

TURKEY

Threats to the World Heritage in the Changing Metropolitan Areas of Istanbul

The Historic Areas of Istanbul on the Bosphorus peninsula were inscribed in 1985 in the World Heritage List, not including Galata and without a buffer zone to protect the surroundings. Risks for the historic urban topography of Istanbul, especially by a series of high-rise buildings threatening the historic urban silhouette, were already presented in *Heritage at Risk 2006/2007* (see the visual impact assessment study by Astrid Debold-Kritter on pp. 159–164).

In the last years, dynamic development and transformation have changed the metropolitan areas with a new scale of building interventions and private investments. Furthermore, the privatisation of urban areas and the development of high-rise buildings with large ground plans or in large clusters have dramatically increased. Conflicts in managing the World Heritage areas of Istanbul Metropolis derive from changing the law relevant for the core areas. Conservation sites and areas of conservation were proposed in 1983. In 1985, the historic areas of Istanbul were inscribed on the basis of criteria 1 to 4. The four “core areas”, Archaeological Park, Süleymaniye conservation site, Zeyrek conservation site, and the Theodosian land walls were protected by Law 2863, which in Article I(4) gives a definition of “conservation” and of “areas of conservation”. Article II defines right and responsibility: “cultural and natural property cannot be acquired through possession”; article 17 states that “urban development plans for conservation” have to be prepared and approved. In 2005, this law was substituted by Law 5366, which instead of the conservation aspect declares: “The aim of this law is to rebuild and restore the regions in accordance with the development of the region, which are registered and announced as sites by cultural and natural protection boards.” The focus of Law 5366 is on land development and renewal, which means reconstruction, destruction and relocation rather than preserving the existing historic buildings in the World Heritage areas. This new law facilitates the privatisation of large areas in the hands of international developers. Now we have urgent conflicts between the aims of preservation and metropolitan planning, such as the development of metropolitan and intercontinental traffic projects on land and sea concentrated in the historic centre, new traffic infrastructure projects like bridges and new transportation systems, projects out of proportion compared to the surrounding historic urban landscape. Protected traditional views and the monumental urban silhouette could be degraded by ambitious new traffic constructions. Open public spaces will be diminished by new transportation infrastructure. The city highway along the peninsula shore is 25 m wide. Large-scale traffic projects as the Golden Horn Bridge will cause a degradation of historic buildings, of monuments and urban heritage illustrating very distinguished phases of human history. Expropriations, demolitions and relocations have been decided for several historic buildings and large-scale transformation and construction are being planned for tourism and business.

Impact assessment studies on traditional and popular places have not been made from the pedestrian’s perspective, but only from a helicopter and from the bird’s eye view. A proper simulation would demonstrate that famous views would be completely disturbed by



Fig. 1. Project for Diamond of Dubai, 2010, height 270 m, 53 floors, Hattat Holding Arch. Murat Yilmaz (reproduction taken from ARCH + no. 195, November 2009)



Fig. 2. Galata Port, cruise ships blocking the view towards Tophane shore, degrading the historic silhouette with the mosque by Sinan (photo: Debold-Kritter 2006). The Galataport project was submitted in 2007.

dominating, out-of-scale technical constructions. From Atatürk Bridge, only 9.5 m high, the pylons will degrade Sinan’s Süleymaniye silhouette. The view towards Top Kapi’s gentle silhouette has not been considered, either; it will also be blocked or at least badly affected. The core areas of the World Heritage, some of which

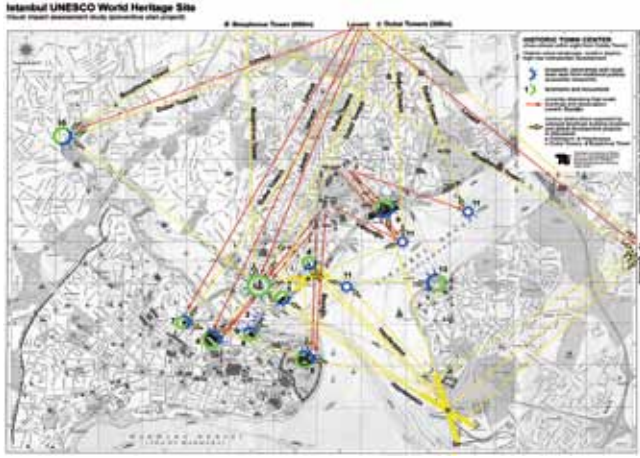


Fig. 3. The Istanbul World Heritage site visual impact assessment study (preventive plan project, TU Berlin) indicates traditional publicly accessible viewpoints. Important viewpoints on Golden Horn are marked: no. 1 Galata Tower, no. 2 Galata Bridge, no. 8 Eminönü Mosque, no. 6 Süleymaniye Mosque Terrace, and no. 7 Zeyrek Terrace.



