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Heritagisation of the “Ottoman/Turkish House” in the 1970s: Istanbul-based Actors, Associations and their Networks

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Introduction



FIGURE 1. CALL FOR ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED HISTORIC HOMES.

POSTER FOR "THE SECOND TURKISH HOUSES WEEK" ORGANIZED BY TÜRKEV (TÜRKİYE TARİHİ EVLERİ KORUMA DERNEĞİ)

- 1 Urban vernacular houses in Turkey were heritagised in the 1970s, a decade in which concrete-frame apartment buildings came to dominate the fabric of cities, especially that of Istanbul, the largest- and fastest-growing city in the country. Many articles, studies, and monographs have contributed to the definition of this typology, dubbed variably as the "Ottoman" or "Turkish House," as a heritage object; however, the process by which it became a heritage object and even a "theme" has not received due critical scrutiny (on theming, see: Gottdiener, 2011). How and why was a type of domestic architecture in Istanbul heritagised? Who were the promoters of this type of heritage? How did they mediate evolving European norms in local and professional contexts, and how did they translate local concerns to international platforms? This paper seeks to identify the actors, associations and networks key to the re-construction of this type as cultural heritage in the 1970s in the same period as heritage promotion policies appeared under the influence of Europe-based supranational organizations. My discussion is limited to Istanbul-based actors because, even before the 1970s, dramatic transformations in Istanbul inspired discussions about this typology.
- 2 Heritagisation, here, refers to a social construct (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 2006) and process (Harvey 2001; Smith 2006; for an overview of post-War preservation discourses, see Rajagopalan 2012). The heritagisation of vernacular houses in Turkey is connected to post-World War II European preservation discourses responding to growing concerns about the destruction of historic city centres through rapid urbanization. In the context of Istanbul and Turkey specifically, it was also related to the rise of "civil

society," policy decisions, and legal arrangements, all encouraged by a host of relatively new supranational Europe-based organizations in the 1970s. These local actors, to whom I will refer as "Istanbul enthusiasts," were encouraged by historic preservation projects they observed abroad in Europe and motivated in person by representatives of supranational organizations. They would adopt and distort the simultaneously developing international norms, which shifted from individual monument-based restoration to area conservation in the post-war era. Supranational institutions supported historic preservation with the aim to foster the notion of a common European and "universal" inheritance; their efforts in "democratizing" heritage found popular support in other European countries, but local actors in Istanbul cast their objectives in nationalist, and sometimes elitist, tones. In addition, while international norms and legislations of the 1970s were adopted swiftly in Turkey, they were not necessarily implemented. Instead, these local actors' early efforts unintentionally paved the way for the gentrification of certain streets and neighbourhoods, as well as providing source imagery for commodification in the real estate market in the following decades. By tracing the interactions of these actors, mainly through a survey of reports in local newspapers, magazines, architectural journals, and interviews and biographic accounts, this article discusses how the Ottoman-Turkish House, an appellation for the wooden domestic vernacular originally used to define a revivalist professional agenda in the early decades of the 20th century, became framed as a European inheritance for an international audience; and it reflects in turn how the local discourse of heritage preservation revolving around the house developed into a vital imagining of "Old Istanbul" for the political present. The arguments and findings of the paper can potentially provide insight for future studies exploring links between historic preservation, tourism, and urban renewal.

- 3 Out of the several cases and figures I will discuss, two, Oya Kılıç's exhibition "Istanbul 1800" in 1975, and Perihan Balcı's research, exhibition and book *Old Istanbul Houses [Eski İstanbul Evleri]*, are lesser-known and unique examples of women's contributions to the historic preservation of the urban vernacular. The most well-known case I will discuss is the Turing Club's restoration of Soğukçeşme Street that has been featured in international media outlets who usually promote the narrative that the restoration was the Club Chairperson's own vision. I will show that in fact the efforts of supranational organizations, and the vested interest of the central government in tourism revenue-generating projects have coalesced with experts' and enthusiasts' calls to protect disappearing architectural expressions of a shared national culture. I have had the opportunity to interview Oya Kılıç (Karabekir) and to examine the archival documentation at the association established by Perihan Balcı (1924-2013), while the rest of my sources on these efforts are mainly published biographic accounts. I also rely on newspaper and journal coverage in spite of the possible criticism that their record of events is distorted; I see such popular accounts as constitutive of the public debate on the fate of historic homes, and therefore, of the historical account.
- 4 The second section of this article, "Heritage and Inheritance," discusses the rise of democratized architectural heritage movements and policies in Turkey and Europe more generally, which are related to issues of national and continental identity as well as to the phenomena of urban gentrification and the tourist economy. Section 3, "The Ottoman/Turkish House as a Vernacular Type," summarizes how and why Istanbul's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wooden houses became codified in the twentieth century as the traditional Turkish or Ottoman House. The fourth section, "The

Heritagisation of the Ottoman/Turkish House,” investigates the role of experts who, in the 1970s, expanded the interest in the Ottoman/Turkish House into a movement to transform the historic peninsula of Istanbul into an open-air museum; this movement was especially influenced by international trends in architectural and urban preservation and architectural restoration, as well as the activities of supranational organizations, most notably the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Section 5, “An Open-air Museum on the Historic Peninsula,” looks more closely at the influence of Oya Kılıç’s “Istanbul 1800” exhibition in promoting the open-air museum vision for Istanbul, an approach also advanced by resourceful and well-organized civil society groups in Turkey—such as TÜRKEV and TAÇ—as considered in the following section, “‘Civil Society’ for Architectural Heritage.” In the sixth section, “A Model Ottoman Street,” I will treat the fashionably picturesque “restoration” of Soğukçeşme Street by the Touring Club and its outspoken chairperson, Çelik Gülersoy (1930-2003), as part of a political-economic agenda to project Istanbul as a unique and dynamic global city. The “Conclusion” reviews issues of the preservation of vernacular houses and elite, institutional actors in the current re-imagining of Old Istanbul.

I. Heritage and Inheritance

- 5 Heritage, once the privilege of the rich who would “inherit” from ancestors, has been democratized in modern times (Lowenthal 2003). The modern conception of heritage is expedient: as a shared value, it strengthens bias among citizens towards their nation or faith, inviting them to realize, together with other citizens, that they are the inheritors of a particular past, and therefore, share a common future. Another aspect of architectural heritage is that it justifies territorial claims. Artifacts including whole buildings from antiquity were first “collected” by European nation states to construct a genealogical tree at the apex of which they would place themselves. The Ottoman state would start its own collections in response to European imperialist infringement to which archaeological excavations provided a pretext. Wendy Shaw (2003) argues that,

Like colonized nations gaining their independence, Ottomans had to fight against the supposed objectivity of the scientific practices of archaeology and reinsert their presence into the narrative of civilization that this science helped to write... Archaeological activities helped to justify European hopes of imperial possessions in previous Ottoman territories. Europeans often disguised their activities of antiquities collection as a form of altruism without political motivations. In light of this, Ottoman archaeological expeditions responded to the European incursions in order not only to reclaim artifactual rights, but, more important, territorial ones. Thus the development of the museum and the legislative practices associated with it spoke not only verbally in the language of heritage and history but also physically in the language of conquest and territory. (Shaw 2003: 106–7)

- 6 Hence the first heritage legislation in Turkey dealt with the status of artifacts from antiquity (the Antiques Regulation, or *Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi*, of 1874). The elevation of the urban vernacular buildings in their urban context to heritage status came much later.
- 7 The first antiques regulations were placed all under the control of the Ministry of Education. This legislation was revised in 1906 to address the shortcomings of the 1874 law in protecting works from the Turkish-Islamic period, including old houses (Eres and Yalman 2013: 34). The 1906 law was adopted by the new republic and remained in

effect until 1973. The Directory of Antiques and Museums, established in 1920, was responsible for archaeological findings. In 1951, the "Supreme Council for Preservation" [*Gayrimenkul Eski Eserler ve Anıtlar Yüksek Kurulu*] was established mainly to inventory and register historically significant buildings, and restore monumental ones, usually in isolation from their urban contexts. It was not until 1973 when a new preservation law, in parallel to developments in Europe, promoted the preservation of buildings not in isolation but in the context of their area or site.

