

## **Waterfront Revitalization as a Challenging Urban Issue in Istanbul**

### **Introduction**

Water was an important natural resource in the growth of early settlements. By having various features -a defense element, a source for agricultural production and trade, a means for transportation and industrial uses- water offered many advantages for cities. Therefore, locations that existed on water's edges, especially natural and protective harbors, became favorable sites for the foundation of ancient cities. So, contrary to contemporary condition, throughout the history, there was a close and integrated water-city relation.

Besides its dominance in settlement's activities, water was also determinant in the development of urban form and pattern. The type of water resource - river, sea, lake or canal- shapes the development of the settlement. "For cities located on the great lakes ...the urban shoreline marks one edge of the city and development occurs farther inland." (Wrenn 1983, 26) On the other hand, "Some cities are bisected by rivers and urban development takes place on both sides of the water." Like the other landforms -mountains, valleys, and hills- water also influences the formation of urban pattern. Especially in early times when people did not have the knowledge to modify nature, they shape their living environment according to natural resources. As mentioned by Jacobs, "At some point, topography and natural features such as rivers show in street patterns...The street and block patterns of early European hill cities reflect topography. Similarly the impact of rivers shows, not only as undulating linear bands of public space between areas of streets and development blocks, but as determinants of the development patterns themselves". (Jacobs 1993, 256)

In this context, by being an interface between city and water, waterfronts are one of the most complex and challenging urban lands in cities. For contemporary waterfront cities, it is very critical to understand the changing structure of urban waterfronts and their integration with the existing city structure. Specifically, port zones, that experienced a significant transformation throughout the history, are remarkable cases to discuss this issue. For this reason, this paper focuses on waterfront revitalization projects that were developed for port zones.

### **Historical Development of Port Zones**

Throughout the history, urban waterfronts have been in a cycle of transformation and diverse uses took place on waterfronts such as fishing, defense, trade, transportation, industry, and recreation. Each of these activities shaped waterfronts in different ways and offered a different water-city integration model. As the main concern of this study is the revitalization of port zones in contemporary cities, this part will focus on the historical evolution of waterfronts in former port cities. Although every city has a different evolution period depending on its geographical features, size, economy and other local conditions, a common model of development can be determine for all port cities. "This process can be illustrated from San Francisco to Sydney, from Southampton to Singapore.... Each case is unique, but the underlying principle remain largely the same" (Hoyle 1993, 333).

Stage	Symbol ○ city ● port	Period	Characteristics
I Primitive cityport		Ancient-medieval to 19th century	Close spatial and functional association between city and port
II Expanding cityport		19th-early 20th century	Rapid commercial and industrial growth forces port to develop beyond city confines, with linear quays and break-bulk industries
III Modern industrial cityport		mid-20th century	Industrial growth (especially oil refining) and introduction of containers and ro-ro facilities require separation and increased space
IV Retreat from the waterfront		1960s-1980s	Changes in maritime technology induce growth of separate maritime industrial development areas
V Redevelopment of the waterfront		1970s-1990s	Large-scale modern port consumes large areas of land- and water-space; urban renewal of original core

(Source: B.S. Hoyle, D.A. Pinder and M.S. Husain, ed. *Revitalising the Waterfront*. London, Belhaven Press, 1988)

**Figure1. Hoyle's historical model for port-city development. (Vallega 1993, 25)**

As stated before, in ancient times, locating on water's edge was an important criterion in the site selection of settlements. "Among the earliest cities of Mesopotamia, the common thread was the presence of a major river which provided...transport for...materials and food, a line of defense, a source of drinking water, and a means of power." (Craig-Smith & Fagence 1995, 1) Besides giving advantages for the basic activities, water was also an important means in the development of trade. With the improvement of trade, small ports that provide access to other cities were constructed on water's edge and settlements began to specialize as port cities. That caused spatial changes in the shoreline and waterfronts became heart of the cities' economy. At that time, waterfronts were also serving as social interaction points. "In the nineteenth century, visiting a port city meant becoming acquainted with a microcosm that seemed to include all nationalities, cultures, and ethnic groups; a visit to a port city was an introduction to the world". (Meyer 1999, 32) Waterfronts were the "theater of coming and going". (Kostof 1991, 44) Consequently, at that period, there was a close spatial and functional connection between port and city.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, landscape of waterfronts started to change and waterfronts turned into the places of industrial activities. As a result of rapid industrialization and developments in shipping technology, new scale of activities, which required different site organizations, had emerged on waterfronts. Factories, huge size warehouses and docks were constructed in the place of wooden piers and new port zones were developed. At that time, urban waterfronts were not the places of attraction or recreation. There was the dominance of industry rather than human scale activities and that created a physical and social segregation between port and city. As stated by Craig-Smith and Fagence, in the last 200 years, waterfronts were mostly used for industrial and utility activities such as port facilities, manufacturing industry, boat building and maintenance, water supply, drainage, sewage-treatment plants, electricity power generation. (Craig-Smith & Fagence 1995) These uses caused inaccessibility of citizens to waterfronts. Although waterfronts had great impacts in cities' economy, they had a negative image in cities.

