

Sustainable Management of Historic Environment in the Context of Sustainable Development

Hüseyin KOÇAK

Department of Sociology , Afyon Kocatepe University
kocak@aku.edu.tr

Hasan KORKUT

Department of International Relations, International University Of Sarejevo
hkorkut@ius.edu.ba

Abstract: This study examines the relation between sustainable development and the management of historic environment. The historic environment is a resource that should be sustained for the benefit of both present and future generations. The term "sustainable development" has risen to international prominence following the publication of the Brundtland Report. The fundamental understanding of the sustainable development is that environment and economy can not be seen separately. It can be defined as policies for economic growth which allow the needs of the present to be met without jeopardizing those of future generations.

Historic environment and traditional residence patterns should not be regarded only as our cultural variables, but in accordance with the concept of "sustainable development", as housing stocks too. They have been accepted as a "public trust". In order to achieve a sustainable management of historic environment, changes in attitudes and behavior will be required on all levels of society. For a smooth transition, all segments of society need to be aware of and accept the need to change. Education, research, and full-scale demonstration projects with local participation will be necessary. Besides these changes, international cooperation in both technical and financial fields is crucial.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Environment, Historic Environment, Sustainability, Sustainable Development

Introduction

In a world faced with the dangers entailed by rapid growth and development, depleting resources, and impairment of the historic environment, preservation-related issues have become urgent. A global world is not a uniform world for societies. But, there are threats to the global environment. So, more attention has to be paid for a global identity around environmental issues.

Urbanization as such is not a problem. On the contrary, it brings considerable social and economic benefits. The problem is that the development of infrastructure and services in the towns and cities is not keeping pace with the rapid population growth. As a result, living and environmental conditions are deteriorating. There is an urgent need to plan and manage the cities in order to sustain them. Thus, sustaining cities is an imperative.

Preservation of Historic environment is crucial for sustainability. Historic environment and cultural heritage are more than old monuments. If the preservation and restoration of unique historic environments should be justified on its own merits, as a universal value in itself, it may actually also plays an important and integral part in promoting sustainable social and economic development. There is a link between signs and symbols; decoration and motifs; iconographic structures and shared cultural wisdom. This is a silent language, which bonds a people together through a meaning system.

The tangible and intangible relationships between man and his environment, both natural and built, are historical phenomena in human civilization. They are evident in the historic urban settlements where the reciprocating relationship between man and nature is reflected in distinctive and responsive environments, and it is related to human needs. In relatively recent times, this historical symbiosis was disregarded in the process of city making, which has caused catastrophic environmental problems in varying degrees according to the country. This has led to a growing appreciation of historic urban forms resulting in intense conservation movements and strongly influenced new urban design approaches (Özaslan, 2002).

Throughout this article, we have used the word “place” to describe any immovable part of historic environment that people perceive as having a distinct identity. It can be of any scale from a milestone to a building, an historic area, a town, or a region. Sustainable management of a place begins with understanding and articulating how, why and to what extent it has heritage values-its significance. Communicating that significance to everyone concerned with a place, and particularly to people whose actions may affect it, is then essential if they are to act in awareness of those heritage values. Our country is geographically located in a cradle of humanity, history and civilization. Turkey has many clear and priceless historical treasures. We should appreciate this fact and preserve them carefully. Our people today and new generations to come must be oriented toward interest, love and respect for history.

Basic Concepts and Terms Related To Historic Environment and Sustainable Management

The aim of this paper is to focus on the relation between historic environment and sustainable management. But before that, initially, it is essential to explain some definitions of words in a specific or technical sense. We can talk about some of them according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Object; Anything not (now) fixed to or incorporated within the structure of a place, but historically associated with it. **Place;** Any part of the historic environment, of any scale, that has a distinctive identity perceived by people. **Preserve;** To keep safe from harm. **Conservation;** The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognizing opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations. **Historic environment;** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora. **Heritage;** All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility. Heritage, cultural inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others. Heritage, natural inherited habitats, species, ecosystems, geology and landforms, including those in and under water, to which people attach value. **Sustain;** Maintain, nurture and affirm validity. **Sustainable;** Capable of meeting present needs without compromising ability to meet future needs (www.helm.org.uk, 2009).

