul)

**Starting date of the project:** 2001

**Duration:** 4 years

**Contribution:** 7 million euros

**Turkey's Contribution:** 10 million euros

**Programme Partners:** European Commission

Fatih Municipality & Under secretariat of Treasury

([www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/e-mali-sheets2.html](http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/english/e-mali-sheets2.html))

"**Fener and Balat Rehabilitation Programme**", implementations were started with the support of European Union's € 7 million euros in January 2003. In the scope of the Program, the aim is restoration of old housing buildings as much as possible in the Quarters of Fener and Balat. Establishing a Social Centre, revitalising the historic Balat Market, and building a solid waste management system. Activities are still continuing participation of the inhabitants of the quarters. (<http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/!Publish/tr/PR%20-%202006-PressRelease-44.doc> ,

A Technical Assistance Team were supported those mentioned works. The Team assisted to the Municipality of Fatih. Together with **Foment Ciutat Vella SA, IMC Consulting Firm**

(England), GRET (France) and *Kadin Emegini Degerlendirme Vakfi (Foundation for the Support of Women's Work) (Turkey)* formed the other member of the consortium.

Fener and Balat Districts Rehabilitation Program propose the participation of decision making and applications. For this reason, introduce the Program, to invite participation in various different phases, and inform the people of the progress meetings, house and office visits were made.

#### **IV. History of the Fener-Balat Rehabilitation Programme:**

A group of architects in 1968, made a research on the wide area that includes **Zeyrek, Fener, Balat** and **Ayvansaray**. As a result of that research it was realized that the whole historic and cultural environment started to become slum. In 1975, a zone in Zeyrek became a conservation area as the first step. In the period of 1979-1980, the conservation area was enlarged.

No action had been taken after 1975, when the Zeyrek was put under conservation. For twenty years not a single change had happened in the area. The Molla Zeyrek Mosque (Pantakrato Church) which had a history of more than a thousand and five hundred years had continued its decay. The Ottoman water fountains had dried. Historic baths collapsed. The konaks (historic houses) were faced with many fire incidents. The structures of modern apartment architecture with facades were placed for the demolished konaks. The avlu's (courtyards) of mosques that had almost five hundred years of history have been places of discomfort. The cobbled streets disappeared under several layers of asphalt. The same applies to Fener and also Balat and Ayvansaray. (KALKAN, E., "The First Urban Rehabilitation Project Of Turkey", Hurriyet Newspaper.)

UNESCO had put almost the whole peninsula to the list of "**World Cultural Heritage**" and the decision was approved by the responsible bodies. The reason why the privilege was given to Suleymaniye by UNESCO was that the timber structures were not in good condition and they had the bigger risk of decline and demolition than the others.

The project progressed significantly however the budget of Fatih was not sufficient although its being a very populated district. As a result, the things that could be done were limited. They started the restoration of some of the structures that were the properties of Municipality, Pious Foundations (Vakıfs) and the Ministry of the Treasury.

Zemilli Ali Efendi Tekkesi was one of them. Together with the **Turkiye Egitim Gonulluleri Vakfi (Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation/ TEGV)** Municipality restored this structure. In this restoration, a small scale of *education unit* was established with computers. Two **Byzantine Cistern** which were named as Findikzade, Cukurbostani and Carsamba Cukurbostani were transformed to education parks from slumming zones.

By UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Municipality of Fatih, French Institute of Anatolian Researches and Fener Volunteers there initiated the project named "**Fener and Balat Districts Urban Rehabilitation Project**" in September 1st 1997.

Municipality of Fatih, sustained a meeting room and a project studio in 1st September, 1997 to the UNESCO team that came to Istanbul; and the working process began. EU declared that the project that was directed by UNESCO would receive the financial support. One of the factors that affected the EU's decision was the fact that non-governmental organizations (NGO's) played a very important part in this project. As two local initiatives, "**Fener Volunteers Charity** and **Balat Beautification Charity**" were established before the initiation of the project. The Fener Volunteers Charity was working on establishment of an **Institute of Fener – Balat Researches**. The members of this charity, who also made efforts to protect the historical structures, hosted the whole UNESCO team during their feasibility investigations.