So, in the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, all industrial activities and port facilities in city centers began to move to outer city zones by leaving vast urban lands. For instance, 2000 hectares of waterfront land in London and 17.5 miles of riverfront in Pittsburgh were abandoned. (Hall 1993) Technological improvements were not the only reason of this movement. Newly emerging demands of post-industrial cities -ecological attempts, changing life of society and need of recreational activities- also encouraged the shift of ports. Waterfronts isolated from the physical, social and economic life of cities. They turned into the challenging urban lands. At that period, the integrated port-city model of 19<sup>th</sup> century disappeared. That caused significant spatial changes in cities and also in waterfront – city integration.

In this context, in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, revitalization of waterfronts emerged as one of the most important issues of urban design and planning disciplines. It became an opportunity to improve the social, physical and economical condition of cities. “So while the abandonment of an old port by deep-sea shipping may seem a short-term negative in terms of attracting capital to a city, it actually opens up a priceless opportunity to create a new image for a city or a region.” (Marshall 2001, 77) By situating close to water, waterfronts are differing from the other urban lands. They are located at city centers. As water’s edges were places where settlements were originated, many historical buildings exist on waterfronts. So, waterfronts offer unique potentials for new urban developments. Increasing demand for recreational activities became determinant in the development of waterfronts and waterfronts were mostly designed as new public open spaces of cities that are totally challenging with their former structure.

### **Waterfront Revitalization in the World**

Waterfront revitalization has been the most remarkable urban development attempt in the world during the last two decades. Bruttomesso defines waterfront revitalization as a “genuine urban revolution”. (Bruttomesso 1993, 10) Waterfronts had experienced the most radical urban revitalization of 20<sup>th</sup> century cities by having transformation in their physical layout, function, use and social pattern. As most of the world’s big city centers are located on water’s edge, revitalization of waterfronts referred to downtown development. Being new potential urban lands, waterfronts offer great opportunities to make contemporary pieces of cities. So, integration of those lands with the existing urban fabric became an important issue of urban design and planning disciplines.

In this context, in order to discuss the waterfront revitalization attempts in Istanbul, it is important to analyze projects that are already developed in other world cities. First attempts of waterfront revitalization process emerged in 1960s in Baltimore and then in Boston and in San Francisco. These were the multifunctional projects that became models for the following revitalization projects developed in Europe and North America. Since waterfront revitalization is a global phenomenon, all world cities experienced a similar process in a different time period. Waterfront redevelopment attempts in “West Indies ...and the Kingston Waterfront, with its luxury apartment, convention hotel, shopping malls, and prestige office blocks has much in common with comparable schemes in North America and Europe” (Craig-Smith & Fagence 1995, 99). Basically, most of the revitalization projects in the world were seeking for same purposes. Although every project has their own objectives depending on local conditions, they share some common goals such as redefinition of waterfront’s position in the urban context, remaking the urban image and regeneration of the economy.

Definition of the waterfront’s new role in the urban context is the main concern of all projects. Most of the projects see waterfronts as lands to be reclaimed from water in order to create an extension of existing city centers. Designers and planners tried to turn waterfronts into places in which people want to live, work and play. Sydney Darling Harbor is a project that exemplifies this case; “Our first principle was that this place should be designed for people to use. It should be a gathering place, a promenading, people-watching place, a place to sit, to eat and drink and talk, gaze at the city skyline, watch the activity on the water. That sort of place.” (Young 1993, 266) There are several reasons of this public attitude; but, the most important one is the shift of cities from industrial to service economy, which brought a new understanding of city space. After 1960s, there was a demand of public spaces in cities for recreational and leisure uses. Similar to the other leftover spaces, waterfronts became suitable urban lands to construct newly emerging trends of society. Therefore, recreation – including commercial facilities, housing blocks, entertainment units, sport facilities, cultural centers and parks- became the most dominant concept in the definition of contemporary waterfronts.