- 8 Just as European and later post-colonial nation-states became involved in the making of heritage, merging post-war Europe, too, has engaged in heritage production to consolidate continental identification (Lowenthal 1994). The union of Europe is defined by values of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, but it also demands a measure of political-economic convergence—the motto of the European Union is, after all, "united in diversity." Thus, according to the trio Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge (2000), "the need for a European heritage" stems from a discord between integration and the lack of corresponding legitimizing identification.
- 9 The preservation of architectural heritage has been a cornerstone of European integration since the movement to merge began, but the constitution of heritage has changed radically over time. In Istanbul, traditional neighbourhoods and old houses were razed without qualm in the immediate post-war period, during which the "West" hailed Turkey as a successful example of modernization. In 1959, Istanbul even received the Council of Europe's "Europe Prize," created in 1955, for its urban renewal operations. As the European Council president at the time announced: "We all know the courage and determination of Istanbul, the guard of the Straits, in the spectacular rebuilding effort it has undertaken without damaging any of its historical treasures that are the living witness to its bright past." (*"İstanbul Yılın Şehri"* 1960: 1) When the prize was awarded, urban renewal was seen as a means of making Istanbul more "European"—an outcome that matched the prize's stated goal of "promoting European unity." Urban renewal policies isolated the city's monuments and opened vistas onto them with newly carved-out boulevards. Yet, this process also brought about the demolition of much of the city's historic housing stock, leaving thousands of people homeless. Correlating the opening of roads with modernization was, of course, not evidence of "Europeanness," but rather the continuation of the nineteenth-century reform practice, taking inspiration from concurrent international trends (Boysan 1993, 1999; Altınyıldız 2007).
- 10 The discontent and anxieties stemming from rapid urbanization and the loss of old houses gave way over the following decades to a vibrant debate on urban culture. Eventually, increased awareness of the preservation and cultural heritage policies being endorsed by supranational institutions, led a small number of professionals and enthusiasts to advocate for a return of the "Turkish House" and the rediscovery of old neighbourhoods. But the coupling of this professional call with market reforms in the post-1980 period soon led to types of nostalgia that, in Svetlana Boym's terms, were more "restorative" than "reflective" (Boym 2001).
- 11 For my discussion here what is important is that the democratization of heritage has allowed individuals who may not have personal ties to any particular historic home to articulate positions and form new alliances and associations around the fate of old houses and the neighbourhoods they constituted. In this sense, the cases from Istanbul that I will discuss are not only pertinent to the city of Istanbul, or to Turkey at large.

For example, anthropologist Christa Salamandra (2004) discusses the revalorization of "Old Damascus," that is, the historic core of Damascus, among the Damascene elite in the 1990s. She characterizes The Society of Friends of Damascus, established in 1977, as an elite group organized for socialization more than preservation-oriented activism. Here, appreciation of Old Damascus provided a loose group boundary or "distinction" à la Bourdieu, despite the fact that the group's members did not live in Old Damascus. In this way, elite Damascenes try to distinguish themselves from newcomers from the countryside by way of the importance they attached to "urbanite culture" and architectural heritage as its manifestation. This notion of distinction contradicts ideals of sharing a common future or democratization. Heritage controversies and activism revolve around this contradiction: i.e. whose heritage is erased and/or claimed by whom? For an elite group facing waning influence, embracing architecture is "restorative," in that it seeks to restore the group's relative position. However, such a reading cannot entirely account for the support of architectural heritage preservation initiatives shown by supranational organizations and national governments.

- 12 The institutionalization of historic preservation since the 1970s has corresponded with the turn to tourism in deindustrializing cities as well as urban renewal schemes that seek to revitalize inner-city areas. Speaking more broadly, Svetlana Boym has observed (in the context of Eastern Europe) that "the urban renewal taking place in the present is no longer futuristic but nostalgic; the city imagines its future by improvising on its past" (Boym 2001: 75). Historic preservation of the urban vernacular can be regarded as the leading arena of "culture"—a category used to market cities as part and parcel of the global turn from managerial to entrepreneurial city governance (Harvey 1989). Historic preservation-led urban renewal in inner-city neighbourhoods pushes out poorer residents, sanitizing these neighbourhoods in predictable ways amenable for international tourists as well as rendering them welcoming to affluent residents. While much has been written about historic preservation-led urban renewal (and gentrification) in Istanbul in the 1990s and after, how experts and Istanbul enthusiasts in Turkey led the way in the protection of historic homes and created area conservation models is a lesser-known story.

II. The Ottoman-Turkish House as a Vernacular Type

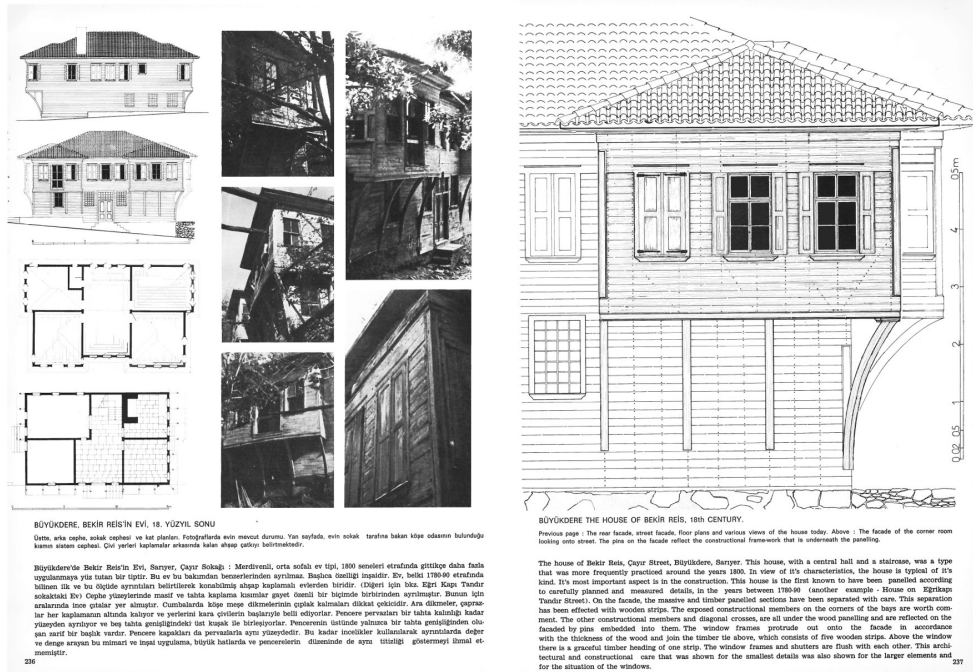


Figure 2a. A typical detailed formal study of the wooden vernacular houses in Istanbul undertaken by Sedad Hakki Eldem. (full size)

ELDEM, SEDAD HAKKI. 1984. TÜRK EVİ: OSMANLI DÖNEMİ, PP. 236-237. İSTANBUL: TÜRKİYE ANIT, ÇEVRE, TURİZM DEĞERLERİNİ KORUMA VAKFI.

