The Effects of Gentrification on Cultural Identity

A case study in İstanbul, Sulukule

Blekinge Tekniska Högskola

Sustainable Urban Planning Master Thesis 2014/2015

Supervisor: Professor Jana Revedin Arch PhD

Author: Çiğdem Özcan
Abstract

Gentrification is a formation that demonstrate the revitalisation of urban areas where local inhabitants is displaced and force to move other districts. In the last years, there are several debates about positive and negative consequences of revitalisation projects. This paper discusses the effects of gentrification researched through an analysis and perspective on changes in a given district. It underlines the influences of alterations on the cultural landscapes and cultural identities. Focusing on the historic neighbourhood of İstanbul, Sulukule as a case study, this thesis analyses the change on character of a region with particular attention to the shifts of identity of a district. The aim is examining the role of gentrification on cultural identity, its effects, project process and consequences for neighbourhoods.

Key Words: Gentrification, Cultural Identity, Cultural Landscape, Sulukule

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to my supervisor Professor Jana Revedin for her trust, support and critical comments as I put together this thesis. Furthermore, I would like to thank Sabrina Fredin for her useful advice about the structure at the beginning of my work. Finally, I want to thank my family for their constant help and motivation throughout in my life.
# Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgements......................................................................................................................................... i

Table of Contents.......................................................................................................................................... ii

List of Figures................................................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter I: Introduction.................................................................................................................................. 2

Chapter II: Theoretical Foundation Literature Review .................................................................................. 3

  II.1. Gentrification........................................................................................................................................ 3

  II.2. Cultural Identity- Cultural Landscape.................................................................................................. 6

Chapter III: Methodology............................................................................................................................... 7

  III.1. Case Study: İstanbul – Sulukule ......................................................................................................... 7

    III.1.1 A Brief History of Sulukule ................................................................................................................. 7

    III.1.2. The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project ................................................................................... 13

    III.1.3. Current Situation ............................................................................................................................... 16

Chapter IV: Analysis...................................................................................................................................... 21

  IV. 1. Analysis of Case Study .................................................................................................................... 21

  IV. 2. Perspective between Gentrification and Cultural Identity .................................................................. 22

  IV. 3. Barry Farm Revitalization Project ..................................................................................................... 24

Chapter V: Conclusion..................................................................................................................................... 27

Chapter VI: References.................................................................................................................................. 29
List of Figures

Figure 1: Plan of Sulukule. Sulukule’nin Değişen Çehresi. Arkitera (2011)........................................9
Figure 2: General appearance of neighbourhood before project. Fatih News (2013).....9
Figure 3: Entrance of the neighbourhood. http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.se/(2011)..10
Figure 4: Sulukule women spend time on the streets while chatting. Sulukule Blog
http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.se/ (2011)..................................................................................11
Figure 5: View of the old city wall separating Sulukule from a major road.
Yapı News (2012)..........................................................................................................................12
Figure 6: Two boys take a stroll in the ruins. Sulukule Blog. (2011).............................14
Figure 7: Beginning of the gentrification project. Sulukule Blog. (2011).....................15
Figure 8: New Apartment in Taşoluk. http://toki.gov.tr/.....................................................16
Figure 9: The location of Sulukule and new migration area Taşoluk. Türkiye’den
Şiddet Hikayeleri http://www.siddethikayeleri.com/(2009).............................................................17
Figure 10-11: Construction in the area http://metinsamasti.blogspot.se/ (2012)..........18
Figure 12: Final appearance of Sulukule district. Toki Sulukule Houses.
Figure 13: Final appearance of Sulukule district.http://metinsamasti.blogspot.se/..............20
Figure 14: Plan of Barry Farm Project area. Anacostia River Realty. Development in East of
River neighborhoods.......................................................................................................................24
Figure 15: A row of public housing units in Barry Farm. DC's Poorest Residents Fight
Displacement by Gentrification by Rania Khalek (2014)...............................................................25

Figure 16: Construction in Barry Farm. DC's Poorest Residents Fight Displacement by
Gentrification by Rania Khalek (2014)...........................................................................................26
I. Introduction

Policy decisions, natural events, population growth, improvements on technology and socio-economic structures are all factors that contribute to the unique development of a city. Additionally, in terms of many distinctive aspects cities always have process of change. Through this change, the concept of “gentrification” has emerged in urban planning academia the result of which can be to make cities more liveable, balance nature and ecology as well as to ensure social integration. There are also many negative and controversial side effects of the gentrification process.

Gentrification is the process of renewal and rebuilding districts by creating new living environments and new structures. Displacement of local inhabitants as well as cultural, physical and social changes are also common occurrences, which, over the last years, have led to debates about gentrification’s true effects.

Using Istanbul, Sulukule as a case study, this paper aims to contribute to the present debate by highlighting the effects and causes of gentrification on cultural identity. Sulukule, a Romani neighbourhood on the historical peninsula of Istanbul, was identified as an urban redevelopment area. The main aim of the project was to create “a better urban environment” for both inhabitants and residents of Istanbul. Sulukule is a significant district in terms of being one of the oldest Roma settlements in Europe. According to residents and local inhabitants of this neighbourhood this regeneration effort poses a threat the cultural sustainability by damaging the cultural identity and socio-economical complexity of the city.

