

# ISTANBUL-BOSPHORUS AS OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE, THE PROCESS OF CHANGE OVER TIME

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## ABSTRACT:

In the course of globalisation national identity and local cultural concepts are outstanding items. Landscape is an indicator of common heritage as a combination of natural and cultural heritage. Bosphorus of Istanbul is an organically evolving landscape with its continuing and associative cultural landscape properties. In this paper, the changing process of man-made and natural environmental relationships of the cultural landscape of Bosphorus is searched in terms of sustainable land use. Four groves from Bosphorus are selected as case studies for this purpose. These examples are studied in terms of documentation as a first step to develop and to rehabilitate cultural landscape areas.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Bosphorus is a strait of 20 km long and 1 to 1.5 km wide in Istanbul between the two continents of Asia and Europe, connecting the Black Sea with the Marmara. Due to the topography, both sides of the strait are covered with hills sometimes punctuated with valleys giving the opportunity of exceptional views from both sides. The seaside residences stretching in an almost unbroken line along the whole length of the seashore and their unique architecture together with the natural environment makes Bosphorus a waterway of beauty attracting the foreigners as well as the citizens themselves. In this context, Bosphorus cultural landscape which is the interaction of natural and man-made features needs a detailed documentation, maintenance, management and development procedures in order to continue to serve as an essential cultural living area of the inhabitants.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The old settlements of Bosphorus were situated on the planes where the streams flowed to the sea. The inhabitants of these villages mostly lived on fishing and producing vegetables and garden crops. The Bosphorus, with its bays, woods, meadows and streams (on which sailing on row boats-caiques-was the main pleasure) was Istanbul's residents' place for recreation. In time, the waterfront began to be adorned with palaces and residences of wealthy inhabitants. At first, these were built and used as summer residences only, later with the development of transport between the two shores and the city centre most of them began to be used permanently. With their perfect proportions and unique architecture, these waterfront buildings together with the natural vegetation surrounding them added new beauties to the exceptional scenery of the Bosphorus. As they sometimes formed a continuous line on both sides of the strait they were described as "pearls of necklace". Apart from the waterfront buildings, sometimes small kiosks were built on the slopes in woods with the colours of their facades contrasting with those of the vegetation as punctuating elements giving variety to whole scene. This extraordinary combination blending the architectural buildings with nature was at its peak

in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, with the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially after the First World War, industrialization, rapid and unplanned, uncontrolled, unhealthy urbanization due to false planning and political decisions have changed the once balanced unity of the built environment and natural one.



Figure 1. The Bosphorus



**Figure 2. A view from Rumelihisari.**

### 3. THE PROPERTIES OF BOSPHORUS

#### 3.1 Location and Topography

The “Golden Horn” divides the city of Istanbul into two parts. The “Historical Peninsula” which is the centre of the city and Galata-Beyoğlu region Bosphorus is an extension of the city to the north along the strait making up the third part. The low plateaus that line the Bosphorus from both sides that range in altitude of 100 to 200 m from the sea form the basic elements of topography of Bosphorus area. The undulations on the opposite sides of the strait show an asymmetric formation. The highest points on the west side are near the Black Sea shores (200-230 m), whereas the highest points on the east side are closer to the Marmara Sea.

#### 3.2 Climate

The Bosphorus and its periphery are under the effect of regional climatic conditions (Mediterranean) in general. But local climatic conditions prevail between different parts due the location, altitude and vegetation cover. The annual average temperature ranges between 13.6 C and 13.9 C and the annual precipitation between 672 mm and 745 mm. The relative humidity is between 70 to 80% (the highest in Turkey) (Yaltirik, 1975, p.308-309).

#### 3.3 Vegetation Cover

The natural vegetation cover of the Bosphorus shows a transition between the Mediterranean climatic type to Black Sea climatic type. The natural vegetation cover is made up of forests and pseudo-machi's. The forest texture is rich in terms of species. According to the climatic conditions Chestnut (*Castanea*), Oak (*Quercus*), Elm (*Ulmus*), Linden (*Tilia*), Ash (*Fraxinus*), Locust (*Robinia*) are the most prominent ones. The most important species of machi formation are Laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), Mastic Tree (*Pistachio terebinthus*), Judas Tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*), Broom (*Spartium junceum*), Firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*), and Oak (*Quercus latifolius*, *Quercus coccifera*). Apart from the natural vegetation cover there are other vegetation types that have perfectly acclimatised in time in Bosphorus and became an inseparable part of it, like Plane Tree (*Platanus orientalis*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), and especially Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), Stone Pine (*Pinus pinea*) (Pamay, 1975, P.165,166)



**Figure 3. A view from the natural vegetation cover of the Bosphorus.**



**Figure 4. Waterfront buildings with the natural vegetation.**



**Figure 5. A view from slopes of the Bosphorus.**

#### 3.4 Population

As a result of migration to the big cities (primarily Istanbul) beginning from 1950 the population in Bosphorus also began to increase rapidly.

