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## Historic City Center Urban Regeneration: Case of Malaga and Kemeraltı, Izmir

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### Abstract

In Turkey, cities grew very fast after 1950's because of the job opportunities and industrial development, which caused a high migration from the rural areas to the cities. Due to the rapid city development, infrastructure, green space and urban facilities could not catch up with the process and resulted in unplanned, inadequate cities. Another result of this is the challenges the historic city centers in a social, environmental and economical way, urbanization damages their characteristic urban identity besides the physical deterioration and economic decay of such centers. Since historic city centers inhabit an important amount of cultural and historical identity, they should be handled very delicately in urban regeneration projects. In order to achieve a sustainable project, such public spaces in historic city centers should be given new functions and the quality should be improved for the citizens to embrace the project and to strengthen the urban identity of the city. This study investigates the urban regeneration project of Malaga, Spain historic city center and further discusses the similarities with Kemeraltı historic center in Izmir and tries to make suggestions for Kemeraltı. The strong relationship between urban regeneration and historic conservation is identified and the importance of citizens' participation along with the local authorities' approach is emphasized.

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### 1. Introduction

Since 1960's historic urban areas are threatened by rapid contemporary urbanization and emerging concepts of

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heritage conservation in the context of urban regeneration have been discussed worldwide. Every new development and urban growth have affected the physical, social and cultural environment of cities as well as constituting an improvement in urban life. Today, conserving urban historic places is a globally urgent and complex matter due to the fast urban growth and resulting transformation of cities worldwide. Establishing a balanced approach to historic environments has always been a struggle between the old and new causing a tension over continuity and change (Descamps, 2014). Historic city centers are the most important subjects of such a controversy for they are in the heart of urban development and transformation.

Cities are inhabitants' intermediaries of interaction, creativity, culture, and commerce. Historic city centers generally consist of historic buildings, heritage sites, etc. but a city's history reflects a mound of characteristic and identity. The revitalization and conservation of historic city centers are fundamental aspects of change. Additionally, urban regeneration of historic city centers cause social interaction between the local users of the city, and therefore accelerates public activity. This study compares the historic city center urban regeneration projects of two important cities which are İzmir, Turkey and Malaga, Spain. Besides being Mediterranean historical cities, these two have provisional resemblances. The essay specifically examines the strategic urban regeneration plans and approaches that have been made by local authorities and the participation of citizens.

## **2. Historic Conservation in the Context of Urban Regeneration**

Historic city centers serve as a place of identity, memory and belonging (Çubuk, 2012). They create an urban character that can be adopted by the entire city and in many examples, historic city centers embody the city's identity as a result of the heritage they are carrying while new developments come to life around them. Also, due to the high amount of commercial functions, offices and public edifices, city centers generally originates the city's central business regions. As a result, the city center represents the city's economic and social core while adding a considerable value to it.

Achieving a successful historic city center transformation requires the integration of urban regeneration regulations for cultural, social and economical sides that are working well together. Local authorities and citizens' participation have a great role in creating a balance between development and heritage conservation. Urban regeneration is a holistic and integrated action that seeks lasting solutions to urban problems for an area that has been subject to change, in the economic, physical, social, and environmental levels (Akkar, 2006). In other words, urban regeneration process involves various partnerships besides residents, developing plans, methods and policy-based approaches by public and institutional leadership models (Gülersoy and Gürler, 2011). A holistic policy for historic city center regeneration can be carried into effect by considering the community as a partner and integrating the heritage conservation in the process of urban regeneration leading to a sustainable development (Chohan and Wai Ki, 2005). The goals of this sustainable development can be achieved by social consistency, economic viability and physical improvement harmoniously within an urban regeneration project.

Urban regeneration in the context of historic city center conservation is a fundamental step for change because it generates a variety of economic activity and creative solutions for the urban and social fabric within the historical structure resulting in adoption by society. It is a process where historic urban conservation gains vital importance as well as urban renovation and reuse. This transformation phase attracts inhabitants and visitors to recapture and seize these upgraded neighborhoods leading to an increase in social interaction between citizens. Furthermore, the regeneration of historic city centers maintains their feeling of belonging and perception of identity. In other words, urban regeneration of historic city centers includes conserving history and culture on one hand and its local economic viability on the other (Descamps, 2014).

Nevertheless, urban regeneration approaches in historic city centers can only be successful if they create a balance between the new development and heritage conservation building a bridge between old urban fabric and coming generations. According to World Heritage Convention, cultural heritage is a monument, group of buildings or site of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value (Chohan and Wai Ki, 2005). The basic meaning of conserving a building is to protect the built and cultural heritage (Turgut and Özden, 2005). Sustainable historical conservation does not enforce irrational costs that can destroy the balance between development and preservation. With this method, social resources and economic assets can be maintained while sense of place belonging is strengthened. In other words, heritage conservation mostly helps to discover the cultural

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