CONSERVING 20TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE: A STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION PROCESS OF TALIMHANE

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Abstract. At the turn of the 21st century, theory and practice of conservation started to be respected within a broader building stock by including the 20th century architectural heritage. Since it is an example that opens “to bring the significance of the modern movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the professionals and the educational community concerned with the built environment” expression of 1990 Eindhoven Statement of DO.CO.MO international working party into discussion, conservation effort of Talimhane residential area in Istanbul, Turkey, can be appreciated as a typical 20th century architectural heritage problematic. Talimhane exemplifies an integrated symbol for Istanbul; besides its substantial physical characteristics, this historically valuable area is respected in terms of functional, aesthetic, social and economic value contexts. However, because of its proximity to major tourism nodes, Talimhane become attractive to associated governmental authorities. Starting from the beginning of 2000s, the residential usage of Talimhane was decided to be transformed into different functions related to tourism. As a result, the physical structure of Talimhane has been witnessing diverse changes from macro to micro scales. This problematic attempt has led various construction trials in the forms of new constructions, reconstructions and/or partial modifications such as changes in the existing mass proportions, facade organizations, construction techniques and materials. In light of the foregoing, the main subject of this research is to explore the development and transformation process of Talimhane in regard to physical, functional, aesthetic, social and economic contexts. The study aims to examine the change of 20th century buildings in Talimhane by considering their functional conversion in exchange for the benefits of tourism. By assessing the values and current situation of Talimhane in a holistic manner, this work is further intended to present a discussion on the issues regarding the conservation and sustainability of this unique area.
1 INTRODUCTION

Istanbul is a metropolis housing traces of the historical palimpsest that have enriched its cultural heritage. In its multi-layered structure, the architectural products of 20th century modernism have considered as components of a period of interruption instead of components of a continuity and palimpsest. Focusing on this contradictory relationship between modernism and built environment, the contribution of novelty to the metropolitan structure creates a problem of perception. The products of modern architecture, especially focusing on the critical urbanization politics in 1950s, were evaluated with their relationship to the environment besides their authentic characteristics. This process has mostly resulted with a threatening impression to the existing pattern.

Conservation of modern architectural heritage in Turkey has been an actual conservation problematic discussed especially in terms of demolishment, transformation and privatization projects. In the evaluation process of the modern architectural heritage, DO.CO.MO.MO defines values in comparative significance as their canonic status and reference value for urban scale evaluation [1]. Therefore, their contribution to the existing urban pattern is a basic criteria for selection as a part of modern heritage.

Talimhane residential area, in the center of Istanbul, was established in the first half of the 20th century within Beyoglu/Pera region with a significant 19th century pattern. Since its preliminary formation, the perception of Talimhane has been defined as a critical point in urban history of Istanbul. This research aims to discuss values, problems and potentials of the modernist housing areas, using the transformation process of Talimhane area as a case study.

2 PRELIMINARY FORMATION AND INTEGRITY

“Talimhane” took its name from the armory place of Taksim Artillery Barracks (Taksim Topcu Barracks) where soldiers trained in the Ottoman era. (Figure 1-a) [2]. In the second half of the 19th century, this area that would be transformed into Talimhane residential district afterwards, was surrounded by the residential areas of that period on the west, by Taksim Artillery Barracks, its barns and by Taksim Garden on the east and by Istiklal Avenue (Grande Rue de Pera), one of the major axis of Istanbul, on the south (Figure 1-b, c).

Figure 1: (a) Armory place of Taksim Artillery Barracks (http://taksimdenelinicek.org/) (b) Talimhane and its nearby setting in 19th century (Prepared by Authors on 1938 dated Pervitich Map) (c) Talimhane and its nearby setting in 19th century (Gülersoy, 1986).

