

HISTORICAL HERITAGE - CONSERVATION - RESTORATION IN SMALL TOWNS AND QUESTION OF RURAL GENTRIFICATION IN TURKEY

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Introduction

Increasing opportunities in transportation and communication brought about by the process of globalization, changing economic networks and the development of new occupational groups have on the one hand changed people's working hours and the way they utilize their leisure time, while on the other hand have deeply impacted the understanding and practice of tourism of the 1960s. The mass tourism phenomenon of those years, which focused on the 3S's (Sun, Sea, and Sand) has started to give its place to a type of tourism that is specialized – personalized – on the understanding of 3E's (Exciting, Entertainment, Educational)². The desire of the tourist to become a “discoverer” and his/her search for an adventure has slid tourism activity towards new routes of tourism that have been enriched with new places. It was mostly the small towns which have conserved their economic, social and cultural structures that have formed the most important components of these routes. These towns, which have been constructed with local features and traditional techniques, with their characteristic architectural features, have become the indispensable target of tourism as a cultural heritage. These towns in Turkey subsist mostly with their stable and even collapsing limited agricultural economy, and they are generally situated in quiet and secluded regions, outside/on the margins of the country's development axis (Mediterranean and Aegean coasts).

- The cultural heritage of some of these small towns that requires conservation is subject to the threat of dilapidation and disappearance because they have been unable to become part of this new trend in tourism, nor could they create an alternative economic activity. These are **hidden cities/towns**.
- The towns that have become part of the new touristic

trend present two disparate scenes;

- On one hand, there are those towns that, as owners of their buildings and towns, adapted their potential to tourism, and added their activities to it, creating an economic power/potential. However, these towns, without having been a part of a holistic tourism policy **face the risk of being exhausted** rapidly in the tourism market after having obtained short-term gains. Furthermore, these towns/boroughs also face the threat of deteriorated cultural heritage due to erroneous structural and functional practices.
- On the other hand, there are those towns that are being physically regenerated with their “**new owners**”, in the process the historical heritage ceases to be a part of the region/environs in the social and cultural sense and becomes scenery. These are the towns where the process of gentrification is experienced.

This paper will focus on the above described towns towards which tourism has inclined, and discuss these within the scope of the concepts of rural gentrification, conservation, regeneration, and cultural tourism.

Acquaintance of small cities with conservation and tourism's dilemma

One of the primary factors in the development of urban-scale conservation³ in Turkey, and its expansion into the small towns in Anatolia is the declaration of the year 1975 as the “European Architectural Heritage Year” by the Council of Europe to which Turkey also is a member. Although the motto “A Future for our Past” has required a long time to spread throughout the society, it was with this

³ The root of the phenomenon of preservation in Turkey goes back to the period of Ottoman Empire. However, as in the European and other global examples, the subject of preservation was limited also in Turkey to monumental buildings up until the end of World War II. In Turkey where the effects of the 1964 Venice Charter were perceived in a short period of time, the basic problem gets tangled in practice and especially in funding.

¹ This research is supported by Galatasaray University Research Found.

² Tourism 2020 Vision, World Tourism Organisation URL: www.world-tourism.org

primary impetus that this journey that aimed to explain the necessity of urban conservation to the society has started under the leadership of a group of scientists. The incorporation of a Turkish town, Safranbolu⁴, into the “World Heritage List” by UNESCO twenty years later has been an important step in the organization of conservation in small towns in Anatolia covering all historical settlements⁵.