#### 3.5 Transportation

Once the only means of communication in the Bosphorus was by sea (row boats). The introduction of steam boat was in 1829 and regular trips with these began along the strait in the year 1849. Before the construction of the two bridges over the strait, the first in 1973 and the second one in 1988, the communication between the two sides for vehicles was done by ferry-boats. While the bridges over the strait were planned it was considered that these would only cause a linear development along their peripheries without affecting the Bosphorus area, but the rapid increase in the population immediately after the construction revealed the opposite.



**Figure 6. The Bosphorus Bridge.**

### 3.6 Land use

The primary land use in the Bosphorus was housing. The inhabitants of the traditional villages of the Bosphorus had mostly settled on the bay and the inner parts of the valleys leaving the shore to the waterfront residences and palaces. Today, the districts of the Bosphorus on the south (near the city centre) are densely populated with every kind of urban land use, whereas the population density decreases to the north and these districts are mostly used for recreation and tourism.

The industry in the Bosphorus area is limited and it is located to the north of the strait and there are numerous historical buildings all over the area open to public as museums.

### 3.7 Architecture

Apart from the general characteristics of traditional Turkish house the specific characteristics of the Bosphorus affected the architecture of the buildings on the strait. The primary factor affecting the design was the view (Bosphorus), and the houses were designed to benefit the most of it. The second important factor was the sun.

As the general formation of the strait is on north-south axis, the houses on the European side get the morning sun whereas those on the Asian side get the afternoon sun. This is reflected on their facades (the latter have shutters to protect them from this negative factor). As the houses were almost built on the sea the principle rooms were on the upper floors and the material used for the construction was wood instead of masonry to get enough protection from damp. But the late examples represent western styles such as Art Nouveau, Neoclassical, Baroque or Rococo and all were masonry buildings belonging to foreign consulates or the palace members or the emperor (sultan) himself. The colours used in their facades were mainly pale colours (primarily white) to contrast with the green vegetation surrounding them (Tunbiş, 1995, p.112).

It is sad to state that the most of the waterfront houses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century doesn't exist now and those that could be preserved stand like strangers among their new neighbours most of which do not even bear a sign of the ones they have replaced.



**Figure 7. Amcazade Huseyin Pasa Yalisi , one of the oldest waterfront buildings in Istanbul (date:1699).**



**Figure 8. Waterfront buildings from 19<sup>th</sup> century.**



**Figure 9. Contemporary waterfront buildings.**

## 4. BOSPHORUS IN LEGAL BOUNDRIES

The building activities that had began in 1956-59 with the construction of new roads and roads widening in the historical peninsula and the whole city have made the Bosphorus area a suitable place for settlements and caused the city to further enlarge to the north via Bosphorus.

With the "Beyoglu Arrangement Plan" in 1954 the areas between Mecidiyekoy and Levent (district not on the shore but adjacent to those on the shore) were assigned for industrial use, and with "Istanbul Industrial Plan" in 1955 Istinye, Pasabahce, Beykoz (districts on the shore) were shown among the areas for industry.

In 1966 the "Istanbul Industrial Areas Plan" excluded Istinye from the areas destined to be used for industry, but included Levent and the areas surrounding it instead. In 1969 Istinye was again announced as an industrial area (Aslan, 1989:62).

The shanty towns that have developed in Bosphorus in those years are merely the product of these false planning decisions.

The first attempt to preserve the Bosphorus from extensive development was the "Bosphorus Shoreline Preservation Plan" in 1971, and with the "Old Buildings Act" in 1973 all the building procedures in Bosphorus began to be directed by the "Council of Old Buildings and Monuments". The "Ministry of Culture" announced the Bosphorus as a natural and cultural heritage site and the "Arrangement Plan" prepared for



preventing unplanned building and preserving the given texture was approved and put to force in 1977. With this plan the future land use for the Bosphorus was determined as recreation, tourism and housing. This plan rejected any new industrial development in the Bosphorus, and proposed that among the established ones those that had negative effects on the environment should be carried elsewhere.

Although this plan initially proposed positive measures for the protection of Bosphorus the revisions made on it in 1978 and 1979 deprived it of these concepts.

The public interest for Bosphorus gained a potential in the course of the rapid building developments that took place after 1980 and as a result of this the “Bosphorus Building Act” was announced in 1983. This act brought strict measures for construction in Bosphorus especially on the frontal area (areas perceived when viewed from the sea) and prohibited any building construction on plots that lay in the residential areas but haven’t been built prior to that date and stated the principle that these should be regarded and preserved as “green areas”.



Figure 10. Building activities in bays at 1970’s.



Figure 11. Building activities in woods at 1990’s.

