A Model for an Integrated Multi-disciplinary Approach for the Preservation of 20th Century and Modernist Architectural Heritage

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1. Introduction

In Turkey today 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage is threatened with rapid and wholesale destruction as a result of urban development and the implementation of new urbanization laws. Beginning in the 1950s and gaining momentum in the 1970s, Turkey’s large cities and especially Istanbul among them have been characterized with constant transformation: unforeseen growth in population and correspondingly unplanned urbanization, a process through which the former outskirts of the urban areas reserved for satellite towns and industrial development became primary and secondary centres. Such developments create great pressure on the industrial complexes and housing settlements of the 20th century and subject this heritage to uncontrolled transformation, exploiting it as infrastructures for new development and uses.

The conservation of 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage is problematic all over the world (Maledetti vincoli, 2013). They share the same principles with former architectural heritage that were first outlined in the Carta del Restauro (1931) and monumentalized in the Venice Charter (1964) and the Nara Document (1995), which need not be repeated in this context. The problems inherent to this period became the focus of theory and research more recently, beginning in the 1990s, as illustrated by the foundation of DOCOMOMO International and its subsequent expansion. More recent international documents including the DOCOMOMO Constitution as well as the idea of the “spirit of place” or genius loci first put forward at the ICOMOS General Assembly Meeting in Quebec in 2008 [Petzet, 2009] and the ensuing Valetta Principles in 2011 incorporate a set of multi-faceted principles and criteria, including both tangible and intangible elements. According to the Valetta Principles, the tangible elements include “the urban structure, architectural elements, the landscapes within and around the town, archaeological remains, panoramas, skylines, view-lines and landmark sites” and the intangible “activities, symbolic and historic functions, cultural practices, traditions, memories, and cultural references that constitute the substance of their historic value”. Historic sites and buildings are viewed as spatial structures, turning the physical shells inside out while the concept of planning is enlarged into “management”, which should include all related “legislative, financial, administrative and conservation documents as well as conservation and monitoring plans”, embracing the idea of transformation and proposing to make use of it for improving “the quality” of historic heritage.

The idea and criteria for “cultural property” has not been thoroughly established or understood in Turkey as demonstrated by the fact that “age” remains
to be the most important criterion for national designation. However, the 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage requires a different set of criteria, including values such as design (innovation, uniqueness) and memory (The Modern Movement and the World Heritage List, 1997) rather than material authenticity and integrity celebrated both by national and international legislation (Outstanding Universal Value, 2005). Conservation planning has not yet become an integrated function of urban planning activity in Turkey either, and 20th century and Modernist heritage is not recognized as urban layers to be preserved. More recent legislation that affects the principles and criteria outlined in the Turkish Act No. 2863 on “the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Property” (1983), include Turkish Act No. 5366 on “the Regenerative Preservation and Sustainable Use of Dilapidated and Deteriorated Historic and Cultural Immovable Property” (2005), the Turkish Act No. 5393 on “Municipalities” (2005), and the Turkish Act No. 6306 on “Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk” (2012). These laws which have made the uncontrolled and rent based transformation of historic areas possible, constitute a threat against the preservation of all historic areas with worse effects on more recent heritage. The land-rent pressures are especially high in Istanbul, the focus of population and economic growth in Turkey; the city also possesses a rich heritage of numerous historic layers and aims at becoming a modern world capital of culture. Planning decisions not primarily based on preservation has led to severe losses of cultural property and historic areas in the recent decades. 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage is especially threatened because (1) age value, which is the most easily understood one among all the criteria cannot be used for this recent heritage, (2) personal and urban memory, which are the foremost intangible values of cultural heritage and vital for arousing public consciousness, are rendered irrelevant in many cases as was observed in the Taksim Gezi Park example recently, (3) the structural systems are often experimental and/or innovative and do not conform to present safety standards and regulations, which lead to overriding issues of public safety and often result in reconstruction rather than structural strengthening which tends to be more costly and time-consuming operations, and (4) the differences between the urban planning understanding and approaches in the period when such areas were created and those of our day reduce their heritage value through arguments pertaining to the loss of former heritage for their creation as was also observed in the case of Gezi Park recently.

2. Case Studies
2.1. Taksim Gezi Park, Istanbul
This recent and publicly better known case illustrates various aspects of the legal situation and consequent threats well. Gezi Park (or Park No 2) was designed and implemented according to Henri Prost’s Plan for Istanbul in 1940. It is threatened with destruction for the reconstruction of a former military barracks building, which occupied the same location but was removed for the park as a result of disuse. Demolished in 1939, Topçu (Artillery) Barracks is not a part of public and urban memory anymore. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as well as the central government would like to reconstruct the barracks as a
multi-functional center including a shopping mall, five-star hotel and residence - functions surprisingly defined as "socio-cultural" by the PM. Istanbul No II Regional Commission on Conservation of Cultural Property in charge of the Taksim - Beyoğlu area had formerly ratified a reconstruction project for the barracks in 2011.