There are several different results of this urban gentrification project for both inhabitants and the future of Istanbul. One of the main problems of this project has been that it forces inhabitants to migrate to other areas and affect well-situated newcomers to live here by increasing cost of rents. The result has been a shift in the identity and culture of the area.

In order to examine the causes and consequences of gentrification on cultural identity for the case study of the urban district of Sulukule, the following research questions will be addressed throughout this paper: To what extent does gentrification affect cultural identity in urban areas? What is the role of gentrification in cultural identity and cultural landscape?

One of the aims of this thesis to critically analyse the Sulukule regeneration project as well as to discuss a second regeneration project from Washington D.C.; “revitalization without
gentrification”. Both projects will be analysed in order to understand effects and results of each one. The aim is to better understand planning details of gentrification that applied to two different projects: the Sulukule and Barry Farm Regeneration projects.

In order to analyse gentrification and its effect on cultural identity a theoretical approach to the term gentrification will be identified on the second chapter. Furthermore, again same chapter going to describe the approach of cultural identity and cultural landscape. The third chapter the paper provides a brief historical background of Sulukule district and gives details about regeneration project. On the fourth chapter project reviews will be indicated and discussed on both Sulukule and Barry Farm project in Washington D.C.

II. Theorical Foundation Literature Review

II.1. Gentrification

When it comes to gentrification there are several definitions and discussions that need examination in order to explore the development process as well as the causes and affects according to many different perspectives. In this part I will examine gentrification in terms of four different perspectives; cultural, social, political and architectural, planning. First, I want to define gentrification from cultural point of view because that is vital the discussion involving the upgrading of houses for upper classes personnel and in doing so, destroying the previous habitant’s culture. Second, social aspect that is changes by forcing poorer inhabitants to migrate to other districts. Besides, political debates always discuss the benefits and costs of revitalization of an area. Lastly, again, it is significant to criticize gentrification projects in terms of new planning and architectural structure.

The phrase of gentrification is firstly defined by British socialist Ruth Glass while observing social structure of districts in London. “Once this process of gentrification starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (Glass 1964)

Hamnett (1984) stated another definition: Gentrification commonly involves the invasion by middle-class or higher-income groups of previously working-class neighbourhoods or multi-occupied 'twilight areas' and the replacement or displacement of many of the original occupants. It involves the physical renovation or rehabilitation of what was frequently a highly deteriorated housing stock and it’s upgrading to meet the requirements of its new owners.
As cultural point of view, according to Ley and Butler’s clarification that is cited by Hamnett, due to the changes in class composition, changes have also occurred in the cultural orientation, preferences and working patterns of a segment of this new middle class which have predisposed them to living in the inner city, rather than commuting from leafy suburban areas. (2003)

One of the inevitable results of gentrification process is replacing pre-existing social and cultural systems of districts with the new ones. In this way loss of residents of familiar systems are affected directly from the process. Physical upgrading makes conservation difficult to solve negative socio cultural effects of displacement and loss of character of the district.

Furthermore, about social aspect for the emergence of gentrification that is identified by society’s demands which affect the condition and process of gentrification. As the way of life, as it is desired by these social classes is more often offered in inner-city districts than in the suburbs of the city, members decide to move to these areas, and thus slowly begin to change the existing urban structure towards their requirements. Hence, in these cases it is the society instead of the economy who initiates gentrification processes (Ley 1980 p.16, 17)

Thus, on the frame of physical architectural and planning process Smith claims that the crucial point about gentrification is that it involves not only a social change but also, at the neighbourhood scale, a physical change in the housing stock and an economic change in the land and housing market. It is this combination of social, physical, and economic change that distinguishes gentrification as an identifiable process/set of processes (1987) Other definition state by Kennedy and Leonard that gentrification is a district-based process in which households with higher income displace lower income households. Within this process the character and flair of the neighbourhood is changed fundamentally.(2001)

Gentrification also became the centre of attention of political debates (Lees 2008). The literature on gentrification emphasizes the relationship between governmental policy and city renewal. It has been observed that gentrification is not solely a consequence of natural phenomena and market forces, but also the result of government policy shaped by strong predevelopment interests in the private sector. (Smith & Williams, 1986)

About interest in gentrification, there have been various attempts trying to explain the causes and development of the process and likewise to the controversy that was going on in political
discussions, the quantity of theoretical explanatory models resulted in a number of diverse assumptions of gentrification. Especially between the 1970s and 1980s, these debates were dominated by two theoretical positions. On the one side gentrification was explained on grounds of economy, describing the gentrification as initiated by developers and investors. On the other side it was based on socio-cultural factors, describing gentrification as started by the development of different lifestyles (Hamnett 1991)

Far from being a completely negative process, gentrification can bring with it several positive outcomes: reinvestment, increased levels of home ownership, improved public services, improved commercial activities, renovation of vacant and abandoned properties, adaptive use of “white elephant” structures, increased property tax, sales tax, and income tax revenues, neighbourhood jobs, property value appreciation, and economic integration (Rypkema D. D., 2004 ). Yet it is the negative outcomes that make gentrification such a polarizing topic; rising housing costs, changes in the human character of the neighbourhood, loss of a sense of “power” and “ownership” by long-term residents, and potential conflicts between new residents and long-term residents (Rypkema D. D., 2004 ). This dilemma brings some political debates together about gentrification.

