
THE LOST IDENTITY OF IZMIR

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Port cities are distinguished from other cities by their waterfronts, which were shaped by economic and cultural transactions between each city and its networks. Trade-related activities prepared the conditions for accelerated globalisation with economic changes. The Ottoman Empire supported commerce and production in Western Anatolia after 16th century. Many European merchants thus moved to Izmir in accord with an agreement made by the Ottoman Empire in order to maintain commercial events. Afterwards, the city developed as a culturally diverse entity due to its port activity. The waterfront and arguably the whole structure of the city have been influenced by cross cultural exchanges. Study explains how shifting networks have created a unique palimpsest of structures and actor networks between 16th and 21st century in Izmir, a port city on western coast in Turkey. This paper explores the transformation of Izmir's urban form and identity. Different architectural practices such as Dutch, British, French, Italian, Greek were concretised on Izmir's waterfront and have become a part of the city's identity. Nevertheless, political decisions, governmental policies, fires, earthquakes, planned and unplanned events changed the waterfront and caused gaps in history told by its built environment. This study analyses the vicissitudes in the planning history of Izmir's waterfront.

Keywords

Izmir, identity, cross culturalism, demolition, waterfront, port city

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INTRODUCTION

The city of Izmir has had the identity of a port city since its establishment in 3000 BC. But the port-city identity of Izmir reached its peak in the nineteenth century, when the city became the main entrance port of Europe to Western Anatolia, especially in connection with the industrialization processes underway all around the world¹. The second wave of globalization based on the rapid intensification of waterborne trade, the larger size of steam-driven shipping and the resulting increased volume of shipments, together with the direct connection of docks to hinterlands through rail, required the creation of massive and extensive infrastructures such as large extended docks, canals, railway depots, bridges, shipyards, etc.² In this period, British and French companies were involved in designing warehouses, train stations, and other infrastructure in Izmir and its hinterland. This was the case until the third generation of globalization, in which an exchange of ideas was based on port-related relations. Robertson (2003) identifies the third wave of globalization, in which we are now immersed, as having started in 1945 and being linked to the post-World War II, and accelerating until today. The breaking point overlaps with de-industrialization and containerization in the case of port cities. This means that the Izmir case is involved in two major time intervals. The first period begins with the first globalization wave and lasts until de-industrialization covering two globalization waves. After de-industrialisation, the factories directly connected to the port were closed and became vacant. Only few of them were conserved (the Gas Factory and the Wheat Factory), but others such as the electric factory became abandoned. Izmir's industrial heritage is located right behind the port facilities. This area declined after de-industrialisation. The factories except Gas Factory and Wheat Factory became vacant.

The political decisions mostly concerned about the waterfront of Izmir between New Port and Konak. This paper focuses on the planning history of waterfront, which has been facing with numerous disasters such as great fires, war, earthquakes as well as political decisions. The decisions and natural disasters caused the losses of the cross-cultural based port identity of Izmir.

As a result, Izmir is facing the losing the port identity and becoming more a city, which is located on the waterfront. This paper seeks about the wrong decisions, planned or unplanned destructions and contemporary approaches that caused the losses of the port identity of a port city.

PORT IDENTITY OF IZMIR

Izmir was settled down around B.C. 3000 on a peninsula in –present day- Bayrakli. It was thought that the first port was located in this area.³ Izmir has been known as a port city since the ancient times.

First sea commerce initiatives achieved the peak point in ancient times -called as -golden age in B. C. 650 with the East Hellen civilization⁴. In B.C. 400s, Alexandre moved the city to Kadifekale (Pagos) inner port was in use.⁵ This inner port was developed by Genoese.⁶ As Strabon noted, the inner port was used until the mid XVIII⁷. Chandler⁸ explained that the closure of the inner port caused by the floating and its bringings. Figure 1 shows the shifts of the ports in Izmir through the history.