When scrutinizing the development of the concept of conservation in small towns in Turkey, it is not possible to overlook the changes in the phenomenon of tourism in the 1990s. Because the demands of the new tourist profile – who is equipped with the opportunities of contemporary rapid transportation, communication and information – looking for variety in tourism and the will to meet different cultures has let the new destinations to incline towards these small towns. And this has started the journey of town inhabitants – who had previously not been eager to protect their historical heritage because this did not provide them with revenues – along with pioneering mayors to become experts of conservation. As of the year 2000, such towns have begun to compete for presenting and restoring their historical fabric under the guidance of the “Turkish Association of Historical Towns and Region (TAHTR)⁶, an NGO established by mayors who were supervised by scientists⁷ that were part of the organization of “European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR)”. TAHTR has started its mission, built on a motto, “The Project of Towns Conserving themselves”, just like the motto “European Architectural Heritage” employed 30 years before, and has been a milestone in persuading the inhabitants to assume themselves the task of conserving their towns. Whether or not the tourism sector, which is expected to be a remedy in the conservation of these small towns, will be reconciled with the introverted structures of these towns, and whether or not the physical, social and functional conservation will be provided in this process are important issues that face us in the present day. This subject will be analyzed below with two different examples.

Is the real owner the tourist or the burgher who gives the service to the tourist? Protected or exhausted/consumed cities?

⁴ Safranbolu is located in a near geography to this study’s subject Mudurnu, to which it has a similar fabric in terms of resources and planning.

⁵ Kiziltan Ulukavak, 2004. Safranbolu’da 25 Yil. *Yerel Kimlik*. 11. 5-9

⁶ In Turkish: Tarihi Kentler Birliği (TKB)

⁷ Prof. Metin Sozen should especially be emphasized for he was for the Historical Towns Union.

Mudurnu is a settlement that is located in the middle of the Izmit-Bolu region (Map 1), on the old Silk Road, over the intersection of important commercial and military roads of almost all eras. Mudurnu, which is one among the first known settlements in the Bithynia region, came under the sovereignty of Phrighia, Anatolia-Persia and Rome from 1200 BC onwards. Mudurnu, which takes its present name after a castle built by a Byzantine governor of Bursa in her daughter’s – Moderna’s – memory, was annexed by the Ottomans in 1307. The traveller, İbn-Batuta, who goes to Crimea through the Mudurnu-Bolu-Kastamonu road in 1333, tells that he passed through the Turcoman villages between Mudurnu and Goynuk, and that he stopped over the Turkish town of Mudurnu, which was organized around Ahi *Tekkes* (dervish lodges), giving the appearance of a lively economic center. He describes that there were 3000 residences, 17 districts, Yildirim Mosque and madrasah, 1 dar al-hadith, 13 preschools, 3 caravanserais and hammams, 1100 needle stalls and stores. He narrates that Mudurnu-made needles and wooden (pine) pitchers were sent as far as Europe and India, and boards of 10 Turkish yards (685 cm.) length and 180cm width were sent to Istanbul and other countries through the ports of Akçaşehir and İzmit.⁸ Additionally, it is known that there were craftsmen skilled in copperworking, jewellery, ironworking, and textiles.⁹

The present fabric of the town predominantly bears the features of the nineteenth century Ottoman town fabric. The then affluence brought about by the Silk Road is reflected on the window arrangements, block-effect balconies, triangular facades, ornaments made with the technique of wooden engraving on banisters and doors, forming a rich architectural stock. As a result of the studies conducted in 1995 in the settlement, 215 buildings with historical value were registered, and the entire settlement was declared an “urban protected site”.

Mudurnu, which was a rich borough at the time of the Ottoman Empire, has lost its economic liveliness, the limited but specialized economy of the past based on industrial production (leather and sewing needle) has collapsed, and the fabric of the town has started to dilapidate due to being left outside of the developing new economic axis of Turkey (Picture:1). Being located in a deep valley and woods has limited the agricultural production of the town, leaving it without an alternative development route and thus a stable economy, causing migration. As a natural result of this process the town’s architectural heritage has been left to its

⁸ URL: <http://www.mudurnu.gov.tr/tarih.html>

⁹ T.C. Dahiliye Vekâleti Mahallî İdareler Umum Mudurlugu, 1933

own devices.¹⁰

Acquaintance of the town with Tourism

The chicken production (Mudurnu Chicken), injected into the settlement in the second half of the 1980s in order to overcome this stagnant economy, has become one of the first three producers in the national market by 2000. This success not only developed the town's economy but also created an economy based on chicken production in the surrounding villages. However, the company's termination of chicken production in 2000 due to its internal problems has left the town in a new and deep economic crisis.

