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## **The Evaluation of Waterfront as a Public Space in Terms of the Quality Concept, Case of Maltepe Fill Area**

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### **Abstract**

The quality and publicity of waterfront area have problems in Istanbul, an important coastal city in common with all character as history, culture, tourism or industrial city. Moreover, the rent oriented building trade has become decision maker of urban land use, change and transformation in Istanbul, which has continuous population growth. Thus, insufficiency of open public space increases in Istanbul where built-up area increases day by day. Inevitably, waterfront areas are affected from construction process of Istanbul. Especially, waterfront areas have problems in terms of public space quality. On the other hand, in the world city Istanbul, lots of projects are developed in order to solve the lack of public spaces however they usually are seen rent oriented.

Within the scope of the paper, Maltepe fill area, which is a waterfront project was developed in Anatolian side of Istanbul by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in order to solve the lack of open public spaces because of the overpopulation and built up area, will be evaluated in terms of the public space quality. The municipality aimed to design the biggest live, sport and entertainment center in Europe with this project that is 120 hectare fill area with 3,5 km length and 400 m width. However, the fill area breaks off the city, citizen and coast relation because of the scale of the project. In this concept, the evaluation of the fill area project will be done according to the some subjects explained in a paper “the consideration of coast usage as a public space in terms of the quality concept in Kocaeli” which was presented in 12th international conference standardization, prototypes and quality.

### **Keywords**

waterfront, public space, quality, İstanbul, Maltepe fill area

### **1. Introduction**

The ideal of making İstanbul a “world city” became the basis of Turkey’s pursuit of globalization, after the adoption of neoliberal policies in the post-1980 period. The concept of world city which developed along with the globalization process started a transformation based on urban identity, urban image, and environmental quality. This transformation process defined a new discourse on İstanbul through the realized mega projects, and invested the government with the power of authority over the urban space. In this sense, waterfront projects are also an important point because of their significance within the image of the city [1]. Competing cities of the global world used waterfront as a marketing material. Inevitably, waterfront became a commodity and waterfront rehabilitation projects which focus generally on the rent value started as the instruments of this concept. As such consequences of these actions, the general publicity of waterfront and the creation of such public activity spaces can be pushed aside [2].

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the growth rate of İstanbul’s built environment nearly started to push the natural limits of the forestland and the waterfront. Land was getting full of new constructions while the sea was getting filled with the soil of these constructions. First infilling in İstanbul were for coastal road constructions as a consequence of the poor transportation decisions, while in 2000s; reclamation projects were used to create safeguarded open spaces by the government. Two new land reclamation projects in Yenikapı and Maltepe coasts took their part in the urban fabric of İstanbul (Fig. 1). These fill areas pushed further the shoreline away from the city and changed its already artificial condition [3].



Fig. 1. Location of Maltepe and Yenikapı fill area in Istanbul coast

Additionally, İstanbul is not just a waterfront city; it is a city on water. Water had always been a dominant element in İstanbul by being a defense element, a way for trade, a means of transportation, a source of industrial activities and a recreational element [4]. After all, the waterfront area of İstanbul have problems in its quality and publicity. New land reclamation projects give further damage to the relation between the city and its waterfront. 400 meters wide infilling project in Maltepe is designed as a piece of land over the sea without any attention on its relation with the waterfront. Thus, this research aims to evaluate the land use in Maltepe fill area project in terms of public space and quality of life.

## 2. Public Waterfront Space and Quality

Public space differs from private space as it allows people to gather; makes certain encounters possible; lets ideas to be shared and produced; serves as a platform for congregations, protests, concerts, etc. In this way, public space is a part of the daily life that can change community or evolve with it. According to Habermas (2010), public space emerged from the needs of society with the rise of capitalism and democracy [5]. On the other hand, definitions of public space may vary in their area of focus depending on the background of the person defining it and the purpose of the definition. There are four basic elements in defining public space or any space in the built environment: access, use, control and ownership [6].