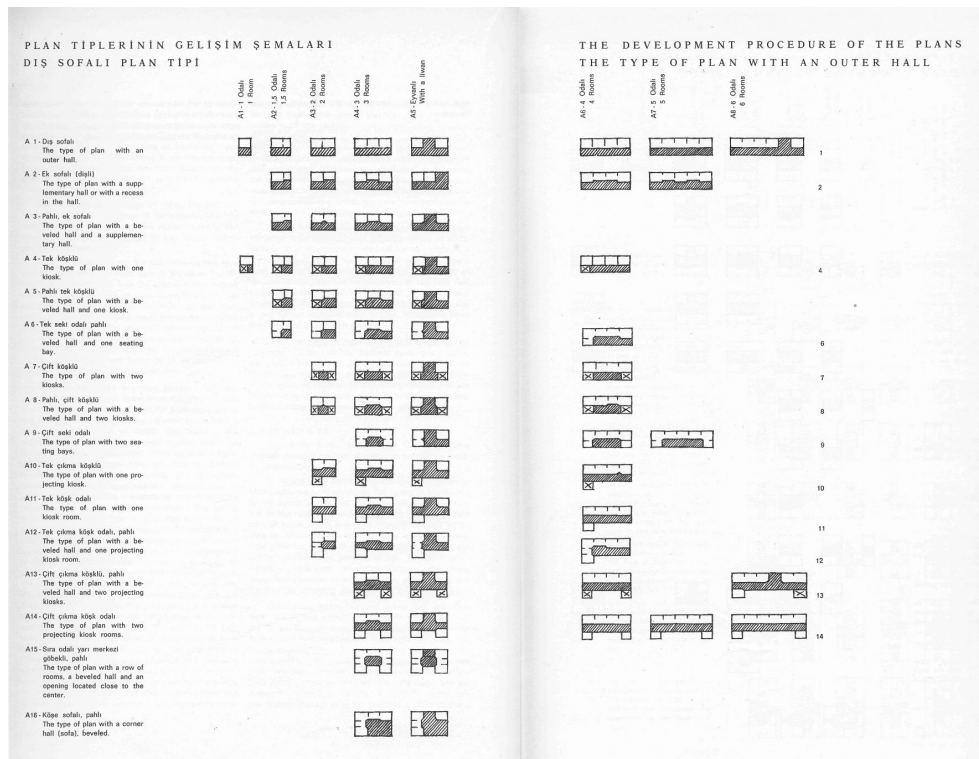


Figure 2b. Sedad Hakki Eldem's typological studies. (full size)

ELDEM, SEDAD HAKKI. 1984. TÜRK EVİ: OSMANLI DÖNEMİ, PP. 26-27. İSTANBUL: TÜRKİYE ANIT, ÇEVRE, TURİZM DEĞERLERİNİ KORUMA VAKFI.

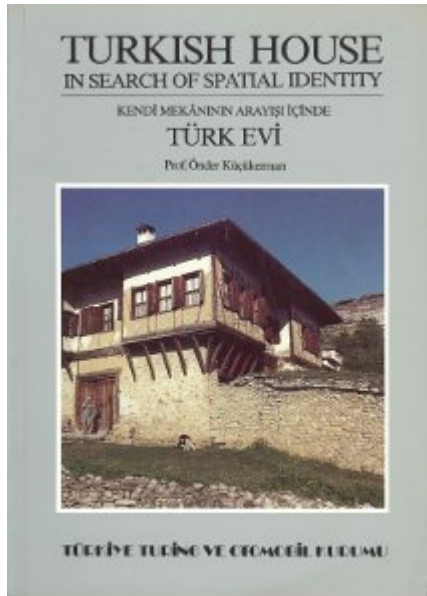


FIGURE 3A. COVER, ÖNDER KÜÇÜKERMAN'S (1991) *TURKISH HOUSE: IN SEARCH OF SPATIAL IDENTITY*, 4TH EDITION.

PUBLISHED BY TÜRKİYE TURING VE OTOMOBİL KURUMU (TOURING CLUB).

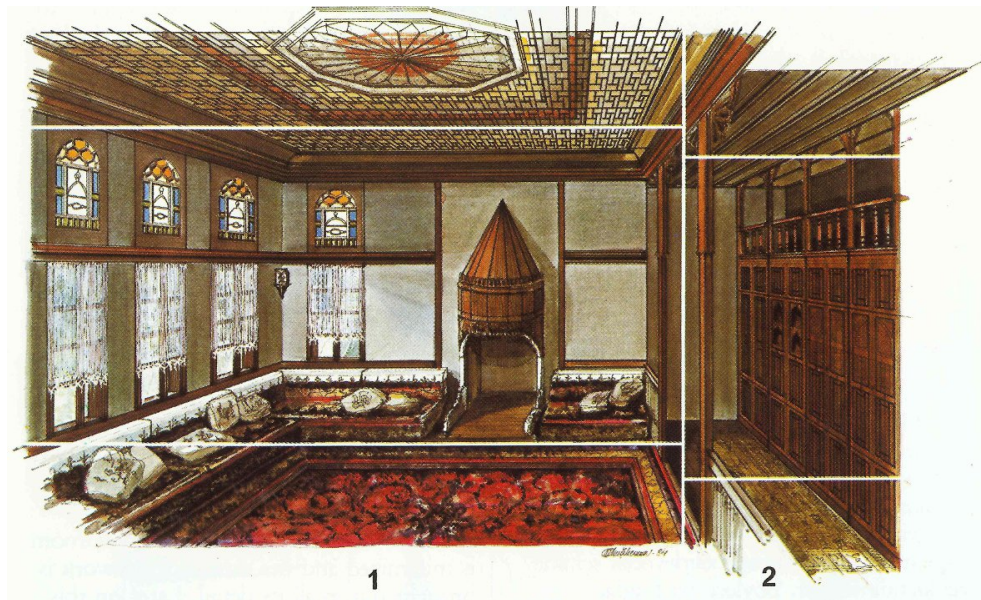


FIGURE 3B. RENDITION OF A TYPICAL FAMILY ROOM FROM KÜÇÜKERMAN'S *TURKISH HOUSE* (P. 78) WHICH FOCUSES ON THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF ROOMS, AND THE "ROOTS" QUESTION, I.E. THE POTENTIAL INFLUENCES CARRIED FROM THE NOMADIC LIVES OF TURKS BEFORE SETTLING IN ANATOLIA. (FULL SIZE)

- 13 The earliest writings on vernacular architecture in the late Ottoman Empire date from the first decades of the 20th century; these focus on wooden urban houses, the traditional neighbourhoods they constituted, and the character of old Istanbul (Sezer 2005, 2009). In a period when most of the middle classes desired to move out of old houses to modern apartment buildings, the topic of wooden houses was embraced by only a handful intellectuals from the same circle. One of their common objectives in looking at the vernacular was to derive from it a contemporary, modern, and simultaneously national idiom for new housing. These early commentators—including

but not limited to Celal Esad Arseven (starting in 1909 with *Constantinople*), Hamdullah Suphi, Süheyl Ünver—precede architect-educator Sedad Hakkı Eldem’s studies and famous “National Architecture Seminar” of the 1930s at the Fine Arts Academy, where the construct of the Turkish House took central stage. How Eldem and his students documented surviving examples of significant urban vernacular houses, produced typological studies based on this documentation, and derived from these studies his national yet modern idiom to apply in numerous built and unbuilt projects is well documented through the seminal work of architectural historian Sibel Bozdoğan (1987, 1996, 2001, 2012; see also Tanyeli and Tanju 2008, 2009). The documentation and categorization of old wooden houses as “Turkish House(s)” was connected to a disciplinary development in which this group of residential buildings was first defined as a distinguished architectural tradition which could eventually be assimilated back into the discipline as a source or point of origin (Tanyeli 1999; see Brown and Maudlin 2011 for a broader account of the vernacular).