Moreover, current discussions critically argue about the influence of urban policy towards processes of gentrification. After years of population decrease, many European cities registered anew demographic increase since the end of the 1980s. Thus, political debates discussing possibilities to fuel this ‘back-to-the-city’-trend have gained in importance in recent years. Criticisms accuse politicians that promoting policies of inner-city resurgence will stimulate gentrification and, while neglecting negative consequences, advertise it as positive urban development (Haase et al. 2009). Hence, gentrification can also be described by political interventions.

Besides, The Oxford American Dictionary adds another political spin: "Movement of middle class families into urban areas, causing property values to increase and having secondary effect of driving out poorer families. In the process, housing in the areas affected, both renovated and unrenovated, undergoes a significant price appreciation. Such a process of neighbourhood transition commonly involves a degree of tenure transformation from renting to owning”(Hamnett, 1984, p.284)
II.2. Cultural Identity - Cultural Landscape

Oxford dictionary define cultural identity as the definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender). In stereotyping, this is framed in terms of difference or otherness.

According to Shindler’s exploration, groups are defined by their cultural identity which is, among many things, comprised of the rich web of interrelating stories, myths, narratives, and traditions held by the people and institutions of a given group. This array of components work in unison to create a shared sense of common identity, without which the social structure would fall away and leave nothing more than a handful of individuals leading their own independent lives. (2014)

To understand cultural identity in the context of public health it is important to focus on the worldviews of the communities and people in need of health services. The meaning of words used to describe disease and adaptive behaviours needed to maintain good health must be examined in the light of a diverse cultural environment. People live their lives as simultaneous members and participants in a multiplicity of social contexts. An individual's cultural identity can be shaped not only by race and ethnicity, but also by age, gender, family configuration, religion, socioeconomic status, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology stage of acculturation, and place of upbringing. (Thomas, 2002)

On the lights of these definitions cultural identity is necessary and fundamental in terms of maintain main values of a community. It also indicates significance of a person’s relation and integrity with impacts of culture, heritage and traditions.

In order to be integrated with all heritage and traditions experiencing living space, cultural districts are significant. Due to the fact that cultural landscape is also plays important role to support cultural identity.

Definition of UNESCO points out this with these words; to reveal and sustain the great diversity of the interactions between humans and their environment, to protect living traditional cultures and preserve the traces of those which have disappeared, these sites, called cultural landscapes, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List.
Cultural landscapes cultivated terraces on lofty mountains, gardens, sacred places testify to the creative genius, social development and the imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity. They are part of our collective identity.

Apart from UNESCO’s clarification on the relation of culture and landscape, Sauer indicates the relation with this explanation: A cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium. The cultural landscape the result. (Sauer, 1963) Landscape can also be viewed as a place of cultural exchange, a site at which practices and processes of cultural exchange become forms of cultural heritage (Burke, Leader-Elliot and Maltby, 2004: website)

III. Methodology

Having a closer look on the theoretical background of gentrification we find different definitions and theoretical background. Additionally in order to study causes and effects gentrification on cultural identity case study has been chosen analysing the development of the urban district Sulukule, Istanbul. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. (Yin 1989)

Thanks to the method of a case study it is possible to use a wide range of different sources, such as academic journals, newspaper articles, blogs, documentaries in order to outline how gentrification affect cultural identity in Sulukule, İstanbul. Furthermore, using complete interviews that already made with inhabitants of Sulukule during the project process in order to understand their complaints and wishes related to gentrification project in the district. These short interviews are vital in terms of observe how different groups of local residents experience these transformations. These concluded as examination of the development and transformation process in the area of the case study.

III.1. Case Study: İstanbul – Sulukule

III.1.1. A Brief of Sulukule

Urban regeneration projects have become a focus of attention in Istanbul due to tourism promotion, particularly great expectations from the European Capital of Culture 2010 Event. In order to truly comprehend the all alteration in İstanbul, in the district of Sulukule, it is
necessary to explain the changes from the history to today’s situation. Sulukule, a Romani
neighbourhood on the historical peninsula of Istanbul, was designated as an urban
redevelopment zone. The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project is one of the recent efforts to
present “a better urban environment” to foreign visitors and investors. The project has
accelerated the struggle for land, causing dispossessions, evictions and demolitions. Locals’
needs and rights are denied. Consequently, the citizens in Sulukule started to oppose
regeneration and formed an urban social movement. (Uysal, 2011)

Uysal define Sulukule (officially called Hatice and Neslişah Sultan but widely known as
Sulukule) is a Romani neighbourhood in the Fatih district of Istanbul. Sulukule is located on
the borders of the historical peninsula, near the ancient Theodosia Walls. The neighbourhood
is around 8000 m² with 571 households. (2011) Accordingly, the area is fundamental as being
one of the historical landscape area in Istanbul. As reported by Romani historians Sulukule is
one of the first ever Romani settlements in this part of the world. (Marsh, 2006) After the
Turkish conquest of Istanbul, Sulukule became the first neighbourhood in the world to be
permanently settled by the Romani people. The Roma mostly dealt with music, dancing and
entertainment during the Byzantine and Ottoman times (Göncüoğlu & Yavuztürk, 2009)