In 1261, Nif (Kemalpaşa) Agreement between Byzantine and Genoese gave privileges to the Genoese merchants in Izmir. The Genoese dominated the waterfront of Izmir between 13th and 15th century. Fuhrmann⁹ indicates that the major Ottoman port cities, and especially their waterfront districts, became the prime site of the symbolic engagement of the opposing views of Europe and the Empire, for the sea was the Empire's primary link to Europe, bringing its merchandise, money, travellers, repatriates and also its cannons to the Ottoman shores. Meyer¹⁰ points out that the network of port cities on the Mediterranean Sea represented the most important trade centre in the world in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Trade relations between Izmir and other ports increased due to

cotton cultivation especially in the Aegean region and Izmir thus became the centre of the eastern Mediterranean trade.¹¹ Due to location of Izmir on the Aegean coastline, it has always been attractive for oversea traffic.¹²

Kasaba¹³ indicates five major factors about the Mediterranean region which became important for European commerce in the nineteenth century:

- 1 Increasing European demand for raw materials and agricultural products for their industry.
- 2 The British intention to communicate with the colonies in India through the Ottoman Empire.
- 3 The disruption of the economic relations between the United States and Britain which forced the British industrialists to look for new sources for raw materials which had been obtained from the U.S. previously.
- 4 The French Revolution and the following wars influenced local merchants, especially in the western Ottoman Empire. They maintained the trade in the Empire.
- 5 The British policy to break Napoleon's trade block in the region.

Since the European merchants involved the port actions in Ottoman Empire, Izmir's whole structure has been influenced by the commercial activities and the port identity developed in order to maintain the port activities. Railways are the proof of the mentioned relations. Izmir's hinterland is a rich with its agriculture products, especially with raw cottons, olive oils, waxes, dyes, leathers etc.

Queen Elizabeth I gave allowance for involving to the 12 British merchants for 7 years in Ottoman in September, 11, 1518.¹⁴

Ottoman Empire made an agreement with France in 1535. According to agreement, Levantines settled in Izmir in order to maintain commerce between Europe and Ottoman Empire. On the other hand Ottoman Empire was supporting the multicultural ethnicity between its border. Gulfen Iren describes the complexity of Izmir as following:¹⁵

“They named Izmir “Gavur Izmir.” In Izmir, Muslims lived within a Levanten world. My grandfather was educated in Al-Azhar in Egypt but he read books in English and French, played the piano, rode horses. In the Izmirian dialect, nouns commonly derive from Greek, Italian or French. For example, an oval serving plate is known as piyate. A fork is peron, an apron, prostela. The cuisine of Izmir is mainly Greek and Armenian.”

According to Goffman majority of the economical changes happened in Izmir during 17th century.¹⁶ Author noted that Izmir became a cosmopolite city in 15-20 years. Trade tradition transformed into the global scale.¹⁷ Livorno, Genoa, Messina, Trieste, Ancona, Venice, Marseille, Amsterdam and London constituted Izmir's port network in 18th century.¹⁸

During the time, France replaced Venice in the Levant, notably in especially in 1718. Afterwards, commercial activities increased between Ottoman and port of Marseille. Ottoman Empire has provided privileges and concessions for the merchants in 1740. Izmir became the most important port of the Ottoman Empire, handling one quarter of all Ottoman trade according to an agreement between France and Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, a regular line of postal steamships between Marseille and Izmir was established. The first post office in Izmir was founded by French in May, 1, 1812.¹⁹

The port and hinterland connections were playing important role in case of Izmir's commerce network. First of all the goods should be collected from local farmers. Rums, Armenians and Jewish people were providing communication between European merchants and Ottoman good producers²⁰. This is why they were called as commissioners in this complex commercial network. Main companies were mostly French and British and the communications were made by Jewish, Rums and Armenians, because these people were able to speak with the locals and living in Ottoman Empire for a long time in contrast to the Levantines.

