



# Attempts to Sustain the Ottoman Identity of Bursa in the Hundred-Years History of the Turkish Republic

## Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Yüz Yıllık Geçmişinde Bursa'daki Osmanlı Kimliğini Sürdürmeye Yönelik Çabalar

Sermin Çakıcı Alp<sup>1</sup>

### Öz

19. yüzyıl sonlarından itibaren dünya gündeminde yer alan kültürel mirasın korunmasına ilişkin uluslararası bildirgeler ile ilişkili olarak gelişen tarihi kent kimliklerinin sürdürülebilirliği konusu, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin benimsediği çağdaş koruma anlayışının gelişmesine katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu çalışma kapsamında, gelişmekte olan bir sanayi kenti olması yanı sıra Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ilk başkenti olarak içerdiği kültürel mirasın zenginliği nedeniyle 2014 yılında UNESCO Dünya Miras Alanı listesine giren Bursa'yı tanımlayan Osmanlı kent kimliğinin sürdürülmesi için gerçekleştirilen koruma çabaları incelenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle Türkiye'de yasal değişkenliğe bağlı olarak yön çizen koruma faaliyetleri incelenerek kronolojik olarak sunulmaktadır. Ardından, Osmanlı kimlik yapılarının korunmasına yönelik yerel ve idari uygulamaların sağlanmasındaki zorluklar ve başarılar, 1951, 1973, 1983 ve 2004 yıllarında onaylanan dört Koruma Kanunu ışığında değerlendirilmektedir. Böylece, Bursa'daki kültürel mirasın sürdürülebilmesine yönelik gerçekleştirilen koruma faaliyetlerinin mevzuattaki değişim ve dönüşümü ne şekilde takip ettiği de anlaşılmaktadır. Sonuç bölümünde ise, koruma karar ve uygulamalarında Bursa'nın çok katmanlı tarihi kent karakterinin bütüncül korunması yerine Osmanlı kimliğinin sürdürülmesine yönelik bir yönelme olup olmadığı da tartışılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sürdürülebilirlik, Koruma Yasaları, Osmanlı Kent Kimliği, Cumhuriyet Bursası

### ABSTRACT

The sustainability issue of historical urban identities, which has occupied the agenda of different countries since the late 19th century and transformed in parallel with international declarations on the conservation of cultural heritage, has contributed to the contemporary conservation approach adopted by the Republic of Turkey. Despite being a developing industrial city, Bursa has been one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, since 2014, and still has the richness of cultural assets revealing mostly the Early Ottoman period architectural character. Hence, this study aims to examine the attempts to sustain the historic identity of Bursa, which is the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. In this concept, firstly, the conservation activities varied in association with the changing legal aspects in Türkiye are analyzed and presented in chronological order. Afterward, the challenges and successes in providing local and governmental implementations to conserve the Ottoman identity structures are assessed in light of the four Conservation Acts approved in 1951, 1973, 1983, and 2004. By this, it is aimed to understand how the conservation activities carried out to sustain the cultural heritage in Bursa follow the changes in the national legal aspects. In the conclusion section, it is also discussed whether there is a tendency towards the maintenance of the Ottoman identity of Bursa in the conservation decisions and practices although it has a multi-layered spatial character to be conserved.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Conservation Acts, Ottoman Urban Identity, Republican Bursa

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author | Yetkili Yazar: Hacettepe University, Faculty of Architecture, Assist. Prof. Dr., [serminalp@hacettepe.edu.tr](mailto:serminalp@hacettepe.edu.tr), ORCID: 0000-0001-9364-5024.



**INTRODUCTION:**

Urban conservation is a multi-faceted issue that requires the negotiation of complex data concerning the geographical, architectural, natural, and economic aspects of a historic city. In addition to the preservation of spatial structure that defines historical city centers, there should be an emphasis on the continuity of social activities carried out in urban spaces together with the financial gains for the urban development without being considered separately from each other. By application of this holistic approach in urban planning decisions, it would be possible to provide the sustainability of historic urban identities in metropolitan-developing-cities (Lynch, 1960; Lalli, 1988; Kavartzis et.al., 2015; Ince and Dinçer, 2017). In addition, the architectural heritage is accepted as the documentary of social history identifying a community, which makes it essential to explain the relation between the built environment and the citizens. It is also significant to understand the range of conservation views on the development of the urban identity of a historic city with legal variety in a country by creating a chronology of conservation implementations. Hence, the togetherness of legal, theoretical, and practical aspects that concern the conservation issue contributes to the continuity of historic urban identity.

Within the conservation issue of architectural and urban heritage in Türkiye, it is questioned whether it is possible to discover the parallelism between practices and laws concerning the conservation issue of urban identity defining a historic city. Bursa is chosen to exemplify the relationship between the Conservation Laws approved in the hundred-year history of the Republic of Turkey to preserve the Ottoman cultural heritage despite urban development activities applied in this continuously transformed industrial city. This historic city was approved as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014, including the five Sultans' Complexes, a still active historic trade center, and an Ottoman Village named Cumalıkızık. In addition to the Ottoman identity of Bursa, it hosts various types of cultural assets dating back to the Byzantine, Ottoman, and Turkish Republic periods, which also describes the multi-layered spatial character of its historic urban identity. However, there is currently a lack of integrity in preserving all periods of cultural heritage since most of the structures with Early Ottoman Period architectural character are mostly concerned by the local authorities and the public. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reasons for this discriminatory and selective attitude by discovering the impacts of conservation attempts on the sustainability of the Ottoman identity of Bursa in parallel with the transformation in conservation policy of the Turkish Republic, from the 1950s to the 2000s.