Furthermore, in terms of physical structures, Sulukule has rarity physical character in İstanbul.
Unique formation of the area is emphasized these words: Historically Sulukule was marginally
positioned along the ancient Byzantine defence walls that for centuries demarcated the
western extent of Istanbul. A variety of physical factors further separated Sulukule from its
immediate surroundings, such as the organic street pattern characterized by frequent cul-de
-sacs and low rise houses. The unique living spaces reflected the communal lifestyle of the
residents. The buildings were seldom accessible directly from the street. Individual houses
opened to communal courtyards and courtyards opened to streets through very narrow
passageways. (Karaman & Islam, 2011)
Hence, the important effect of physical structure of Sulukule has been expressed by giving example from daily life of the district. Sulukule’s streets were occupied by bodies almost around the clock. A typical neighbourhood scene involved women sitting on the sidewalks chatting or doing daily chores, children playing on the street, and men loitering at street corners or sitting on chairs often placed directly on the street. The residents were aware of
the fact that neighbourhood enabled them to perform certain everyday habits, that would not be tolerated outside the borders of Sulukule. (Karaman & Islam, 2011)

Semi-private spaces has been composed by these several courtyards and they provide people semi-common areas to socialize by washing clothes and as playground for children. Apart from these thanks to physical features it is obvious that Sulukule is socially and culturally differentiated from most of the districts of Istanbul. Besides, Sulukule has a vital importance since Byzantine period it has suffered isolation for generations. Foggo indicates that during the Byzantine rule, Sulukule’s dwellers faced frequent pressure from the Christian Orthodox Church. Romani families were forced to live in camps outside the city (2007). During the Ottoman reign, the Roma was discriminated against because of their entertainment and drinking habits. Their ‘cultural separateness’, due to having a different language, loud debates and fights on the streets and playing with animals, was often considered impure (Mischek, 2002). Romani people in Istanbul were relocated several times and subjected to compulsory public work. Since the 19th century, Ottoman modernization affected the civil status of the Roma, who did not abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyles (Somersan & Kirca Schroeder, 2008).

Figure 3: Entrance of the neighbourhood
Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Roma of Sulukule continued the 19th century tradition of managing Entertainment Houses....These were small, informal “listen-watch, eat and drink” places, where you could rent the entire house, a hall, or a room to have belly dancers and musicians perform just for you and your friends or family while being served food and alcohol (Akçura, 2007). Prototypes of these houses were established in the early 1940s. They remained popular among both tourists and locals alike, providing a vital source of livelihood for the neighbourhood until the late 1980s. Today many Sulukuleans, particularly those who worked in the entertainment industry, still reminisce in the prosperity of those years. (Karaman&Islam, 2011)

Sulukule, in its trans located reassertion, remained a vibrant neighbourhood thanks to its entertainment houses. This relative prosperity lasted until the 1990s, when the new chief of security ordered a clearance action against the entertainment houses, on the basis of their imputed “moral degeneracy.” But more than that, more significantly, the culture of the Roma could not be accommodated within the new urban “vision” and the gathering city-branding drive that was by then rapidly developing to fashion İstanbul as a twenty-first century global metropolis. (Robins, 2011)
In the early 1990s, following claims that Romani people in Sulukule were dealing drugs and engaging in prostitution, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality closed down the houses (Somersan, 2007). In 1992, police intervention was harsh against the inhabitants of Sulukule. Police beat some musicians and destroyed their instruments (Foggo, 2007). Since live entertainment industry was the neighbourhood’s major source of income, its abolition ushered in a period of rapid economic decline, and boosted drug trade as an alternative source of informal livelihood. The neighbourhood also suffered physically; houses fell into disrepair as the residents lacked the economic resources to invest in and maintain their homes. Day after day, walls of stigma rose around the neighbourhood. Despite its very central location and its close proximity to main transportation axes and to the central tourist and hotel zones. Sulukule remained a no-go zone for the great majority of the Istanbulites. (Karaman & Islam, 2011)

![Figure 5: View of the old city wall separating Sulukule from a major road](image)

Since the 1990s, local governments have neglected Sulukule. Sulukule has been denied access to basic municipal services such as transportation, sanitation and education and has been abandoned to its own fate (Özden, 2008). The neighbourhood has since turned to a slum area and suffered from poverty (Karaman, 2008). Even though having a good time in Sulukule between 1950s and 1990s positive conditions of entertainment houses has changed in early 1990s. From that point onwards, Sulukule’s fortune declined dramatically. The quality of life of its Roma inhabitants suffered immensely as a consequence of this offensive against what a basic productive economic livelihood in the district. Another decisive move had been made towards the final crushing of Sulukule; towards the seeming goal of the final eradication of what Sulukule had long and defiantly stood for in city’s cultural life. (Robins, 2011)
III.1.2. The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project

In 2005, a law was passed giving extraordinary powers to local authorities to develop historic areas of the İstanbul. With this new law in İstanbul, Sulukule (for the “Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties”) the by now notorious law, so called renewal began to conceived on a far more ambitious scale, and according to new and commercially very ambitious real-estate imperatives. (Robins, 2011)