- 14 Today, the Turkish House is viewed as a “site of memory” rather than an architectural form or type with any precise definition (Bertram 2008; also, see also Baydar 1993; and Akcan on how the house captured the imaginations of early Republican architects, urbanists and intellectuals, 2008 and 2012). In the context of Istanbul, nostalgia for the city’s lost character became centred on the Turkish House and the traditional *mahalle*, or neighbourhood, it constituted (Mills 2010). The *mahalle* is imagined to have provided a “sense of place,” a sense of belonging and identity (*Ibid.*). There is, however, great diversity between vernacular housing forms across Turkey, but because of their powerful role as a signifier of lost social values, it is Istanbul’s wooden houses dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that most lend their look to the “Turkish House” type.
- 15 While Eldem referred to Ottoman-era houses as “Turkish” with overt nationalistic connotations in the 1930s, from the 1970s onwards some scholars (e.g. Ayda Arel 1982) have opted for “Ottoman” as the umbrella term, in partial reaction to Balkan countries’ efforts to define the houses as part of their national heritage, such as “Bulgarian Houses” or “Greek Houses” (Sezgin 1975, Mutlu 1975a, 1975b). Eldem himself came to employ the term “Ottoman-Turkish” (1984); however, the signifier “Turkish” has not been totally abandoned (e.g., Yürekli and Yürekli 2005: 10; see Tuztaş and Aşkun, 2013, for a discussion of the nuances between the different terms—“Turkish House,” “Ottoman House,” and “Anatolian House”—used in local literature to refer to vernacular dwellings).
- 16 As described in monographs the house is defined as a “fixed entity” or “type,” consisting of two or more floors (see Eldem 1954, 1984, 1986, 1987; Arel 1982; Küçükerman 1985; Kuban 1995; Bektaş 1996; Günay and Birkan 1998; Yürekli and Yürekli 2005; Bachmann 2008 for standard local sources on the wooden vernacular house as an architectural type). The first floor, walled off from the street, is where social life and (in semi-rural environments) cooking takes place. The second floor provides the family’s living quarters. It includes a “life”, “living” hall called the *hayat* or *sofa*, and various other rooms. The entrance to each room features a narrow service area with a built-in cupboard to stow bedding and other household items. Beyond this service area, rooms may have slightly raised, rectangular platforms for sitting, surrounded by low, fixed seating. In each room, the walls, ceilings, and floors are also subtly partitioned into zones, and overall, their decoration and design emphasise

horizontality. Based on these characteristics, the rooms are regarded as self-sufficient units, and the house in general is praised for its minimalism and multi-functionality. However, it must be emphasised that such a typologically described house as representative of an ethno-linguistically defined national culture is largely constructed.

III. The Heritagisation of the Ottoman/Turkish House

- 17 The heritagisation of the Turkish House is connected with the development of expert visions for an open-air park in the “historic peninsula” [*tarihi yarımada*] or “Old Istanbul,” south of the Golden Horn. The wooden vernacular prevalent in the historic peninsula had already come to signify the Muslim Ottoman cultural milieu by the early twentieth century—in contradistinction to districts such as Pera and Harbiye to the north of the Golden Horn, which came to be regarded as the “European” parts of the city—because, first, the sale of houses by Muslims to non-Muslims was prohibited well into the nineteenth century, and, second, Ottomans decreed the use of wooden construction in residential properties for its relative safety in this earthquake-prone city (Koçu 1971).

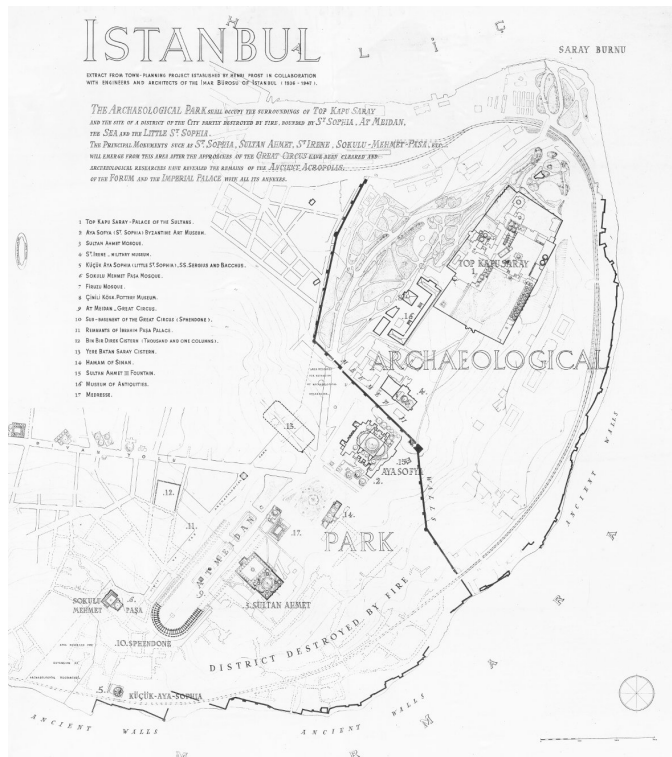


Figure 4. Henri Prost's proposal for an archaeology park. (full size)

ATATURK LIBRARY ARCHIVE.

- 18 The first expert proposal to conserve parts of the historic peninsula as an open-air (archaeological) park was made by the French planners Donald Alfred Agache and Jacques-Henri Lambert as early as 1934 for Sultanahmet Square, the former site of the Roman hippodrome (Pinon 2010: 152; Gül 2009: 94). Another French planner, Henri Prost, envisioned in his 1938 master plan for the city to construct in the same place a Republic Square as the location for modern state ceremonies. Ultimately, his proposal

was not accepted, Taksim Square was preferred for performing that function. In a new plan in 1947, Prost then proposed turning Sultanahmet into an “archaeology park,” yet this proposal too was not implemented (Altınyıldız 2007: 292). Interestingly, Albert Gabriel took the latter proposal for an open-air archaeology park to UNESCO in 1947 on the basis that “the conservation of pre-Turkish structures can only be undertaken with foreign funds” due to lack of local funding (quoted in Pinon 2010: 154). To convince a hesitant UNESCO—whose original mandate was maintaining peace rather than preserving culture—the UNESCO appointee Guy de La Charrière wrote in 1949,

...for UNESCO, this would be an enormous publicity if they can manage to transform this section of Istanbul into a symbol of utmost tolerance and fusion of cultures, the peaceful image of which Jerusalem could never generate [*sic*] (quoted in Pinon 2010: 155).

- 19 The talks between UNESCO and the Turkish government were abandoned by 1953 due to a number of factors including inadequate diplomacy (Pinon 2010; Altınyıldız 2007). While a failed effort, it nevertheless shows the evolving motivation of a supranational (though Europe- and Paris-based) organization such as UNESCO in the preservation and display of architectural heritage.
- 20 Another expert proposal appeared in the late 1970s under the guidance of the European Council. Its Assembly initiated an international campaign in 1978 to preserve Istanbul’s architectural heritage (Güngör 1978; Öğülmüş 1979). The campaign identified Topkapı, Sultanahmet, Zeyrek, Süleymaniye, and Yedikule as conservation areas.
- 21 UNESCO subsequently contributed funds for local experts to study and prepare targeted plans for these neighbourhoods. Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism contributed to this effort by commissioning proposals from Istanbul Technical University’s (ITU) Restoration Program for the rehabilitation of selected streets in Sultanahmet. As reported in newspapers, the proposals included returning the neighbourhoods to their nineteenth-century state —with streets paved with cobblestones instead of asphalt; lanterns [*kandil* and *fener*] instead of electric lights; and the elimination of motor vehicles in favour of foot traffic and horse carts. The ITU’s proposals also imagined repairing historic homes and utilising them for touristic purpose (Gökdağ 1992).
- 22 The 1978 vision, as reported in newspapers of the time, bears some similarity to the current government’s much-contested Museum-City Project of the mid-2000s and its accompanying legislation, which allowed local governments to declare historic inner city neighbourhoods as pioneer urban renewal areas (Kuban 2006). What seems to have changed in the interim is a critical awareness among architects and planners vis-à-vis historicist proposals and the exclusionary social consequences of government-led gentrification (see Aksoy and Robins 2011 on Sulukule). The politics of neo-Ottoman neighbourhoods are now especially suspect because they are coming from pro-Islamist central and local governments (led by the same Justice and Development Party, AKP for *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), whose principle method of developmentality is the (re)imagining of the future city through an improvisation of its pasts.



Figure 5. Current "pioneer renewal areas" in the historic peninsula. (full size)

MAP DIAGRAM BASED ON FATİH MUNICIPALITY'S PLAN. DRAWN BY HADİ MADWAR.



FIGURE 6. SULUKULE, ONE OF THE RENEWAL AREAS BEFORE DEMOLITION AND EVICTION OF ITS POOR ROMA RESIDENTS.