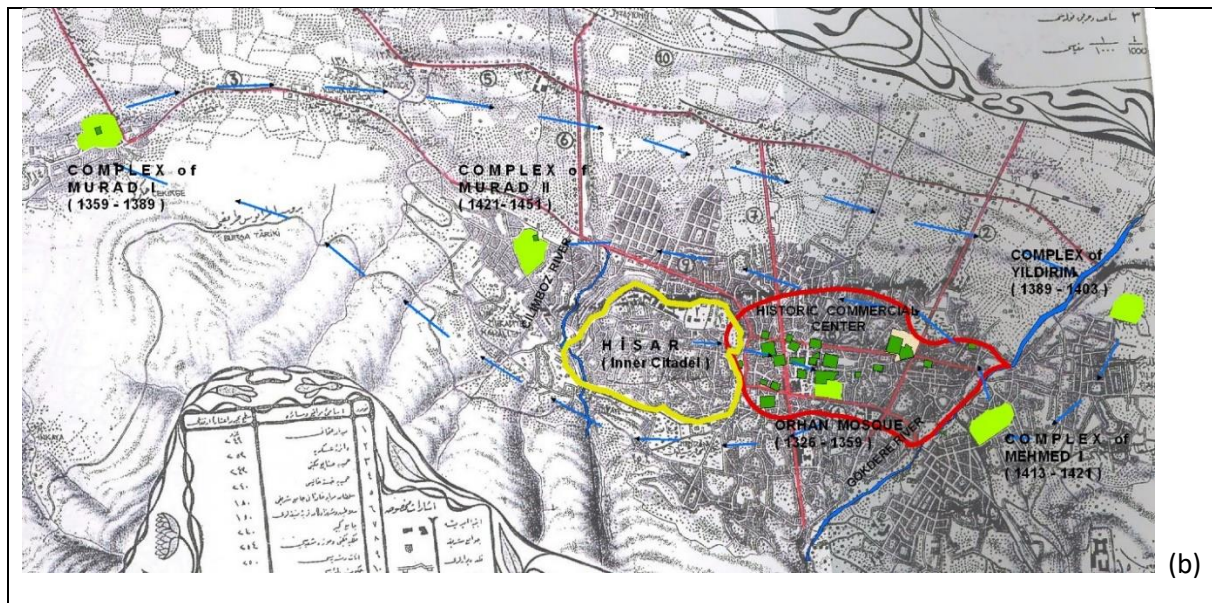
The research method used in this study depends on an assessment of written and visual documents concerning the legal and practical ways to sustain cultural heritage in Bursa and Türkiye. In addition to a comprehensive literature review (Batur, 1975; Okyay, 1976; Tatar et.al., 1992; Ahunbay, 1996; Madran, 1997; Madran and Özgönül, 1999; Ekinci, 2000; Kuban, 2001; Madran, 2002; Durukan, 2004; Kayın 2008; Levent, 2009; Güçhan and Kurul, 2009; Jokilehto, 2009; Dinçer, 2012; Çakıcı, 2017), the archives of public and private institutions, like the Municipalities, the Universities, and the NGOs, contribute to finding out what has been done to provide the conservation of historic urban identity in Bursa. On the other hand, the urban development and transformation movements that appeared in this historic city are also investigated to understand the reasons for applying regular conservation decisions after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic (1923). Meanwhile, a matrix table is prepared to discover the relation between the legal and practical attempts to conserve the cultural assets in Bursa. By this, it is possible to define the breakpoints in the timeline of conservation activities in Bursa, concerning the history of Conservation Acts in Türkiye, from the 1950s to the 2000s. After analyzing the collected data chronologically, the results of the conservation decisions and implementations are evaluated to describe the role of this historic city in following the development of the national legal aspects in this issue. Consequently, the impacts of Conservation Acts on attempts to sustain the

cultural heritage in Bursa are discussed to find out if there is any prejudice in providing the conservation of Ottoman over the Early Republican Identity of Bursa.

## THE OTTOMAN IDENTITY IN BURSA

Bursa is in the northwest part of Anatolia, within the Marmara Region, and has been hosted by various civilizations of Bithynian, Roman, and Early Byzantine periods in its urban history (Süel, 1996; Eyice, 1996; Akkılıç, 2002; Özgan, 2008; Şahin, 2010; Tonak, 2010). Despite its multi-layered historic urban character, there appear monumental and residential buildings having mostly the architectural features of an Ottoman city (**Figure 1a**). This city was settled on a special geographical structure between and around two streams, named Nilüfer and Gökdere Streams, which have flowed from south to north along the Great Mountain (Uludağ / Olympos) rising in a dynamic topography for centuries. As mentioned by Cezzar (1983: 35-118), carrying the new commercial activities from the inside of the citadel to the plain of Bursa had already influenced the formation of the urban identity of this capital city of the Ottoman Empire, since the beginning of the 14th century. In addition, the formation process of five Sultan's complexes influenced the shaping of Ottoman Bursa from east to west, until the 16th century (Oğuzoğlu, 1996; Tanman, 1996; Cerasi, 2001; İnalçık, 2003; Kaplanoğlu, 2008) (**Figure 1b**). The old neighborhoods having organic traditional urban textures started to lose their original identity as a result of modernization and urban development activities since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite permanent changes due to the governmental, industrial, and touristic demands following migrations (Özdemir, 2009), the conservation decisions, which were approved from 1974 to 1981, initially contributed to the continuity of the historical identity of this Ottoman city. In the following years, an awareness of the multi-layered urban identity of Bursa has also appeared as a result of the assessment of listed historic areas, which may differ in terms of the different architectural characteristics of cultural assets they include. Currently, there exist various types of natural and manmade Ottoman architectural heritage, which also identify the historic urban character of Bursa, in addition to Early Republican Period buildings.