Another major objective of projects is to improve urban image. As stated by Short, "What sells the city is the image of the city." (Short 1996, 431) So, after the shift to post industrial economy, one of the most important issues for cities is to remake their images both on national and international level. Public and private leaders wanted to remove negative effects of abandoned industrial sites. They looked for an entirely new image to compete with other world cities and decided to reestablish the image of postindustrial city on waterfronts. Sydney and Bilbao are two leading examples of cities that promote their waterfronts. Both cities became worldwide known cities after the revitalization of their waterfronts. Every year, approximately 15 million people visit Sydney's waterfront.

In addition to remaking the urban image, revitalization of urban waterfronts is also important in the economic growth of cities. After the shift from manufacturing, cities began to look for new economies and waterfronts became advantageous urban centers that bring good incomes to cities. In this context, effect of Bilbao Guggenheim Museum to local economy is remarkable. "Before the museum was built, the weekend occupation rate of the hotels in the city was only about 20 percent. Today, it is practically impossible to find a room during the weekends." (Vegara 2001, 91) Another example can be the case of Baltimore that realizes the role of capital in waterfront development. After the Baltimore Inner Harbor revitalization program, 15 000 jobs were created in addition to the development of a new tourism industry that caters to "6.5 million tourists who spent almost \$3 billion in the city in 1999". (Millspaugh 2001, 75)

Consequently, in post-industrial cities, the position of water and waterfronts in the city context was radically changed. Urban waterfronts became destination for mass leisure, sightseeing and tourism. Boyer describes contemporary urban waterfronts as "leisure time zones" that are contained with shopping malls, restaurants, parks, hotels, residential units, cultural centers and with many other entertainment facilities. Although waterfront revitalization has great impacts in the physical, social and economical structures of contemporary cities, there are also some challenging points. Like the many other urban structures, waterfronts are under the dominance of globalization. Today, everything became mobile; not only people but also culture, images, needs and preferences also travel by international tourist and by visual images. So, tourists are mostly looking same facilities and activities without considering the unique and local characteristics of a place. This caused standardization in most of the waterfront scheme in different cities. As Turkey is newly experiencing this process, standard activities that exist in most waterfronts are also proposed for the projects developed in Turkey. In this context, the contemporary waterfront revitalization attempts for the city of Istanbul will be discussed in the following part of this paper.

### **Waterfront Revitalization Attempts in Istanbul**

In Turkey, most of the industrial centers are located near water's edge. Therefore Turkey has a great potential in terms of waterfront revitalization. But, Turkish port cities experience a different evolution period than the other world cities. Most ports are still in an active use in city centers. Port cities in Turkey did not experience an abandonment period that causes problems for cities. In this context, it can be stated that waterfront revitalization is a newly emerging trend in Turkey.

Istanbul, being an important port city in the history, is an impressive case that experience revitalization process. Istanbul is not just a waterfront city; it is a city on water. Water had been always dominant in Istanbul's life by being a defense element, a way for trade, a means of transportation, a source for industrial activities and a recreational element. As ports were acting as important interaction points, they became essential elements of urban structure in the city. So, waterfront revitalization is an important issue for the development of Istanbul. Revitalization of Haliç's waterfront in 1980's is the first large scale implemented project. Besides Haliç, in recent years, some projects were also developed for the port areas of

Istanbul; such as “Kadıköy Square Haydarpaşa-Harem Urban Design Competition” in 2001, and “Galata Port” Project. Since the implementation of such projects takes many years, last two projects were not put in to action yet. So, the main intentions and ideas of those projects will be discussed in the scope of this paper.