AVAILABLE FROM WIKICOMMONS. URL: [HTTP://UPLOAD.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKIPEDIA/COMMONS/1/1B/SULUKULE_AND_THE_WALL.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Sulukule_and_the_wall.jpg)



convened in Venice in 1964 (not to omit the importance of the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, 1931; the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954; and of ICCROM, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, created in 1959). The document that followed, known as the Venice Charter, set standards for conservation, by broadening the definition of what needed to be preserved from monument [*anıt*] to heritage [*miras*], deemphasizing the local and the national in favour of the “universal,” and extending concern from individual buildings to areas of integrated fabric, including vernacular buildings. Notably this coincided with Bernard Rudofsky’s MoMA exhibition “Architecture without Architects,” which sought to expand the understandings of what constitutes architecture through the inclusion of vernacular examples from around the world, and signalled the institutional acceptance of vernacular types by design professionals as a critique of international modernism and the negative impact of modernist planning in post-war cities. While the Venice Charter is cited today as an international document, the Congress was dominated by European experts and the charter reflected as a result continental European concerns such as the “rehabilitation of destroyed cities” and the promotion of cultural tourism as an economic asset (Aygen 2013: 26).

- 26 The institution that was created to oversee the work towards the new goals set by the Charter was the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). ICOMOS was established as an advisory body to UNESCO; “an international non-governmental organization of professionals, dedicated to the conservation of the world’s historic monuments and sites.” (see Akbulut and Aköz 2005: 97, for Turkey’s participation) While UNESCO’s strategy was to serve as an arbiter and compile its own list of worthy sites, the Council of Europe decided to also enlist local civil society in the task. Both UNESCO and the Council of Europe have now emerged as “authorizing institutions of heritage.” (Smith 2006: 87)
- 27 The Council of Europe undertook many important initiatives in the field of heritage during the 1970s (Howard and Ashworth 1999). Europa Nostra [*Our Europe*] had been founded in 1963 in the Office of the Council of Europe, Paris, by a group of nongovernmental heritage organizations headed by Italia Nostra. It established an awards scheme in 1978 to acknowledge and promote outstanding heritage preservation efforts (for news in local press, see “Önemli Haberler” 1978: 3, 16). However, one of the most influential initiatives advanced by the Council of Europe was its designation of the year 1975 as the European Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY) (Delafons 1997: 110-15). Beginning in 1972, the Council spearheaded a publicity campaign that led to pilot preservation projects, publications, and conferences. These culminated with the convening of the Amsterdam Congress, convened in October 1975 under the auspices of the Council of Europe.



Figure 8. Model commissioned by the municipality to show the scheme to be built in Sulukule. While the new buildings were built with modern construction techniques, they used some of the vocabulary of old timber houses such as bay windows and horizontal covering planks. Overall massing superficially seeks to emulate that of traditional neighbourhoods.(full size)

DETAY MAKET, ISTANBUL.



FIGURE 9. EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR (1975).

Commemorative coin from the UK. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/96/EUROPEAN_ARCHITECTURAL_YEAR_STONEHENGE_MEDALLION_1975_a_-_Flickr_-_woody1778a.jpg

- 28 The declaration that was presented at this event (the European Charter of Architectural Heritage) included a set of recommendations to parliaments and institutions across Europe (Pickard and Council of Europe 2000). The Charter introduced the concept of integrated heritage conservation, along with the notion that Europe's architectural heritage was common to all European peoples (*Ibid*: 195). Heritage, so redefined in the declaration, was no longer limited to works of outstanding universal value or to monumental expression, but also included everyday or quotidian examples. The Charter stipulated that respect for, and understanding of, architectural heritage was necessary "to achieve a greater unity," further acknowledging that this heritage was in danger of disappearing.

- 29 Each member nation of the Council was expected to take measures to document and protect its architectural heritage. According to John Delafons, EAHY "stimulated in England a longer-lasting interest in conservation at the grass roots level. It was perhaps the beginning of the popular concern for conservation which increasingly supplanted the elitist tradition of conservation in Britain" (Delafons 1997: 110-116) In Turkey, where there was no such tradition, and where the state took sole responsibility for the preservation of monuments, the Heritage Year stimulated not necessarily a bottom-up movement, but certainly a number of projects, events and associations that aimed at promotion and publicity.
- 30 According to Turkish professionals, the most notable change signalled by EAHY and the Amsterdam Congress was the shift away from simply protecting historic monuments towards a more integrated effort to conserve historical environments (Özer 1976; Çubuk 1975). In the years that followed, Turkish delegates, who had attended similar international symposia and exhibitions organized under the auspices of UNESCO and the Council of Europe, reported on their experiences and learning in Turkish journals of art and architecture. These delegates, together with enthusiasts, also played an active role in highlighting the architectural heritage of Istanbul by organizing local exhibitions that they occasionally brought back to the European Council. International congresses also helped to raise awareness among local politicians about the economic potential of heritage initiatives.
- 31 Despite the increased politicization of the Chamber of Turkish Architects, which corresponded with the radicalization of politics in Turkey through the decade, some of the professionals' attention had begun to swing away from ideals of social equity and access, towards the externalization and problematization of "culture." Turkish delegates who had attended international symposia and exhibitions often reported that Balkan countries were claiming Turkish heritage as their own (Sezgin 1975, Mutlu 1975a, Mutlu 1975b). At the same time, they were impressed by conservation efforts in Europe and proposed the expropriation of historic neighbourhoods in Turkey to transform them into open-air museums with a functional use. Thus, local actors rearticulated international calls for heritage preservation, which to a degree were about democratizing heritage in nationalist terms, and supported revenue-generating proposals, rather than those aimed at social sustainability that, for instance, would empower existing residents to take care of their homes.

IV. An Open-air Museum on the Historic Peninsula



FIGURE 10A. "ISTANBUL 1800" EXHIBITION ON THE COVER OF *MILLİYET SANAT*, 1975 (135). (FULL SIZE)



Figure 10b. "The state of Şehzadebaşı, Süleymaniye and Vefa in the nineteenth century" Model produced for and displayed at the "İstanbul" 1800 exhibition. (full size)

REPRODUCED FROM *MILLİYET SANAT*, 1975 (135), P. 20.

- 32 Proposals for an open-air museum on Istanbul’s historic peninsula were quickly embraced in the daily press. Tourism was cited as an economic justification: one journalist called it “foreign-exchange mint” [*döviz matbaası*], to highlight the expediency of heritage preservation in an economy based on an import substitution model, suffering from a trade deficit, and short of foreign exchange (Durukal 1973, 1975). The “Istanbul 1800” exhibition (May 21–June 20, 1975) proposed conserving a part of the historic peninsula as it had looked in the year 1800, “before [it lost] characteristics with the impact of Europeanisation.” Organized by Oya Kılıç—a young female graduate of a local interior architecture school and a PhD student in art history—and held at the centrally located Galatasaray Branch Gallery of the Building and Credit Bank [*Yapı Kredi*], the exhibition first made the news in early 1974, and inspired supportive write-ups even after it was over (Gönültaş 1974: 3; Özkoçak 1975). Kılıç had fond memories of the nation-themed miniature park, Madurodam, she had visited in Holland as a child (E-Interview with Kılıç, 25 November 2011), but it was as a young professional that she first encountered the concept of an open-air museum, in a UNESCO newsletter. In support of the exhibition Çelik Gülersoy, chairman of the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey, helped to pay for the photographs, and Sedat Eldem, the aforementioned renowned Turkish architect who devoted his career to the development of a national architecture based on extensive studies of the Turkish House, allowed Kılıç access to his comprehensive private archive.
- 33 Eldem was highly appreciative of Kılıç’s proposal and wishfully predicted that, “it is women who will protect our works of art and houses.” (Erduran 1976: 14). The role of women in heritage activism is better documented in North America (e.g. Dubrow and Goodman 2003). In the Turkish context only a few female professionals are credited such as Cahide Tamer, Selma Emler and Mualla Eyüboğlu Anhegger. Among the first women architects in Turkey, this trio collaborated in the restoration of Rumeli Hisarı. (Emler additionally represented Turkey in the 1964 Venice meeting, along with architectural historian Doğan Kuban; Aygen 2013: 60). The work of these leading restoration architects consisted mostly of monumental buildings. The efforts of Kılıç, and later Perihan Balcı, differed first by targeting the preservation of vernacular houses, and second by promoting their work and instigating public debate through exhibitions and publications rather than concentrating exclusively on direct professional interventions.
- 34 “Istanbul 1800” included black-and-white photographs, sketches by Kılıç, measured drawings, two architectural models—one in 1/500 scale of the area around Süleymaniye from şehzadebaşı to Vefa, and a second smaller one of a stereotypical segment of the Bosphorus with its waterfront mansions, [*yalı*—and what she called “authentic artifacts” such as doorknobs, window grills, and wall carvings. Kılıç (1975: 21) explained:
- My aim is to create a historic and touristic open-air museum and cultural centre that I named “Istanbul 1800.” According to the information given by ICOM (International Council of Museums) that is under UNESCO, there are 152 open-air museums in 14 countries on the European continent alone. In all of them, the goal is to exhibit a culture that is disappearing.
- 35 Appealing to and simultaneously reflecting popular nationalist sentiments, perhaps following the celebration of 1973 as the half-century mark of the Republic’s establishment, she argued that only protecting monuments to the neglect of vernacular architecture undermined Turkey’s claim to the city. She suggested that the old fabric of