**Figure 1. (a)** Location of Bursa and General views of cultural assets in Bursa (source: from the archive of the Great Municipality of Bursa, and [www.lifeinbursa.com](http://www.lifeinbursa.com)); **(b)** The enlargement of Bursa until the 16<sup>th</sup> century (the source: the map of Bursa (1907) from the archive of Setbaşı Library and redesigned by the Author in 2008) (the figure was redesigned by the Author in 2023)

### 1. Attempts to Conserve the Ottoman Identity of Bursa

The conservation issue of cultural properties in the Ottoman Empire was initially legalized in the *Asar-ı Atika Nizamnameleri*<sup>2</sup>, which focused on the documentation, preservation, and presentation of artifacts from the ancient periods. That was also a governmental trial to adapt to the conservation approach of Europe (Madran, 2002; Güçhan and Kurul, 2009). After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, new institutions were established within the first ten years to develop the awareness of the community in the documentation and conservation of historical monuments. This also reveals the mobility in the political agenda of the new Republican Government for the documentation and conservation of national heritage in different historic cities of Türkiye. As one of them, Bursa has been transformed by the application of modernization movements that appeared since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pitcher, 2001; Çakıcı Alp, 2017; Dostoğlu and Vural, 2002). The **disasters and continuous improper restorations have periodically caused deformations within its historical urban identity**. On the other hand, there also exist pioneering applications related to the maintenance and repair of monumental structures mostly dated to the Early Ottoman Period. With the influence of the Amsterdam Declaration (1972)<sup>3</sup>, the norms of 'site' were accepted as the new topic of the 1970s, in which new legal aspects in the national conservation approach of the Turkish Republic appeared for the continuity of traditional urban textures including historic buildings together with their surrounding landscapes. The organization in making decisions for the sustainability of cultural heritage shifted from centralization to localization, by the establishment of the Regional Conservation Councils in the historic cities of Türkiye, since the early 1980s. Meanwhile, the local authorities, such as municipalities and governorships, took responsibility for the planning and application stages of conservation plans, while the Ministry of Culture has become responsible for the technical service. Consequently, public awareness in the conservation of the urban identity of a historic city has appeared as a result of the

<sup>2</sup> The first (1869), the second (1874), the third (1884), and the fourth (1906) Ancient Monument Regulations Monuments Act (1912) called attention to the importance of the local museums.

<sup>3</sup> The importance of 'integrated conservation in site scale' was already accepted by the effects of the Amsterdam Declaration, in which the Council of Europe publicized '1975' as 'the year of European Architectural Heritage' in 1972.

cooperative practices carried out with the participation of the university, NGOs, local administration, and the public.

The city of Bursa is a proper example to investigate the continuous unity between governmental and local conservation practices for the sustainability of the Ottoman identity, in connection with the legal developments regarding the conservation of cultural heritage in the Turkish Republic, from 1951 to 2005. During these fifty years of legal regulations, the scales and the periods of the cultural properties to be preserved are reshaped according to the influences of international regulations. In addition, the terminology used for conservation activities has developed in the meantime, which also impacts the variety in the efforts to preserve the historic urban identity of Ottoman Bursa. Hence, in this part of the article, the mobility in the sustainability of Ottoman identity in Bursa is described as categorized under the titles of conservation activities that have been differentiated with the legal variety in national conservation approaches in the hundred years of the Turkish Republic. (**Figure 2**). To discover the classification of the conservation implementations differentiating according to the scales of cultural assets and the timeline in the development of the National Conservation Acts since 1951, a matrix table is prepared while revealing the intersection between the legal and practical aspects in the conservation of historic urban identity in Bursa since the 1950s.

Relation between the Legal Aspects and Practices in Conservation of Ottoman Identity of Bursa	1951 The ACT for Establishment of the HIGH CONSERVATION COUNCIL (GEEAYK) NO: 5805	1973 HISTORIC ARTIFACTS ACT NO: 1710	1983 CONSERVATION ACT of CULTURAL and NATURAL ARTEFACT NO: 2863	2005 ACT on the RENEWAL, PRESERVATION, and RE-USE of Worn-Out Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets NO: 5366
Reconstruction of Collapsed Buildings	√		√	√
Restorations and Repair Applications	√		√	√
Registration Decisions on Building and Site Scales		√	√	
Conservation Plans and Street Rehabilitation Projects		√	√	
Museology and Exhibition Works on Archaeological Remains	√		√	√
Public Awareness and Participation in Conservation Activities		√	√	

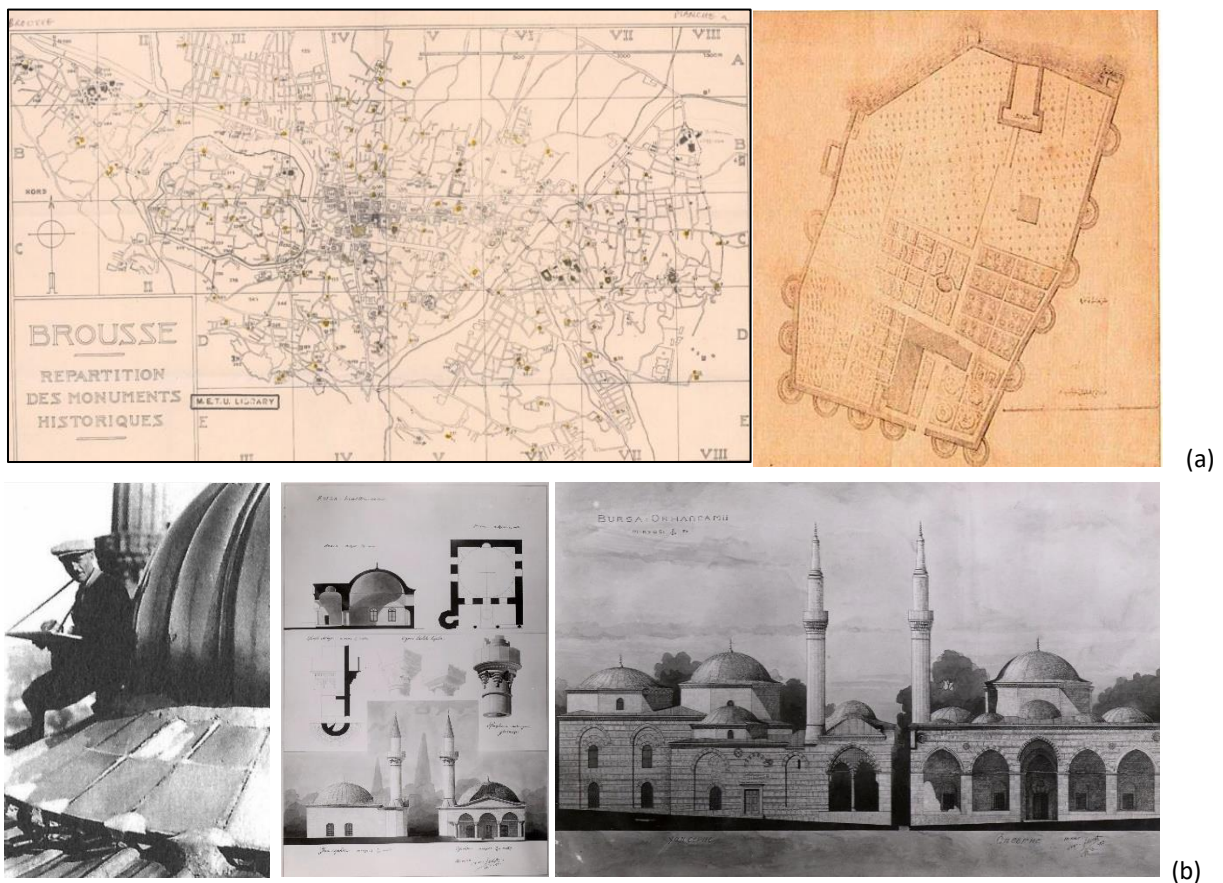
**Figure 2.** The relation between legal aspects and practices in the conservation of the Ottoman Identity of Bursa (the Author, 2023)