The project was designed by the Director of Istanbul World Heritage Sites, architect Halil Onur. However, this is not a building easy to reconstruct as very little is known of it; there are only a handful of photographs. It is also considered to be of little art and architecture historical significance by experts and is only remembered with its Orientalist gateway (DOCOMOMO Turkey Petition, 2013). Thus a more recent urban layer with the characteristics of cultural property and forming an integral part of public and urban memory has been declared irrelevant for the reconstruction of a former building, about which very little is known. This is also a political and cultural act of preferring one historic period to another, which may not be justified in terms of architectural preservation criteria or principles. It cannot be publicly justified either as was demonstrated by the civic unrest that ensued.

2.2 İnönü Stadium, Dolmabahçe, Istanbul

İnönü Stadium, which is the home of Beşiktaş Sports Club today, was constructed on the former Gas Plant behind the Dolmabahçe Palace in 1939-1947 and was designed by the architects Paolo Vietti-Voli, Şinasi Şahingiray and Fazıl Aysu [Tanyeli et al., 2006, 63]. Its association with Beşiktaş led to requests for increasing its spectator capacity beginning from the 1970s but the related Conservation Commissions dismissed these requests because of its prominent location along the Bosphorus silhouette and skyline: An appeal made to the Higher Commission on the Conservation of Immovable Historic Buildings and Monuments (HCCIHBM) for the addition of seating for 35 thousand spectators was rejected on the basis that it would disturb the view of Dolmabahçe Palace and Mosque from the Bosphorus shore and would create urban planning and vehicular traffic problems in the area (HCCIHBM decision no 6554 dated 15 July 1972).

A later project adding two towers on the Bosphorus side with extra seats between was selected to be the least objectionable proposal in terms of its effect to the silhouette and the seating was reduced to provide an entrance underneath like a portico. It was also dictated that the permission of the architects were to be obtained before the implementation and that no further projects for any additions were to be brought to the Commission. (HCCIHBM
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decision no 10553 dated 8 September 1978). These decisions in the 1970s did not refer to the cultural property value of the stadium itself, as the conservation of modern architectural heritage was not a part of preservation theory or practice yet. However, the requirement for the permission of the architect(s) was an important and exemplary decision.

A later decision in 1982 was based on the value of the monument as “one of the first stadiums of the republican period”, however defining the Modernist period socially rather than physically: It was decreed that the stadium façade facing the Bosphorus was to be preserved without any changes whereas seating could be added to the northern and southern sides, these projects should be presented in detail to the Commission and should be obtained through the process of an architectural competition if necessary in order to increase the design quality, and the traffic problems that would arise from these additions should be considered by the authorities. (HCCIHM decision no 14240 dated 10 December 1982) A proper project did not follow up until 2004 when the Istanbul No III Regional Commission on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Property (RCCCNP) ratified the proposed preliminary project on the basis that it was proposed with the consent of one of the original designers, Fazıl Aysu. (Istanbul No III RCCCNP decision no 14582 dated 28 April 2004)

The stadium was designated as "cultural property to be conserved" according to Turkish Act No 2863 only afterwards in 2005 based on the positive views of DOCOMOMO Turkey and ICOMOS Turkey and because the monument reflected the principles of Modern Architecture, it was the first sports complex in Istanbul, its colonnaded entrance façade and the Bosphorus façade retained their authenticity and integrity as well as their value as historic documents, it had symbolic, historic and architectural merit for Istanbul, and it was located within the preservation zone of Dolmabahçe Palace (Istanbul No III RCCCNP decision dated 31 March 2005). Nevertheless, the pressure for additional seating continued in the following years with the result that those parts of the stadium except for the original section on the Bosphorus side were unlisted. It is interesting that this decision was based on the assumption that this section of the stadium was not constructed according to the original project as it was left incomplete in 1947 but was built with additional seating in 1964, and further additions in 2004 destroyed the original architectural characteristics on this side. It was also stated that this part revised in 2004 was not structurally acceptable according to the Earthquake Safety Regulation dated 2007, and the structure itself designed on the old olympic standards was not adequate according to the UEFA regulations for soccer stadiums. (Istanbul No III RCCCNP decision no 946 dated 7 May 2013) It is obvious that these requirements and standards are unreasonable for a building with cultural heritage value; the date and architectural characteristics of the original building should preclude all such assumptions, which treat these values as unimportant. Thus, rather than strengthening the building or changing its function to a suitable one, it is preferred to partially destroy the monument and all of its intrinsic characteristics and values, which have been defined in detail by the same Commission in 2005.
2.3. Turkish Monopoly Liquor and Cognac Factory, Mecidiyeköy, Istanbul