Apart from that, the law authorized municipalities to implement large scale urban regeneration projects with the right of expropriation in deteriorated historic areas and zones of degeneration. Municipalities now can implement regeneration projects to build public housing estates, industrial and trade zones, technology parks and recreational areas, protect and restore deteriorated urban areas, conserve historical and cultural heritage and take precautions against earthquake risks. (Uysal 2011)

The main aim of the renewal project is the replacement of existing buildings with the new housing, along with commercial and touristic facilities. According to Robins, property owners the more fortunate inhabitants of the district, were offered the chance to buy a new housing scheme, and if they do not want to or could not they were declined free to sell their property to third parties or to the municipality. However, considering that most of the property owners were actually relatively poor, only a very small percentage could opt into the new project. (2011)

After approving the Sulukule Urban Regeneration project in 2006 three actors jointly participated to the project: The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, The Fatih Municipality and The Mass Housing Administration (Toplu Konut İdaresi or TOKI)

The Sulukule Case represents what Edelman (1964) differentiates as politics of ‘big issues’, as compared with politics dealing with the distribution of goods and services. In the Sulukule case, the project used the ‘big issues’ and refused to discuss how goods and services are distributed.
Figure 6: Two boys take a stroll in the ruins

During the process of gentrification project texture of streets, historical houses, green areas were destroyed and local population forced to move other districts. According to Uysal’s citation the municipality website describes the project as a necessity, stating as follows: “Neslisah and Hatice Sultan neighbourhoods have witnessed urban decay and turned into slum areas, in the centre of Istanbul. These neighbourhoods have not only been physically ruined but also become homelands for socio-economic problems” (http://www.fatih.bel.tr/bpi.asp?caid=631&cid=1155).

The rhetoric introduces physically decayed Sulukule as a social threat and continues as follows: “Sulukule has been occupied by low income and low cultural groups who came as immigrants without having a sense of belonging to the city. There is no trace of a homogeneous culture in the neighbourhood” (http://www.fatih.bel.tr/bpi.asp?caid=631&cid=1155) Again, according to definition of Fatih municipality the official objectives of the project are the following: the Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project aims to “preserve national and world heritage, particularly historical tissue in Sulukule including ancient walls, to stop physical decay and to secure the sustainability of the neighbourhood, to maintain economic development, to promote urban integration, to increase standards of living in Sulukule and to encourage dwellers to participate in urban policies” (http://www.fatih.bel.tr/bpi.asp?caid=631&cid=1155). In order to defend rights of the Romani of Sulukule a major development was the formation of the broad alliance of
opposition groups under the name of Sulukule Platform. Moreover, to document the weeks and months of assault on the Neslişah and Hatice Sultan neighbourhoods; to publicize more widely the injustices that have taken place, and to come up with alternative planning options for the historic peninsula. (Robins, 2011)

Figure 7: Beginning of the gentrification project

Sulukule Platform demanded the demolitions must be stopped and displaced families should return to Sulukule. “It is the Romani people who give the unique identity to the neighbourhood”, as stated on SP’s website (The Sulukule Platform Portal) Head of the new local Romani association Mr. Pündük criticized their new life style with these words: “Our houses and courtyards, this was the typical structure. The courtyard served many functions, we used to wash our dead there, have fruit trees, mulberry, cherry, plum trees. We used to have animals, chickens, birds, horses, donkeys...We live in apartments now, but living in apartments is not our way of life...we do not have this culture.”

The project simply ignores the Romani identity. Romani residents in Sulukule are considered as temporary and are accused of not integrating with the urban culture. The authorities often underline the significance of the location of Sulukule in Istanbul. (Uysal 2011) On the other hand, Professor Eruzun emphasized the details of the project “We are being criticized for wanting to build houses with bay windows, for wanting to keep alive the Ottoman character, we look at photographs and we apply whatever we see in them. Images, appearances, façades,
prevail over any engagement with architectural substance.” (2007) In this way, it is obvious observing that there are two distinctive approach about the aims and effects of Sulukule project.

**III.1.3. Current Situation**

The confrontations over what has happened in Sulukule have generally centred on the conflict between tradition and modernization. From the perspective of the critically engaged, the argument has been put in terms of the need to respect and protect the heritage of the Roma, and the historical legacy of Istanbul more generally, against the onslaught of imperiously escalating modernization. (Robins, 2011) With the Law 5366, demolitions in Sulukule ended in November 2009. Approximately 500 families were displaced under the direction of policy forces (Radikal, 2009; Çavdar, 2008). Locals who refused to leave Sulukule faced deteriorated living conditions, with the cessation of electricity, water and heating services to houses. The rubble left behind after the demolitions, compounded by non-potable water, created serious health risks. The Roma who had chosen to leave Sulukule were not spared either, having lost their chief source of income as entertainers. (Uysal, 2011)

Inhabitants forced to move Taşoluk that is a far away district form the center. Living in Taşoluk, a distant district consisting of separate apartment flats, has become hard. Romani families were often unable to afford the high rents, bills and mortgages in Taşoluk, a far cry from their former arrangements where shared flats and bills were the norm (Gönenç & Bastürk, 2009; Gümüş, 2007). As a sequel to ‘regular’ and ‘ordered’ daily life in Taşoluk has become a problem. Taşoluk has a different socio-cultural profile, which has caused the isolation of the displaced dwellers (Saymaz, 2007; Özden, 2008b)