Accordingly, the conservation implementations on a building scale are composed of registration and documentation of still-standing historic buildings and archaeological remains, in addition to the restoration and reconstruction of mostly collapsed ones to be reused for cultural and touristic demands that appeared as a result of the urban development activities in Bursa. Moreover, the conservation development plans and street rehabilitation projects in historic neighborhoods of Bursa were prepared and applied together with the local attempts to provide public awareness of not only urban but also rural heritage settled in and around this Ottoman city. More importantly, the period between the 1980s and the 2000s can be accepted as the 'golden age' in all types of conservation attempts in Bursa, while the dominant implementations are restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings that have continued since the 1950s. All these types of implementations are required to be

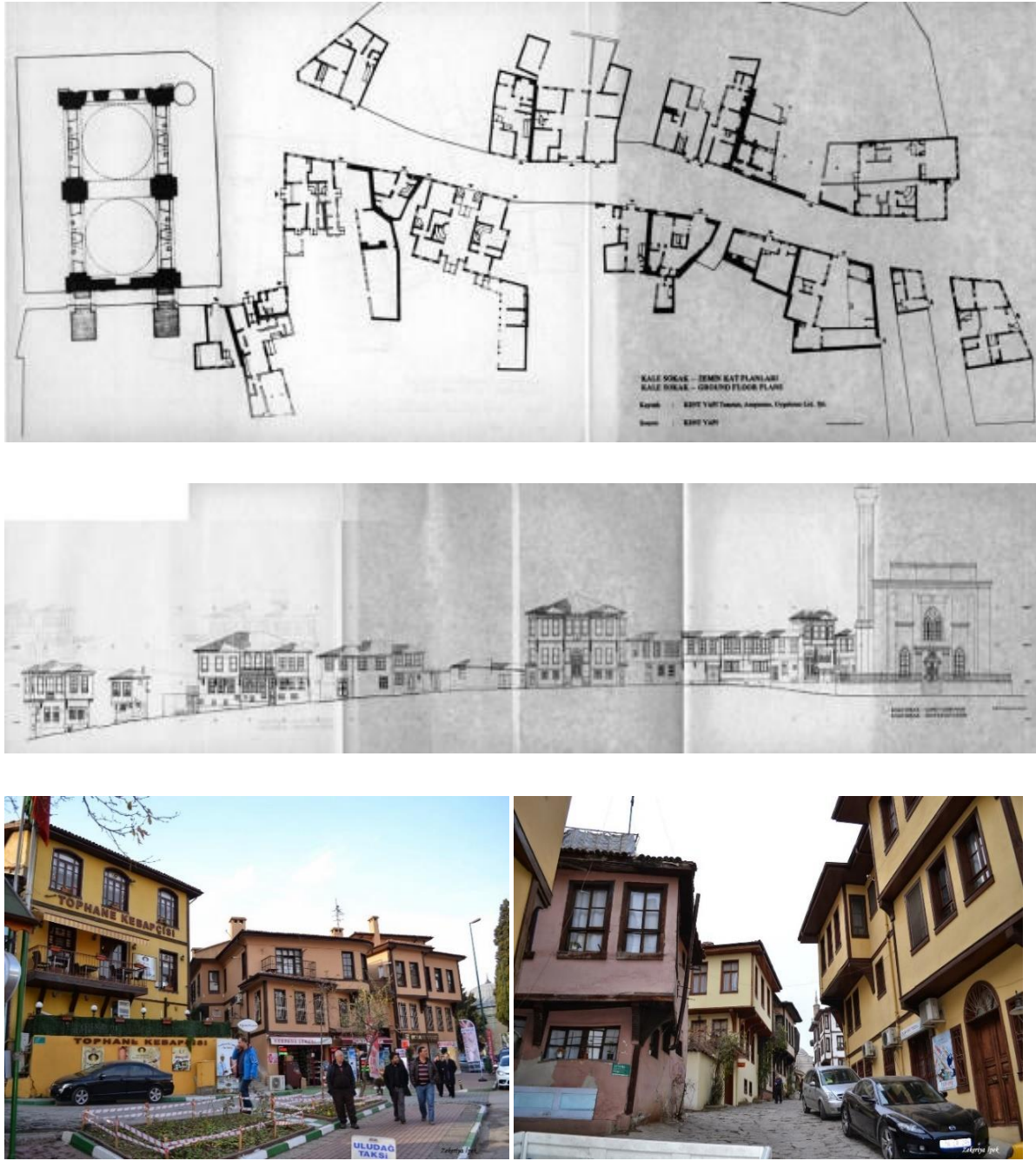
mentioned in detail to understand the challenges to the sustainability of cultural heritage against the urban transformation and renovation applications that appeared concerning the current legal aspects in the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage.