**French Institute of Anatolian Researches** has played an active role in project from the very beginning. The head of the institute **Stefanos Yerasimos** explained the aim of the projects as:

*“A rehabilitation and restoration project has been carried out so as to increase the standards of living of the people in this zone. In the first phase of this study, data collection prior to application process, evaluation of the data, and a feasibility study that would include a project proposal are targeted. In the second phase, the aim was to realize an application process via use of the data derived from the feasibility study.”*

There were examples of restoration and rehabilitation projects that were carried out in Istanbul in the hands of the project team, which was comprised of municipality members, national and international specialists, non-governmental organizations and institute. Some of those projects were “**Sogukcesme**” and “**Kariye Project**” which was supported by **Turing Otomobil Foundation**, and “**Ortakoy Project**” that was made by **Municipality of Besiktas**. Those examples were discussed in the committee.

In the Sogukcesme Street, the dwellings were bought and the inhabitants were made to move to other places in the city; the fact that social network was at least as valuable as the structures was ignored. De-humanized street was decorated as a “theatre scene” and was opened to tourism. The head of Turing, Celik Gulersoy, made up for his failure in Kariye. The organization undertook the restoration of facades around the Kariye Museum. Inhabitants of the district were not made to move, and the social network was conserved.

Fener and Balat Districts were discussed at the beginning of the Rehabilitation Project. All the stakeholders agreed on the social restoration as well as physical restoration in the project.

The Main Coordinator of the Project **Remi Stoquart**, stated the priorities of the projects as:

*“Proposal is to financing for developing the social housing, restoration of the structures and design of their environment. It was realized that in the housing units in which there used to live a family now live four or five families. This situation is diminishing their living space, and gives rise to unhealthy conditions. It was also observed that the shared facilities such as kitchen, bathroom, and toilet were unsanitary. It is vital that the structures should be improved for their inhabitants.”*

Examples of the civil architecture and historic structures should be conserved and utilized. Mosque, church, synagogue, timber and stone (*kagir*) structures should be examined and restored. The whole area should be restored as a place where living is possible. Village clinics, dispensaries, education spaces should be arranged according to needs.

*“At this phase of the project our target is to establish the **participation** and **contribution of inhabitants** of the district, force of public development and support of the social housing. In this respect, the strategy for rehabilitation project will be determined.”*

Committee finalized the feasibility study at 31st January, 1998 and submitted to the UNESCO. A book was prepared from the feasibility study and published in French, English and Turkish. The project was approved by committees of UNESCO and EU.

(“**Balat ve Fener Semtleri'nin Rehabilitasyonu**”, 1998, Ed. A team from Fatih Municipality, EU, UNESCO, French Anatolian Research Institute.)

Beginning from the 1st January, 2000, it was determined that the project studies should begin. EU gave 7 million Euros to the project from the fund of NGO; and Turkey made 2 million dollar contribution from the TOKİ (Prime Ministry Mass Housing Directorate) it was the first time that TOKİ funded an urban rehabilitation project.

It was realized that there was a *lack of specialist construction workers* as the Fener and Balat project was realized. To deal with this problem, and also for job education in the area, a **restoration school** was established. The Technical University of Berlin, which carried out many studies on Istanbul in the last century, undertakes the establishment of restoration school. The problem was solved when Istanbul Technical University also gave its support to the school project.

Dimitri Kantemir's Palace in Fener, Sancaktar Yokuşu (Sancaktar Rise) was chosen as the new place for the restoration school. The palace which was a collection of many different structures that belonged to Pious Foundations (Vakıflar) and Ministry of Treasury was transferred to Municipality thanks to efforts of Fener Volunteers Charity.

