# A DISCUSSION ON THE ANALYSIS STAGE OF STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLANNING

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**ABSTRACT:**

A city without old buildings is like a man without a memory. The quarters of the cities, which houses a great variety of these old buildings that are parts of a history, a remainder of a style and ideals of another age, are historic urban quarters. They represent or reflect the elements of the cities' cultural, social, economical, political and architectural history. Similar to sites or areas of historic interest, historic urban quarters are also products of their epochs. The historical buildings and the historic urban tissues, the witnesses of the past civilizations as well as the authentic remains constitute the cultural heritage face of the historic urban quarters.

Within the contemporary understanding of urban design, utilization of the increasing stock of historic areas, thus, historic urban quarters, as well as infusing new lives to the lost spaces have become the fundamental issues directly related to revitalization of such areas as functioning parts of the city.

There are two main approaches in development of policies and plans for historic urban quarters: classical and strategic. Considering the sustainability of the identity and unique characteristics of historic urban quarters, the employment of strategic approaches for their revitalization seems to be a major concern.

The main aim of this paper is to open up a discussion platform for the appropriate utilization of contemporary methods and techniques required in the analysis stage of strategic conservation planning for historic urban quarters. Accordingly, the paper will intend to discuss strategic planning approaches focusing on the analysis stage, from the information user perspective. It is hoped that, the discussion points raised in this paper will set up a bridge between the information users and information providers in the analysis stage.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conservation and revitalization of historic urban quarters have become one of the main concern areas of protection of cultural heritage. There are two main approaches in development of policies and plans for historic urban quarters: classical and strategic. Considering the sustainability of the identity and unique characteristics of historic urban quarters, the employment of strategic approaches for their revitalization seems to be a major concern.

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or an entity) is, what t does, and why it does it (Bryson, 1988; Olsen and Eadie, 1982). Strategic planning is designed to help leaders and decision makers – such as urban planners, conservationists, etc., think and act strategically. Strategic planning has been used extensively in the private sector to provide corporations and businesses with long-term vision and goals and short-term action plans to achieve these goals. Although strategy is the means used to achieve the objectives, it is not just any plan, however. The concept of strategy has to be perceived as a plan, which is the result of analyzing the strengths and weaknesses and determining what the environment has to offer (the opportunities and threats), so that the objectives can be achieved. (Jauch, et al., 1988, p.12)

Development of strategies became recently much more popular than ever before not only in the business world, but also in many other fields due to the rapidly changing environment. Town Planning, Urban Design, Architecture and Conservation Planning are no exception to this general trend.

Gary Hamel, together with his colleague C. K. Prahaland from Michigan University has re-defined 'Organizational Strategy' with the motto 'Strategy is a Revolution'. Their book 'Competing for the Future' (1994), became the bible of the business world (Capital, 1998, p.1). Hamel's argument about the importance of developing strategies focus on the questions: 'How can we get ready for the future?' and 'How can we compete?' He builds up most of his discussions on the necessity and importance of challenge (Capital, 1998, p.6). He also criticize the attitude of most of the enterprises, which he believes to be mainly involved with *Operational Issues* rather than *Strategic* ones (p.7), and adds that the best operational practices may fail unless they have a sound basis. This sound basis can only be developed through an appropriate determination of strategies with a potential of awaking *competitive advantage.*

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All these arguments may sound strange to our main concern - conservation and revitalization - at the first instance. However, approaching revitalization of historic urban quarters with this kind of philosophy would increase the chance of success of related implementations:

First of all, conservation and revitalization are both future-oriented and they should be in a mutually exclusive relationship, simply because, the main aim of conservation cannot be met by creation of museum environments for the sake of preservation. As many authors in literature stress, conservation and revitalization are both focused on creating a *future of the past*. Hence, conservation and revitalization efforts have to be addressed to make the concerned area 'ready for the future' and to make the area 'competitive' with the rest of the cities of which they are parts. The key question 'How to do this?' inevitably calls for developing relevant strategies on conceptual basis. In addition to this, preparation of the historic urban quarters for the future and assigning them competitive advantage can be considered as a real challenging issue, just like as strategies. Why challenging? Challenging, because, successive conservation and revitalization involve complex relationships between a variety of multi-dimensional factors in physical, functional, social, cultural and economic terms, which are far beyond the scope of pure preservation. In other words, breaking the vicious circle of deterioration and decay of a historic urban quarter needs a real challenge.

