

# Socio-Spatial Transformations in Obsolete Port Regions: A Case for Istanbul-Karakoy District

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**Abstract**— Istanbul-Karakoy Port, field of this study, has lost its former significance in time due to the transformation of urban functions. Today, activities for regeneration of this region continue in two forms and scales. First of these activities is the "planned transformation projects," which also includes "Galataport project", and the second one is "spontaneous transformation," which consists of individual interventions. Galataport project that based on the idea of arranging the area specifically for tourists was prepared in 2005 and became a topic of tremendous public debate. On the other hand, the "spontaneous transformation" that is observed in Karakoy District starts in 2004 with the foundation of "Istanbul Modern Museum" which allowed the cultural integration of old naval warehouses of the port to the daily life. Following this adaptive reuse intervention, the district started to accommodate numerous art galleries, studios, café-workshops and design stores. In this context, this paper first examines regeneration studies in obsolete port regions, analyzes the planned and ongoing socio-spatial transformations in the specific case of Karakoy and performs a critical review of the sustainability of the proposals on how to reinstate the district in the active life of Istanbul.

**Keywords**—Port Cities, Socio-Spatial Transformation, Urban Regeneration, Urban Revitalization.

## I. INTRODUCTION

PORT cities have maintained their importance as the center of commerce and social life throughout history. However, in time, these port areas have lost their quality of being daylong activity centers as commercial functions gained significance. Urban regeneration projects have been conducted in recent years in order to reinstate the former identities and features of these areas. These old port districts are transformed to the most popular tourism, commerce, culture and recreation areas of the city with newly proposed uses. Karakoy port district was selected to be the field of the study on this transformation process because there are a lot of qualified historical buildings which have lost their function in the area and the idea that the area is going to have an important role in the active commercial, tourism and recreational activities in Istanbul was adopted. The aim of the study is to examine planned and ongoing socio-spatial transformations in the area to integrate it in Istanbul's active life and interpret these transformations from a critical point of view.

## II. REGENERATION STUDIES IN OBSOLETE PORT REGIONS

Port areas, which connect the city to the coast, have lost their former significance after the 19th century due to

advancements in marine technologies and socio-economic changes. The spaces of the former ports and hinterlands have therefore become deprived urban areas. This common phenomenon has led to the transformation of many port-cities over the last three decades. These deprived urban lands have been and are still being transformed to new urban centers with new public uses, mostly; culture, tourism and commerce [1], [2]. The socio-spatial transformation oriented urban regeneration studies performed in port areas may be defined as "actions intended to solve problems in obsolete port regions and improve the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions in these areas" [3]. Revitalization of obsolete port areas for commercial, tourism, cultural and recreational purposes is a frequent approach in the world. In their proposed "tourist-historic city" concept, Tunbridge and Ashworth argue for the reuse of cultural heritage for recreational and tourism purposes in regeneration of port areas as a whole [4]. The use of cultural heritage is keystone in recreational development of the coastal front in this approach. Barcelona, Amsterdam, Bilbao and Cape Town areas were selected as the cases of the implementation of this approach and regeneration projects in these areas were examined to provide preliminary data for Karakoy port district.

- Barcelona Case: Two basic reasons that triggered the port transformation in Barcelona are that the port area grew toward the historic city and the Olympics held in 1992. There are sea travel facilities, a trade port and Port Vell, which houses recreational, cultural and commercial activities, in one part of the port, and public sports areas, swimming pools, anchorages and areas allocated to fishers on another part of the port [5]. In Barcelona, a development approach of public-private partnership was adopted to the design approach. It included an emphasis on the public space character of the Olympic Village. The layout of urban perimeter blocks created streets within the Olympic Village in forms of continuations of the existing urban structure. Also, the development on the waterfront carried a strong public character [6]. Barcelona is remarkable in terms of the prevailing importance given to the creation of public space and planning for the public interest.
- Amsterdam Case: As part of the Amsterdam urban regeneration program, old industrial areas on Ij River waterfront were replaced by residential areas, office buildings, cultural centers, hotels and museums. A new Amsterdam emerged with new residential areas, centers of business and commerce connected through new transportation axes after 1999. As obsolete port areas

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were transformed, residential areas were planned by various architects, producing appealing spaces with cultural and architectural tourism value [7].