In the 19th century Istanbul, demolition/transformation of old buildings/areas that had already lost their functions for producing spaces necessitated by modern life was respected as a common method used by the governmental authorities. Similarly, for the purpose of utilization, several projects were developed for Taksim Artillery Barracks that mislaid its military function after 1909. Tied to this progress, Taksim Artillery Barracks together with its armory
place were transferred to a foreign company\(^1\) for real estate investments by a contract signed with the Ministry of Treasury in 1913. However, this mission that came up as a partnership between private enterprise and Ottoman Empire during the last years of the state could not be put into practice for the existing order of legal procedures, difficulties of war, problems of material supply, troubles of inflation and shortages of labor [3]. According to this information, the armory place that remained as a huge and empty space until 1930s in the center of the city, started to host leisure activities such as football competitions and bike rides. Thereby, it was specified as “armory place”\(^2\) of Taksim Artillery Barracks even in 1925 dated and 1/5000 scale Pervititch Maps (Figure 2-a) [2]. Connected to these, implementation project of the armory place could only be possible at the beginning of the 1930s.

Within the same interval, the task of preparing landscape plans of Taksim Square and its surrounding area was given to Henri Prost who was invited to Istanbul during the mayoralty of Lütфи Kırdağ in 1938. According to the master plan of Prost, Taksim Artillery Barracks that was brought to agenda in 1913 to be transformed into a residential zone was demolished in 1940 and converted into an extended public space including Taksim Square, İnönü Gezisi Park, Taksim Municipal Garden and Café, subsequently (Figure 2-b). Neighbouring to this public space, Taksim Kristal Café, constructed adjacent to the armory place at the end of 1920s as one of the first modernist buildings of that era, revitalized the regular social life of the district [2] [4].

As it can be observed from 1943-44 dated and 1/5000 scale Pervititch Maps, building blocks of Talimhane modern residential area took their current forms thanks to Taksim and its surrounding public space organizations (Figure 2-d). Hence, with its homogenous parcel layouts and recently developed residential identity, Talimhane started to differentiate from the current 19th century tissue of its nearby neighbourhoods (Figure 3-a, b, c). In addition to this, Talimhane residential area and Taksim Square public space signified integrity in the context of physical space and unity in modernist conception, as well. To be specified, it defined urban values with complementary effect that is formed by the mass variations of apartment blocks located in harmony.

Integrity reveals itself by domain-specific parcelling and usage of lots. Talimhane, developed as a planned residential area, was projected on large building plots intersecting with each other at right angles in a grid ordered pattern. Regarding to this feature of the district, a comprehensive residential area that presented the architectural characteristics of the first half of 20th century was simultaneously generated in a holistic way. Moreover, usage of reinforced concrete construction system in Talimhane, the widespread construction technology of the era, formed a common outline for settlement. This feature of the settlement pattern defined a “Reference Value” for recently developing residential areas on the north and south axes of the district. Apart from the function of residence, the exclusion of other uses from the area describes a functional integrity.

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1 Osmaniye Company of Industry, Agriculture and Trade. A new company by the name of Istanbul Real Estate Osmaniye was founded for implementing constructional activities. The main objective of the company was to built new apartment blocks in the place of Taksim Artillery Barracks and its armory place, as well as to rent out or sell them (L. Tanatar Baruh, 2013).

2 Champs de Mars (Battle Field). It was also shown as an empty space on maps. It was also shown as an area that includes 6-7 city blocks with a specified transportation pattern (Pervititch, 1925).
3 PLANNED EVOLUTION AND CONTINUITY

From the beginning of 1930s, modernist and Art Deco apartment buildings started to be built in accordance with architectural acclaims and perceptions within the area that hosted an armory place of Taksim Artillery Barracks in the past. With this transformation, the district that began to be called as “Talimhane Neighbourhood” became an extension of Beyoğlu residential zone in the direction of Sisli and initiated to represent the lifestyle and architecture of 20th century (Figure 2-c, Figure 4, Figure 5-f) [4].