*Figure 8: New living area, apartments in Taşoluk*
Figure 9: The location of Sulukule and new migration area, Taşoluk

Displaced families also complained about their difficulty in adapting to the mass houses. According to the Fatih Municipality Survey, 74% of the residents do not want to leave Sulukule. Almost all of these families have lived in Sulukule their entire lives. “I was born here, just like my parents and my grandparents,” says Burçin K. “All our life is here, I know everybody; when I’m in trouble there is always someone to ask for help. What will I do when I live in Taşoluk?” .(Uysal,2011) Furthermore the head of the association, Mr. Pündük continues to complain about living in new district Taşoluk, “We are Romani people, we have a unique life style. We can’t live in flats, which are totally different from Sulukule’s two-floor houses with gardens. In Taşoluk, we can’t practice music training with our children due to neighbours’ complaints. The solidarity has been lost; we were settled far from each other.” He also stressed the importance of their culture, “No matter what they do, we will never forgo our culture. We have been living here for centuries. Our ancestors are buried here. We grew up, went to school and got married here. We have a beautiful culture and will never give it up.” .(Uysal,2011)

The architect and urbanologist Ahmet Vefik Alp emphasizes: Architecture should be seen not only as a covering that protect from rain and cold, but also as culture singly. (Zaman, 2013) The intentions of the local Municipality, however, were quite different: they hoped that the Entertainment Houses would never be opened, that the Romani musicians, singers and dancers, and the accompanying service sector would be totally driven out of the
neighbourhood and Sulukule acquire “new, impeccable morals based on Islam and the tourism industry.” In fact, one of the mottos of the local Municipality in this operation is ironically to build small “Ottoman-Style” housing. This “historical revival,” according to the municipality, would also include the main avenue (Kaleboyu caddesi) by the city walls and its immediate vicinity where other tourist attractions would be constructed, totally overlooking the fact that the Romani Entertainment Houses would be the greatest tourist attraction of all. (Somersan & Süheyla Schroeder, 2008)

Figure 10-11: Construction in area
What the Sulukuleans wanted from the Municipality was a sustainable improvement and an amelioration of their living standards, not the razing of their homes. Nevertheless, Romani neighbourhoods were demolished to make room for big freeways or small highways, to build skyscrapers for global companies, or to settle the newly rising middle classes or even to “enrich the touristic potential” of the city. In recent history of the past 70 to 100 years or so, the Roma in Sulukule were never asked for their opinion of what they thought of plans directly concerning them. (Somersan & Süheyla Schroeder, 2008) As we have pointed out and research conducted in already gentrified areas in İstanbul has shown “renewal and amelioration” of urban services benefits a certain class of society and a small group of people contributing to increasing and deepening of inequalities (Şen, 2005: 106).

For the Sulukule project there were considerable international support from different institutions, musicians and director such as the Romani director Tony Gatliff, musicians Manu Chao and the Romani band Gogol Bordello. Apart from them, UNESCO and the International Alliance of Inhabitants expressed their concerns about the project (Radikal, 2008). The UNESCO Report criticizes Law 5366 for the legitimization of demolitions. The report regards regeneration as a threat against the unity and originality of the region because it leads to radical changes in urban tissue and the replacement of traditional Romani houses by higher buildings and tourist facilities. The UNESCO Report recommends the establishment of a balance between conservation, social needs and the identity of local communities (UNESCO World Heritage Centre Report, 2009).

Figure 12: Final appearance of Sulukule district
The Fatih Municipality’s approach fails to register the undecided nature of intra-urban borders, opening Sulukule to unfettered gentrification. In ethnic enclaves like Sulukule, neighbourhood borders can be highly protective and impermeable spaces of exclusion, yet they also define territories in which communities exist as an ensemble of highly interconnected bodies; this communal territoriality grants residents certain freedoms that they cannot enjoy outside. (Karaman & İslam, 2011) In the case of Sulukule, there are certain discrepancies between the goals and the outcomes of the project. The project that is being implemented in the name of improving the conditions of the existing residents has caused the dispersion of an ethnic population throughout the city. This end result occurred despite the fact that the project is being implemented by public bodies and enormous resources are used to mitigate impacts of the project. (İslam, 2009)

**Figure 13:** Final appearance of Sulukule district
IV. Analysis

IV. 1. Analysis of Case Study

Before Sulukule Urban Regeneration project, Sulukule district had several potentials in terms of both culturally and physically. The morphology of the settlement had been composed by identical and environmental influences. Due to unique character and distinctive landscape as an important component of its identity the region was vital not only for Romani people but also for Istanbul city.

Seeks to mediate or construct a defined identity for a particular geographical space, and usually makes use of spatial metaphors and of specific architectural symbols characterizing that place in the process. Place marketing activities thus interact with place making activities (architecture, planning, urban design and urban development) and with the cultural politics of collective identity and memory construction through space. (Colomb, 2011, p. 26) After Colomb’s point of view about place marketing, for Sulukule, it must be told that entertainment houses, active street life with neighbourhood relations, engagement with music and dance of Romani inhabitants are the crucial elements to gain identity and have memory to able to display uniqueness of the district.

