

Urban Change and Town Centres: Istanbul Historic Peninsula

In the past, city planning was only interested in the utilization of land and the morphology of the city. Today, the prospect directed to the social problems and reviving the economy is more on the agenda. The purpose is to form the positive environmental conditions of the partners between the public and private sector and to arrange the developments directed to maximum utilization for all the city citizens.

Urban Change

The cities are now in an economic competition. This competition influences the comparison of cultural conditions, universal equipment and life quality.

The quality of a city is displayed by its available sources and this quality is also an incentive in order to improve the economic status. The quality of the design in the historical city centers and in the new urban areas is presented by the cultural image. This presentation is as important as the historical "heritage" and protection of the natural environment.(www.srl.de/service)

The city is not only an "economic machine". A city worth living is obliged to display its development facilities for its citizens. New urban areas should be "healthy" and "sustainable" and the historical city centers that preserved their characteristics for many years should be taken as a sample in the design. (Lennard S.H.C., Ungarn-Sternberg S., Lennard L.H., p.iv).

According to Athens Report of 1933, many city planners are criticizing this "functional city" against the developing function discrimination. Because, an urban life displaying diversity had lost its meaning with the absence of the mixed functions.(Sauberzweig D., p.24)

According to the new urbanism concept, the urban areas will live equally all day long and at evening hours. An integrated city life is an important incentive in order to underline special characteristics and to regain the attractiveness of city centers. (Teufel E., p.17)

The environmental conditions had changed on the global scale and the change in the economic structure had influenced the development in the cities. Big shopping centers are built in many cities. (Sauberzweig D., p.24) These are attractive alternative points for side-centers, they contain organized mixed branches in their structures, and they are secure and clean locations. At the same time, shopping centers are an alternative stage for monetary culture. These may complete the public place network, however, they can not substitute a public place only by themselves. Because, the streets and squares are privatized.(Adrian H., p.264)
The construction of many big shopping centers may be interpreted as the incorrect development of the city. Because this development style definitely weakens our old city centers and retail trade and causes the liveliness of the past to disappear. (Teufel E., p.17)

Our cities and their centers are rapidly changing, their transport and infrastructure networks are becoming insufficient, their identities are disappearing as the historical and cultural values disappear, and ruin areas, which are abandoned to their destinies, are being formed. (Bademli R., p.87)

Istanbul Central Business Area and Space Changes

İstanbul, which served as the capital city to East Roman and Ottoman civilizations, preserved this title after the foundation of the Republic. (Altıntaş H., p.421)

The first core of the central business area of the city extends back to Byzantine period. Historical peninsula - Eminönü Region were also lively areas, where trade was intense during Ottoman Period. (Dökmeci V., Dülgeroğlu Y., Berköz Akkal L. , p. 19) By the beginning of 1980's, it was still functioning as the primary center, where wholesale and retail trade small scale manufacturing industry etc. were active.

The social and economic developments in the recent years; transformed the urban structure into a multi-central form with characteristics special to itself. This multi-central development was realized haphazardly on the shore of Marmara Sea, Bosphorus and surrounding arteries.

The old central business area of İstanbul is not a dominant employment center now. It was moved away from the mentioned area because of an economic transformation that require big and modern office areas and private car transportation. (Dökmeci V., Berköz L., p.91,94)

On the other side, Eminönü, which was the oldest and biggest center, is the richest one regarding the traditional business activities of the city. Commercial division of labor and wholesale and retail trade activities are still preserving their importance. (Tümertekin E., p.192).

In 1980 İstanbul Master Plan, the city was provided to develop linearly on the axis of east-west. This was a correct choice that would protect the lungs (in other words, the forests) of the city located on the north. However, after 1980, the changes, which are far from aesthetics and that disregard the social interests, increased with the choices based on capital and profit maximization. (Sönmez M., p.108) Thus, modern shopping centers, hotels, business, management centers were influential in determination of the development direction of the central business areas. In this development, traditional center ad new center (or the sub-center) competition emerged like the sample cities in some developed countries. (Özdemir D.A., p.103)

Eminönü Trade Buildings although the historical structure in the region is damaged in some places, many important buildings still exist. However, the restoration of these buildings that are in a bad situation is required. In the restored buildings, there are the problems of false functioning or the application problems, which are not in compliance with the original.

Against the spectacular, illuminated shopping centers, the historical peninsula and Eminönü region, where the commercial activities are intensified besides the touristic identity, are still the place where the pulse of the traditional shopping is felt. In order to regain the old attractiveness of this region and improve it in the sense of space, it is clearly seen that a powerful policy is required.

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