In the contemporary city, public space is being increasingly accepted as a guarantee factor to improve the quality of life. As such, cities have realized the importance of water in creating a better quality of life in the city. Many cities around the world are creating ambitious waterfront projects, trying to solve their water related problems and combining this with improved public spaces [7]. According to Marshall (2001), "The high profile of their locations means that waterfront projects are magnified intersections of a number of urban forces. Simply, the economic and political stakes (and hence the design stakes) are higher on the urban waterfront. Indeed, through the developments in technology and economics and the shifting of industrial occupancies, the waterfront has become a tremendous opportunity to create environments that reflect the contemporary ideas by the city, society and culture [8]." In this regard, a quality public space on the waterfront should improve both city's and citizen's quality of life, help people in personal renewal, connect the built environment to nature in the urban fabric, and respond to society's need for public space.

Kaplan et al. (2015) suggests these 10 concepts that are common in quality waterfront spaces with reference to studies by Projects for Public Spaces (PPS) movement [9]:

1. Surrounding Buildings Enhance Public Space
2. Limits are Placed on Residential Development
3. Activities Go on Round-The-Clock and Throughout the Year
4. Flexible Design Fosters Adaptability
5. Creative Amenities Boost Everyone's Enjoyment
6. Access Made Easy by Boat, Bike and Foot
7. Local Identity Is Showcased
8. The Water Itself Draws Attention
9. Iconic Buildings Serve a Variety of Functions
10. Good Management Maintains Community Vision.

In addition to the study by Projects for Public Spaces, Şimşek İlhan's (2012) doctoral thesis mentions 23 key concepts and issues for an ideal waterfront rehabilitation project. These concepts and issues are [2]:

1. Developing a sustainable waterfront rehabilitation
2. Establishing public-private partnerships in order to accelerate the rehabilitation process.
3. Ensuring the foremost significance of the social aims for the new waterfront developments
4. Establishing the social aims over the existing values of waterfront
5. Preserving the industrial heritage of waterfront
6. Reintegrating waterfront to the urban fabric
7. Reviving the basic maritime activities
8. Water as an urban space: benefiting from the spatial values of water
9. Ensuring the public access to waterfront and the liveliness of waterfront
10. Creating connected public destinations through the waterfront
11. Correlating the waterfront development with the present built environment
12. Designing independent and symbolic multipurpose buildings
13. Creating a flexible waterfront design that stays active round the year
14. Public services and opportunities on the waterfront
15. Waterfront's identity and importance in the local terms
16. "Passive" open spaces
17. Balancing the social benefits against the environmental benefits
18. A "Barrier-Free" waterfront: considering society's diversity in the recreational program of waterfront
19. Allowing sensory experiences on waterfront
20. Collaborating for the waterfront space
21. Benefiting from urban design competitions
22. "Managing" the redevelopment of waterfront
23. Making use of the international networks for waterfront rehabilitation projects.

Both of the studies on quality waterfront rehabilitation projects highlight such individual and nature focused concepts as individual, water, water as a space, nature, city, urban fabric, publicity, accesibility, and sustainability. Thus, in this research, design and use processes of Maltepe fill area will be studied and the overall project will be evaluated in terms of the 26 criteria that were selected from the given concepts.

### **3. Waterfront Spaces in Istanbul**

"Istanbul, already possessing the privileged conditions for a strong character as a water city, should enhance this particularity for improving the quality of urban life" [7]. However, İstanbul fails to take full advantage of its waterfront because of a number of reasons such as the waterfront space's absence of a proper function, problems about accessibility, privatizations, and land fills. One of the most important elements in İstanbul's urban identity, waterfront space, fails to take an adequate part in city's quality of life because of the poor applications throughout the history

Natural and historical values of İstanbul's waterfronts lack a proper protection in terms of legal, administrative or planning means and waterfront is being wasted as a commodity, despite of many legal and organizational protection attempts throughout the time [2]. Land fill projects can be showed as the main reason behind the denatured and day by day depleted waterfront of İstanbul. Apparent in the current use of the waterfront, coastal roads by the past transportation decisions creates a physical interruption between the waterfront and the city. As a contradiction, waterfront which is legally "public" is also tried to be divided from its publicity by the law [10].