### 1.1. Documentation and Registration of Ottoman Architectural Identity

New governmental foundations that were established by the Turkish Government until the 1950s were established to document, repair, and restore Ottoman monuments, such as mosques, madrasahs, and tombs. The first measured drawings were prepared by the architects; Albert Gabriel, and Sedat Çetintaş, and they were used as the primary sources to understand the original architectural character of these Ottoman period monumental buildings in Bursa (**Figure 3a**). Meanwhile, measured drawings were prepared and published to document other monuments such as Yıldırım Beyazid Bedesten and Ulucami (Çetintaş, 1946), while the plan drawings and sketches revealing the situation of the Citadel (Hisariçi) and the Historic Commercial Center were printed as the sketches (Gabriel, 1958). In addition to these manual techniques, there appeared an initial attempt in the documentation process of a street rehabilitation project prepared for Kale Street (1985), by using digital techniques to take photogrammetric measurements by an expert team from METU (Madran, 1985) (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 3.** (a) Mapping and Documentation Works via the City Plan, and (b) Measured Drawings prepared by Albert Gabriel and Sedat Çetintaş (the 1930s-the 1940s) (source: the plans from the archive of Setbaşı Library in Bursa, the measured drawings from the archive of Ülgen Family <https://archives.saltresearch.org/> )



**Figure 4.** Street Rehabilitation Project of Kale Street, in Tophane-Citadel District (1985) (Source: (1) (Madran, 1985); (2) the photographs by the Author (2020).

The historic fabric of the historic city cores has decayed since the 1970s due to the lack of legislation about the definition and conservation of 'historic sites'. In the case of Bursa, multi-storey new building blocks, which were built within the empty parcels in the city center, began to disrupt the perceptibility and authenticity of the traditional texture, due to the accommodation needs of the increasing population after the migrations from the rural to the urban areas until the 1970s. As a reaction to these forced changes in the architectural character of Ottoman period houses in the historic neighborhoods, pioneering decisions were taken for the registration of 'historic sites' by the GEEAYK, which approved a draft plan declining the boundaries of urban, archaeological, and natural sites between 1974 and 1978<sup>4</sup>. As a result of these initial conservation decisions on an urban scale, public awareness of the

<sup>4</sup> For detailed information about the Council's decisions, please look at (Çakıcı, 2017: 73-85).

existence of such a multi-layered historic urban identity of Bursa has increased. As stated in the 1982 Constitution to 'preserve enough housing', the registration status of 313 historic houses in Bursa was dropped in 1986, which allows paving the way for the demolition of many historic buildings and the construction of new buildings within traditional neighborhoods (Çakıcı, 2017).

### 1.2. Restoration and Reconstruction Works to Reuse Ottoman Structures

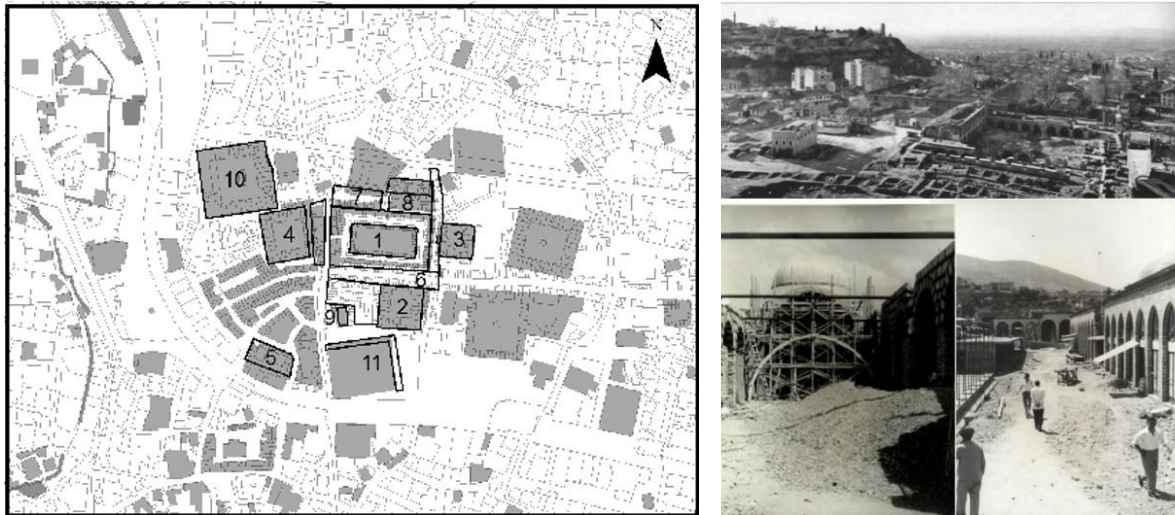
Museology has become popular for scientific field studies since the 1930s as a result of continued interest in archaeology to excavate pre-Ottoman civilizations that lived in Anatolia. This led to the establishment of museums in historic cities of the Turkish Republic as a means of fostering a sense of multi-cultural national identity. These efforts can be seen as 'the national initiative sought to base the modern identity on the historical past'. Accordingly, the monumental buildings, mostly constructed in the Ottoman Empire, were restored to be reused as museums to display archaeological and ethnographic cultural assets found in and around Bursa. Green Madrasah, which was constructed by the order of Çelebi Sultan Mehmed in 1424, is a good example of being reused as an archaeological museum in 1930 after its restoration project (Madran, 1997: 77). **(Figure 5)**

The studies on the repair and documentation of the structures, which could be called 'the city crowns' as defining the Ottoman urban identity of Bursa, were intensified until the 1950s. As one of these monumental figures, Green Mosque was documented and restored following the contemporary conservation approaches by Leon Parville<sup>5</sup> after the earthquake in 1855 (Danişmend, 1948: 40). Ten years after the proclamation of the Republic in Türkiye, Bruno Taut was invited to Bursa (in 1938) for the restoration project of the Green Tomb, which was built in 1421 to be used as the tomb of Sultan Çelebi Mehmet. Material loss and deterioration were detected in certain parts of this structure, especially on its exterior facade covering the Iznik tiles (Gasco, 2010). That proposal was archived by the Turkish Government to be applied between 1941 and 1943, under the management of the Architect Macit Kural, who was employed for its restoration of Green Complex in Bursa as a member of the Council in Conservation of Monuments in Türkiye **(Figure 6)**. Although the tomb and the madrasah, which formed the Complex of Sultan Çelebi, have been restored systematically, the traditional residential texture around this Complex was not preserved in a holistic approach as a part of the urban and architectural heritage in the Ottoman identity of Bursa and the timber-framed houses were simply repaired by the users (Kural, 1968).