Secondly, evaluation of different practices in conservation of historic urban quarters in many cities throughout Europe and Turkey shows that, the most frequent practices and decisions are basically operational in nature. Operational in a sense that they are prescribed form of methods with straightforward protection of the cultural heritage concern: (i) listing of buildings, (ii) declaration or designation of conservation area, and (iii) conservation plans.

**Listing of Buildings**: When some buildings are listed (due to certain accepted criteria), the buildings are protected against demolition. The owners are obliged to meet certain rules and obtain some incentives described or declared by concerned authorities. The general framework of listing the buildings shows similar characteristics in the western world, since democratic and cultural development of western European countries are in parallel directions. Listing of the buildings as a mean to preserve the existing buildings of architectural / historical interest is an operational decision in nature, since it only serves the preservation of them through legislative measures without any concern about economic viability. Additionally, listing is not a challenging measure, since without additional sound decisions on financial terms, it is only a matter of chance whether competitive advantage over other quarters of the cities arises through interventions for preserving the listed buildings.

**Declaration or Designation of Conservation area** is also an operational decision. Declaration only implies that the area is worth to be preserved. Unless supported by relevant applicable measures, they might be 'optional lines on maps with no special protective provisions. Besides, it does not give any clues about 'How making the area ready for the future and how to make it competitive?' 'The problem is that conferring of such status contains an open-ended permanent commitment to the maintenance, renovation and rehabilitation of the area as a whole' (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990, p.16), designation cannot be considered as a strategic mean in conservation. Since an open ended permanent commitment cannot guarantee the success of the consequent actions towards conservation.

**Conservation plans**, which may include legislative, administrative, and financial measures (grants, funds, tax exemptions), may be strategic or operational, depending on how far the dynamism of the area, as well as the type and level of obsolescence are considered. 'Conservation Plans, which tends to be more or less uniform, prepared according to the same 'stenciling pattern' (Çubuk (ed.), Dinçer, 1994, p.227), can be considered as being operational since distinctive characteristics and the dynamism of the areas are not appropriately evaluated.

All of these tools aim to serve the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage in one way or another. But, 'What about the resources?', 'The unique qualities, dynamics and level of obsolescence of any particular historic urban quarter?'. Most of the legislation and policies that is related to conservation of these areas do not pay enough attention to the problem of encouraging the utilization of the capital stock of them. This is mainly due to the neglect of determination of appropriate strategic approach. For this determination, identification of the dynamics of a place and the type and level of obsolescence should be considered as one of the main prerequisites, through which the distinctive characteristics of the area will come out.

Thus, in order to identify of the dynamics of a place and the type and level of obsolescence, **the initial stage** – before strategy development, conceptual design and detailed design, is the ***analysis stage*** which is the crucial basis for successful planning proposals for conservation and revitalization of a specific historic urban area.

## 2. ANALYSIS STAGE IN STRATEGIC CONSERVATION PLANNING

The analysis stage is the crucial basis for successful planning and urban design proposals and therefore should be given due attention and effort. Thus, determination of the most relevant strategic approach should rest upon a through analysis.

There are two main questions to be answered at this point:

- What should be analysed? – *The analysis topics*
- How to analyse? – *The analysis methods / techniques and tools*

The answers to these questions will clarify the scope of overall analysis stage in strategic conservation planning. Accordingly, the analysis topics can be classified under three main headings:

- Analysis of the natural environment
- Analysis of the man-made (built) environment
- Analysis of the socio-economic environment

### 2.1 Analysis of the Natural Environment

Analysis of this kind includes the identification of topographical features, vegetation, plantation, landscape, flora/fauna, soil, water, climatical features.

### 2.2 Analysis of the Man-made (Built) Environment

The analysis of the man-made / built environment includes two sub-headings: (i) the physical analysis and (ii) the functional analysis.

**(i) Physical Analysis:**

a. *Locational Analysis* showing the location of the area within the country / region / city / district
b. *Historical Analysis* including information on physical, social, economical background and structure of the concerned area; the historical development, changes and growth of the area; when needed the morphological development of the area.
c. *Urban Pattern Analysis* covering data about the form of development; solid-void relations; street pattern; urban spaces in terms of their quality, enclosure, character, activities; elements of the area such as paths, nodes, edges, landmarks and districts; the gap sites and vacant plots of land, streets or spaces requiring definition or redefinition.
d. *Architectural Evaluation* documenting types of architectural details, doors, windows, roof types, building forms / heights, materials, etc.
e. *Technical Infrastructure Analysis* covers the analysis of electricity, sewage system, water supply.