## 5. ANALYTICAL FRAME FOR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

In order to search the changing process of man-made and natural environmental relationships of the cultural landscape of Bosphorus, two examples from Asian and European sides are selected. The groves are searched in terms of historical background, plants, buildings, ownership and function. In this paper, the past and the present activities of groves are examined in order to determine the change over time.

<b>Historical Research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Private use</li> <li>• Plants: Cedar (Cedrus), Pine (Pinus), Spruce (Pices), Yew (Taxus), Cypress (Cupressus), Juniper (Juniperus), Maple (Acer), Oak (Ouercus), False Acacia (Robinia), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus)</li> <li>• Buildings: Yildiz Palace, Cadir Pavilion, Sale Pavilion, Malta Pavilion, Chinaware Factory, Barns,</li> </ul>
<b>Existing Conditions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Public use</li> <li>• The owner is now the Municipality of Istanbul. It is used as a public park since 1950.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuity and Change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing plant material is rehabilitated and preserved with necessary additions.</li> <li>• Previous private use has changed into public use</li> <li>• Adaptations and change have been made in the palaces and kiosks due to modern living requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Classifying Cultural Activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Cultural activities (concert, exhibition etc.)</li> <li>• Educational activities (some parts of Yildiz Grove is owned by Yildiz Technical University for educational purposes.</li> </ul>

<b>Fethi Pasa Grove</b>
<b>Historical Research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Private use</li> <li>• Plants: Oak (Querous), Bay Laurel (Laurus), Mastic Tree (Pistachio), Judas Tree (Cercis), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus), False Acacia (Robinia), Ash (Fraxinus), Yew (Taxus)</li> <li>• Buildings: Two buildings of traditional wood construction</li> </ul>
<b>Existing Conditions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Public use</li> <li>• Through 1960-1980 period the grove was left on its own without any maintenance. The Municipality of Istanbul renovated it with a maintenance programme during 1985-1987.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuity and Change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing plant material is rehabilitated and preserved with necessary additions.</li> <li>• Previous private use has changed into public use</li> <li>• The two buildings of wooden construction have been restored and are now used as a restaurant and a cafe</li> </ul>
<b>Classifying Cultural Activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Tourism</li> </ul>

<b>Emirgan Grove</b>
<b>Historical Research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Private use</li> <li>• Plants: Stone Pine (Pinus Pinea), Spruce (Picea), Cedar (Cedrus), Judas Tree (Cercis), Wisteria (Wisteria), Magnolia (Magnolia), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus), Hawthorne (Crataegus), Plane (Platanus)</li> <li>• Buildings: Sari Pavilion, Pembe Pavilion, Beyaz Pavilion</li> </ul>
<b>Existing Conditions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Public use</li> <li>• It has been bought by the Municipality of Istanbul and opened to public in 1943.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuity and Change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing plant material is rehabilitated and preserved with necessary additions.</li> <li>• Previous private use has changed into public use</li> <li>• The pavilions has been restored to be used as cafe</li> </ul>
<b>Classifying Cultural Activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Cultural activities (concert, exhibition etc.)</li> <li>• The Municipality of Istanbul has been celebrating a “Tulip Festival” in the grove annually.</li> </ul>

<b>Hidiv Grove</b>
<b>Historical Research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Private use</li> <li>• Plants: Linden (Tilia), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus), Pine (Pinus), Yew (Taxus), Magnolia (Magnolia), Cedar (Cedrus), Ash (Fraxinus), False Acacia (Robinia), Oak (Quercus), Laurel (Laurus), Judas Tree (Cercis), Plane (Platanus)</li> <li>• Buildings: Hidiv’s Summer Palace</li> </ul>
<b>Existing Conditions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage: Public use</li> <li>• The summer palace ad the grove had been the property of Hidiv family for years and was used by them privately until 1930. The new owner of the property is The Municipality of Istanbul since 1937. During the restoration work of the palace in 1982 a maintenance programme for the grove was also started the grove and the palace are in good condition today</li> </ul>
<b>Continuity and Change</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existing plant material is rehabilitated and preserved with necessary additions.</li> <li>• Previous private use has changed into public use</li> <li>• The palace has been restored and is used as a restaurant today</li> </ul>
<b>Classifying Cultural Activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Cultural activities (concert etc.)</li> </ul>

## 6. CONCLUSION

Research is essential before undertaking any protection. The documentation, maintenance, management of cultural landscapes requires a detailed research. In this paper, the documentation stage of protecting cultural landscapes are focused in order to find informations which help identifying a landscape’s past and present conditions. Once the documentation of existing cultural landscapes have been completed, an appropriate maintenance and management strategy is in place to develop the landscape’s features, determine its significance, and place it within the context of similar landscapes.

In this paper, examples are studied in terms of documentation as a first step to protect the cultural landscapes. The whole profile of the Bosphorus cultural landcape can be maintained through a research covering the whole strait. Such research would help to improve the sustainable land use and cultural life in the Bosphorus.

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