Rised on a defined height and mass, modernist residential buildings of Talimhane Neighbourhood were appreciated dwelling embodiments of Republican elite class and architectural products of well-known architects of the era. Several famous architects of the Republican Period including Rebii Gorbon ve Mustafa Can (Dogu Apartment), Vedat Tek (Pertev Apartment), Hüsnü Cubukciyan (Istiklal Apartment), Sedad Hakkı Eldem (Ceylan Apartment) and Seyfi Arkan (Ayhan Apartment) are the designers of these modern apartments in Talimhane (Figure 5-a, b, c, d) [4].

Additionally, it can also be followed that several buildings presented within the content of Arkitekt, the most popular architectural journal of Turkey in that time. This also identifies a “Reference Value” for the apartments not only in urban but also in singular building scale. Therefore, these samples have also defined “Historic”, “Aesthetic” and “Functional” values due to their particular qualities. The mass forms of apartments, as well as their facade arrangements, unique corner shapes, consoles, balconies and frontons in relation to constructional components can be regarded as crucial fragments of these values (Figure 5-e, g).
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Figure 4: Archival resources showing the transformation process of armory place of Taksim Artillery Barracks into Talimhane residential area and ongoing constructions of apartments (Istanbul Conservation Board Archive and Gülersoy, 1986)

Figure 5: (a) Dogu Apartment (Arkitekt, 1940/1 15-116:145) (b) Pertev Apartment (Arkitekt, 1933/26:45) (c) Istiklal Apartment (Arkitekt, 1932/23-24:309) (d) Ceylan Apartment (Arkitekt, 1933/35:331) (e) Residential buildings of Talimhane rising on a defined height and mass (Personal Archive of Authors) (f) “Monument and Women of the Period” named painting of Nazmi Ziya (Gülersoy, 1986: 29) (g) Unique corners, consoles, balconies, doors, windows and frontons of residential buildings in Talimhane (Personal Archive of Authors)
4 MECHANICAL TRANSFORMATION AND DISCONTINUITY

The process of transformation that started during 1950s in Talimhane, one of the prestigious quarters of Istanbul from the beginning of its construction, was firstly ensued in its accustomed social character and then followed in its physical appearance. Started with “Events of 6-7 September”\(^3\), the prevailing social structure of Beyoğlu region that comprises the neighborhood of Talimhane initiated to differentiate. Following this evolution, the inhabitants of Talimhane left their own places and a new user group comprised of low-income emigrants settled down in the area. These crucial alterations, in time, converted the general societal profile of the neighborhood such that coinciding with black marketers and marginal groups started to be appreciated as a routine for the preliminary perception of Talimhane [2].

Although the change in public configuration and sense of security did not modify its continuing residential usage, the shift of automobile repair shops and car refection units from Tarlabası to Talimhane gave a strong signal regarding a possible change in the functionally qualified residential pattern of the area [4]. Therefore, as may have been expected, the physical fabric of Talimhane was gradually devaluated. This kind of a great change affected the historical buildings presenting 20\(^{th}\) century architectural features of the area. Within this period of time, historical values have disappeared, existing orders of ground floors have diversified, streets have exposed to advertising signboards and spaces formerly used by pedestrians have occupied by motor vehicles (Figure 6-a) [5] [6]. Thereby, the functional transformation

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\(^3\) “Events of 6-7 September” represent the fact of devastation of places owned or used by minorities living in Istanbul.
that have brought back a physical decay both in macro and micro scales started to disturb the enduring identity of Talimhane from this time on.

Physical disturbances experienced in Talimhane accelerated with the construction of Tarlabasi Boulevard in 1988. In a more specified manner, because of the decided course of Tarlabasi Boulevard, two building blocks of Talimhane located in the southern corner of the neighbourhood were destroyed without considering the valuable apartments that were embodied. Moreover, once the boulevard started to carry heavy traffic after its introduction in 1988, Talimhane was regretably detached from Istiklal Street and Taksim Square which were indeed pieces strongly connected to each other to form a whole in the recent past [4].