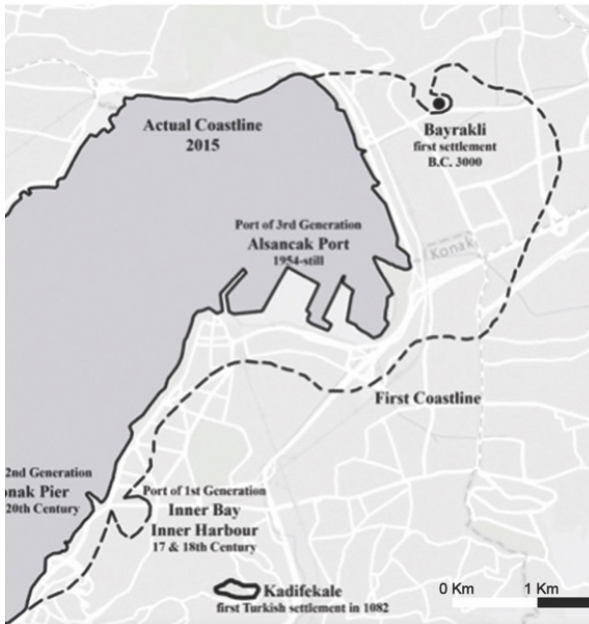


FIGURE 1 The Shift of Izmir Port (map is recreated based on the sources Beyru,1827; Inalcik, 2013 with additions by Tanis, 2015)

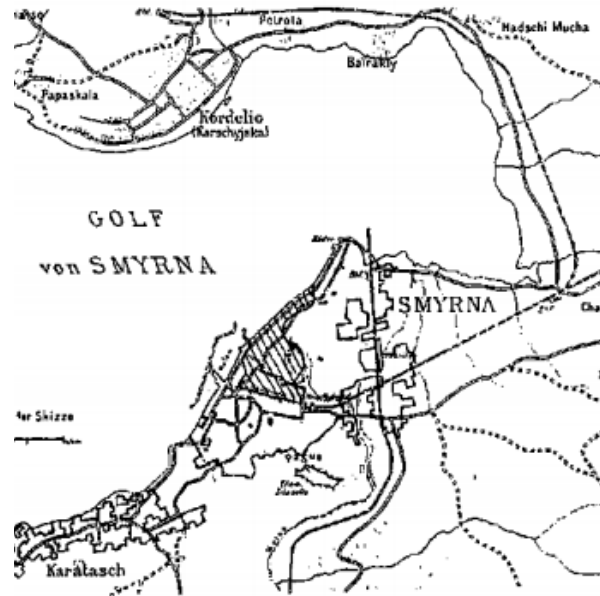


FIGURE 2 The map is showing the burnt part of Izmir after Great Fire 1922.

Sir Joseph Paxton, George Whyte, Augustus William Rixon and William Jackson were the founders of first railway company with the name “Izmir'den Aydin'a Osmanli Demiryolu” in May 1857.²¹ Izmir-Aydin Train Line was completed in July, 1, 1866²². Izmir-Kasaba train line's prerogative was given to Edward Price in July, 4, 1863, but afterwards it was handed over to the French company, which was directed by Belgic native Georges Nagelmakers²³. Basmahane Train Station began to build in 1864 and completed in Turgutlu (Kasaba) in 1866.²⁴

The inner port was not suitable for handling and loading facilities anymore in 16th century²⁵ as mentioned before. Therefore the idea of renewal of the port became important in 1860²⁶. John Charnaud, George Guarracino and Alfred Barker from Britain founded a company to build a new port for Izmir in 1867.²⁷ Mentioned group was agreed with the Dussaud Brothers, who were in charge to built Cherbourg and Marseille Ports.²⁸

After mid 18th century, Merchant families decided to settle in suburbs like Bornova and Buca and built very glorious houses with high exterior walls.²⁹ They wanted to catch the luxurious life in Europe.³⁰ Within this approach, city of Izmir extended to the rural areas with cross cultural architectural approaches.

As Evliya Celebi described Izmir in 1671:³¹

“There are 260 enormous ports and cities where goods are loaded and unloaded under the reign of Ottomans. However Izmir is more famous than all of these cities. Because there are 18 non muslim kings that became friends with the Ottomans all over the world, and they all have consulate in Izmir Their traders bring over all kind of commodities and products of all nations to Izmir. A thousand ships come to Izmir and a thousand of ships leave Izmir, and all the commodity is sold here every year.”