historic Istanbul had been created during the five hundred years of Ottoman rule; but that its obliteration had been the result of both modernization and new developments, and the emphasis placed on the preservation of its Byzantine walls and monuments. She went on to contend that the historic Turkish houses were prime “examples that would prove that Istanbul [was] ours for the past five hundred years.” In the same breath, she referred to old Turkish houses as “cultural weapons.” Moreover, their touristic potential was frequently invoked in write-ups urging the government to take action on the open-air museum (Andak 1975).

- 36 This young female architect’s call was reflective of an aspiration for cultural expression that emerged out of a new type of European identification. Her argument revealed her familiarity with contemporary debates on museology and heritage conservation. The folk museums she had in mind, from Nordic countries, were responses to industrial modernity that sought to protect rural architecture. Yet, even recent examples of such forms of historic conservation, as in the case of urban pilot projects in Italy, tend to focus on provincial towns of little economic importance. In Turkey, however, Kılıç’s exhibition proposed conserving living districts in the heart of a fast-growing metropolis. The exhibition was also hosted by a bank that was heavily invested in the process of building and selling new residential settlements outside of the historical core. Client-visitors to the exhibition in the bank’s gallery in Beyoğlu, the “European” northern part of town, could easily imagine a touristic open-air museum in the historic core, since they had already abandoned the area for homes elsewhere, or planned to do so as soon as possible.

V. “Civil society” for Architectural Heritage



FIGURE 11. TAÇ LOGO FEATURING A STYLIZED WOODEN HOUSE.

FOUNDATION FOR MONUMENTS, ENVIRONMENT, AND TOURISM [TÜRKİYE ANIT ÇEVRE TURİZM DEĞERLERİ VAKFI], (TAÇ).

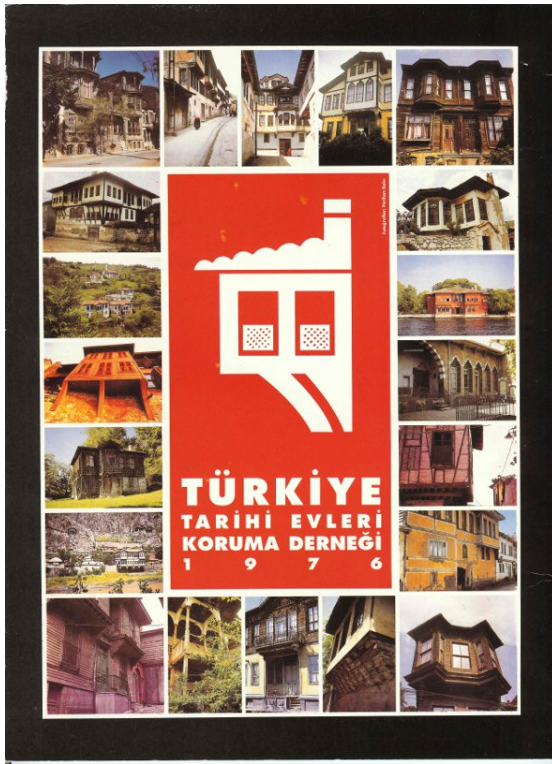


FIGURE 12. TÜRKEV LOGO FEATURING A STYLIZED WOODEN HOUSE.

COVER OF A BOOKLET BY TÜRKEV WITH LOGO STYLIZING THE WOODEN HOUSE AT THE CENTRE.

- 37 The Council of Europe's work in preparation for EAHY culminated in the establishment of a government-level national committee that recommended Istanbul as the site for one of three pilot heritage-conservation projects (Söylemezoğlu 1976; Alsaç 1992; Ahunbay 2004: 142-43). Following this decision, educational institutions of architecture in Istanbul organized conferences and exhibitions, and produced publications to define architectural heritage.
- 38 Until the mid-1970s isolated monuments had occupied the focus of conservation efforts in the city. These were overseen by the High Council of Monuments and Sites [*Anıtlar Yüksek Kurumu*, 1952], which was connected to the Ministry of Education. However, with the popularization of the notion of architectural heritage, various individuals, groups, and institutions began to take a more active, and sometimes leading, role in conservation efforts. Among these was the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey (Touring Club). Its intervention in urban environments started with the rehabilitation of the houses surrounding the Byzantine church-turned-mosque of Saint Saviour in Chora [*Kariye*]. It also became nationally and internationally famous for its renovation of Soğukçeşme Street. Two other nongovernmental organizations were founded in 1976: The Foundation for Monuments, Environment, and Tourism, [*Türkiye Anıt Çevre Turizm Değerleri Vakfı*] (TAÇ) and The Association for the Protection of Historical Homes [*Türkiye Tarihi Evleri Koruma Derneği*] (TÜRKEV). Both of these organizations incorporated images of the Turkish House into their logos. Their memberships consisted largely of academics disturbed by profit-driven urban expansion, and simultaneously inspired by preservation efforts in Europe, especially by those taking place in neighbouring Balkan countries.

- 39 As already mentioned, the Council of Europe encouraged a bottom-up approach to conservation, and yet most of the members of the above-mentioned local organizations were academics and professionals who did not live in the houses they sought to protect. The groups were rather private associations of enthusiasts, more concerned with appearances than with the actual lives lived within these houses. The founding of organizations, such as TAÇ and TÜRKEV were influenced largely by members' encounters in Europe more than any personal attachment to an inherited house.
- 40 The case of TÜRKEV is especially revealing. Although not an Istanbulite by birth, its founder Perihan Balcı grew up in Istanbul, partaking in its warm *mahalle* sociability. After a personal loss in 1965 she began taking photographs of the city's disappearing historic houses. This indeed therapeutic attempt to document and exhibit the disappearing city served to delay the imminent end of the old houses. In 1975, Balcı published a photography book titled *Old Istanbul Houses and Bosphorus Yalis* (Balcı 1975). In the preface, architectural historian Doğan Kuban, also an advocate of preservation and a founding member of TÜRKEV, described Balcı's photography as an antidote to speculative urbanism and a means of educating the wider public. Balcı's work led to an exhibition at the Fine Arts Academy as part of the Academy's EAHY activities, which was followed by another exhibition in Ankara, and another in France, with the title of "Old Istanbul Houses." With the encouragement of Europa Nostra representatives, in 1976 Balcı then established the association TÜRKEV in Istanbul to inform public opinion on the preservation of old houses.
- 41 As this story indicates, TÜRKEV did not involve a bottom-up, grassroots response to the protection of historic housing. Aside from Balcı, all of its founding members were prominent professors—all of whom were male, two of them medical doctors, and two architecture faculty members. The association maintained a similar contributor profile in the years that followed. The association had three goals: to protect historic homes; to help their owners with legal and financial issues; and to persuade the public to once again take up residence in Turkish Houses. TÜRKEV eventually became known for activities such as Balcı's exhibitions and lectures displaying Turkish Houses at home and abroad; annual "Historic Turkish Houses Weeks," which started in 1983; informational tours for architecture students organized in collaboration with universities; and the restoration of the Ismail Dede Efendi House, a house-museum dedicated to the eighteenth-century Ottoman musician. A self-declared "housewife," Balcı was accepted, welcomed, and supported by academics and professionals (e.g. she was a participant in the 1984 meeting and publication "Mimaride Türk Milli Üslubu"). She led the association until the mid-1990s, after which time Cengiz Eruzun, a professor of restoration at Mimar Sinan University took over. Eruzun went on to become the director of the Municipality's "Museum-City" project in 2006 (Eruzun 2007).
- 42 TAÇ's current chairperson, Sinan Genim, also a professor of restoration at Mimar Sinan University, attributes the founding of his organization to an international academic meeting in Budapest in 1975. According to Genim's recollections, a group of approximately thirty academics squeezed in some sightseeing while travelling together by bus to a conference in Budapest. In many Yugoslavian and Bulgarian towns, such as Plovdiv [*Filibe*], the academics encountered well-preserved examples of Ottoman-Turkish vernacular architecture (Genim 2001). These sights and experiences led Genim and his colleagues to establish TAÇ in 1976, with the financial help, guidance, and task list from the Ministry of Tourism. TAÇ has operated in several areas. These have