The aim of the school was teaching its students about timber, stone, iron, calligraphy and giving them a certificate and employing them in the project. In the restoration school it was aimed to give graduate education to both Turkish and German students.

#### **Activities:**

- Creation of a "*House of the Inhabitants*" to inform residents of the changes to be made to their living environment,
- Adoption of a policy for providing credits for rehabilitation,
- Creation of educational centres: Artisans' House, two post schooling extracurricular study centres, a technical institute for textiles,
- Creation of a centre for the reintegration of the drug-addicts and mother and child health care centre,
- Construction of children playgrounds and creation of open air sport facilities,
- Paving/ asphaltting of all the streets of the district,
- Connection to city's gas system and modernization of sewage system
- Public awareness/information campaign on family planning and vaccinations for the children.

#### **V. From Kreuzberg to Fener - Balat: 12 Principles of Conservative Urban Renewal**

Below, 12 principles, foreseen for Kreuzberg, and experience and problems about these 12 principles are given in italic. Then, our approach and suggestions about Fener – Balat are offered in a frame with each principle, problem and experience. Some of them are still in use and implementing during the Fener-Balat Project. (See Photo 4-5)

**Principle. 1 Urban renewal and rehabilitation must be guided, dependent on the requirements of people who are living in the towns and region, and planned together with them.**

This principle; at Fener-Balat Project also has importance. Obtaining economical, technical and labour contribution of public, supplying information and awareness about prevention of historical environment are needed. To achieve this will be become easier with leadership of civilian society organizations (NGO's) and under the co-operation of Fatih Municipality.

**Experience:** *Supporting appropriations are given only when the approvals of renters are taken. All renters, who are reproached with urban renewal, are given guidance services by independent renter advisers.*

Renting is also important problem for Fener-Balat District. Contacting with hosts cannot be possible every time. To convince renters is more difficult because they do not have any responsibility about building they are living in. Ownership situation may be important criteria for determination of houses that will be restored and reformed.

**Problem:** “Renter approval” and “renter consulting” that are two basic elements are not in the guarantee in a long term.

**Experience:** Old buildings are obtaining more quality with smaller cost than new buildings.

**Principle. 2** The foundation of urban renewal must be formed by the real agreement between users and precaution appliers.

Establishing Local Offices, having organizations in the street scale, contacting local people are important for Fener-Balat Project. Especially, situation of people in the struggle to make a living has importance.

**Experience:** The guidance services that are given in the east side of Kreuzberg are not limited with single fact; on the contrary two “district committee” are formed in which, citizens and administration are voting on local projects.

As a good case, Ankara - Hacibayram Mosque Environment Arrangement experience has importance for this subject. In that project is a “Consultation and Orientation Committee” was established with participation of Municipality and local people which carried out implementations.



**PHOTO 4-5. TEVKII CAFER QUARTER, VODINA STREET, NO: 2 (BEFORE AND AFTER RESTORATION)**

Source: <http://fenerbalat.org/homedb.php>

**Problem:** There are lots of problems (as unemployment), which are impossible to be solved by these planning councils.

Projecting and implementation processes will maintain several job opportunities. Making local youth and artisans to work in restoration, renovation and rehabilitation implementations in this project which can improve solution for socio-economic problems. This project must be presented as a “**Model of Society Development**” and “**Strategy**” by supply integration between Social-Centre, solid waste management, Balat Market projects and restoration implementations.

Studies have begun in the “**Social Center**” which was established as a part of the “Fener and Balat Program”. There were a child-care unit giving service all day long and sheltering 15 children of ages 4-5; 154 children at the school age were benefiting from the computer, mathematics and English courses after school. In addition, 118 women were attending health, nutrition, child-care and wood painting courses and seminars in the “Social Center.” (<http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/!Publish/tr/PR%20-%202006-PressRelease-44.doc>)

The aim of the Social Center is to enforce accessibility of inhabitants of these districts to basic social needs and services, especially women and children. In this way it is aimed to establish social uniformity and solidarity.