The significance of the area has been described by Tam in UNESCO report: Sulukule is a peculiar example of an urban space that represents an intertwined historical, social (ethnically identified community) and physical traces and a network. The features of this district richness the urban life and present a unique cultural heritage of Istanbul. (2008) Nevertheless through Sulukule Urban Regeneration project, the face of the cultural and historical environment of district had begun to change rapidly. During the process of Sulukule project, while green spaces were decreasing, the number of structures has increased and all historical pattern and the original morphology of city blocks street orders were destroyed. Kocabas and Gibson emphasized the consequences with different words: the Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project has caused an urban social identity loss. Romani people in Sulukule first found out about project and future demolitions of their houses from the press (2011). The forced transformation of the district led some habitants to leave their places; some people remained without houses that they began to move to the relatives. (Tam, 2008)
When men and women are able to leave their birthplace and move freely among neighbourhoods and regions, their cultural choices are shaped by and in turn help to shape property markets. (Zukin, 2011) In the Sulukule Regeneration Project exactly opposite situation has been seen and this displacement process by force broke neighbourhood network that also give damage the identity of the area. This situation demonstrates that there is no participation of dwellers in the process. Again, Kocabaş and Gibson have called the Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project as ‘a catastrophe for local people’. (2011) Consequently, the implementation of the project caused several breaks in urban way of life. Displacement of locals resulted in significant losses in urban, social, and cultural identity and the break of morphological memory of the city.

IV. 2. Perspective between Gentrification and Cultural Identity

Places can be easily assumed to possess the characteristics of identity, differentiation and personality and can thus be managed to maximise equity, value and awareness. (Kavaratzis&Ashworth, 2004) In this thesis Sulukule has been analysed in the relation to its gentrification and cultural identity as a case study. It has chosen as a place in order to understand the role of gentrification in cultural identity.

In a general term, Gentrification is related to the production of new social identities for the middle class (production of gentry) through restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated working-class neighbourhoods. The problem with this definition is that it marginalizes the effects of such processes on the original inhabitants of a gentrified area. Further consideration of the essence and complexity of gentrification, therefore, might lead to an operational definition of the concept which stresses both a place- and a person-centred perspective. (Daher, 1999) Namely, the geographic constitution of such gentrified or conserved areas is crucial to the production of such new identities, which usually centre on “urban living” and the consumption of high-class cultural products (e.g., alternative music and arts and crafts). (Daher, 2007) Furthermore, regeneration projects should aim to close the gap between economically weak neighbourhoods and the rest of the city (Kocabaş and Gibson, 2011). In this prospect, it could be said that ‘ad hoc generated identities of the new physical structures can bring the feeling of selflessness, alienation and other modes of urban pathology’ in a longer period (Neducin, 2009)
Lukic (2011) supports this view by indicating the negative effects of gentrification which are usually seen as social injustice, since wealthy, usually white, newcomers are recognized as improvement to the neighbourhood, while its “old” residents must move out on the account of increased rent prices and economic changes. While, on the other hand, it has positive effects which are better form and image of gentrified areas, and consequently the city centre itself, rising and maintaining attractiveness of a nearby environment, diversity and better quality of facilities, raising cultural and educational level of the population of that neighbourhood, increased standard of living, reduced crime rate, etc. According to Zukin (1987), the concept of gentrification points out current social, economic and spatial conditions of urban centres which experience the process of restructuring. Gentrified environments, also, offer little more than a means for capital accumulation and the construction of new social identities for those who occupy such places at the expense of their authentic heritage and the well-being of former inhabitants. (Daher, 1999)

Gentrification generally supported by urban planners and administrators as being the saviour of the inner city, run-down neighbourhoods, which are thus “cleansed” of poor and peripheral groups, in fact, has the consequence of reproducing and increasing marginalization of the dislocated groups. (Somersan & Süheyla Schroeder, 2008) However, it is obvious that by “cleaning” run-down or poor neighbourhoods the character of districts is damaged. That’s why outcomes of gentrification should be questionized in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects. As it is examined on this paper, identity is the significant argument that is affected from gentrification process.

Due to the fact that rapidly changes of dynamics in 21st century urban identity has become significant in terms of places. Consequently, it caused significant breaks/fractures in urban social life by displacing inhabitants, destroying whole old texture and building totally new, different structures because of gentrification. Finally, in the light of all information which has given above, gentrification, as an inevitable by-product of city development and as a “double-edged sword,” can have either clearly positive or negative, or both positive and negative impacts (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001, p.14).

Being that all transformations in İstanbul, Sulukule District have been carried out without a conservation plan of culture, identity, and future of local inhabitants, as a result, today’s gentrification of this area, has mostly had negative consequences. Despite, all gentrification
projects has thought as unsuccessful with the all negative sides, there are some other projects with the positive aspects. As Green cited, Hazel Edwards, a professor of planning at Catholic University, there are several examples of successful revitalization without gentrification in some parts of the U.S. (2014) “Barry Farm” project located in Washington D.C. is one of the important revitalization project that is called as revitalization without gentrification, by district government.