included the production of publications such as Sedad Hakkı Eldem's comprehensive three-volume *Turkish House* (1984-1987); the opening of a documentation centre for the study of historic sites; the organization of an annual design competition to encouraged the study of historic environments in architectural education; and the restoration of a limited number of mansions.

VI. A Model Ottoman Street

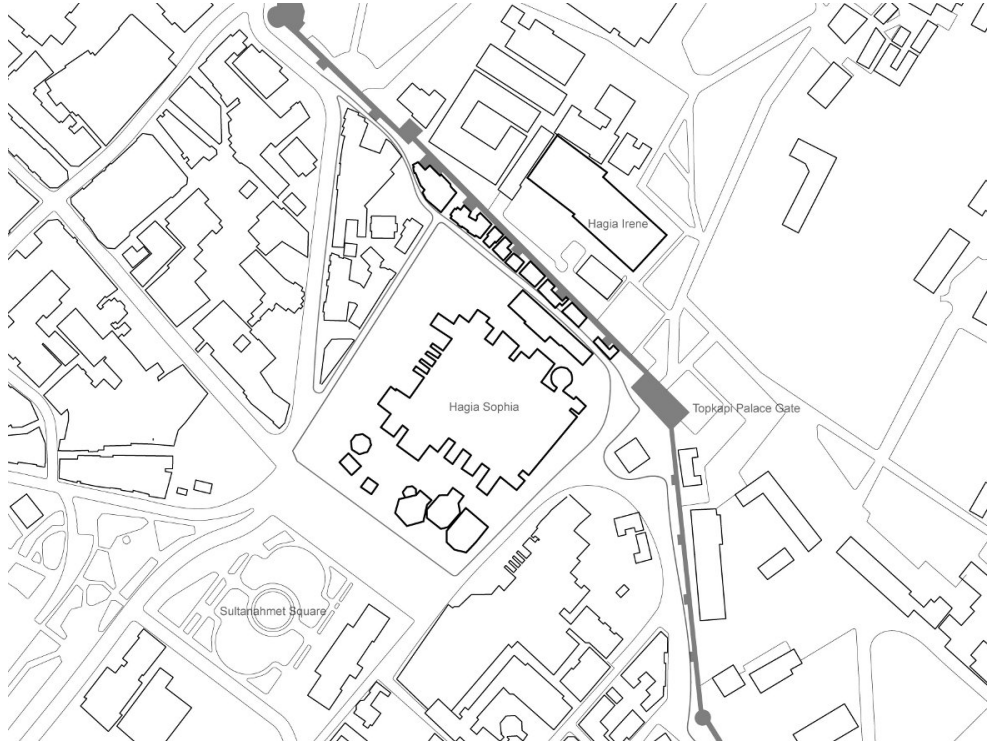


Figure 13. The location of Soğukçeşme Street in relationship to the entrance of the Topkapı Palace, Hagia Irene, and the Hagia Sophia. (full size)

DRAWN BY HADI MADWAR.

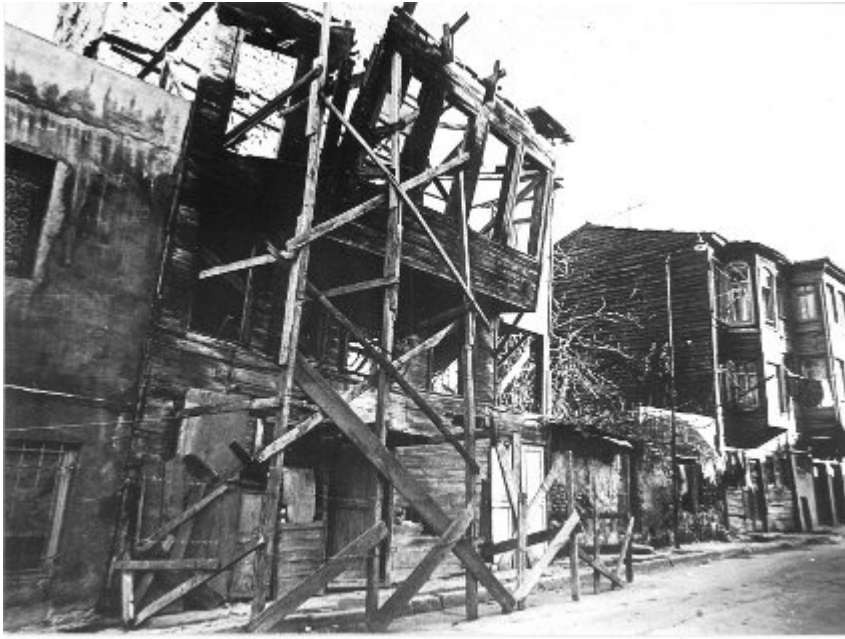


FIGURE 14. SOĞUKÇEŞME STREET BEFORE RESTORATION.

REPRODUCED FROM *SOĞUKÇEŞME SOKAĞI*, THE PROMOTIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE TOURING CLUB [TÜRKİYE TURING VE OTOMOBİL KURUMU].



FIGURE 15. SOĞUKÇEŞME STREET AFTER RESTORATION.

AUTHOR'S PHOTO.

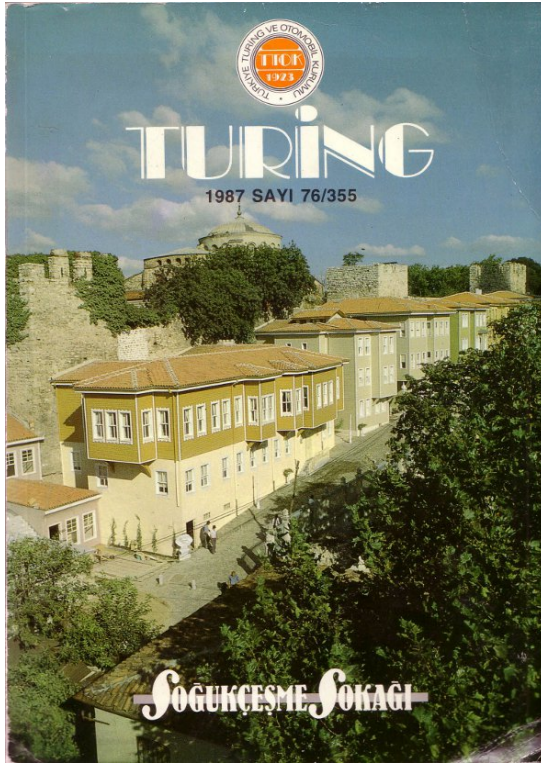


FIGURE 16. SOĞUKÇEŞME STREET ON THE COVER OF THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE TOURING CLUB (1987).