- Bilbao Case: Bilbao searched for an identity due to the obsolete coasts after deindustrialization and social segregation on the right and left sides of the Nervion River and culture and tourism constituted the foundation of the transformation idea. Planned functional areas were residential blocks, office buildings, shopping centers, and universities as well as large-scale congress and culture centers, recreational areas and the Guggenheim Museum, which gives the city identity. Municipality opened contests for the projects. The transformation in Bilbao induced development of cultural tourism in the city with the new identity Guggenheim provided [5].
- Cape Town Case: Large numbers of buildings becoming desolate by industrial use in Cape Town port area were converted to uses such as restaurants, cafés, shopping centers, hotels, taverns, theaters and naval museum. A port open to tourists but close to the city and residents was designed as part of the regeneration project in the area. Although the tourism goal was achieved, economic means of local residents of the old colony of Cape Town were not taken into consideration while designing the project, which was conducted by public-private sector partnership, planned by a single company and the project design process was completed without multilateral discussion. Therefore, Victoria & Alfred port was built in a way that only serves high-incomers and tourists and not the public [5].

The comparison of four areas selected as the examples of the regeneration work conducted in old port areas shows that their common features are preservation of waterfront silhouette, allocation of areas for recreational activities and inclusion of tourism and cultural activities in function areas. Rather than port-based approach, a city-based approach was adopted in the urban regeneration of Barcelona, Amsterdam and Bilbao ports, and the projects achieved their goals. In the case of Cape Town, although it is claimed the same planning policies were adopted, the transformation led the city towards segregation. The most important reason for this is that, on the contrary to other regeneration examples, waterfront areas were not opened to public use in Cape Town and transportation axes, roads and squares were not opened to public. When planned correctly, tourism can be an important tool to reassociate a disconnected city part with the city.

### III. CASE STUDY: KARAKOY PORT DISTRICT

Karakoy is an important port district of Istanbul City, located in the southwest of Bosphorus located between Asia and Europe and which connects the Mediterranean to the Black Sea. The area has significant qualities on commercial, historic and coastal potential. Karakoy has been an important center of commerce in Istanbul since the early ages but has lost its port function due to technological and social changes. There are a large number of historic buildings in the area built by foreign architects after the westernization movement in the

19th century. Reflecting the socio-cultural and economic structure of Istanbul, these historic buildings have played an important role in formation of the city's identity. On the other hand, the waterfront area was not put to its full potential and historic buildings here were abandoned after incorrect use. Karakoy-Salipazari facilities have not been in active use for years and the huge potential has not been benefited. This section of the study first examines the development of Karakoy port district and the reasons for physical and social obsolescence and secondly socio-spatial transformations including planned and spontaneous transformations intended to regenerate the area.

#### *A. Historic Development of the Area and Reasons of Obsolescence*

Karakoy has been a port and commercial center throughout history and has had a port since Byzantine times. Around the year of 1000, Byzantine Emperor allows Genovese merchants to settle and trade in the area. The Genovese, Venetians, Catalans, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Ottomans were in the area following the conquest of Constantinople and the about half of the residents were Muslims in 1478. The area became a center of banks and insurance companies in the 19th century. In these times well-respected society lived in the area and common areas offered recreational use. Finance, commerce, transportation and storehouses developed in parallel with the historical process. Mosques, churches and synagogues have always been together in the area [8]. A lot of buildings in the Karakoy Square were demolished during the development activity in 1950-1960; the square was expanded and lost its form. Dozens of buildings were demolished during the expansion studies on Kemeralti Avenue, which extends from Karakoy towards Tophane. In the second half of the 20th century, Karakoy became a secondary center and an area of depression when workshops came and inappropriate functions were adopted. In 1986, cargo transportation-handling function of Karakoy Port was ended due to the port's location in the city and its burden on urban traffic and the port was allocated to passenger liners and cruises alone. Banking headquarters and large-scale companies in the area moved to Zincirlikuyu-Maslak area, new central business center district of the city, and Karakoy District lost its function as a center of commerce. While Karakoy had 24 hours lively residential and commercial uses in old times; in 1980s, became a district of mechanical, plumbing and electronic parts suppliers during the day and a place for homeless at night [9].