The term “sustainable management” and the associated notion of sustainability have risen to international prominence following the publication of the Brundtland Report. Sustainable management refers to a form of socioeconomic advancement which can continue indefinitely without exhausting the world’s resources or overburdening the ability of natural systems to cope with pollution (Yılmaz, 2005). Sustainability requires profound changes to occur on all levels of society. UN Preparatory Committee for Habitat II stated that: Cities can be part of the world economy and be the engines for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. If present urban problems are not solved, however, they will become obstacles to stability well-being and the attainment of sustainable development.

Definition and Analysis of Historic Environment

The historic cores and quarters represent the genuine culture of their societies as they were formed by the major historical determinants that are derived from local characteristics of place, social conditions and the environment itself. The architectural quality of the pre-industrial city is often hidden in its fabric, where architecture not only forms the city but is also formed by the city. This mutual relationship between the city and its architectural language and production demands that the design principles need to be derived from the pre-industrial fabric; the architectural product of that place, time and society, with its own spatial and aesthetic values (Özaslan, 2002).

The historic environment is a shared resource. Our environment contains a unique and dynamic record of human activity. It has been shaped by people responding to the surroundings they inherit, and embodies the aspirations, skills and investment of successive generations. People value this historic environment as part of their cultural and natural heritage. It reflects the knowledge, beliefs and traditions of diverse communities. It gives distinctiveness, meaning and quality to the places in which we live, providing a sense of continuity and a source of identity. It is a social and economic asset and a resource for learning and enjoyment.

Each generation should therefore shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Significant places should be managed to sustain their values. Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people’s responses to social, economic and technological change.

Conservation is the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognizing opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations. Conservation is achieved by all concerned with a significant place sharing an understanding of its significance, and using that understanding to: judge how its heritage values are vulnerable to change.

Action taken to counter harmful effects of natural change, or to minimize the risk of disaster, should be timely, proportionate to the severity and likelihood of identified consequences, and sustainable.

The Importance of the Sustainability of Historic Environment

Nothing can be defined by itself nor has a value of its own, but always in relation to the others and to the whole. A city can be defined as a complex system consisting of different structures and relationships built up through an incremental process. Every one of these structures represents a sub-system such as social, economic, political or cultural. If we understand the city as a system of relationships then we perceive continuity in the historic urban fabric as the consequence of an unbreakable succession of its qualities. Continuity can be seen as the memory of the city but also the generator for new formations.

Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment. Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute his or her knowledge of the value of places, and to participate in decisions about their future, by means that are accessible, inclusive and informed. Learning is central to sustaining the historic environment. It raises people's awareness and understanding of their heritage, including the varied ways in which its values are perceived by different generations and communities. It encourages informed and active participation in caring for the historic environment (www.helm.org.uk).

Experts should use their knowledge and skills to encourage and enable others to learn about, value and care for the historic environment. They play a crucial role in discerning, communicating and sustaining the established values of places, and in helping people to refine and articulate the values they attach to places. It is essential to develop, maintain and pass on the specialist knowledge and skills necessary to sustain the historic environment.

Sustainable conservation policies of historic environments in Turkey

In many excavations of old cities in Turkey, archeologists have encountered various settlements. This is very important and exciting. Our country has much material that will provide new and original information about past and shed light on the ancient ages. Some of our caves even bear traces of the Stone Age. Anatolian cities abound with tombs, mosques and countless other historical heritages. Moreover, many nations known to us such as the Hittites, Lydian, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Persians, and Ottomans and others set their rich and diverse civilization on this land. They left us many splendid traces and monuments.

The conservation of historic environment is manifest now in virtually every part of the world. In the case of the "developing" world, with special reference to Muslim countries, the introduction of the Western philosophy of conservation was largely accepted with little questions a similar attitude towards accepting the introduction of modernization. Warren indicates that conservation ideas and legislation based on Western models have been introduced without critical analysis of their social, economic and cultural contexts (Warren, 1976). On the other hand, the current tendency of conservation in the Muslim countries is seen as a cultural decision and the preservation of the cultural heritage as an insurance of the continuity of their cultural identity (Kuban, 1983)

Turkey is a land where rich civilizations have flourished for thousands of years in the past and a leader among the countries which bear great universal responsibilities for the protection of the cultural heritage of humanity. The importance of preserving this cultural heritage cannot be limited only to the aim of introducing our past values to future generations, also using the remains from the past as the most important resources to create the future is a critical necessity. It is becoming significant for nations to integrate their cultural identities with their new environment of life. Modern creations in architecture and urban planning which are both carried out with no consideration for national and historical values, hasten alienation. Preserving the cultural heritage of different cultures with equal care and respect will help the feelings of peace and brotherhood to find roots in a world under globalization, while at the same time providing a propelling force towards the development of a rich and multi-colored cultural mosaic with the interaction of different cultures (Erder, 1971).