Along those years Izmir had 40 café houses, 200 taverns and entertainment places, and 300 warehouses for traders.³²

Andre Marchais has applied to Ottoman Empire in order to provide lighting with gas. But his initiatives weren't realised after his death³³ afterwards, Glasgow based "Laidloux and Sons" company built the Izmir Gas Company and provided electricity to Izmir first of all in June, 25, 1864.

It can be claimed thus, commercial activities along the port relations did not only shaped the waterfront and also it shaped whole city structure, applied the innovative developments to the city and brought western notions such as banking system, hotels and insurance companies.

MAN MADE AND NATURAL DISASTERS IN IZMIR

Izmir faced with natural and planned destructions in its history. Izmir had many disasters such earthquakes and fires. These events caused to loosing some part of the accumulated port heritage of Izmir.

Gursoy noted that almost all earthquakes were followed by fire and caused damages in the city.³⁴ According to travellers and the historians, Izmir's trade life was heavily effected by a destructive earthquake on July, 10, 1688. Three of fourth of the building were destroyed including costumes buildings.³⁵ Frank Avenue was the most harmed street.³⁶ This is the first most devastating event, which erased the some part of the cross cultural heritage in Izmir. Most of the bonded warehouses and caravanserais of European traders were destroyed by the fire after earthquake.³⁷

Izmir was suffered by the fires in following years in 1742 and 1763. Half of the city was burnt down in 1742 and all Frank neighbourhood was destroyed by fire in August, 6, 1763³⁸.

Izmir had great fires in 1688, 1737, 1763, 1778, 1797, 1834, 1841, 1842, 1845, 1852, 1861, 1882 and 1992.³⁹ No doubt, Izmir's face has changed during the time with these great fires. The most destructive one was the Three quarters of the city were demolished by Great Fire in 1922 (Figure 2).⁴⁰ Previously, Izmir had may great fires and earthquakes. But after war, Izmir lost some part of the port related heritage. One observer from the British war ship expressed the Great Fire as following:⁴¹

"It was a terrifying thing to see even from the distance. There was the most awful scream one could ever imagine. I believe many people were shoved into the sea, simply by the crowds nearest the houses trying to get further away from the fire ... Many did undoubtedly jump into the sea, from sheer panic."

Kordonboyu has been playing important role for the image of Izmir (Figure 3). It reflected the face of the city in whole time. Kordonboyu was under transformation since 17th century. The shoreline has changed during the time with filling the sea. Belle Vue was planned by Dussauds on the filled area on the shore.⁴² Dussaud Brothers constructed 3245m long dock wall between Konak Sari Kisla and Alsancak Railway Station in 1874.⁴³ Previous shoreline extended app. 100m. with the project. 1250m of 3245m was used for commercial purpose and port facilities.

After the Republic of Turkey was founded, Izmir was faced with transformations along the waterfront. Housing need was increasing after the great fire and war damage. After series of disasters, together with internal immigration, rebuilding became more important. In 1952, an international competition was launched to rethink about the development plan especially for burnt part of the city. The jury was consisted of Rauf Onursal (Mayor of Izmir), Kemal Ardoga (Head of Municipal Department of Infrastructure and Construction), Prof. Paul Bonatz (Istanbul Universitesi, Ord. Prof.), Sir Patrick Abercrombie (Head of Chamber of British Architects), Mithat Yenen (M. Sc. Architect, Vice Chairman of Ilker Bankasi).



FIGURE 3 Belle Vue in 1910s. The buildings were not for commercial uses. There were not even a single building for commercial uses between Punta and Belle Vue.



FIGURE 4 Present day view of Kordonboyu. Ground floors are in use for commercial activities and higher floors are for residential purpose.



FIGURE 5 3-4 storey apartments and 8-9 storey apartments in 1950s.



FIGURE 6 A Levantine House between 8-9 Storey Buildings.



FIGURE 7 A High-rise building behind Levantine Houses.

According to legislation of competition, René and Raymond Danger plan should be followed. Dangers Plan was based on existing pattern of historical Izmir. Plan concerns about the modernization of a nation together with its historical roots. It was an opportunity to work on burnt field in order to think about the resilience of the city and to concretise nationalist and modernist movement after war. Modern image of city was created thus with this project. It was planned according to Beaux-Arts Planning Approaches with wide boulevards.