Fig. 6. Yenikapi traffic area with central terminal and crossing point is situated in the historic centre. The area of construction, which is now open to archaeological research with unique testimonies of the Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations, covers 58 000 m².

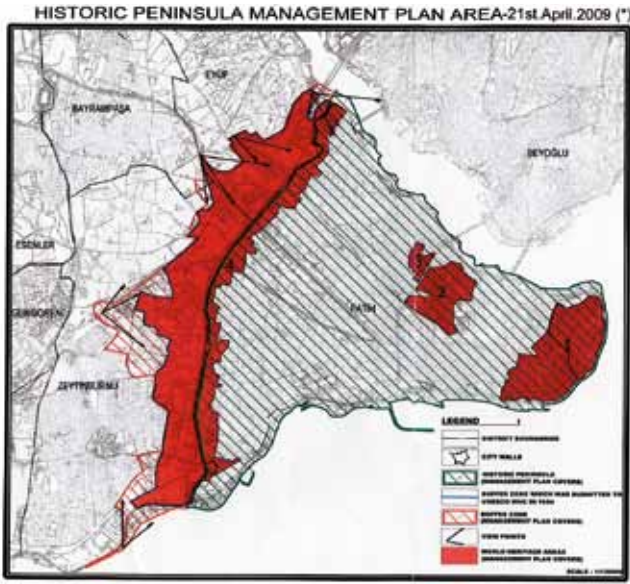


Fig. 4. In the Management Plan 2009 showing the four core areas of the World Heritage some views were drawn outside the Theodosian wall but without topographical identification. There is a buffer zone along the Theodosian Walls, but none towards the Golden Horn, which is an extremely important part of the historic urban landscape.



Figs. 7 and 8. The project of the Halice Metro Bridge (1999) has grown since 2002. It is now presented as a multifunctional cable-stayed bridge, almost 20 m above the sea with two pylons almost 70 m high. The bridge will be 390 m long with a 180 m long Metro station on top.

◁ Fig. 5. Traffic Plan. Its junction is on the historic peninsula near the Byzantine harbour at Yenikapi, providing transfer possibilities to sea bus, suburban trains, Light Rail transport LRT (tramway) and new metro interchange.



Fig. 9. Three types of traffic will cross the bridge, pedestrians are to cross on the lowest level.

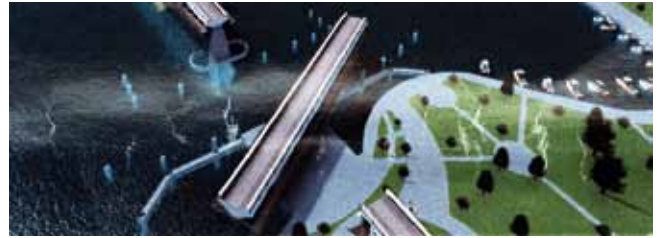
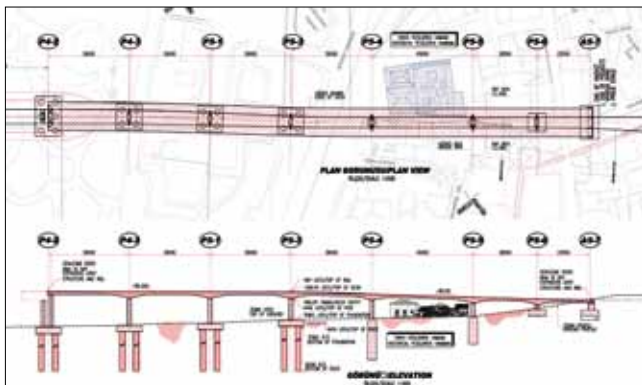
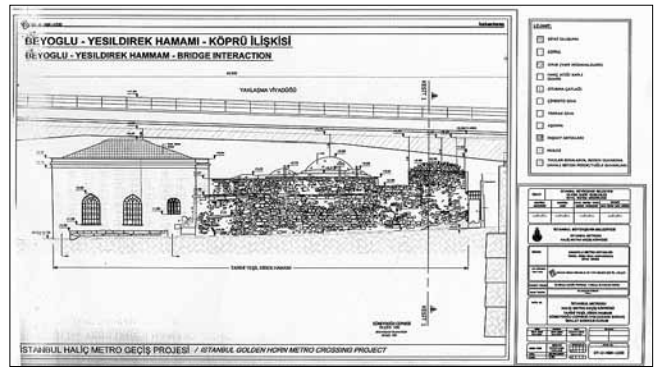


Fig. 10. Recently the idea of a swinging bridge on Unkapane bank has come up, with two aisles of 50 and 70 m to open for ships of up to 25 m width.



