Transformation of Golden Horn: From Industrial Zone to Cultural Corridor

**Background**
With its advantageous geographical position and inspiring topography, Haliç, a.k.a. the Golden Horn, was the creative nucleus of imperial Istanbul. Its peculiar characteristics also attracted industrial entrepreneurs in the twentieth century. Istanbul’s first industrial area was built on the Haliç waterfront, accommodated the industrial buildings and the hillsides behind, the houses of the workers. With the rapid industrialization of the 1950s and 1980s the area fell into disuse and became the backyard of Istanbul. The city dumped whatever it wanted to conceal there, poverty and industrial pollution.
With the decentralization of industry in the mid-1980s, most of the industrial buildings were demolished as a part of then-mayor Dalan’s projects. In this process, the history of the industrialization and modernization of the city was destroyed without any documentation or any urban vision for the re-construction of public space. The brutal “cleansing” left behind a sad waterfront landscape.

Since the 1990s, however, the location and natural beauty of Haliç have been acknowledged once again and the area has become a center of attraction. Parallel to the global trend of the transformation of brown-fields, it hosts a ‘culture zone’ with university campuses (Kadir Has University, İstanbul Bilgi University), museums (Koç Industry Museum, Rezzan Has Museum, santralistanbul), a theme park (Miniaturk), culture and convention center (Sütlüce Mezbahani Kongre Merkezi) and the old shipyards, waiting for adaptive re-use.

Most of these renovations and re-programming have been produced according to a global blueprint: upper-middle class entertainment enclaves stuffed with the ready-made packages of the leisure industry. With their impenetrable boundaries and security-guarded entrances, and their indifference to the neighborhoods in which they are located, they are exclusive ‘ivory towers’ blocking the waterfront. Consequently, a polarization between the ‘culture zone’ blocking the waterfront and the neighborhoods of urban poor behind has emerged. The overcrowded urban parks on the waterfront are the evidence of the need of the congested working class neighborhoods for public space and programs. Hence, the integration of the whole waterfront and the surrounding neighborhoods should be the first step of the upcoming urban transformation.
projects. In the transformation process, the priority should be given to the reconstruction of the public space, which in turn will be an anchor for further transformations within neighborhoods.¹

The route
There will be three stops in the tour of ‘Transformation of Golden Horn: From Industrial Zone to Cultural Corridor’: Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s themepark (Miniaturk), Istanbul Bilgi University’s art platform (santralistanbul) and Eyüp Municipality’s cultural centers.

1) Miniaturk

¹Miniaturk covers a total area of 60,000 square meters. Its model area is 15,000 sqm, making Miniaturk the world’s largest miniature park in respect to its model area. The park contains 120 models done in 1/25th scale. 57 of the structures are from Istanbul, 51 are from Anatolia, and 12 are from the Ottoman territories that today lie outside of Turkey. Additional space was reserved for potential future models. The infrastructure was built taking into consideration the needs of potential additions. Therefore, Miniaturk will continue growing, modeling, in a sense, planned urbanization. Aiming to create a fairy tale atmosphere, the Miniaturk project is divided into three main sections. The sections are Anatolia, Istanbul and the former Ottoman territories. The sections are separated from one another by small landscape designs that ensure continuity by guiding visitors throughout their visit.²

¹ Case Study Halic in Istanbul - Living in Voluntary and Involuntary Exclusion (edited by Tansel Korkmaz, Eda Ünlü-Yücesoy and Yaşar Adanalı, Can Altay, Philipp Misselwitz)

With the events and activities it organizes, santralistanbul aspire to be an international platform for arts, culture and learning, inspired by a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary vision which promotes urban regeneration. In its original incarnation, before restoration and conversion into santralistanbul, the Silahtarağa Power Plant is the Ottoman Empire's first urban-scale power plant. The facility went into service on the Golden Horn, Istanbul's oldest industrial area, in 1911 and supplied the city with electricity up until 1983. Today, the power plant stands as a unique industrial heritage site following its conversion into santralistanbul, a project which involved the collaboration of public sector, private sector and non-governmental organizations alike. Opening its doors on 8 September 2007, santralistanbul is one the most exhaustive conversion projects to be carried out in Turkey in the field of arts and culture.3

3 http://www.santralistanbul.org/pages/index/about/en
3) Eyüp Municipality Cultural Center

In İstanbul, both the metropolitan and district municipalities consider ‘cultural centers’ as showcase of municipal services and pay great attention to these investments. Cultural Center is an umbrella term signifying multi-purpose spaces for mainly culture, art, education and sport related activities; accommodating extensive range of contents; administered with various management models and built with different investment budgets, spatial properties and for diverse aims. These spaces range from simple municipal buildings allocated for provision of training courses, movie screenings or organising seminars to multi-million lira investments of professional performance art centers.

Eyüp is one of the historical districts of İstanbul having coastline next to Haliç. Eyüp Municipality initiated recently an ambitious cultural center investment designed by one of Turkish star architects, Emre Arolat. The municipality already has other cultural spaces in the area mainly specialised in traditional arts and crafts workshops.