Kuban says "If my observations and judgments are accurate, urban preservation especially is impossible in Turkey through the methods indicated by the teaching of orthodox preservation. We should not fool ourselves by making examples of back alley, weak, random applications. The Antalya Harbor, the Sogukcesme Street or region that were conserved without preservation in Safranbolu could not erase the memories of destruction in Istanbul, Izmir, Kayseri, Urfa, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Konya, Antakya and innumerable cities and towns"(Kuban,1983).

As Kuban remarks, it is not possible to state that the preservation policies for the historical and cultural environment in Turkey have achieved their aim to date. In particular, the immigration from rural to urban areas

and the rapid urbanization following 1950, the residence and tourism aimed second wave of shore plundering following 1980, and immigration phenomena from the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions, for security and economical reasons, have reduced to tatters the balance of cities which were formed over hundreds of years ago. The illegal buildings wave, that first began at the fringes of cities (gecekondus/squatters), has, through building pardons, gradually extended the rest of the cities like a cancer, and has become one of the main urban problems today (Tunçer, 1996).

In the preservation and improvement natural sites and historic environment, success can be achieved in application through the cooperation and synchronization of the Ministry of Environment and the Prime-Ministry Specially Protected Areas Department of Environmental Preservation, a long with the support and involvement of local administrations.

Conclusion

The idea of “preservation of environment and historic heritage” should have a more comprehensive meaning in Turkish culture than in western culture. Our culture aims to exalt its function. The idea of development and protection of intrinsic human values together with studies about the inter-relationship between man and nature can comprise the essence of the preservation approach which has appeared in recent times(Arslanoğlu,1986).

Balanced and justifiable decisions about change in the historic environment depend upon understanding who values a place and why they do so, leading to a clear statement of its significance and, with it, the ability to understand the impact of the proposed change on that significance.

The historic environment is constantly changing, but each significant part of it represents a finite resource. If it is not sustained, not only are its heritage values eroded or lost, but so is its potential to give distinctiveness, meaning and quality to the places in which people live, and provide people with a sense of continuity and a source of identity. The historic environment is a social and economic asset and a cultural resource for learning and enjoyment.

It can be said that the point arrived at after decades of disregard and looting in the matter of the preservation of historical and cultural values, is the point of losing, if not all, most of these values. The local and central administrations, which are supposed to prevent this, are observed to be unequal to this task. It is our belief that the duty required of every educated person is to participate actively in the efforts of preservation of the cultural and historical values.

Finally, we have to talk about the importance and necessity of “the heritage cycle” in the sustainable management of historic environment. By understanding the historic environment people value it. By valuing it they will want to care for it. By caring for it they will help people enjoy it. Informing the people of the region about the historic environment and giving them an awareness of it, and thus assuring their positive aid and involvement in the matter of preservation is regarded as the most important means of preservation.

References

- Arslanoğlu, A.,(1986), The Phenomena and Concept of Protectionism in The Light of Our Architectural Characteristics and Our Human Values, *İlim ve Sanat, Sept-Oct*, 28-31.
- Erder, C.,(1971) Introduction To The History Of Concern On The Historical Environment, Ankara.
- HELM, *Historic Environment Local Management*, <http://www.helm.org.uk/>, 15.05.2009.
- Kuban, D.,(1983), Conservation of the Historic Environment for Cultural Survival. *In Architecture and Community-Building in the Islamic World Today*, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 32-37, New York.
- Özaslan, Nuray.,(2002), *Understanding the Historic City*, Anadolu University Press, Eskişehir/Turkey.
- Tunçer, M.,(1996) *Writings On The Preservation Of Historical Environment*, Lecture Notes, Ankara.
- Warren, J.,(1976), Conservation in Islam, *The Architect*, June, 20-24.
- Yılmaz, M.,(2005), Sustainable Urban Environment, *WSEAS Int. Conf. on Environment, Ecosystems and Development*, Venice, Italy, November 2-4, (pp-96-102).