Additionally, "waterfront fill areas" stay as the most common operation in İstanbul's waterfront. Esen (1993) approaches the history of these fill operations focusing on three areas; estate, coastal road, and public space [11]. The purpose of these fill operations has shifted from making coastal roads to creating public spaces in the last 5 years. Yenikapı public demonstration zone and Maltepe fill area stand as the most significant projects that disturb the coastal line. Yenikapı public demonstration zone

was constructed on a fill area of 578.000 m<sup>2</sup> by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality as a large public square for demonstrations, concerts, festivals, and fairs. Similarly, Maltepe fill area project involves an area of 1,200,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the Anatolian side. Lately, an additional fill project is announced for Kabataş coast. Yenikapı public demonstration zone and Maltepe land fill projects create an isolated and controlled space as an alternative to the public spaces that are integrated to the urban fabric [12]. Maltepe fill area project which is claimed as a project to fulfill the need for open public spaces, is the chosen topic for this research.

#### 4. Maltepe Fill Area

First fill projects in Maltepe coast was related to the coastal road constructions (Fig 2.). This coastal road interrupted the public and commercial buildings' relation with water, but the visual contact stayed the same. Maltepe land fill project was put forward in order to provide enough public space to the city (Fig. 2). However, already damaged relationship between the city and the waterfront was totally broken by this operation.



Fig. 2. Maltepe land fill Project, Maltepe coast: 2016

Maltepe fill area which is claimed to be the “the largest life, sport, and entertainment center of Europe” by Kadir Topbaş [13], the current mayor of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, may meet the claims about its size but fails in its architecture and the claimed activity opportunities. The fill area in Maltepe reaches to 3.5 km along the coast, and covers a total area of 1,200.00 m<sup>2</sup> with its width of 400 m. Topbaş mentions that the construction costs for this fill area which is nearly as large as 171 football fields reached to 201,780,000 TL (TRY). The project is planned with 2,865 capacity car parking, 76 capacity bus parking, 255,000 m<sup>2</sup> of passenger way, and 24,000 m<sup>2</sup> of tulip garden with the addition of playfields, playgrounds, 10 fountains, exhibition areas for cultural activities, viewing platforms, a 4,600 capacity amphitheater, picnic areas, exterior sport equipments, and 3 heliports [13].

As stated in the motivation part of the planning project; “...İstanbul is a global metropolis with a limited area of open public space because of the high density in the population and the built environment, in addition to that current areas are under the threat of other functions within the city. The insufficiency of the regional parks, sport areas, and open areas stands as one of the most critical shortcomings for a metropolis like İstanbul. The areas within the planning zone are going to be open to public and will partially meet the regional park, sport area, festival area etc. needs of the Anatolian side. This additional fill project involves a larger area in order to meet region scale needs...” [14]. As also indicated in this project motivation, the insufficiency in open public spaces is a consequence of the unplanned developments. Similarly, the development of this project is a result of the same unplanned approach. Creating a such large fill area within the coast not only produces many environmental issues in waterfront's natural environment and ecosystem but also interrupts the relation between city and waterfront. A fill area project with this width cannot possibly form a relationship between the city and its waterfront, and also the planned functions for this area are actually terrestrial functions. Land fills are the mere results of land reclamation efforts of an urbanization understanding that allows over-condensation. On the other hand, the wastes of the massive constructions are used as the filling material of these operations. The transformation of the coast since 2002 can be observed in the satellite images (Fig. 3). As Küçükakça (2014), 3,500,000 truckloads of excavation waste and fill material were used during the project. Most strikingly, despite of the 3,500,000 truckloads of excavation waste, the project was exempted from any environmental impact assessment reports. Hence, the reorganization of this area as a field for excavation wastes in order to create a recreational area is both away from the public interest and sustainability criteria [3].



Fig. 3. Maltepe coast: 2002, 2007, 2012 April, 2012 August, 2013, 2014

#### 4.1. Evaluation of the project as a public waterfront space

The shortcomings of Maltepe fill area project of such essential qualities as; individual, water, water as a space, nature, city, urban fabric, publicity, accessibility, and sustainability is a clear fact. The project attempts to supply the public space need of the city in a merely quantitative aspect, rather than creating a public waterfront project that is related and harmonious with water. This situation can be observed from the project's design, included functions, and the public use.



Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7. Coast line of Maltepe fill area



Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11. Pedestrian and bike road and canal in the area



Figs. 12, 13, 14, 15. Colored hard ground and urban furniture



Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19. Sports and Children playground



Figs. 20, 21, 22, 23. Skateboard park, Buildings and garage

First of all, the irrelevance of the planned functions on the waterfront to any maritime function can be observed from the plans and the given function list of the project. The high potential of the waterfront within the quality of life in İstanbul was wasted by this fill area. This new coastal line that is 400 m away from its normal state, not only lacks an integration with the urban fabric but also falls short in creating a defined relation with the buildings in its environment. Consequently, the project fails to

serve its environment as an open public space. As seen in Figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7, new coastal line is a 3.5 km long rocky hard ground. Apart from the people sunbathing and fishing from time to time, this relation can be defined as insufficient for a waterfront project. Apart from this hard ground design along the coastal line, the relation with water is getting completely lost while getting through the inner parts of the waterfront. As seen in the photos, seating is designed in a constant and linear manner both on the coast and on the inner parts. This arrangement does not allow any group gathering, meeting, or rearrangement.

This 3.5 km long, water's spatial potential and water relation wise insufficient coastal line is the only part that can be defined as a waterfront space in the project. It can be said that, the inner parts of the project is generally designed as an ordinary terrestrial landscape project. Such mentioned functions in the project plan apart from the afforested and landscaped areas; archeology garden, science park, and model boating pool, are unfinished and inactive. On the other hand, sport areas such as football, volleyball, basketball, tennis fields are active but not being densely used (Figs. 16 and 17). None of these mentioned sports relates to any kind of water sport and production of these spaces over a land fill area indicates poor urban planning. Only reference to any kind of water sport is the safe zone for rowing races. Additionally, bike use is supported by the cycle route along the fill area and rent a bike spots (Figs. 9 and 10). Nevertheless, number of available bikes in these spots falls short for such a large area. On the other hand, playground equipments are ordinary examples that can be found in any playground in Turkey (Figs. 18 and 19). Unfortunately, it is not possible to observe any playground design that is related to any natural element such as waterfront, greenery, mud, sand, or trees. Additionally, the skateboard park within the fill area is designed as separate platforms surrounded by fences as a contrast to the free nature of this sport (Fig. 20).

Densely wooded areas within the landscape project does not allow any public gatherings or use. The relation with the waterfront and city gets lost within the rows of trees together with the spatial sense. Besides, organic and colorful lines in the satellite images are just colored hard ground. Three different colors in three separate areas stay merely as a pattern without creating any identity for their environment (Figs. 12, 13, 14). The seating in these areas also do not allow any group gatherings or rearrangements (Figs. 15 and 16). Picnic tables are only available on the area near the east exit and that area is actually the most commonly used part of the project. The canal, which is the dividing line within the fill area, is used as a boat landing. This canal interrupts the continuity of the coastal circulation but also, it is literally the only part in this project that forms a relation with water (Fig. 11).

The construction works of the buildings on the fill area are recently completed, but their functional program could not be understood during the field survey (Fig. 22). The common architectural language which is formed of simple and timber covered buildings is found as a positive aspect of the project. Nevertheless, the ongoing mosque construction in the area stands as an ordinary small scale example which is irrelevant in the common architectural language. Furthermore, there is just one building available in the area for cafe-restaurant functions (Fig. 21). This building is also in a different architectural language. Additionally, this only building appears as insufficient for such a large area. Similarly, despite of its current inactive state, this fill area was actually designed for massive amounts of people but the number of toilet facilities within the area is away from meeting the requirements. Food and beverage services within the fill area separates the people from the city and also fails to meet the public needs.

Access to the area is possible by the means of public buses or private cars. High capacity parking areas are reserved within the main road connections. There are also parking areas available for trailers.

There are no apparent design considerations in the project about seasonal changes. No place is found for the public use during the winter period or rainy days. Low public use during the summer period indicates that the fill area will be a massively built empty land near the city during winter. Large lawn area which is reserved for public activities can be defined as a large void in front of the city because of its ill-defined relation with the waterfront and the main project area. Considering the fact that this large lawn area also corresponds to the planned public demonstration zone for the Anatolian side indicates the unawareness in the spatial qualities of such a zone or from another perspective, this can indicate an effort similar to Yenikapı, to create a controlled meeting zone away from the city.

Lastly, the evaluation of Maltepe fill area project in terms of its quality as a public waterfront based on the criteria under the title of Public Waterfront Space and Quality can be found in Table 1.