Figs. 11–14. The bridges on land of the Beyoğlu and Unkapane banks will span 460 m, covering not only large streets and traffic areas but also areas with cultural and historical structures as well as listed historic buildings, e.g. Yesildirek Hammam and even mosques.

were inscribed more than 20 years ago in accordance with the then existing protection law, are now losing their legal foundation by a change of local building and metropolitan planning law and by management decisions.

This is the case at Sulukule in core area 4 near the Theodosian Wall. Sulukule is the first project of renewal in accordance with Law 5366. It is a development project realised by demolishing almost all the houses and driving out the old-established inhabitants, most of them Roma who have lived in this region for several hundred years and have owned stable houses. The conflict of interests lies in the responsible national Ministries of Culture and of Tourism. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for national monuments and sites that have been declared UNESCO World Heritage. The Tourism Ministry is part of the metropolitan and even national economy and therefore is interested in related investments. The na-

tional interest in urban development is dominated by TOKİ (Mass Housing Administration) and KIPTAS, both of which organise the market of run-down areas.

Another core area with considerable conflicts of heritage protection and building investment speculation is Süleymaniye. This core area 2 will be the next renewal project in accordance with Law 5366 and without a conservation plan. In order to handle changes in metropolitan planning decisions and legislation and to implement World Heritage conservation standards, preventive planning taking care of core areas and following conservation ethics would be necessary. This has been repeatedly demanded in the ICOMOS/UNESCO missions. Without a legal conservation plan, vernacular architecture will vanish and historic neighbourhoods will fall into decay. Ottoman timber houses in Süleymaniye and Zeyrek, standing for a variety of interesting historic building types, are very much



Figs. 15–18. These are views of the Golden Horn from Galata Bridge and from Yeni Cami as well as from Süleymaniye Mosque terrace. The view of Eyup is unique in the historic urban landscape of Ottoman Istanbul (photos: Debold-Kritter 2006).



Fig. 19. The new development plan for Sulukule completely lacks local traces. Its realisation with underground car parks will even risk destroying archaeological traces of more than 1500 years of urban life near the Theodosian Walls. No preventive archaeological research is planned.



Fig. 20. Four Seasons Hotel extension above the archaeological remains of the Great Palace of the Roman and Byzantine empires, an archaeological zone in one of the core areas of the World Heritage



◁ Fig. 21. Since 2007 private excavations have been carried out on a leased site with the idea to establish an Archaeological Park, and Tourism and Cultural Area open to the public and to guests of the hotel.

in danger, not only because of substantial damages, but also because many of them have not yet been listed and therefore receive no financial and technical support from KUDEB for protection and maintenance. There seems to be no hope as long as there is no definition of a conservation plan and no buffer zone towards the sea front of the Golden Horn. The Golden Horn Bridge and the highway along the shore are supposed to upgrade World Heritage areas for new development and to make these areas accessible to new inhabitants and owners.

The urban development policy in World Heritage areas should be regulated by preventive planning. Informal or legally binding instruments, such as an inventory of listed monuments, a conservation plan, a land-use plan, a defined buffer zone, etc need to be elaborated and presented with extensive mapping in order to give a framework to local or global investors and developers as well as to the local, regional, national and transnational decision and administration processes. Nothing like this has been planned for the Süleymaniye area or for Zeyrek.

Another conflict is due to the lack of a consistent management plan, a tool of great importance for guaranteeing the strategic process of presenting, communicating and resolving conflicting interests. The hierarchic responsibilities of state, municipality and district administrations concerning the World Heritage site and the procedure of protection need to be clarified in a World Heritage management plan. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism should not be allowed to transfer the responsibility for the safeguarding of the World Heritage site to private or commercial users or owners, as was done in the case of the extension of the Four Seasons Hotel. The permission which had been given by the local government was suspended by a court decision in 2009.

The civil society and cultural elites not only in Istanbul are very much aware of the dramatic conflicts between authentic Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman heritage, and neo-liberal urban transformations causing cultural destruction and social gentrification in Istanbul Metropolis. Therefore, decision-makers and stakeholders must give priority to authentic historic and cultural values. A newly built “Ottoman skyline” will not attract cultural tourism. Another aspect is that a gentrification of traditional quarters on the peninsula could also endanger religious and national monuments, if they lose their traditional functions. It is the tangible and intangible heritage of more than 2000 years of urban culture that Istanbul might lose through uniform global renewal. By respecting the historic urban layers and the monuments and sites, and by integrating a unique social diversity of ethnics, religions and cultures Istanbul could remain one of the most fascinating metropolises worldwide.