**Principle. 3** The situation in the redevelopment of the area is determined by fear and discontent. The feeling of trust and optimistic look to the future must be formed again. This principle must be dominant in all rent contracts. The damages which are threatening the main part of buildings must be removed by hasty programs in a short time.

It's needed to make inventory of the buildings, on about structural conditions and conservation positions and comfort situations. Buildings structurally weak, in danger are important and must be short term restorations.

**Experience:** There were many investments into the public funds from 1982 to 1985 in Kreuzberg, but the using of these funds could be inspected partly.

**Problems:** In guiding the programs, there were short term acts in many times more than as needed, so future planning, dependent on strong base, could not be strengthened.

Scheduling of plans and implementations, and supervising and follow of implementations have great importance. Implementation of Fener-Balat project must start in the most necessary and urgent zone. After infrastructure reform restoration and reparation implementations must be completed. This is still urgent in the area.

**Principle. 4, 5,6** Renewal must be verified gradually in a time. There must be a possibility in making addition to the basic standard in the first step with other precautions in the later step. In existing house, the possibilities, which are hidden for new residence forms must be used carefully. Urban situation must be repaired in small scales by little destruction, making the middle parts of block green and arranging exterior sides and fire walls.

Evaluation of exterior side architecture and aesthetics and internal architecture/comfort must be made by using special inventory cards in a scientific way. After this evaluation we can decide method of dealing with each building. Separated case of houses, number of family living in, infrastructure/comfort conditions must carefully dealt with. Reparation of single buildings will divided into categories

Such as structural, simple, paint/ plaster reparation and street side reparations will completed with related with all these.

**Experience:** Thanks to block architects and big house maker companies who are gotten all relevant surroundings' trust, the principles from 4 to 6 are being applied successfully.

Determining the criteria for the firms will be chosen for the restoration /rehabilitation is important. Criteria for determining the Firms are; organization capacities, technical availability.

Technical Support Team, so as to make a ranking for the houses that were to be restored, with participation of Municipality of Fatih, designed two sets of ranking systems; one of architecture and one of social concerns. Necessary data was established with two separate field studies. In the evaluation of the structures location, architectural value, historical value, the level of needed restoration inside and outside of the structure, earthquake risk, the possible changes of use during and after the restoration, the impact of the restoration to its environment, the level of difficulty in taking permission of Conservation Council (due to illegal additions in structure) were adopted as architectural criteria. (See Map 3)

**Problems:** *Many single enterprises and private companies are trying to let loose the principles in a meandering way by their own architects' mediation.*

With this project it is aimed that inhabitants' standards of living should be improved and urban space should be enhanced.

As the constructions continued, the study of preparation of the necessary documents are rapidly processing for the restoration of the second stage of restoration; a rather more detailed and comprehensive work including houses, shops and building that would be used as social centre facilities (<http://www.deltur.cec.eu.int/Publish/tr/DELTUR04FB-W01-PressRelease-3.doc>, AU Turkish Delegations, 9 April 2005 Dated Press Release).

**Principle. 7** “Public facilities must be renewed dependent on the requirements and completed by widening.”

Urban social and technical infrastructure will be determined according to the standards. If deficiency of some infrastructure will be fixed, those will be supply beginning from the most urgent.

**Experience:** *Kreuzberg is a neighbourhood, constructed in a whole, in which verifying ability, like the addition of facilities (as schools) to the region by not getting rid of the renters and users, was obligatory.*

**Problems:** *Public projects take long time.*

While planning it's needed to fixation of the absence of Social Infrastructure (education, health, open/green areas, child playgrounds, sport areas, religious etc.). To supply them is a new project except social-centre and Balat Market.

**Principle. 8** “Urban renewal requires an agreement on principles of social planning as a first condition. By these principles people's participation and economic justices' arrangement is obligatory (people who are reproached with the renewal).”