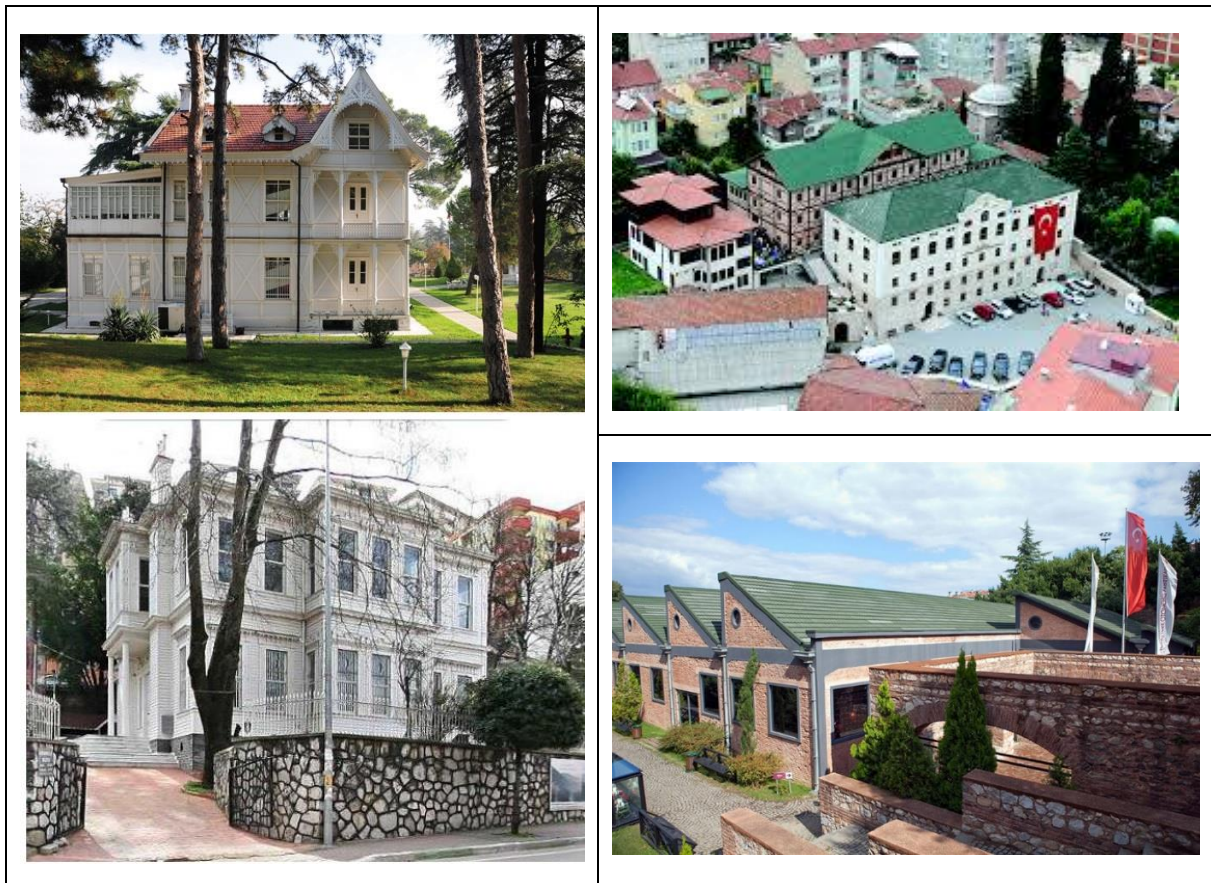
After the approval of No: 5805 Act for the establishment of the High Council for Conservation of the Historical Monuments (*GEEAYK*) on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1951, the responsibility for registration and restoration of immovable cultural properties in Türkiye was given to a Central High Council. As a result of the influence of International Regulations, one of which is the Venice Charter (1964), the reconstruction of historic buildings with contemporary materials and construction techniques began to be mentioned in the principles of restoration projects that have been approved by the High Council in the following decades.







**Figure 7.** Restoration and Reconstruction Works (the 1960s) (sources: (1) the map prepared by the Author, 2018; (2) photographs from the archive of the Regional Conservation Council of Bursa, 2010.



**Figure 8.** Restoration of the Ottoman period monuments to be reused as the museums (since the 1990s) (photographs taken by the Author, 2020)

### 1.3. Conservation Attempts in Urban and Rural Areas Defining Ottoman Identity

Although there were no convenient reforms in taking urban conservation decisions in Türkiye until the 1970s, a proposal plan was prepared by Luigi Piccinato, who was invited for the urban planning of Istanbul at that time, especially to re-plan the historic trade center, most of which was hardly damaged after the "Bazaar Fire" of 1958 in Bursa. Although there was not still a holistic approach to the conservation of this neighborhood, this plan should be accepted as a base map for the conservation