This factory designed around 1930 by Rob Mallet-Stevens is the only work of the celebrated architect in Turkey and reflects a purist approach with Art Deco impressions [Tanyeli et al., 2006, 78; Kambek, 2005]. The characteristics of the original design were visualized by a series of photographs taken upon the completion of the building and preserved in the Turkish Monopoly Archives. Following its privatisation in 2000, the building was used as office space; all of its machinery was lost and its architectural authenticity and integrity were compromised. It was designated finally in 2006 on the persistent applications of DOCOMOMO Turkey. The reasons, which delayed the listing of the monument and its being understood and accepted as cultural property, later became the source on which the conservation approach was inaccurately based. The designation was grounded on the assumption that the building had been transformed during the post-2000 interventions but these could be reversed. However, the conservation approach focused on the belief that these recent interventions deteriorated the structure, and it could not fulfil contemporary needs as in the case of the İnönü Stadium. Therefore, it was suggested that the building should be demolished and reconstructed at a slightly different location on the same building lot with underground parking levels to meet the spatial requirements of the new function proposed [Omay Polat, 2008]. Once again the reasons for listing and acceptance as cultural property to be conserved such as the original architectural characteristics of the factory complex, its uniqueness as the only work of the architect in Turkey, and its value in terms of the “technological advances and innovation” it brought to the industrial history of Turkey were overridden by contemporary needs and standards, and it was decided that a replica was deemed adequate.

2.4. Apartment Buildings in Istanbul

Urban planning in the 1930s’ Istanbul was defined by the Porst Plan and became an important turning point. The new residential zones in multi-storey buildings were concentrated along the Taksim-Şişli axis toward the north. The Talimhane Area, which was the former training ground for the Artillery Barracks in Taksim, was transformed to become a high quality residential area for the prospective users of Gezi Park which replaced the barracks. The area was soon filled with distinguished examples of residential architecture of the first half of the 20th century [Tanyeli et al., 2006, 64]. However its close proximity to Taksim and the pressure of tourism development has further transformed the area into a hotel zone in the recent decades. A joint project by the Istanbul Me-
metropolitan Municipality and the Beyoğlu Municipality in 2004 greatly increased the rate of urban transformation by providing support for the tourism oriented new function through the pedestrianisation of the streets, new street lighting, and a new system of wardens as well as street activities. The following case illustrates an important apartment building, which has been destroyed through this process of transformation and became a sterilised touristic hotel stereotype. A pseudo-19th century neighbourhood of hotels has replaced the original residential urban texture dated to the 1930s and 1940s.

The projects proposed and implemented by local authorities at historic urban centres in Turkey have a common approach: Urban transformation is always attained through demolition and reconstruction rather than preservation. Generally these demolitions are not based on the criteria defined in the laws and regulations or on the decisions and suggestions of the concerned public and/or civil bodies. The lack of legal control and sanctions result in implementations that are not based on the decisions of the related Commissions on the Conservation of Cultural Property. Instead the individual attitude, the guidance of the rent lobbies and land speculators become effective [Omay Polat, 2006].

2.4.1. Ayhan Apartment Building in Talimhane

Ayhan Apartment Building was designed by the important Modernist architect Seyfi Arkan in 1939. (Tanyeli et al., 2006: 65) Following the demolition of the building, the related Conservation Commission decreed that it should be reconstructed according to the original architectural design. However the reconstruction on the same building lot shares no architectural characteristics with the original building. The keystones above and the plaster frames around the windows are reminiscent of 19th century historicism. This is an attempt at recreating a non-existent 19th century urban zone suitable to the adjacent Beyoğlu and Tarlabası areas while completely disregarding the existing and original early 20th century residential zone. Although the Conservation Commission has later ruled that the building should be returned to its original state with the removal of the unsuitable windows and the four extra floors on top, this decision has not been implemented so far. (Istanbul No II RCCCNP decision no 2484 dated 25 March 2009).
2.4.2. Çukurova Apartment Building in Şişli
Çukurova Apartment Building was designed by another prominent Modernist architect Rüknettin Güney and was completed in 1950. (Tanyeli et al., 2006: 77) Unlike the Ayhan Apartment Building, this building was never listed on the national inventories although it had similar architectural characteristics and cultural heritage value. The reconstruction similarly bears pseudo-19th century historicist and eclectic elements, creating “a new architecture compatible with its surroundings”.

