

# 09.30 The Dilemma between Conservation and Economic Benefit: Designation of Heritage Places as "Renewal Areas" in Turkey

What: Paper

Part of: [La conservation des quartiers anciens et le problème de la gentrification](#)

Duration: [\(/sites/patrimoine/en/ACHS2016/items/356/La%20conservation%20des%20quartiers%20anciens%20et%20le%20probl%C3%A8me%20de%20la%20gentrification\)](#)

Sunday June 5 09:00 AM to 12:30 PM (3 hours 30 minutes)  
30 minutes

Where: UQAM, pavillon J.-A. De Sève (DS)

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Conservation of cultural heritage is a "value"-based process. Since the early twentieth century, scholars in the conservation field have been aware of the coexistence of different values ranging from socio-cultural to economic values. The same awareness has characterized the cultural economics analysis of cultural heritage conservation. Both approaches emphasize the subjective nature of "values" that change according to time, society and place.

Today it is a fact that, often, economic values of cultural heritage dominate the sociocultural values because of the increasing focus on economic benefits and development of neoliberal economic policies. Consequently, heritage places, which are the integral part of the built environment, are the object of for-profit interventions through urban transformation and regeneration projects that may, often, lead to demolitions and destructions of the social and cultural values of cultural heritage.

Reflections of the neoliberal policy shift are also evident in Turkey. For central and local authorities, the "reconsideration" and "use" of heritage places in order to gain economic benefit has become a prevailing concern. Heritage places are subject to laws and regulations for their conservation and sustainability, controlling and limiting new interventions. In order to overcome these "conservation obstacles" and allow for-profit interventions on heritage places through "regeneration" and "urban transformation" projects, planned and financed by national and international investors, the configuration of new legal rules and policy instruments is necessary. Accordingly, a new law on "Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalization of Deteriorated Immoveable Historical and Cultural Properties" (Act. No. 5366) was introduced in 2005, for the preparation and implementation of urban regeneration and conservation projects in cultural and natural heritage sites. The aim of this law is defined as valorizing timeworn historical and cultural heritage properties through "renewal projects" of maintenance and conservation prepared outside the approved conservation master plans. This law can be considered as a breaking point in the conservation of cultural heritage in Turkey, as it triggered conflicts in terms of preservation of cultural heritage when the interventions under this law are taken into account. In fact, the aim of this law is described as the preservation of cultural heritage, however, many renewal projects propose mixed-use developments where expropriation by the central as well as local authorities leads to the displacement of local residents to get higher rents.

This paper aims to discuss the approach of central and local authorities in terms of conservation of cultural heritage and the effects/results of this new policy instrument, referring to examples from Istanbul. The paper will first illustrate the context characterizing the implementation of these new rules. Then, it will focus on two renewal areas where projects are being implemented: Tarlabası and Sulukule. The paper will compare the situation of the sites before and after the renewal project considering the various values involved and the way they were affected. The aim is to see if heritage places are (ab)used by decision-makers in Turkey in order to gain maximum economic benefits, neglecting the conservation of cultural heritage.

Paper coauthored with A. Guliz Bilgin Altinoz and Anna Mignosa

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