Astrid Debold-Kritter
ICOMOS Germany



Figs. 22–25. Three hotel extension structures, each on four pylons, have already been built very near the Hagia Sofia

Allianoi and Hasankeyf Doomed

The Turkish government is planning in the next years the construction of hundreds of dams that will affect almost every river in the country. Environmentalists are alarmed that a new “law on the protection of nature and biological diversity” could threaten the existing nature reserves. Environment Minister Veysel Eroğlu, whose ministry is responsible for granting the licenses for dam constructions, is considered to be the most prominent dam lobbyist (see article by Karl Strittmatter, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 November 2010). In *Heritage at Risk 2006/07* (pp. 155, 157–159) ICOMOS Turkey already gave an account of the planned flooding of Allianoi, a unique Roman bath complex near Bergama (ancient Pergamon), once Yortanlı Dam will be completed. Unfortunately, the joint international appeals by Europa Nostra, ICOMOS and EAA (European Association of Archaeologists) of 16 September 2005 and 20 March 2007, published in *H@R 2006/07*, did not change the plans of the Turkish government. Several recent articles in international newspapers reported on the imminent disappearance of Allianoi:

Le complexe thermal romain d'Allianoi, le plus vaste d'Asie Mineure, datant du IIe siècle, repose désormais sous plusieurs mètres de sable. Les fresques et les colonnes de ce site archéologique unique, situé à quelques kilomètres de l'ancienne Pergame, dans l'ouest de la Turquie, ont été ensevelies et pourraient bientôt être englouties sous les 17 mètres d'eau d'un lac artificiel.

Malgré la mobilisation d'associations écologistes, rien ne semble pouvoir arrêter le projet de barrage qui menace Allianoi. « C'est devenu un enjeu politique et le gouvernement essaye d'en finir avec le site d'Allianoi. Nous voulons éviter un massacre », proteste Güven Eken, président de l'association de défense de la nature (Doga Dernegi). Avec une poignée d'autres activistes, M. Eken s'est enchaîné aux grues du chantier, lundi 20 septembre au matin, pour dénoncer « le massacre illégal de la culture à Allianoi ».

Selon les associations, l'ensablement du site, censé protéger les richesses archéologiques avant l'inondation, aurait été mené « de manière impropre ». Du ciment contenant de la poussière de brique serait utilisé. (...)

Le projet de barrage de Yortanlı, lancé il y a quinze ans, violerait également la loi de protection du patrimoine naturel et historique. Une dizaine de décisions de justice se sont déjà opposées aux travaux de construction. Enfin, la rentabilité du projet est incertaine.

Allianoi, detail of the archaeological site



La mise en valeur du site d'Allianoi aurait pu, en revanche, attirer quelques centaines de milliers de touristes par an.

Le ministre de la culture et du tourisme, Ertugrul Günay, a qualifié d'« exagérés » les appels alarmistes de la société civile et d'artistes pour sauver Allianoi, et a assuré que le patrimoine historique ne subirait aucun dommage dans l'opération. Son collègue de l'environnement, Veysel Eroğlu, s'est montré moins diplomate envers le très populaire chanteur Tarkan, qui s'est mobilisé pour la sauvegarde des bains romains. « Il ferait mieux de ne pas mettre son nez dans des affaires qu'il ne comprend pas », a déclaré le ministre.

« Allianoi est sacrifié à la politique du ministre Eroğlu », estime pour sa part M. Eken qui dénonce des conflits d'intérêts. Le ministre, ancien directeur de l'administration des eaux, qui supervise la construction de barrages, a lancé de nombreux projets d'irrigation et d'hydroélectricité ces dernières années. Une autre retenue d'eau, qui doit être édifiée sur le Tigre à Illisu, dans le sud-est, rencontre l'opposition de la société civile et risque de submerger la cité d'Hasankeyf.

Guillaume Perrier

*“En Turquie, les thermes d'Allianoi condamnés par un barrage”, in: Le Monde
25 September 2010*

Hasankeyf, an outstanding medieval site by the Tigris River, with cultural traces dating back thousands of years, cannot be saved, either, although national and international opposition was able to at least postpone the construction of the Ilisu Dam, which according to experts will only have 30–50 years of functional life. ICOMOS Austria, ICOMOS Germany and ICOMOS Switzerland pointed out to the government authorities responsible for the export credit guarantees the devastating consequences the planned project will have for the cultural heritage. Initially, the project was planned together with a consortium of German, Austrian and Swiss companies. For a while, there was hope that the dam project would not go ahead, when the three countries cancelled their credit guarantees in 2009 and backed out of the project altogether, because of the ecological, social and cultural-historical consequential damage. However, the project will now be realised with the help of Turkish companies. To commemorate the history of Hasankeyf a “historic theme park” is planned with transferred remains of the monuments, e.g. the 900 year-old bridge across the Tigris.

M. Pz.

View of Hasankeyf (photo: Gökalp İşçan)