The loss of functional homogeneity and diversification of uses stimulate the intensification of deterioration. To extent, the period of 1970s defines a phase of commercialized alteration in ground floors, so a horizontal deterioration in Talimhane (Figure 6-b). The vertical acceleration and broad inspection of this change realized with the intensive usage of Tarlabasi Boulevard. These changes related with the requirements coming from the new functionality of the area also caused losses of the architectural features in structures. Buildings were either renovated with new inconvenient scales, masses and/or facade proportions or constructed on the same building lots of demolished older ones with different dimensions. Thereby, the old continual perception in the vertical silhouette started to vary completely. Additionally, in consideration of the commercial uses placed within the boundaries of the area, regular visitor profile of Talimhane was diversified, permanent degree of security was decreased and -as a consequence of these negatives- reported crime rates were increased [7].

As the problems becoming unceasingly encountered, emigration to Talimhane that started with the social transformation during the riots arisen in 1955 resumed to continue within the period of “Mechanical Transformation and Discontinuity” [2]. Consequently, this remaining change in the original user pattern of the site, not only constrained with the loss of assets associated with the history of Talimhane, but also conduced to damage the value of urban memory attached to the area [6]. Therefore, Talimhane that was a significant area thanks to its location and architectural features in the past has transformed into a mechanical, stagnant and unpleasant urban segment of Istanbul.

5 LEGAL INTERVENTION AND EFFORTS FOR RECOVERY

Deterioration of Talimhane, suffered during the previous interval named as “Mechanical Transformation and Discontinuity”, aroused attention of governmental authorities during the 1990s. This, in time, triggered to launch interventions for revitalizing Talimhane. One of the recovery efforts realized within this context was the nomination of Beyoglu district, including the boundaries of Talimhane, as “urban site” in 1993[4]. The other legal intervention was the resolution concerning the designation of Talimhane as a “Tourism Development Area” for its future survival as a new “cultural center” by the Council of Ministers in 1994. This tourism oriented recommendations connected to the concept of “Tourism Development Area” that was indeed considered as an innovative and operative remedy for the maintenance of the area has changed the functional trend of Talimhane, completely [8]. Moreover, rather than the units concentrating on automobile oriented commercial purposes, by tourism accommodation facilities and commercial units serving for visitors have started to be multiplied in the area.

Connected to the previously mentioned experiences in Talimhane, historically valuable buildings have neglected. To be specified, while some residential apartments were condemned

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4 Beyoglu district, including Talimhane, was declared as an “urban site” upon 4720 numbered decision dated on 07.07.1993 by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board no.1 of Istanbul.
to survive under poor conditions, some selected ones started to be used as accommodation units with reorganized interiors or demolished and rebuilt as massive hotels in joint parcels.

As determined in prior research conducted on the area; most important and irreversible ones of these diversified struggles have been increased floor rights\(^5\), ensued dead facades, modified plan schemes, differentiated ground floor functions, misplaced solid-void relations, disordered building fronts and fabricated material uses [9]. At this point, Ayhan Apartment that is located within the boundaries of Talimhane should be highlighted. Ayhan Apartment, originally a valuable residential apartment presenting all features of its period of construction, was designed by Seyfi Arkan in 1939. Its demolition in 2004 and then so-called “reconstruction” as a hotel with four additional stories made it a symbol for Talimhane (Figure 7-a).

Since proposed tourism development hotel concept that was realized with the aim of rescuing Talimhane from the deprived condition grounded on its problematic structure, hotels could not reach full capacities (Figure 7-b) [5]. This, in turn, led Talimhane to gain a negative image over again. Thereby, these judgments that did not consider the multivariate layers and potential outcomes of transformation processes comprehensively were not appropriate and sufficient to solve the actual troubles of Talimhane. Even, they have regarded as new catalysts generating various new problems [10].