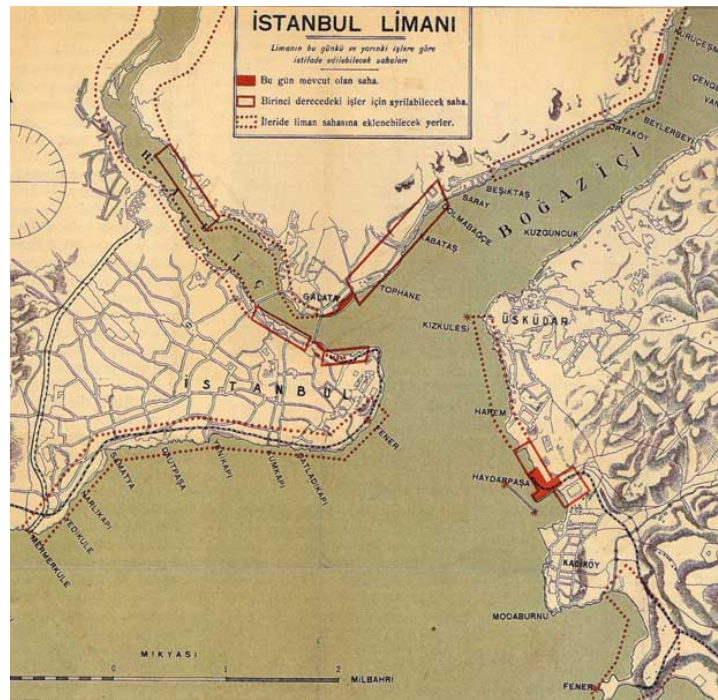


Figure2. Existing ports and potential port lands of Istanbul in early 1900s. (Koraltürk 2001, 95)

### ***Revitalization of Haliç's Waterfront***

By being a naturally protective bay 7.5 km in length, Haliç is a specific geographical entity. Greatest merchant harbors of Mediterranean world were located on Haliç. Haliç was the main reason of the foundation of the city in the Historical Peninsula; there was the port before the city.

Similar to the other world cities, by the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial structures began to arise along the Haliç's water edge. Especially, in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Haliç's waterfront became a working land with full of factories and warehouses. Prost's plan in 1930s for the city of Istanbul was also encouraged industrial development on the waterfront. This dominance of industry in Haliç continued until 1980s. With the emergence of waterfront revitalization concept in 1950s in North America and in 1960s in Europe, in the mid of 1970s regeneration of Haliç's waterfront came into the agenda and authorities began to think about the decentralization of industrial facilities from Haliç. Between 1975 and 1977, many symposiums and studies were done about this transformation. At the end of those studies it was decided to remove the undesirable effect of contaminated water in Haliç and to develop a waterfront zone with recreational and cultural activities.

By the beginning of 1980s, industrial facilities began to move from Haliç's waterfront. In 1981, a commission was founded for this process. But, after 1984 this organization was ignored. During this period, all warehouses, factories and also some old neighborhoods, in an area of 50-100m widths from the shoreline, were destroyed and transformed to an empty green area that weakened the relation between sea and the city.

Haliç's waterfront revitalization is the most considerable process in Istanbul as being the first example. But, results of the process were disappointing. In this context, the project can be criticized from several points. First, the project site was homogenized without considering the specific conditions of different zones. Same model were implemented to the whole area. The waterfront turned into a passive green linear edge. Second, after the implementation of the project, Haliç's waterfront did not become an attractive urban center as mentioned at the beginning of the process. Although undesirable effects of industrial facilities were removed from Haliç's edge, due to the lack of other urban facilities, the waterfront did not turn to an urban area that were highly used by citizens. It did not integrated with the existing urban fabric. Concisely, the project is neither reflects the unique features of a waterfront land nor responds to society's needs.



**Figure 3. Parkway on Haliç's waterfront. Haliç's waterfront were homogenized by applying the same green area model to the whole area. (Yüçetürk 2001, XII)**

### ***Kadıköy Square Haydarpaşa-Harem Urban Design Competition***

By the improvements in trade in 19<sup>th</sup> century, existing ports in Haliç became insufficient and new port areas needed for the city of Istanbul. At that time, besides the redevelopment of existing ports in Haliç and Galata, construction of new ports in other parts of the city was decided. After the development of railways in 1880s in Haydarpaşa, authorities decided to build a new modern port -Haydarpaşa port- in Kadıköy. By the construction of Haydarpaşa Port in 1903, the area became an important transportation node for the city. Later in 1950s, the port was expanded and redeveloped to adapt the improvements in maritime technology. In those years, the port became one of the major ports of Turkey.