#### *B. Socio-spatial Transformations in Karakoy District*

The configuration of the port area shows clear influence of urban transformation projects, conducted or planned by central or local governances and possibly reflects on urban use. On the other hand, the effect of daily life practices of Karakoy district's local residents on this configuration is a fact that must be considered. It is observed in successful regeneration projects around the world that "projects that integrate the city and the city dwellers, make life easier for residents and improve life quality" are sustainable. In this context, it is

important for the sustainability of decisions made about the area that daily life practices of city residents are interpreted and spontaneous socio-spatial transformations observed in regeneration are taken into consideration. Accordingly, this section of the study examines urban regeneration oriented socio-spatial transformations in Karakoy district as planned transformation projects and spontaneous transformation.

### 1. Planned Transformation Projects

The first planned transformation projects performed in Karakoy District date back to 19th Century in the Ottoman period. Planned transformation projects performed in the area were examined under the headings of "planned transformation projects from 19th century to present" and "currently planned transformation project: Galataport" (Table I).

TABLE I  
PLANNED TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS AND SPATIAL  
TRANSFORMATIONS IN KARAKOY DISTRICT

Project	Date	Spatial Transformations
Planned transformation projects from 19th century to present		
Westernization movements in the Ottoman era	1857	Consists of the organization of Karakoy Square, integration of the tunnel and tramway lines into urban transportation network, and construction of Karakoy-Salipazari dock, custom house, storehouse, warehouse and commercial areas.
Prost plan	1936-1951	Based on improvements of existing settlement, rather than a plan to grow and expand the city and proposes two large green areas in the plans for Historical Peninsula and Galata-Beyoglu.
Development studies during the term of Menderes	1954-1959	Consists of the opening of Kemeralti and Maliye avenues and the expansion of Karakoy Square, and preparation of the projects for buildings, customs, storehouses and warehouses currently used by Turkey Maritime Organization.
Expropriation work during the term of Dalan	1980	Consists of destruction of many historic buildings due to incorrect methods during the remediation of the Golden Horn and Karakoy District coming to its current state by losing its last stores on the Tunnel side.
Currently planned transformation project: Galataport		
Galataport	-	Consists of tourism/entertainment-oriented transformation of Karakoy-Salipazari area.

#### - Planned Transformation Projects from 19th Century to Present

Western municipal governance was introduced to Istanbul as part of the Westernization movements in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and the 6th Municipal Office, which was founded in Istanbul in 1857 and covers the districts of Pera, Karakoy, Galata and Tophane, was chosen as the pilot area of planned urban reforms [10]. Significant development work in this period that affected urban structure of the area were the organization of Karakoy Square, demolishing of sea walls, construction of Unkapani and Eminonu bridges, integration of the tunnel and tramway lines into urban transportation network, and construction of Karakoy-Salipazari dock, custom house, storehouse, warehouse and commercial complexes. The reforms did not yield the expected regeneration, satisfy urbanites as expected and could not be sustained in the long run, possibly due to the fact that problems of infrastructure, residence and hygiene were not considered properly [11].

The 2nd planned transformation project in the transformation of Karakoy port area was performed by French urban planner Prost between 1936 and 1951. Henri Prost designed the planning of settlements in Istanbul primarily according to environmental health and transportation. In this context, he proposes two large green areas in his plans for the Historical Peninsula and Galata-Beyoglu. Prost's plan is based on improvements of existing settlement, rather than a plan to expand the city. Green areas are a part of this idea [12].

The 3rd planned transformation project performed in the area was the development activities between 1954 and 1959. Development activities performed within Menderes demolitions, which were named after the prime minister of the time, consisted of the opening of Kemeralti and Maliye avenues and the expansion of Karakoy Square. A large number of historic buildings between Karakoy and Tophane were demolished. Also, architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem prepared in the late 1950s the projects of buildings, customs and warehouses currently used by TMO (Turkish Maritime Organization) [11].

The latest planned transformation project in the area was the project of extensive expropriation named after Dalan, mayor of the time, in 1980. Incorrect methods adopted during the project of remediating the Golden Horn due to rapid industrialization activity at the time caused destruction of many historic buildings. Karakoy Square lost its last stores on the Tunnel side and came to its current state [13]. Therefore, it can be said that the development projects removed the area gradually further away from its identity as a port city, transformed it into a transit market of all sorts of wholesale.