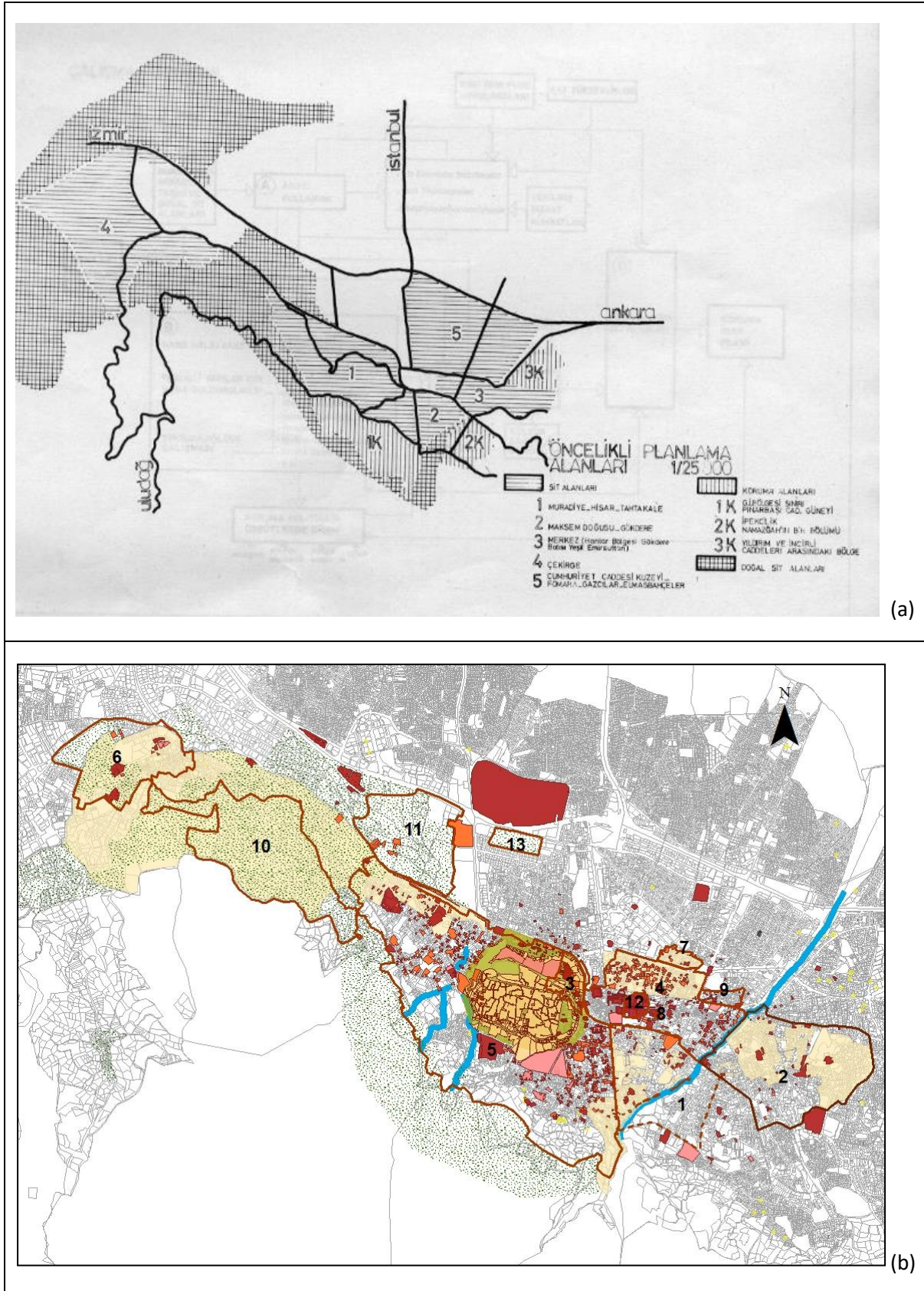
development plans. After the approval of the new Conservation Act in 1973<sup>6</sup>, not only the historic buildings but also historic areas were accepted as cultural properties to be preserved, which has renovated the principles in new city plans of historic cities like Bursa. Accordingly, the need for a 'Conservation Master Plan' for Bursa was mentioned to be prepared with the collaboration of different disciplinarians, such as architects, archaeologists, historians, and city planners.

The permanent changes that depended on the demand for new houses and workplaces in this developing industrial city got out of control until the 1980s. Due to this threat to the sustainability of the historic identity of this Ottoman capital city, one of the general assembly meetings of the High Council was organized in Bursa, in December 1981, to prepare a schedule of the working report and a draft map revealing the possible boundaries of conservation areas. Contrary to the plan decisions prepared for revealing the boundary of conservation areas in Bursa, in 1981, Fomara-Gazıcılar-Elmasbahçeler Neighborhoods have been exposed to irreversible transformation activities over time since they were not registered despite being referred to as 'protected areas'. This region was mentioned as a 'new central business area' in the following city plans, which resulted in the construction of irregular multi-storey buildings within this traditional housing texture in and around the plain of Bursa.

The historic buildings, which were constructed before the 19th century, and the important public buildings, having architectural and historical values, have been declared to be preserved and restored, together with the traditional dwellings, since the 1980s. With the approval and effectuation of Conservation Law No. 2863<sup>7</sup> in 1983, the designing and approval stages of conservation plans for historic sites were revised. In the meantime, the Regional Conservation Council of Bursa, which was established in 1987, has the dominant role in conservation practices applied following the new legal aspects in the Turkish Republic. Following the registration decisions in both building and site scales, 13 conservation development plans<sup>8</sup> were prepared from 1981 to the beginning of the 21st century for the continuity of the traditional texture within the boundaries of the historical city center, expanding from the Dobruca District in the west to the Sultans' Complexes in Emirsultan and Yıldırım Districts in the east of Bursa (**Figure 9**). It was aimed to provide integrity in the conservation whole historic identity of this Ottoman Capital while improving the lifestyle of the citizens during the application of the urban development activities. As the first one of these plans, the Conservation Development Plan of Tophane District (1984), which is known as the oldest settlement of Bursa, was prepared to repair and regulate the environmental landscape surrounding the Citadel, together with the Tombs of the first Sultans of Ottoman Empire (Osman Gazi and Orhan Gazi). This project was prepared in partnership with Bursa Municipality, Ağa Han, and Special Administration, in the meantime. Within the concept of this plan, a street rehabilitation project for Kale Street was prepared in 1985, which aims to sustain the traditional texture of this small Ottoman neighborhood. It is a pioneering attempt, in which a holistic conservation approach appeared while contributing to the continuation of the spatial and socio-cultural structure forming the historic residential identity of Bursa. As a result of this project, a holistic preservation approach was applied from the original stone pavement texture of the road to the traditional masonry architectural elements on the facades (**Figure 4**).