Today, Haydarpaşa port is isolated from the city life with its warehouses and back-up land for storage facilities. Port zone is a valuable urban land as being located in the center of Istanbul. With the "Kadıköy Square, Haydarpaşa-Harem Urban Design Competition", replacement of the Haydarpaşa port came on the agenda. Although, the port has a high working capacity, the shift of the port to outer city zone is projected for the future. But this is not the only reason of the development of a competition for this district of the city. In last three decades, the city of Istanbul faced with a functional and physical deterioration of urban spaces due to the pressure of migration and rapid urbanization. This brought the necessity of the redevelopment and revitalization of some urban lands in the city center. The project site, where Harem Bus Terminal, Haydarpaşa Port, Haydarpaşa Customhouse, Haydarpaşa Train Station -intersection of three transportation modes- exist, becomes one of these urban lands. Therefore, in 2001, the Greater Municipality of Istanbul organized a competition project for the site. The main objective of this competition is to redevelop the project site as an urban space for the metropolis of Istanbul. Some purposes of this project were declared in the competition brief as following:

- To evaluate all existing plans and decisions proposed for the site,
- To develop the physical and functional conditions of the site in order to integrate it with its surrounding,
- To analyze waterfront projects that were developed from Kartal to Moda and from Uskudar to Harem to facilitate their connection with the project site,
- To redefine the identity of Kadıköy Square that is one of the most important centers of the city,
- To propose a new transportation scheme for the site,
- To encourage fine arts.



**Figure 4. Existing condition of the project site with a working port.**  
(Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi vol.4 1994, 31)



**Figure 5. Image proposed by the project that was selected for the first prize.**  
(<http://www.promim.com>)

Based on these intentions, it can be stated that the context of the competition is far from being a waterfront revitalization project. The project site is exactly a waterfront land; but nothing was mentioned about this unique feature of the site in the competition brief. The site was expressed like any other urban land of the city rather than as a waterfront. Concisely, the major identity of the site was ignored in the competition brief. Although that project did not implemented yet, by analyzing the completion brief and the project that was selected for the first prize, it can be stated that a similar waterfront model –including aquarium, passenger terminal, recreational areas, commercial and cultural centers- to the other word cities was proposed to the project site.

### **Galata Port Project**

Throughout the history, Galata had been always a significant settlement in the history of Istanbul. It was the economic center of the city where commercial and port activities took place. Like the other port cities, various ethnic and religious groups were settled in Galata. So, Galata Port project area, covering a land of 100.000 m<sup>2</sup> from Karaköy to Tophane including Karaköy Port and Salı Pazarı, is an important historical quarter of the city.



**Figure 6. Existing condition of Karaköy Port. (Archive of TMO)**

In the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Karaköy Port is one of the most active port of Istanbul. But in 1980s, being situated at the city center, the port zone became unsuitable for the increasing traffic of vessels and trucks. Therefore, the port was closed to vessels in 1986 and to trucks in 1988 and began to serve only as a passenger port. But, because of its configuration, the port did not operate properly for such a use. Therefore, TMO (Turkish Maritime Organization) decided to develop a project, named 'Galata Port', for this area. They intended to construct a contemporary passenger port similar to the models that were developed in western countries with many tourist-oriented activities -hotel, aquarium, commercial center, leisure and cultural facilities. Like the many other waterfront regeneration and revitalization projects, the main aim of the project is stated as creating an international culture and tourism center that will bring an economical and commercial vitality to Istanbul and also that will develop Istanbul's image in the national and international level. General Director of TMO declared that after the implementation of this project a new tourism industry will develop in Istanbul and it is expected that 12 million tourists in a year, coming by passenger ships, will visit "Galata Port". (<http://www.arkitera.com/haberler/2002/03/12/istanbul2.htm>)

Contrary to this, Galata Port Project is highly discussed and criticized by different groups. There are many controversies and objections by mass media, city dwellers and non governmental organizations for the content and scope of the project. The project is criticized as destroying the historical characteristic of the site, creating a barrier between the city and sea and preventing the public access to the waterfront.



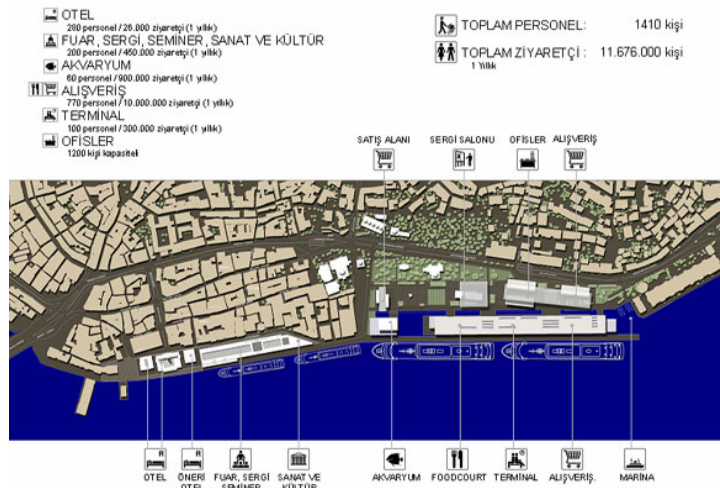


Figure 7. Plan of Galata Port with all the typical uses; hotel, aquarium, offices, cultural and commercial centers. (Archive of TMO)