#### - Currently Planned Transformation Project: Galataport

Galataport, being prepared by the central government for the Karakoy-Salipazari area which has been discussed for the last 10 years proposes a tourism/entertainment-oriented transformation of the area (Fig. 1). TMO 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 projects, the main aim of the project is stated as creating an international culture and tourism center that will bring an economical vitality to Istanbul. Contrary to this, Galataport 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 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 coast [14]. The project area covers approximately 100.000 square meters. Project designer specifies the main decisions on the project as preservation of the port as a boutique port, connecting Tophane Square to the sea, reuse of naval warehouses and TMO buildings as tourism and commercial buildings [15].



Fig. 1 Galataport project's visual presentation [16]

Credited and criticized aspects of the project should be discussed: existing historic buildings in the area are to be restored and reused. A new passenger ship port, compatible with modern ports, was designed. Old naval warehouse buildings no 1, 2 and 3 are arranged to be the main terminal building. Implementation of marina structure is to allow access from the sea. Offices, sales areas, technology centers and a restaurant are designed. Tophane Square and the historic clock tower area are to be rearranged as an urban attraction center. TMO headquarters was designed as a hotel complex with bar-restaurant units on its terrace. The project is affirmed for reusing warehouse no 20 and old package post office buildings and connecting Tophane Square to the shore. One of the most important criticisms of the project is that it focuses on profit-oriented functions that do not integrate with the needs of city dwellers. A review of distribution of functions to areas reveals that Galataport is active in tourism and hotel functions while the area should be designed around cultural and recreational areas with tourism function nourishing these other functions [9]. The second important criticism is density. Although it is claimed that historic buildings in the area have been considered, the project was put out to tender for a second time, owing to allegations that a project of such density will overshadow the historic identity of the area and the tender winner company will close the area to public [5]. The first tender for Galataport was in September 2005 and was taken to court by Istanbul Chamber of Urban Planners. The tender was cancelled by court decision in 2006 and another tender was opened in May 2013. Although the debated tender process is complete, details of the project have not been clarified. Galataport is considered a positive idea in terms of main principles but causes concern due to the facts that abrupt decisions can be made on an important part of the city, a single financier performs the project, which has a mono-functional structure and has the potential of dissociating discriminating and sudden effects on daily life [11].

## 2. Spontaneous Transformations: Observations and Analyses























Projects designed taking daily life dynamics of local residents into account are sustainable in all over the world.

Spontaneous socio-spatial transformations, shaped by individual actions of urban residents, have been observed in Karakoy District since the 1990s. Analyses of these transformations and their use as data for a planned transformation project in the area are crucial to the sustainability of regeneration activities.

Throughout the 1990s, especially Kuledibi and surroundings were first restored and reused as apartments in the scale of buildings and later in building blocks. The ongoing transformation in Kuledibi reached Karakoy in the course of time [11]. Today, the spontaneous transformation in the Karakoy area can be observed in daily life. In this context, the spontaneous transformations in the area were analyzed through photographs, interviews and observations. Selected spatial transformation examples that reflect results of the analyses are presented in Table II. The most important breaking point of these spatial transformations is reuse of the old naval warehouse as the first contemporary arts museum of the city; Karakoy-Salipazari Limani, a controlled and safe area currently only accessible through seafaring to Istanbul, was only introduced to the residents in 2004, when Istanbul Modern museum was founded. Another breaking point was when another naval warehouse was selected to be a venue of the 9th International Istanbul Biennial in 2005 and transformation in the area steered towards the axis of culture and arts. Salt Galata, which was opened in 2011 in a 19th century building designed by architect Alexandre Vallaury on Bankalar Avenue for the Ottoman Bank, may be one of the examples of this kind of transformation. Following all these conversions with cultural use, the area caught the attention of various resident groups. The district houses large-scale investments as well as numerous independent art galleries, exhibition halls, art studios, café-workshops and design stores. The transformation ensues and has brought along the use of historical buildings by universities for educational purposes.