To determining the “Principles of Social Planning” for the Case of Fener-Balat, it is needed to re-evaluate and renew social interviews which it has been done before, while using some methods of sampling. This interview will be applicative at the area to determine the social, economic and cultural positions and conservation consciousness also.

**Experience:** *All forms of participation to the administration, mentioned in the first and second points, are determined elements of the social planning in the application.*

**Problems:** *The connectivity and guarantee in a long time, which are given to the social planning are still inadequate today.*

The solid waste campaign which was established within this context was realized in four primary schools in February-March 2005. Within this context, 1250 students were given the solid waste and environment-consciousness seminars; and 150 students were trained in studio works. Within the solid waste campaign, in March 29, 2005, recycling trash bins were distributed to 2500 houses in Fener and Balat Districts.

**Principle. 9** **“For guiding urban renewal, decision making must be clear, on the other hand the agents of people who are reproached with renewal must be strengthened and decision maker committees whose meetings are in the relevant region must be formed.”**

**Experience:** *Organization of people, who are reproached with renewal, is very different among each other. The association model is the best successful organization model until today. (SO 36 Association)*

**Problems:** *The association model cannot be applicable for all places.*

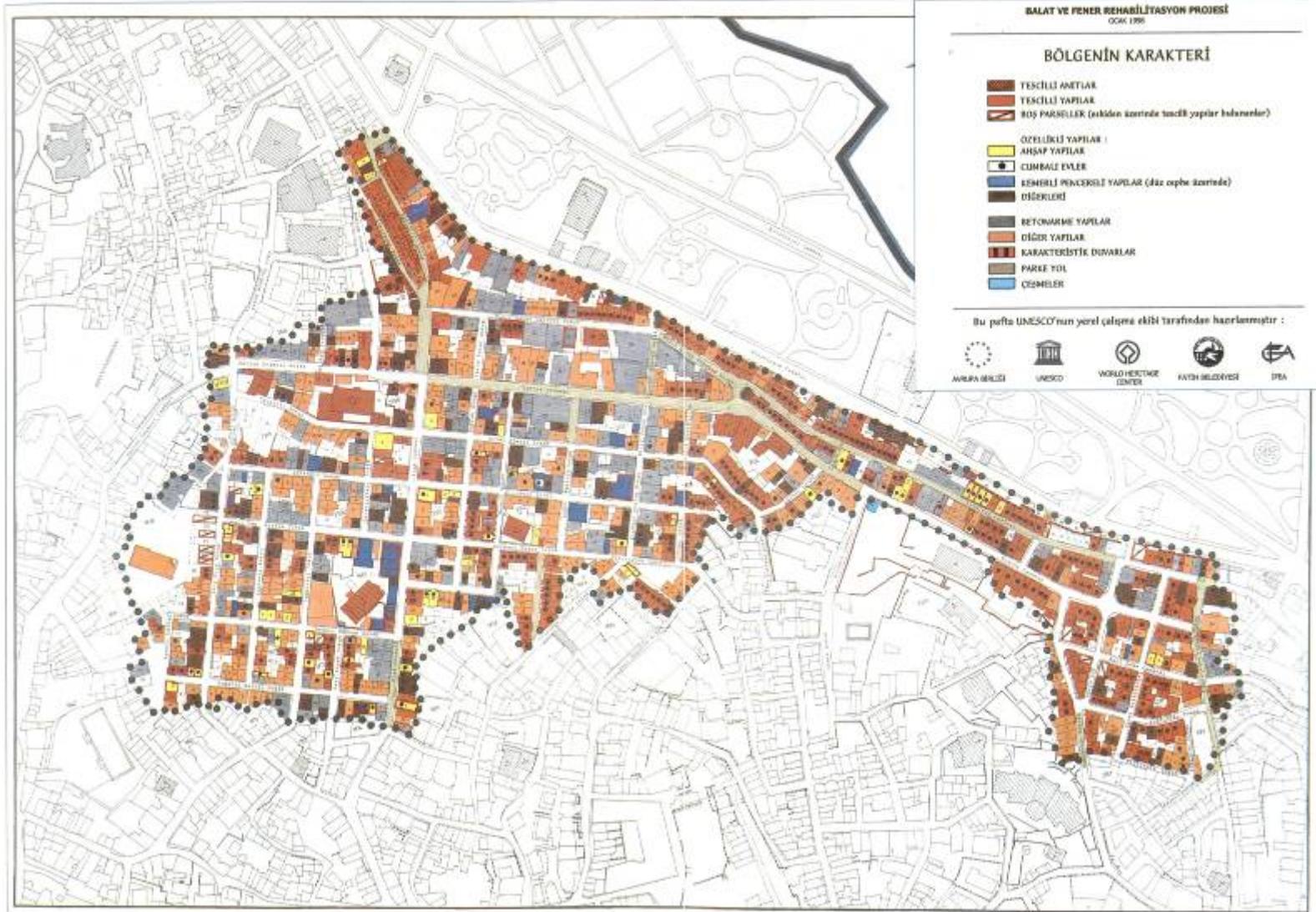
At Fener-Balat Districts; analysis for organisations such as “Civil Public Organisations”, “Foundation/Vakifs”, “Cooperatives/Housing and Tourism”, “Company-Public Cooperation” and will be chosen one or two.