Tourism sector has been the last hope of the local administrators in order to regenerate the town. It was exactly those years when people's sense of leisure time working primarily in metropolises, especially in the office services, has started to change, particularly incorporating/being exposed to culture-sports-adventure into their weekends. Furthermore, the organization of TAHTR, in whose establishment process Mudurnu's mayor took part, has started its mission in Anatolia with "The Project of Towns Conserving Themselves". Also, Mudurnu's historical fabric has been found eligible by the Project and won TAHTR's award for not undergoing the urbanization pressure of the 1950s and for conserving itself.

Thus, Mudurnu was given direction with the merging of different dynamics as a result of which historical heritage has been presented to the service of cultural tourism. The traditional Ottoman towns that are located in the same region, having similar features to those of Mudurnu – Beypazari, Nallihan, Goyunuk, Tarakli – have also separately entered into a similar process (Picture: 2). But all these towns deserve to be handled as a chain of culture, to be arranged and preserved in line with the roles to be given to each of them¹¹. Yet in the present practice each settlement, independent from the others, is trying to increase its capacity under the guidance of tourism firms.

In Turkey, where a credit system for funding, which

¹⁰ Since they have not lived the pressure of regeneration, and they only had to resist the natural destruction, such urban fabrics are in a luckier situation than the cities that have developed rapidly.

¹¹ Although Mudurnu is in a more advantageous position than the other settlements in terms of being close to the TEM – the highway that connects the most important two metropolises of modern Turkey –, and although its surrounding natural habitat provides the opportunities for its tourism to be diversified, it is Beypazari that takes part in tourism destinations more often.

would provide the incentives to building owners for urban conservation, became part of the legal system only from 2005 onwards, the conservation of urban heritage has relied on the economic power of the building owners. For this reason, the tourism sector has been a life buoy to embrace for the town administrators in order to revitalize the economy. Since a financial source for increasing the interest of the tourist for the town and the accommodation potential cannot be created, building owners, however limited economic resources they may have, are suggested and expected to renew their buildings themselves and to transform these into accommodation facilities.

Transformation of the town through:

In the last four years, even though these expectations of the city administrators and those involved in the tourism sector were not realized fully, there have been important transformations in the village. These were not limited only to alterations to the physical space, such as in the manner of the maintenance of the historical buildings and minor repairs. The real transformation was in the social structure; the imposed tourism function had diverse effects over the segments.

The first segment: this is the segment, who works in the tourism sector and depends on it in terms of income. This segment is content with the fact that tourism is soaring in the village.

Second segment: those, whose houses are photographed and used as images from the villages in brochures, in promoting the village as a touristic region, yet do not themselves acquire revenue from these tourism activities. This segment eventually suffers from the tourism activities, because while they are under pressure to restore the historical building they own, they do not have the sufficient economic means.

- generally partner with tourism investors from out of town, having to leave their houses or,
- try to reside in their buildings with minor repairs, but are under societal pressure either because they do not reconstruct in a technically adequate way or because they cannot participate in tourism activities and they are known as the segment that impedes the development of the city.

The third segment: Those who live in the apartment buildings that were constructed in place of the historical buildings which were torn down before. This segment is composed mostly of the public officials who work in the service sector. This segment does not possess buildings that need restoration. They have a fixed income that does not

depend on the economic activities of the city. Yet they complain about the rising living costs due to the advent of tourism in the city and the burdens brought about by the changing socio-cultural conditions; and for this reason they advocate the protection of the status quo.