**(ii) Functional Analysis:**

**a.** *Accessibility / Permeability / Traffic Circulation / Transportation Analysis* covers all modes of movement in the area including pedestrian, car, bus, etc. and the provision for each of these modes in terms of circulation, parking and drop off points
**b.** *Land use survey* providing information about the distribution of functions on the concerned area concentrating on the ground and upper floor uses

### 2.3 Analysis of the Socio-economic Environment

This analysis provides data regarding the demographic structure of the citizens, users of / within the area; the existing economic activities and employment pattern; the existing laws and regulations; the current local authority/government policies; the official and non-official stakeholders in conservation activities.

All these analysis topics are dealt with varios techniques and methods which are summarized in Table 1.

Beside these analyses through which the physical, functional and socio-economic characteristics of the concerned area are determined, the analysis should also provide the opportunity for the identification of **key constraints** as well as **potential opportunities.** This is a necessity for a sound basis for the strategic conservation planning. For such identification, the SWOT analysis method, which is a kind of prerequisite for strategic planning should be applied to the area. Accordingly, based on the data gathered from the above stated analyses methods, the SWOT analysis method, which has recently become popular in environmental studies, should be utilized for conservation purposes. Since this method is specifically developed for strategic planning and borrowed from another discipline (management), the authors feel that it should be specified in detail for further discussion on the analysis stage of strategic conservation planning.

## 3. SWOT ANALYSIS METHOD

The SWOT analysis approach, a derivative of the Harvard policy model (also referred to as the "design school model"; Mintzberg 1994, pp. 36-39) seeks to address the question of strategy formation from a two-fold perspective: from an *external* appraisal (of threats and opportunities in an environment) and from an *internal* appraisal (of strengths and weaknesses in an organization).

However, this clear distinction between internal and external conditions is more difficult to apply when assessing the potential part of the physical world such as a city district, or a historic urban quarter. Moughtin (1999) argues that, the analysis in strict management terms could be applied to an organization contemplating a particular intervention in the real world estate but not necessarily in quite the same way for the potential of real estate itself. According to Moughtin (1999), many of the threats facing an inner city area or the opportunities it presents could be considered to be internal to the physical structure being investigated.

As again stated by Moughtin (1999), there is clearly an overlap between all four analytical categories. A weakness, for example, can be viewed in a more positive light as an opportunity, while in some instances strength in one area when viewed from a different perspective can appear as the source of weakness. Nevertheless, the structure imposed by the listing and categorizing of aspects and qualities of the project site, or the working area / district, under these four broad headings does assist in formulating possible strategies for intervention.

Within the regional development environment, the SWOT instrument is intended to highlight those dominant and determining factors, both within and outside of the territory in question, which are likely to influence the success of the project, as well as to produce relevant strategic guidelines by linking the project to its environment. (European Commission 1999: 42).

The completion of the analysis can also form the basis for questioning the assumptions underlying project goals and objectives. The SWOT analysis can, therefore, assist in the clearer definition of the design brief and point the way to design solutions (Moughtin, 1999).

The SWOT analysis, when used in a matrix form, as introduced by Moughtin (1999), is a powerful tool for dissecting the properties and potential of an urban area. If the examination of the data is structured as shown in Table 2, then the strengths and weaknesses of a number of the main aspects of life in a study area can be addressed and analysed. The properties and potential of the study site or city district can be examined under a number of broad headings or factors – such as physical properties and aesthetic qualities of *the built environment* in the study area; *the natural environment* which would include fauna, flora, air, water and pollution; and finally *the social and economic conditions* in the area, including political and administrative issues. Using such a matrix, it is possible to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the study area in terms of the factors listed in the matrix, as well as working horizontally along a line of the matrix, to examine any particular factor for its strength, weakness, opportunities for its development and the potential threat it faces.

The use of the matrix is simply an aid to analysis. The result of that analysis will be a statement, which summarizes the potential of the site for achieving sustainable development, outlining the interventions or actions necessary to arrive at such an outcome.