First prize winning project was designed by Architect Kemal Ahmet Aru et. al. For a while, Izmir's waterfront between Gundogdu Square and New Harbour was dominated by 3-4 storey buildings (Figure 5).⁴⁴ These buildings were known as family apartments. It created resilient environment in waterfront of Izmir, after Great Fire following the after war era's needs. 3-4 storey apartments were located within green gardens. But unfortunately Izmir lost this image in few decades due to further planning approaches. This period witnessed the most convenient planning decisions after republic founded.

Two storey Levantine Houses along the waterfront were constructed around late 19th century.⁴⁵ Although some of Levantine houses were saved from the great fire, after a law entitled "Kat Mulkiyet Kanunu" Condominium Act, Izmir's waterfront faced with rapid development. Even it took a place in the literature with the name "Yik-Yap-Sat", which refers to "Demolish-Reconstruct-Sell". The reason of this rapid development was related to increasing population due to internal immigration to Izmir. The population increased from 230.000 to 400.000 between 1950 and 1960.⁴⁶ The immigration triggered after 1950s. Izmir faced again with housing shortage. 3-4 storey modernist apartments were thus destroyed. Between 1955 and 1983, the waterfront of Izmir has reshaped with horizontal concrete wall of 8-9 storey raw-buildings. Only few Levantine Houses reached to present day as shown in Figure 6.

Between 1964 and 1973, the mayor Osman Kibar (commonly known as asphalt Osman) caused many destructions as well.⁴⁷ Building quality decreased within these years. The only intention was demolishing, reconstructing and making money through selling more apartments.

In 1987 and 1988, another mayor Burhan Ozfatura allowed the high-rise buildings in waterfront. First high rise buildings were erected right behind the valuable and rare Levantine's houses, which saved from fires and demolitions. Today, skyline includes high-rise buildings without considering its history, identity and the built environment.

Man-made disasters damaged Izmir's waterfront more than the natural disasters. Money – based decisions took the place especially after 1950s. Izmir has a wide opportunity to expand the city from the city core. Instead of demolishing the heritage, development plans for metropolitan area would be improved by the actors.

CONCLUSION

Fortuin and de Meere indicate cities tend to develop whatever resources they have. They explain these resources as local identity, social and cultural capital, administrative networks, economic factors, the quality of the body of public servants, the housing stock, and so on. During a project, social, physical and economic developments interact, not only of the government or professional organizations, but also of individuals in society. They also point out that the city is a connection and therefore a network of mutually influencing developments, comprising countless actors, both inside and outside of administrative boundaries.

Since the ancient times, Izmir hosted port actions, even though it was interrupted by wars, attacks, fires. After all events, the city of Izmir had recovered the port identity and maintain it. It is important to recover and to not lose the port identity, which is based on port related actions in frame of cross-culturalism. Therefore, the port identity of Izmir should be considered as a priority in order to develop sustainable regeneration for its waterfront with sustainable identity. If not, Izmir will be faced soon with losing its port identity and becoming a city, which is located on waterfront.

On the other hand, first impression of a port city is consisted of a view from sea towards to city. After natural or man made disasters, Izmir's waterfront has lost this impression as well. The concrete high storey row-housing apartments don't reflect Izmir's identity. It interrupts as well as the connection between sea and the city. Izmir has failed in terms of resilience of a city after sequence of events like man-made and natural disasters. We should better to stop immediately and rethink about the future of waterfront or Port City Izmir, in order to avoid further wrong decisions. Otherwise 5000 -year- old Izmir will loose its importance and identity within a century.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Fatma Tanis received a bachelor degree in architecture from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 2013. She earned a master of science degree from Istanbul Technical University, Architecture Department, History of Architecture Programme with the thesis entitled "The Waterfront Regeneration Projects and Contemporary Design Approaches of European Port Cities". She is a PhD Candidate in History of Architecture and Urban Planning, TU Delft. Her research explores how shifting networks have created a unique palimpsest of structures and actor networks between 16th and 21st century in Izmir, a port city on western coast in Turkey.

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