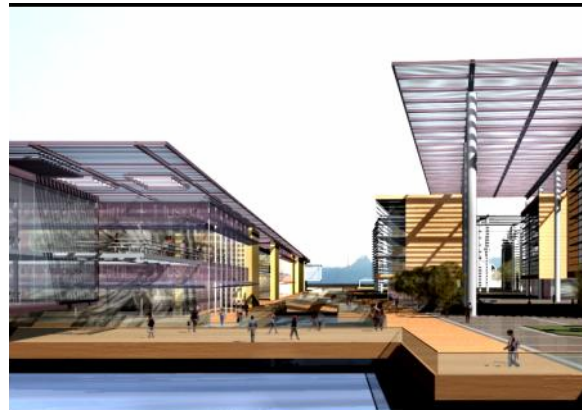


Figure 8. Existing warehouses of Salıpaazarı Port.(Archive of TMO)  
Figure 9. Proposed image for the warehouse district. (Archive of TMO)

## Conclusion

Today, under the dominance of global economy and changing dynamics of urban life, distinctive characteristics of waterfronts and cities ignored in many revitalization projects. “New towns in towns are rising on the sites of decaying piers. Upscale shopping is replacing abandoned warehouses. Parks are greening the old concrete shorelines and ferries...are using waterways that were once the realm of cruise ships.” (Bender 1993, 33) This scene exists almost in every contemporary urban waterfront that is situated in different world cities. There are many similarities between waterfront projects developed in Baltimore and Europe or in an Asian city. In this context, waterfront revitalization can be criticized as being standardized.

Since there is a competition between cities to attract more people and capital, cities began to copy models that have successfully implemented in other world cities in order to warranty their success. Therefore several models of a waterfront revitalization program were determined from the projects that were successfully completed and many small and medium size cities adapted these models. Baltimore Inner Harbor development, pioneer of the waterfront revitalization, was copied by many other world cities. For example, aquariums become the most attractive element of waterfronts schemes to revitalize the abandoned waterfronts and attract more money. “Baltimore’s National Aquarium has been the number-

one paid tourist attraction in Maryland, drawing 1.5 million people a year, generating \$128 million in annual revenues for the region, and increasing adjacent land values.” (Gunts 1992, 59) Therefore, most North American cities constructed aquariums on their waterfronts after the success of Baltimore. Such configuration of waterfront models spread all around the world including small sized cities and towns. But, standardization of the process originates several challenges; because this does not include only “some construction standards but also organizational methods, spatial typologies, and architectural forms, thus generating a monotonous sense of déjà vu, that make places and structures impossible to distinguish”. (Bruttomesso 2001, 48)

In recent years, Turkish port cities have also tendencies to implement such projects for their waterfronts. Two main attempts can be determined for the waterfront development in Turkey. First one is short-term projects that were planned by the construction of a highway and green areas parallel to the water on a land gained by landfills. Revitalization of Haliç’s waterfront is the most remarkable example of this approach. Many coastal towns in Turkey experienced a similar process to Haliç. Second attempt is long-term revitalization projects. In early 2000’s, authorities realized the advantages of waterfront revitalization and began to develop large-scale and long-term waterfront projects for several port zones of Turkish cities. In this context, two significant projects were developed for the city of Istanbul; “Kadıköy Square Haydarpaşa-Harem Urban Design Competition” and “Galata Port”. Even though these projects are not implemented yet, it can be argued that they have similar contexts with other worldwide processes in terms of their intentions. Aquariums, commercial centers, cultural facilities and various tourist activities were proposed in the scope of those projects. As, both project sites are the most remarkable urban lands of the city, revitalization of those lands is very important for the development of Istanbul’s image in the global level. Although these two projects offer great opportunities for the city of Istanbul, integration of those global models and local conditions and requirements of Istanbul generate challenges. Concisely, like the many other urban waterfronts, Istanbul’s waterfronts are under the dominance of homogenization and standardization.

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