Keeping in mind that effective strategies will be built on strengths, take advantage of opportunities, and overcome or minimize weaknesses and threats (Bryson, J. M. et al., 1988a, p. 23), the historic urban quarters should be scanned for the assessment of their positive aspects (i.e. values and sometimes obsolescence and development dynamics) and negative aspects (obsolescence and development dynamics) and the changes likely to occur for better or for worse. Only by this way, it will be possible to determine the most relevant strategic approach for the revitalization of historic areas.

## 4. QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

In order to provide a historic urban quarter with a certain level of competitiveness and the basis to channel the various competing demands for spaces within them, determination of an appropriate strategic approach is an important issue to debate on. Based on the discussions above, it seems to be inevitably necessary to identify the *values* that are worth to be preserved, the *type and rate of obsolescence* and the *development dynamics* in order to develop relevant strategies for revitalizing these areas.

Determination of the most relevant strategic approach should rest upon a through analysis. This analysis should include both the data gathered through various analyses methods discussed above and also through the SWOT analysis method.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned analysis methods have so far been realized mostly through 'manual methods', as we may call it. Thus, being information users as conservation experts that specialize in research, inventories, initial studies and conservation planning, most of the time we only use the methods such as surveying on site through maps, photographs, measured drawings, sketches, in addition to the limited utilization of new emerging technologies such as scanning, computerized drawings and 3D modelling. However, our intention is to understand the acquisition, processing and use of new technologies for the described analysis methods, so that we can play a much more affective role in our future professional activities. Besides, we believe that application of such technologies within analysis stage of the process of strategic planning in conservation will positively contribute to the theory and practice of conservation occupation.

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| ANALYSIS TOPICS | | | | TECHNIQUES & METHODS | TOOLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Analysis of the Natural Environment** | Topographical features | | | Surveying techniques | Maps<br>Tables<br>Charts<br>Digrams |
| | Soil | | | | |
| | Landscape - Vegetation<br>Plantation – Flora / Fauna | | | | |
| | Water | | | | |
| | Climatical Features | | | | |
| **Analysis of the Man-made (Built) Environment** | **Physical analysis** | Locational analysis | | Documentary research | Maps |
| | | Historical analysis | | Documentary research | Data collected from books, maps, documents;<br>Inventory forms can also be used to document buildings, streets, etc. of historic value |
| | | Urban pattern analysis | Form of development | Morphological analysis | Maps<br>3D drawings |
| | | | Solid-void relations | Figure – Ground analysis | Maps<br>Street silhouettes<br>3D proportionate or scaled sketch drawings<br>Photographs |
| | | | Street pattern; Urban spaces in terms of their quality, enclosure, character, activities | Linkage theory | |
| | | | Elements of the area such as paths, nodes, edges, landmarks and districts | Lynch analysis | Maps<br>Photographs<br>3D sketch drawings |
| | | | The gap sites and vacant plots of land, streets or spaces requiring definition or redefinition | Lost space analysis | Maps<br>Photographs |
| | | Architectural evaluation | | Site surveying | With sketch and measured drawings and photographing;<br>information gathered on tables, inventory forms for all buildings |
| | | Technical infrastructure | | Documentary research | Maps and reports |
| | **Functional analysis** | Accessibility / Permeability / Traffic Circulation | | Traffic and transportation survey | Maps |
| | | Functional distribution | | Landuse survey | Maps presented with appropriate coloring and technique |
| **Analysis of the Socio-economic Environment** | Demographic structure of the citizens, users of / within the area | | | Questionnaire survey<br>Interviews | Tables<br>Graphs<br>Bar-charts |
| | The existing economic activities and employment pattern | | | | |
| | The existing laws and regulations | | | Documentary research | Documents<br>Laws, regulations |
| | The current local authority/government policies | | | | |
| | The official and non-official stakeholders in conservation activities | | | Interviews<br>Questionnaire survey | Tables<br>Graphs<br>Bar-charts |

Table 1. Analysis topic, techniques, methods and tools in an urban environment

| | Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.**<br>**Built environment**<br>Physical and aesthetic qualities | **A1** | **A2** | **A3** | **A4** |
| **B.**<br>**Natural environment**<br>Fauna, flora, air, water, pollution | **B1** | **B2** | **B3** | **B4** |
| **C.**<br>**Socio-economic environment**<br>Including political and administrative conditions | **C1** | **C2** | **C3** | **C4** |

Table 2. SWOT analysis matrix for an urban environment (Moughtin, 1999)