Spatial transformations in Karakoy cause changes in social structure as well. Plumbing part suppliers and art studios are located adjacently in the area. The daily life, where classes seemingly incompatible and of different communication and interaction levels according to their scales and ways of thinking, define a regular irregularity. The combination of an upper-middle class urbanite that owns a designer boutique and an urbanite that owns a mechanical part supply shop in the area melt down the approach of urban transformation based on separate social strata. At this point, the traditional cosmopolitan structure, which is a part of Karakoy's identity as a port city, is updated to a life of urbanites from all classes living together. This section discusses the power of urbanites to transform a city. At this point, it can be said that urban use, creativity and daily life have considerable effects on the transformation of urban identity.

TABLE II  
SOME CASES OF SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORICAL SPACES IN KARAKOY DISTRICT SINCE 2004

Exterior View	Interior View	Space Name	Construction Date	Conversion Date	Original Use	New Use
		Istanbul Modern	1950	2004	Naval Warehouse	Contemporary Art Museum
		Salt Galata	1892	2011	Ottoman Bank	Contemporary Art Foundation
		Art Sümer	End of 19 <sup>th</sup> century	2005	Storehouse	Art Gallery
		Galeri Mana	19 <sup>th</sup> century	2011	Wheat Mill	Art Gallery
		Istanbul 74	19 <sup>th</sup> century	2009	Commercial Purposes	Art and Culture Platform
		Unter	1960	2012	Workshop	Café
		Nano	1960	2011	Workshop	Café
		Atölye 11	1840	2011	Orthodox Church	Design Store
		Karabatak	1950	2011	Metal Workshop	Café
		Bahçeşehir University	1950	2013	Commercial Purpose	Faculty of Communication
		Karaköy Kûlah	1950	2011	Ice Cream Cone Factory	Temporary Project Space/Night Club

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is observed in successful regeneration projects around the world that tourism-oriented projects that establish a relationship between urbanities and the waterfront, that consider daily life practices of city residents and that are performed through a transparent planning process, are sustainable. Like in Barcelona, Amsterdam and Bilbao regeneration projects, a tourism-oriented transformation project that uses historic significance and brings together city dwellers with the waterfront should be proposed for Karakoy Port region. An exclusively tourism-oriented port transformation project like in the example of Cape Town can disconnect the area from its surroundings and cause social polarization. After reviewing planned transformation projects

and spontaneous transformations in Karakoy area from a critical point of view, this study summarizes the proposals developed for the regeneration of the area in the light of preliminary data:

- Transformation of Karakoy port area into the new culture, arts, business and shopping center of Istanbul by conversion of qualified historic buildings of the district in such a way that support culture-oriented spontaneous transformation observed in the field,
- Ensuring public participation in planned transformation projects, opening project contests in a participative method rather than a single investor or a single designer,
- Proposing projects that remove duty paid practices and that integrate with the historic texture of the district,

- Modernization of existing port facilities as a symbolic and boutique cruiser port (like in the example of Venice-San Marco, cruisers can dock one by one, without compromising the city's silhouette),
- Reuse of obsolete historic buildings in the vicinity of the port as boutique hotels,
- Reuse of obsolete historic buildings on the transportation axes from Karakoy to Beyoglu (Pera), the most important attraction center of Istanbul, as residences, cafés, stores or for cultural purposes and ensuring daylong activity in the area, and promotion of large-scale companies on Bogazkesen Avenue, one of these axes, to allocate their ground floors for extraverted uses,
- Transferring Istanbul Modern to another old naval warehouse to allow Tophane Square reach the waterfront and reconnect city dwellers to the sea; extending the pedestrian axis in Beyoglu (Pera) towards Bogazkesen Avenue, Tophane Square and finally towards the waterfront,
- Reuse of other old naval warehouses for cultural and social activities, and completing the conversion of warehouse allocated to Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, to Art and Sculpture Museum.

Transformation projects proposed with the aim to regenerate old ports and their hinterlands include concepts such as tourism, commerce and shopping, art and culture, and recreation. The critical aspect is making sure that port areas are not transformed to serve a single use or address a single type of users. Projects performed around the world contribute to their cities only in how well they bring together city dwellers and the regenerated area in various social, cultural and economic levels with multiple functions suitable to natural dynamism of port areas. In this context, an urbanite-oriented project process that focuses on the city in the broadest possible perspective that integrates with the historic texture with minimum punctual interventions will maintain sustainability of culture and tourism-oriented regeneration of Karakoy port district.

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