*In the local meetings, the scope of restoration and the contracts between Municipality and property owners were discussed in addition to election criteria. As a result of the studies it was decided that property owners which were to benefit from the restoration should not sell their property in five years; that they should not make any constructions/interventions against the restoration plan; that they should give priority to the prior tenants while renting their property and they should make increase in the rents according to the legal framework.*

**Principle.10** **“Urban renewal that can be trusted requires the certain financing guarantees.”**

**Experience:** *In the urban renewal there must be a period for 2 or 3 years for preparation. Hence what will be supported after 3 years must be known clearly today.*

**Problems:** *In guiding the program “stop and go” is the thing which is continuously run into.*



**MAP 3. THE CHARACTER OF THE FENER-BALAT AREA**

Source: Balat ve Fener Semtleri'nin Rehabilitasyonu, 1998, Fatih Bel., AB, UNESCO, Fransız Anadolu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü.

Financial continuity and getting back models has to be building up. This is needed for a “Sustainable Conservation Model” and continuity of implementations.

**Principle. 11** “About taking on institutions, all chances must be used for improving new forms.”

**Experience:** *The best taken on institutions are public companies and ‘make it yourself’ associations.*

**Problems:** *The province government intends supporting the activities of public taken on institutions, only in an abstaining manner.*

**Principle. 12** “Also after 1984, all precautions must guarantee the urban renewal in accordance with this project.”

**Problems:** *The foresight about the perspective of the urban renewal in Kreuzberg after 1987 is difficult until now. There is a deficiency of not clearly putting the politic aims about this subject.*

One of the main important components of Fener-Balat Project is, after the Project implementations, a sustainable & continuous environmental and building restoration unit/organisation will be actively work nearby the Local Government (Fatih Municipality).

In the context of “*Fener and Balat Districts Rehabilitation Program*” executed by European Union and Municipality of Fatih, restoration studies started in 26 houses elected with the property owner’s approval. As a result of the adjudication of Turkish Delegation of European Committee in August of 2004, a contractor firm executed the restorations. (See Photo 4-5)

Restoration of the 26 houses was to be completed in 8 months and would cost approximately 377.000 Euros. In these houses, roofs and façades will be repaired, main entrance doors and windows would be renewed, and the additions of low quality would be replaced. It is aimed that the original architectural values of the houses should be protected and physical conditions would be improved. Monitoring and acceptance of the restoration made by the contractor firm should be done by Technical Support Team that was working together with Municipality of Fatih.