By 2005 the Social Democrat mayor, who was behind the changes that took place in the last five years, lost the elections to the conservative candidate and the transformation stride that relied on tourism lost its momentum. Both the resistance of the community to tourism and change, as well as the unwillingness of the central government to bear the burden in the protection of historical heritage, contributed to this outcome.

Gentrified¹² towns

Doganbey town is a historical settlement in the Aegean region, between Priene and Milet antique cities, which is located on a hillside looking at the bay. The town is near the hillside of the Mykale (Samsun) Mountains, looking down to Dilekyarimadasi National Park's delta area, and until 1924 it was a village¹³ inhabited by the Greeks (Map 2)¹⁴.

The name of the village comes from Domatia, Nmotia or New Nmotia¹⁵. It is believed that this name is associated with the Greek term "Domatia" that is used for houses that are situated in woods with big courtyards that are built in the form of separate rooms. When these houses were expanded into a village, this name was given to the village.¹⁶ In the 1800s, with a Sultan decree the community in the region was resituated from the Aegean islands. Later on, the community was sent back to Greece with the 1924 Lausanne Exchange of Populations and the Muslim community that was residing in Greece was brought to the region.

Doganbey village, which was ruined in the 1955 earthquake and reconstructed by the villagers who continued to live there, was declared "a devastated area" due to landslides in the region and was evacuated completely in 1985. The villagers moved to a settlement built by the state, in the plains below the village, named the New Doganbey. With the big fire of 1996 around the old village, most of the

green area and natural assets were lost. The abandoned and ruined village was re-discovered by a group of intellectuals from Istanbul towards the end of the 1990s. These discoverers bought the ruined houses and the houses in the village were constructed one by one with a new style by an architect. Yet the modest residences, which reflected the limited agricultural production since their construction, were far from satisfying the demands of their new owners.

While Doganbey might create the illusion of an old Aegean village while wondering on its narrow and steep roads, it is actually a higher middle class ghetto with its shutters, closed most of the time, with its dogs that do not bark, with its roosters that do not crow and its jeeps that wonder around, blocking the way of those walking around from time to time.

With the restoration that reflects the tastes of their new owners, a settlement which was in ruins was brought back to life; besides the literature on conservation acknowledges these practices and brings forward new definitions; yet it is clear that in today's outlook there is a conceptual confusion on conservation.

- **The first one of these**, without no doubt of the good intentions of the intellectual community, is the condition of gentrification that exists in the rural area where there is no link between the old and the new social structure that is created in the village.
- **The second one**, as different from the classic urban gentrification process, does not concern the restoration and renovation of the current buildings, but the reconstruction of the whole village buildings that are in ruins. This recreates the historical heritage as a decorative element and labels and markets these new buildings with the concepts of preservation, culture, cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Even though the concept of tourism that relies on cultural heritage – presented as an alternative to mass tourism – reveals local values, it also brings about the commodification of these values for the market and their fast consumption. Thus tourism, which is used as a means in the development of small cities with rich historical architectural reserves, due to its consuming and consumed attribute may affect the maintenance of the settlements. By implication, one of the questions that needs to be answered today is: "considering that in terms of the conservation of cultural heritage the opportunities that are brought forward by cultural tourism are also limited, how could the maintenance of this heritage be achieved and how much would it cost?"

¹² Martin Phillips. 2000: Making space for rural gentrification. *II Anglo Spanish Symposium on Rural Geography*. University of Valladolid, Spain.;

Housing Assistance Council (HAC). 2005: *They paved paradise gentrification in rural communities*. <http://www.ruralhome.org>

¹³ <http://www.dilekyarimadasi.com/merkez.htm>

¹⁴ www.bikeabout.org/maps/turkey8.gif

¹⁵ Domatium in Latin means "small house."