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 7: (a) The story of Ayhan Apartment (Arkitekt, 1939/5-6:101; Polat, 2006; Polat, 2006 and Personal Archive of Authors), (b) Silhouettes of Tarlabasi Boulevard and Sehit Muhtar Street (Personal Archive of Authors and Beyoglu Municipality Archive)

In order to repossess the value and primary prestige of Talimhane, all building blocks carrying the architectural features were registered based on their period of formation\(^6\): “Early Republican Period”\(^7\). However, the architectural character of Talimhane consists of examples from Art Deco to modernist styles, collectively. Therefore, the specified expression that re-

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5 As underlined in Beyoglu 1/1000 scaled Conservation Implementation Plan, number of floors are constrained with Ground Floor+10 in “Talimhane Tourism Development Area”.

6 Beyoglu district, including Talimhane, was declared as an “urban site” upon 11437 numbered decision dated on 15.12.1999 by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board No.1 of Istanbul. This decision was supported with 662 and 663 numbered council resolutions that in fact underline the existing integrity and presence of Early Republican Period buildings in Talimhane; respectively.

7 The concept of “Early Republican Period”, associated with definite architectural features such as style, construction system and architectural approach, defined as a periodical refractive by the specialization in Turkish history of architecture.
duces the togetherness of Talimhane into a single conceptual/periodic quality become inadequate and undermines the power of decision. Further, corresponding registration decision was not enough for terminating the change in the area.

Legal appropriation and recovery efforts of Talimhane continued with “Beautiful Beyoglu Project” implemented by Beyoglu Municipality. “Beautiful Beyoglu Project” that was accomplished with the objective of restoring the primal identity and central function of Beyoglu, including the building lots of Talimhane, in 2002 realized with two fold applications: street rehabilitation and façade regulation [5]. Nonetheless, this application that might be perceived positively at first time was not enough to recover the change of Talimhane’s 20th century residential tissue into a mechanical tourism center.

Following these, “Beyoglu Talimhane District Facade Rehabilitation and Urban Design Implementation Project”, accelerated due to the meetings of “NATO Summit” in 2004 and “International Union of Architects” in 2005 hosted by Istanbul, provided new transformations and developments. To the extent that all roads were closed to motorized traffic except specific hours for service and infrastructure such as lighting and safety were improved to increase the sense of belonging (Figure 8). Old elements of urban furniture were changed with new ones and positioned in a comprehensive manner by taking the flow of pedestrians into consideration. Additionally, by initiating the works of infrastructural enhancement in terms of electricity, water and natural gas; the general environment of Talimhane witnessed the scene of a general layout of arrangement. For building scale, works such as façade rehabilitation, renovation and cleaning were done. Considering the works conducted, Talimhane would be aimed to achieve a prestigious area vivid for 24 hours [11]. However, this initiative also gave support to the unmanaged development of Talimhane and unescapably continued to reduce its quality.

Figure 8: Infrastructure works realized within the content of “Beyoglu Talimhane District Facade Rehabilitation and Urban Design Implementation Project” (Kızıldere, 2010: 94 and Personal Archive of Authors)

Figure 9: Functional transformation of Talimhane (Prepared by authors-1955 and 1993 dated analyses are constituted with the information coming from the study of Kızıldere, 2010)\(^8\)

\(^8\) Numbers of parcels has varied for the dates analyzed because of the transformation processes.
6 IMITATED ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORICAL FALSY

Talimhane, an area still carrying the qualification of “urban site”, can be regarded as a transmuted district from a comprehensive residential core to an artificial and undefined place constituted of units serving for tourism (Figure 10-a). The significant fact needed to be underlined at this point is the one by one demolition of 20th century Art Deco and Early Republican Period buildings, valued with statues of registration and in turn makes Talimhane special, because of their incapacity to respond the requirements of tourism. New configurations structured instead of the old ones have not concern the surveillance principle of Talimhane’s homogeneous building stock, even present a quite contradictory stance with the buildings located in the area. The most frightening one within these is the new identity built upon the novel trend: “imitated architecture”\(^9\). Facade organizations of buildings have also been changed within the scope of this trend. This behavior has increased in Talimhane as an urge to substitute past (Figure 10-b).