- 43 Soon after the founding of TAÇ, the Ministry of Tourism approached Istanbul Technical University (ITU) to develop a proposal for the rehabilitation of Soğukçeşme Street and its surrounding neighbourhood. The invitation came in response to calls for the development of an open-air museum to showcase the historic fabric of the city for touristic consumption. The results of the ITU study, published in 1979, recommended the building of tourist-oriented facilities along Soğukçeşme Street, and the re-building of existing structures with additions to make the street appear more authentic (Eldem *et al.* 1979, 1980). Despite its fragmented beginnings, the Soğukçeşme Street project was subsequently adopted and funded by the Touring and Automobile Club, becoming its most publicized and popular project. As the project also set an important precedent in Turkey for historic preservation with touristic purposes, it is important to understand how it came about and how it was received.
- 44 Architects had a love-hate relationship with the Touring Club’s chairperson, Çelik Gülersoy, an “Old Istanbul” enthusiast *par excellence*. Despite being educated as a lawyer, Gülersoy identified himself, and was in turn identified, as an urban historian, an art historian, an architect, a planner, a restorer, an Istanbul gentleman, and so forth; most of all, he acted as a model public persona on issues concerning Istanbul. Among other activities, he authored a series of books on Istanbul and established a library on Soğukçeşme Street dedicated to the study of Istanbul, using the resources of the Touring Club that came from fees charged to Turkish workers in Europe upon re-entry into Turkey. Gülersoy’s first major architectural project was the Malta Pavilion in the Yıldız Palace Park. The project received the Council of Europe’s Europa Nostra award and validated his authority on matters of historic preservation. Just before the military coup of 1980, after which Turkey shifted from a state-dominated to a privatized

economy, the Club acquired a series of important “preservation” contracts giving Gülersoy greater public visibility. He would lease and maintain these historic properties opening them to the general public. While these efforts were generally appreciated, architects criticized the mode of restoration he chose for Soğukçeşme Street. His acerbic rebuttals and inability to take criticism provided ample material for animated discussions in the architectural media (Gülersoy 1984; “Mesaja Yanıtlar” 1984). Paradoxically, it was Soğukçeşme Street that brought both the organization and Chairman Gülersoy national and international acclaim. The *New York Times* called him “a latter-day Prospero” (Ster 1986). He single-handedly transformed the Club into a nostalgia machine for “Old Istanbul”.

- 45 The Touring Club bought the properties on Soğukçeşme Street precisely because of its tourist potential, being tucked neatly between the entrance of Topkapı Palace and the Hagia Sophia. The Club proceeded to demolish the street’s existing urban fragments and rebuild it in accordance with nineteenth-century depictions. In her critical analysis of this mode of restoration, architectural historian Zeynep Çelik situates Soğukçeşme Street within the legacy of nineteenth-century world expositions, comparing it to the imaginary Oriental streets (e.g. “La Rue du Caire”) constructed for those occasions (Çelik 1992; Çelik 1994: 83-93). The streets scape was reimagined: individual buildings were re-built with concrete frames, and they showcased fashionably ornate 1980s middle-class interiors, have exterior facades clad in timber, and are painted in soft pastel colours. The project was promoted as a response to the perceived loss of Istanbul’s character. It was realized with government approval at a time when the municipality was simultaneously engaged in a drastic program of demolitions within the historic fabric in an effort to turn Istanbul into a regional hub.
- 46 The Soğukçeşme Street renovation project was initiated in response to urban transformation, and it was inspired by post-war preservation discourses and, more specifically, 1970s legislation. However, once implemented, it became an important site for cultural and touristic consumption, paving the way for a wider practice of commodified nostalgia. Over the past decades this has evolved from proposals for the fictional restoration of urban fragments to the wholesale freezing of the historic city.
- 47 The timing of the reconstruction corresponded with the adoption of “neo-Ottomanism” as state policy during the government of Turgut Özal (prime minister, 1983-89; president, 1989-93), a conservative, nationalist leader and a contemporary of Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. (Çolak 2006; Potuoğlu-Cook 2006) Özal and other policy-makers in his government emphasised Turkey’s Ottoman legacy and its Muslim character in order to both counter rising internal ethnic conflict, and shape Turkish foreign policy. Hence, the Greater Istanbul Municipality’s concurrent urban renewal operations involved massive demolition and displacement, especially around the Golden Horn. Ironically these operations went hand in hand with historic preservation efforts by experts and enthusiasts. Clearing operations would make Istanbul fit to be an international metropolitan centre, and preservation would highlight its uniqueness as a city.

Conclusion

- 48 The Ottoman/Turkish House was a category first constructed within the nation-building policies of the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, that is, in the first

decades of the 20th century. It captured the imagination of a small number of nevertheless highly influential intellectuals and architects based in Istanbul at a time when most of the population of the city desired to move to modern apartments. The house gained a special status in melancholic depictions of modern Istanbul. There were suggestions for the preservation of important examples of historic wooden houses; however, the notion of deriving from the architectural "type" a revivalist contemporary architecture remained the prevalent motivation. By the 1970s, growing concerns about the destruction of historic centres through rapid urbanization led in Istanbul, as in many cities in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. Damascus), to the formal reconstruction of the house as a heritage object. At a time when most people had moved to modern, concrete-frame apartment buildings, appreciating "Old Istanbul," its *mahalle* sociability, and the aesthetics of wooden houses became a socially distinguishing signifier. Several enthusiasts and professionals sought to protect these houses in their urban context, i.e. through district conservation, while generating tourism income, an idea which concurrently became official policy for inner-city revitalization.

- 49 This article sought to outline the interrelation between Turkey and the international scene in the realm of historic preservation, and to link the local and professional developments to more general trends. A number of preservation areas in the centre of Istanbul, namely Sultanahmet, Süleymaniye and Sulukule, were invoked to discuss how European norms were mediated locally, and how local concerns were translated to international platforms. Starting with local professionals' 1949 (later aborted) appeal to UNESCO—an organization originally set up in 1946 to promote peace (long before the institutionalization of its World Heritage lists)—to help set up an archaeological park in Sultanahmet Square, the concerns and requests of locally based enthusiasts and professionals continued to inform the policies and actions of supranational organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe.
- 50 Several key local actors, the associations they set up, and their networks in the 1970s were discussed in greater detail to show how evolving European norms were reinterpreted as they were translated to the local context. When compared to their counterparts in the early decades of the 20th century, these actors had restrained professional agendas. The 1975 European Architectural Heritage Year was particularly instrumental in the founding of TÜRKEV and TAÇ in 1976 and the turn to historic preservation of the Touring Club, an organization established in 1923 to cross-promote tourism and the automobile sector in the then-nascent Republic of Turkey. The document that resulted from the European Architectural Heritage Year meeting clearly stated that "The European Architectural heritage is the common property of our continent." Yet, all these Istanbul-based actors and their associations emphasised the national character of their heritage object, the house, and the nationalist imperative to preserve it. The popular preservation movement in Europe was at least in part to be regarded as an expression for more social equity and the democratization of heritage, even if there were counter tendencies, but in Turkey local calls remained paternalistic and somewhat elitist. Nevertheless, these actors' efforts had tremendous impact for decades to come as the "house" proved vital for imagining Old Istanbul, and this imagining continues to inform public debates on urban renewal in the present day.

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ABSTRACTS

The "Ottoman House" or "Turkish House" refers to a category of urban, vernacular, residential buildings. As a heritage object, it has been the subject of many studies and monographs; however, its formal "heritagisation" in the 1970s has not received due critical scrutiny. This heritagisation process is connected with post-World War II European preservation discourses responding to growing concerns about the destruction of historic city centres through rapid urbanization; in the context of Istanbul and Turkey specifically, heritagisation is also related to the emergence of new actors and legal arrangements, all of which are encouraged by a host of supranational organizations, such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, and their heritage promotion policies. By tracing the interactions of Istanbul-based actors and their networks, this article discusses how and why the Ottoman/Turkish House, originally used to define a nationalist and revivalist professional agenda in the first decades of the 20th century, was turned into a heritage object in the 1970s.

INDEX

Keywords: Turkish House, Heritage, Istanbul, Ottoman House, Architectural Preservation, Europe, Vernacular, Conservation, Restoration

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