IV. 3. Barry Farm Revitalization Project

According to Charles Hostovsky who is a professor of urban planning at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., the speed of revitalization in D.C. has been extraordinarily rapid. (Green, 2014) As an example Barry Farm is one of the redevelopment project in U.S. a neighbourhood located east of the Anacostia River in southeast Washington, DC. The target of the Barry Farm redevelopment plan is to improve the residents’ quality of life by addressing both the physical architecture and human capital of the community.

Figure 14: Plan of Barry Farm Project area
Reyna Alorro, who works for the DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, indicates revitalization has spread east of the Anacostia River. There, the city is supporting the redevelopment of Barry Farm, 25 acres of public housing, into a new mixed-income, and mixed-use development that they hope will be an example of equitable revitalization. Furthermore, the aim is turning into blight, crime, high unemployment areas to mixed income communities.

Barry Farm, a historic African American community founded by freed slaves, currently has some 400 units, with 1,200 people. The population of the housing development is 93 percent single mothers; some 86 percent are unemployed. “This is not a friendly, welcoming site.” There is only one over-priced corner store, with a bullet-proof glass wall separating the store owners from customers. (Green, 2014)

Figure 15: A row of public housing units in Barry Farm
Kelly Smyser, DC Housing Authority describe the project: 1,400 public and affordable apartments will be created. Moreover, there will be recreation centre, indoor pool, basketball courts and metro connection for residents. This project splits up from other projects by calling “revitalization without gentrification.” The prominent and vital feature of this project is protecting community’s unique cultural heritage while applying revitalization project. In this way the project can called as “revitalization without gentrification. The meaning of this, as all current residents will be allowed to come back to the new development. “There will be zero displacement.”

Figure 16: Construction in Barry Farm

As the urban leader and author, Kaid Benfield, already mentioned, “we have to work towards a balanced solution, and also track our progress to see whether we are living up to our goals. “As a consequence the quotation of Kaid Benfield, the city also promises it will undertake a program of “build first before demolition.” To increase the diversity of the development, some 300 of the new units will be affordable housing, rentals, or for sale for all inhabitants and residents. (Green, 2014) The neighbourhood is rightly concerned about how they can preserve the best of the local culture with all the change in the region.
One example of this is the Goodman League, a basketball tournament that happens in the neighbourhood every year. “People have a good time, barbequing, sitting in lawn chairs. There are no beefs on the court.” The basketball courts will remain as untouched and continue to use for the tournament again. Having a revitalization project without displacement in the community one of the critical attribute in terms of protecting cultural identity. Apart from that analysing habits of the district, and trying to involve them again into new planning process enable to protect local culture.

V. Conclusion

There is an immense literature on gentrification. In highlighting the displacement of poor residents by the affluent gentry, most of gentrification studies have laid emphasis on the class dimension of gentrification. (Karaman & Islam, 2011) As both Murdie and Teixeira (2011) and Lees (2007) rightly point out there has been no substantial work on the ethnic dimensions of neighbourhood redevelopment and displacement.

Hence, there has been no theoretical approach for the relation of displacement and cultural identity on the results of gentrification. By focusing in two different districts that have been experienced by urban regeneration projects this paper attempts to address and discuss the gap that has a role on the gentrification on cultural identity. Based on a literature review, numerous theoretical approaches and definitions of gentrification have been presented. Furthermore, cultural identity and cultural landscape has been defined. Through the diverse approaches and the combination with the revitalization projects the development and effects of the gentrification process in Sulukule has been analysed detailed.

After explanation of these two different examples, Sulukule and Barry Farm revitalization projects, the question comes into mind, is it possible to apply projects as “revitalization without gentrification” or changing the old heritage is a fate as a result of revitalization project. In the light of the examples that given above, there are negative and positive results of revitalization projects on the cultural identity of districts. If necessary analyse and attention can be provided it is possible to get positive impacts from the project about conservation identity of districts.

As a result of two different examples, the role of gentrification in cultural identity has notably proven. Displacement of local inhabitants, alteration of whole structures and landscape, morphological frame are the main reasons to lose identity in a district. To what extend
applying revitalization projects can be accomplished by destroying whole texture and heritage of a district? It is obvious that if future of local inhabitants, their identity and cultural effects on an area is taken into consideration, gentrification projects will be successful and effectual. As a consequence, if gentrification projects continue to be implied without taking account of cultural heritage, at conclusion, it is inevitable that not only identity of one district but also identity of the city and a nation will be demolished.
V.References


Daher, R. F. (2007).Reconceptualizing Tourism in the Middle East: Place, Heritage, Mobility and Competitiveness


Eruzun, C. (2007) İstanbul Nasıl Yenileniyor? (How İstanbul is being renewed?) Yeni Mimar, June


Gönenç, M., & Baştürk, D. (2009). Yerel seçim Sulukuleli’nin umurunda bile deg ‘il’ (Sulukule’s dwellers didn’t pay attention to the local elections). Taraf, 27 March

Gümüş, K. (2007). Sulukule Projesi’nin asıl amacı ne? (What is the real purpose of the Sulukule Project?). Radikal 2, 4 December


Unesco(2011) 17. Proposals concerning the desirability of a standard setting instrument on historical urban landscapes. General Conference 36th session in Paris

Uysal, Ülke Evrim (2011) An urban social movement challenging urban regeneration: The case of Sulukule, Istanbul. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Research, Snellmanninkatu 10, 00014 Helsinki, Finland