![Talimhane and its nearby setting at the present](http://taksimdenelinicek.org/gezi-park-indagunluk-hayat)

![Hotels located in Talimhane](Personal Archive of Authors)

Figure 10: (a) Talimhane and its nearby setting at the present (http://taksimdenelinicek.org/gezi-park-indagunluk-hayat) (b) Hotels located in Talimhane (Personal Archive of Authors).

Talimhane, as a planned holistic residential area, almostly complete its holistic transformation process into a tourism area. Deformed order of building lots and relationship between facade and mass qualities destroyed the valuable authentic function, architecture, aesthetic and historical documentary values. By preventing the continuity of 20th century within the center of the city and emulating 19th century pattern. Thereby, the effort of building a new comprehensive piece of land is a misleading intervention in the existing status of the area especially with “Taksim Pedestrianization Project”. While the project reconnects the pieces already detached after the construction of Tarlabasi Boulevard, it actually realized an undefined

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\(^9\) “Imitated architecture is reconstructing a historical structure without any information and document or converting a modern building into a structure having historical appearance or designing a new structure directly in a historical-looking.” (Akay, Sefaletin Tarihselciği, Mimarišt, 43, 58, 2012), “New historic building, imitate/try to imitate the original one, it is a copy, it is a misleading. (…) it is inconsistent with the essence of conservation (Akın, Yeni Tarihi Yapı? Taksim Topçu Kuşlası, Mimarišt, 3-4, 364, 2012).
space between Talimhane and Taksim instead of creating an integrated pedestrian zone (Figure 11). These controversial projects, contrary to the originality of the area, have generated randomly selected or entirely speculative architectural units and unidentified zones.

![Transformation of Talimhane and Taksim Square, 1966-2002-2012 (Google Earth)](image)

Figure 11: Transformation of Talimhane and Taksim Square, 1966-2002-2012 (Google Earth)

### 7 CONCLUSION

At the same year, when the perception of architecture in urban scale and its relationship with its environment was defined in Beijing Charter in 1999 regarding on the fact of “urbanisation of increasing speed resulted in dramatic changes in urban structure and architecture forms”, Talimhane was declared as “urban site” [13]. After this constructive decision where the authentic identity of the area was emphasized, a number of interventions were taken. But unfortunately, these measures could not help to prevent the transformation containing examples of imitated architecture and historic falsity. The preliminary formation of Talimhane is a project of modernity. This process also embraces the anxiety of becoming a metropolis [14]. The examples of 20th century architectural production cannot compromise with the pragmatic projects aiming to create a new historicist identity for Istanbul. Not being able to gain its historicity, this period of heritage is also not perceived as a part of modern and contemporary. Accordingly, while it could “contribute to the enrichment of the area”, revival of historical patterns and new sections have usually resulted with an “uncontrolled development” [15].

Instead of elements in the city that should be renewed or replaced examples of modern architectural heritage should be considered as values in context of the continuity of the metropolis. If metropolis is perceived as “a system of change” contemporary architectural additions should also have a meaning in the field of protection of this system [16]. Re-use of cultural heritage is again the most significant solution as discussed in 19th century. 20th century accepted a conservation concept based on age and historical value. But, as mentioned in the section of “Change and the built environment” in Valetta Principles, “regardless of style and expression, all new architecture should avoid the negative effects of drastic or excessive contrasts and of fragmentation and interruptions in the continuity of the urban fabric and space” [17].

Nonetheless, it is still possible to refer to potentials in the area. There are also authentic above mentioned values within the new fabric created in Talimhane. Thereby, “by admiring the values of the site and its setting”, the existing buildings and well implemented restoration projects could be the basis of an appropriate planning for the area [17]. The pedestrianized area as well as its unsolved relationship with Taksim Square and its environment can affect Talimhane in terms of problems and potentials. Re-designing the function with the integrity of public space, can be an efficient solution for re-using the area with diverse functions.
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