3. Conclusion: A Multi-Disiciplinary Approach
It is important to emphasize here that the general public opinion as well as that of the experts, authorities and legal bodies is negative toward the cultural property value of the 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage because, unless they are iconic and celebrated works of architecture, their value is solely based on their reflection of the design understanding, approach and style of their period and not on being “old and historic” or contributing to the historic urban character at first glance. Their large numbers and dilapidated state, where their innovative and authentic architectural character is no longer visible, usually pushes them into oblivion, structures incompatible with the desired urban identity. This situation and general opinion is the basis underlying the threat against this period. In a multi-layered city such as Istanbul, this recent period becomes the most easily disposed and replaced by various pseudo-historicisms. The rent based approach is also supported by the authorities and is not negated by the cultural state policies.
Thus in Turkey, the lack of a systematic legislation and a multidisciplinary approach in implementations create further threats against the preservation of 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage. The more delicate and in some cases innovative and/or experimental structural system designs are considered a structural weakness within the framework of current building codes and disaster prevention regulations. Furthermore the lack of an integrated conservation methodology creates dilemmas between regional, urban and conservation plans, leading to the wholesale destruction of urban heritage areas together with their social and cultural structure.
As again and again underlined in international documents, principles and legislation, an integrated and multi-disciplinary conservation strategy is necessary and indispensable for cultural built heritage, which represents a “high interdependence between economic, social and cultural expressions of community life” and which allows the recognition of “the identity, the peculiarity and the plurality of society” [Bizzaro and Nijkamp, 1996, 16]. The overriding concept appears to be identity, and its perception depends on the urban historic character: 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage could be much more acceptable in an urban setting such as Ankara while it is visually/aesthetically disowned in a multi-layered city such as Istanbul where former built heritage is much more dominant. Abbé Gregoire defined the basic aim of preservation as “liberty, national identity and the building of a new society” at the time of the French Revolution. People/nations gain their identity through their cultural property; the interest in ancient cultures for the legitimization of
the new Turkish Republic illustrates this point well. However such identities should not be dictated by political regimes and based on commercial and/or industrial development; such considerations should not take precedence over preservation [Roth, 2003, 402].

In addition to the threats and problems with the acceptation of criteria, the listing and designation of 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage remains to be problematic in Turkey although legally possible. The use of reinforced concrete structural systems, which continues to be a contemporary technique as opposed to historic masonry and timber frame constructions, leads the authorities, owners, developers and designers to believe that they may be easily reproduced through reconstruction. Recent acts and regulations approved and/or amended following the 1999 Kocaeli Earthquake such as the acts No 7269 and 6306 consider structural weakness as the major threat in cases of natural disasters and require that all buildings should be structurally safe without reference to their age and heritage value [Baturayoğlu Yöney et al., 2013]. The result is inappropriate structural strengthening interventions on listed and/or unlisted buildings with heritage value; often, safety considerations may rise above those of the preservation of architectural characteristics and authenticity and lead to reconstruction projects as in the cases of the İnönü Stadium and the Liquor and Cognac Factory. One important contradiction here is the fact that the so-called contemporaneously reproducible structural systems of these buildings are in fact not reproducible and are among the most important characteristics that make these building unique and define their cultural heritage value. This recent heritage should be indispensible in terms of urban civic memory, however they are usually threatened and easily disposed of through excuses such as structural safety and spatial inadequacy.

What these case studies show us is that successful preservation of the 20th century and Modernist architectural heritage may only be attained if the prominent side disciplines in architecture, re-use and restoration implementations, urban planning and engineering theory and practice recognize conservation theory. This can only be achieved through conscious historic preservation specialists. All relevant decision making processes as well as physical interventions must regard the preservation of the architectural characteristics that define the cultural property value as their foremost consideration in a project design with a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach: Such a model should bring together all the participants of the decision making process, creating a team made up of central and local policy-makers and administrators, regional and urban planners, conservation planners, architectural designers, architectural historians and researchers, material researchers and structural engineers, preferably under the leadership of an architectural preservation expert. However the participants in the decision making process will not be limited to these team members but should include social and cultural counterparts such as building owners and residents/users, non-governmental organizations and consultants who could advice on various aspects of the project or planning activity in an integrated approach. A multi-dimensional approach may address the complexity and plurality of policy perspectives as well as cultural, historical, architectural, environmental, economic and ethical implica-
tions. A balanced evaluation of resource constrains, involved subjects, tools and mechanisms is able to render planning and management of renewal processes successful and to guarantee social acceptance, moreover identifying strategic priorities through evaluation approaches and improving the capability to define management mechanisms, which may achieve transparency in the decision-making process [Bizzaro and Nijkamp, 1996, 1].

The international documents of the last decade, culminating in the Valetta Principles have been instrumental in showing all architectural preservationists the various intangible aspects of authenticity and the importance of the conservation of the spirit of the place as well as that of the physical remains. Unnecessary reconstructions and heavy urban development are major threats against the architectural heritage in our cities. Urban development and investment may only become positive transformation tools if it is properly controlled through an integrated multi-disciplinary preservation approach.

References

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