Fig. 24. The plan of Maltepe fill area Project

Table 1. The quality consideration of Maltepe fill area

|    | Concepts for waterfront space quality  | Maltepe Fill Area |
|----|--|-------------------|
| 1  | Surrounding Buildings Enhance Public Space   | negative          |
| 2  | Limits are Placed on Residential Development   | negative          |
| 3  | Activities Go On Round-The-Clock And Throughout The Year   | negative          |
| 4  | Flexible Design Fosters Adaptability   | negative          |
| 5  | Creative Amenities Boost Everyone's Enjoyment  | negative          |
| 6  | Access Made Easy By Boat, Bike And Foot  | negative          |
| 7  | Local Identity is Showcased  | negative          |
| 8  | The Water Itself Draws Attention   | negative          |
| 9  | Iconic Buildings Serve a Variety of Functions  | negative          |
| 10 | Developing a sustainable waterfront rehabilitation   | negative          |
| 11 | Establishing public-private partnerships in order to accelerate the rehabilitation process             | positive          |
| 12 | Ensuring the foremost significance of the social aims for the new waterfront developments              | negative          |
| 13 | Establishing the social aims over the existing values of waterfront                                    | negative          |
| 14 | Reintegrating waterfront to the urban fabric   | negative          |
| 15 | Reviving the basic maritime activities   | negative          |
| 16 | Water as an urban space: benefiting from the spatial values of water                                   | negative          |
| 17 | Creating connected public destinations through the waterfront  | positive          |
| 18 | Correlating the waterfront development with the present built environment                              | negative          |
| 19 | Designing independent and symbolic multipurpose buildings  | negative          |
| 20 | Creating a flexible waterfront design that stays active round the year                                 | negative          |
| 21 | Waterfront's identity and importance in the local terms  | negative          |
| 22 | "Passive" open spaces  | positive          |
| 23 | Balancing the social benefits against the environmental benefits                                       | negative          |
| 24 | A "Barrier-Free" waterfront: considering society's diversity in the recreational program of waterfront | positive          |
| 25 | Allowing sensory experiences on waterfront   | negative          |
| 26 | Collaborating for the waterfront space   | negative          |

## 5. Conclusion

As stated by Şimşek İlhan (2012), main criterion that is currently used to evaluate "urban space" is how successfully it is embraced by community; space becomes more successful and sustainable as it is being embraced by the community. Community embraces such spaces where they feel they belong to. The transformation of the planned public spaces within the fill area into embraced, occupied, and active "places" is an outcome of the project. The success of the transformation in the waterfront and the continuity of it will be determined by certain factors regarding the new spaces in the area such as; ease of integration with the urban fabric, familiarity within the city, and strength of the formed connections [2]. However, both the sense of place and the relation with the city and water are lost within new Maltepe waterfront project. Experiencing the coast over an ordinary rocky ground and losing the identity of place, together with the related observations and criteria indicates that Maltepe fill area is away from being a quality waterfront space.

As a matter of fact, quality waterfront spaces improve the quality of urban life. A similar research on the positive, negative, shortcoming, and faulty aspects of the waterfront areas in some of Kocaeli's important districts namely, İzmit, Başiskele, and Değirmendere, is presented in the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference "Standardization, Prototypes and Quality: A Means of Balkan Countries' Collaboration" by

the name of "The Consideration of Coast Usage as a Public Space in Terms of the Quality Concept in Kocaeli". According to that research, Kocaeli fails to become a coastal city despite of the great potential of the cove from the point of the city and the citizens, because of the failure of waterfront spaces in forming a relation with the city and taking part in urban life.

To conclude, coastal city administrations should consider public benefit rather than rent value while working on the design, transformation, and conservation projects regarding waterfront spaces in order to create water, nature, and urban life focused public spaces. New waterfront projects should meet the needs of city and citizens, protect local nature and ecology; while should not damage the coast and its relation with the city by fill areas, and continue to apply the poor urban planning decisions in the past. Mega fill projects which commonly use the wastes of widely supported construction activities should be stopped in order to save the waterfront space. City's need for public spaces as a consequence of the overly condense built environment, should be fulfilled by quality urban design projects which protect the inherent qualities in the waterfront and consider the previously given quality criteria; rather than examples similar to Maltepe fill area project which fail to take part in urban life by creating an overly artificial piece of land near the city.

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