¹⁶ <http://www.dilekyarimadasi.com/merkez.htm>

Those that come and invest to the city, intending to share the revenue created by the historical heritage, leave the city as soon as possible when the resources of the city start to be exhausted; they leave the city and its inhabitants alone by themselves. What is exhausted is not only the city's cultural heritage, but also its economic, social and societal future. To assure that the investments continue to come, each year different and recurring activities are organized in the city. This approach, without taking into consideration whether they are willing or not, turns the city's inhabitants into actors in a play that is written by the investors who aim to increase the attention of the tourist and the financial revenue. Can this situation be explained with the aim of "conserving local heritage"?

Yet, it is clear that tourism creates the economic support needed for the conservation of the buildings that are valued as cultural heritage but are in the process of decay. Yet the frequent renovation of the historical buildings in order to respond to the changing demands and to raise the interest of the visitors causes the building to lose its authenticity. Interventions that spread out to the external perimeter of the building eliminate the historical harmony between the building and its perimeter. Historical contexts leave themselves to new anomic contexts. To what extent can these regenerated contexts and historical heritages be protected and how long can tourism be sustained?

The small cities that are turned into the weekend residences for those who live in big cities and transformed both in terms of context and social structure – thus are in the process of gentrification –, will live in an illusion that they are being protected – as long as cultural heritage is treated only as physical fabric. Is it possible to achieve a successful renovation in a fabric that lacks the social and cultural elements that form the basis of the historical heritage and the historical traces of these elements?

In terms of renovation, the future is leading us to a working platform that focuses on the problems of small cities. Especially in developing countries, as long as the state funds for cultural heritage are limited, it is inevitable that the historical buildings in small cities will either become part of the tourism market as hotels, restaurants, cafes or suburban weekend residences of the rich. The small historical cities, which we presume will not be of any interest to anyone until the popularity of the big historical centres is exhausted, are very precious not to be left alone unprotected to their own fate in the face of these havoc.

In many countries, it is the small towns where the original historical heritage is protected. These small towns are generally those where rural economy dominates in a closed social structure. Especially in countries with highly centralized administration, these towns usually remain outside the general dynamics and axis of development as well. In the developing countries, such towns have already lost a large portion of their population to metropolitan centers and the remaining aging rural population with limited expectations is not capable to produce a synergy neither for economic development nor for the formulation of a substantial demand for higher standards of living, including renovation of their environment. In addition, it is this population with limited means and expectations who own the most significant buildings in these small towns and who cannot conserve, renovate and sustain them.

Lately, we increasingly come across efforts to promote a certain economic dynamism by the utilization of the cultural heritage of the cities as a factor of development. However, these efforts that require the restoration of the original features of the buildings usually fail because of the economic inadequacy of the very owners of the buildings. It is expected that the owners would restore their buildings so that the building assumes a touristic value and the population in that town benefits from the new touristic activity. However, it is usually the case that their initial economic inadequacy leads the owners to not to benefit economically from this restoration because they continue to occupy the restored and renovated buildings that they own and/or they do not have the economic means to start and sustain touristic business enterprises. Therefore, it is usually the case where the owners of such buildings who invest in the restoration of their homes contribute to the restoration of the city but they themselves do not directly and equitably benefit from the newly acquired touristic value of the city as a result of such restorations. On the other hand, in case the owner is unable to sustain let alone restore the building, those buildings are usually bought by the elites from the metropolitan areas; this, in turn, leads to rural gentrification where the city more often than not closes itself to outside and turns into a ghetto of elites in the rural. This paper attempts to compare some small towns in Turkey that have conserved their historical features from a perspective which argues that the historical heritage of a town is the common heritage.

Abstract

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Picture 1: Mudurnu at 1928¹⁷



Picture 3: Doganbey; after gentrification



Picture 2: Mudurnu at 2002¹⁸



Map1:Location of Mudurnu between İstanbul and Ankara



Map 2: Location of Doganbey between Priene and

¹⁷ URL: www.mudurnu.bld.gov.tr

¹⁸ URL: www.mudurnu.bld.gov.tr

Aegean Coast¹⁹

¹⁹ URL: [www.google earth.com](http://www.googleearth.com)