<sup>7</sup> Publication date of the Act: 21 July 1983; the detailed name of the Act: "the Conservation Act of Cultural and Natural Artefacts"

<sup>8</sup> You can see chronological order of all these conservation plans in (Çakıcı Alp, 2022: 13)

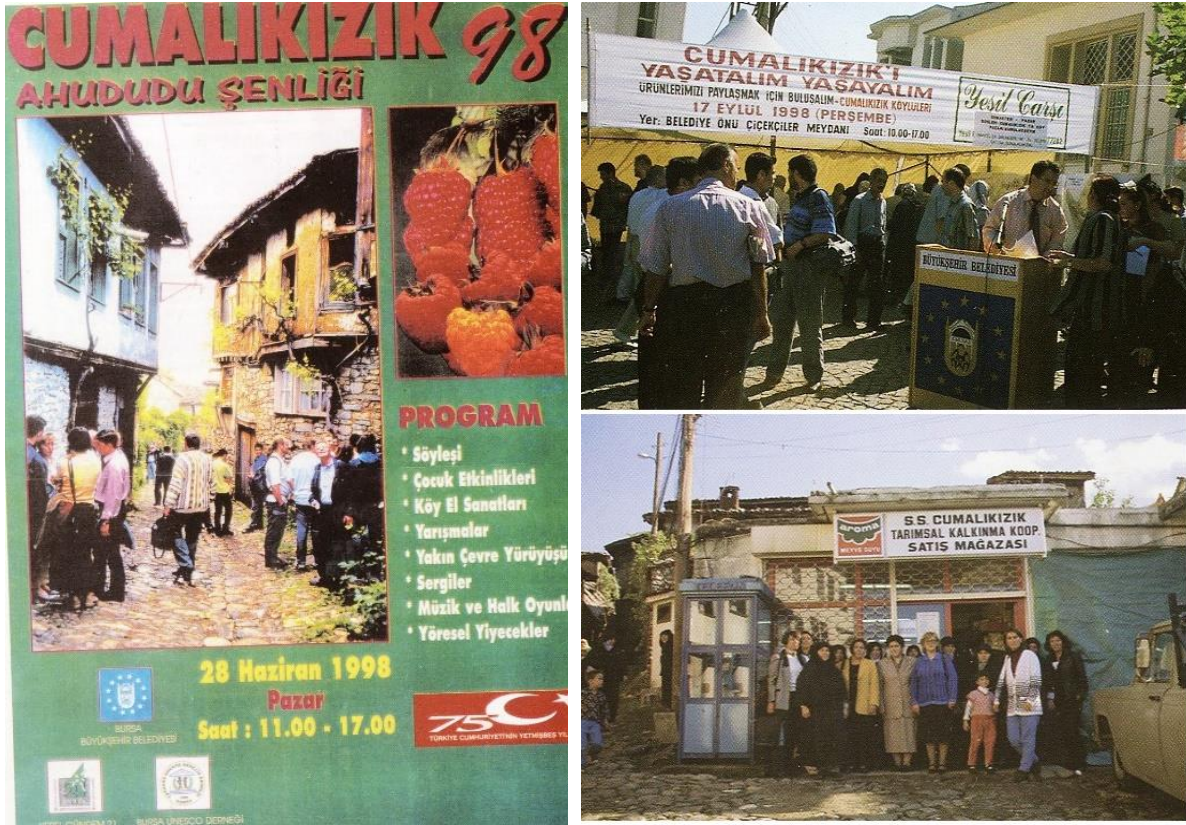


**Figure 9.** (a) the boundaries of the conservation areas on a draft plan drawing (source: the archive of the BKTVKBK); (b) boundaries of the approved conservation development plans, from the 1980s to the 2000s (Çakıcı, 2017)

#### 1.4. Public Awareness of Tangible and Intangible Ottoman Heritage

As a result of the cooperation between different governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Bursa, during the first thirty years of the Turkish Republic, new competitions and workshops were organized by 'Local Agenda 21 (*Yerel Gündem 21*)', the City Council of Bursa (*Bursa Kent Konseyi*), and Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa. Bursa Metropolitan Municipality became the first member of the Union of Historical Cities (*Tarihi Kentler Birliği*) of Türkiye, which would be essential in the development of cooperation between historical cities within the scope of the "European Common Heritage Studies" initiated by the Council of Europe in the 1970s. As another local actor in the conservation issue, 'Local Agenda 21' started a new process for the promotion, preservation, and continuity of the historical identity of Bursa, in the early 1990s (Yiğiter Genli and Yirmibeşoğlu, 2003). This organization, which supported local and governmental conservation activities in the following years, was effective in raising the awareness of local authorities and the public for the preservation of rural areas. For example, the University, Local Associations, and NGOs, together with the businessmen, volunteers, and village representatives, came together in the "Cumalıkızık Village Conservation and Survival '98 Project" organized by Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and Bursa Tophane Unesco Youth Association. With the participation of the public, the concept of "sustainability of rural heritage" began to be expressed for the first time in this project, which positively improved the viewpoint of the public and local governments on rural tourism and development policies (**Figure 10**). This attempt would keep the socio-economic conditions alive while providing continuity of historic architectural heritage within the framework of a holistic conservation plan by transferring the traditional texture to future generations.

At the beginning of the 1980s, a new wide and straight avenue named Haşim İşcan Street was opened just south of the historical trade center of Bursa while separating Doğanbey and Tayakadın Neighborhoods from the Reyhan Neighborhood. Although these historic settlements have a similar architectural character to Ottoman housing, the southern part of Haşim İşcan was opened to a new trade center since this part was not registered as an urban site previously (Çakıcı Alp, 2021). However, the issue of 'new construction exploded in this historical built-environment' was particularly discussed within the scope of the competition titled '*Tarihi Kentte Gelecek İçin Yaşama Çevreleri – Bursa 2000*', which was organized with the cooperative work between Bursa Municipality and the Chamber of Architects (**Figure 11**). The awarded project was prepared to re-use the building stock, most of which dates to the last period of the Ottoman Empire, for social development purposes. In addition, it was also proposed to pedestrianize Haşim İşcan Street, but it was rejected by the Regional Conservation Council of Bursa, considering that it would interrupt the vehicular transportation flow within the city center.

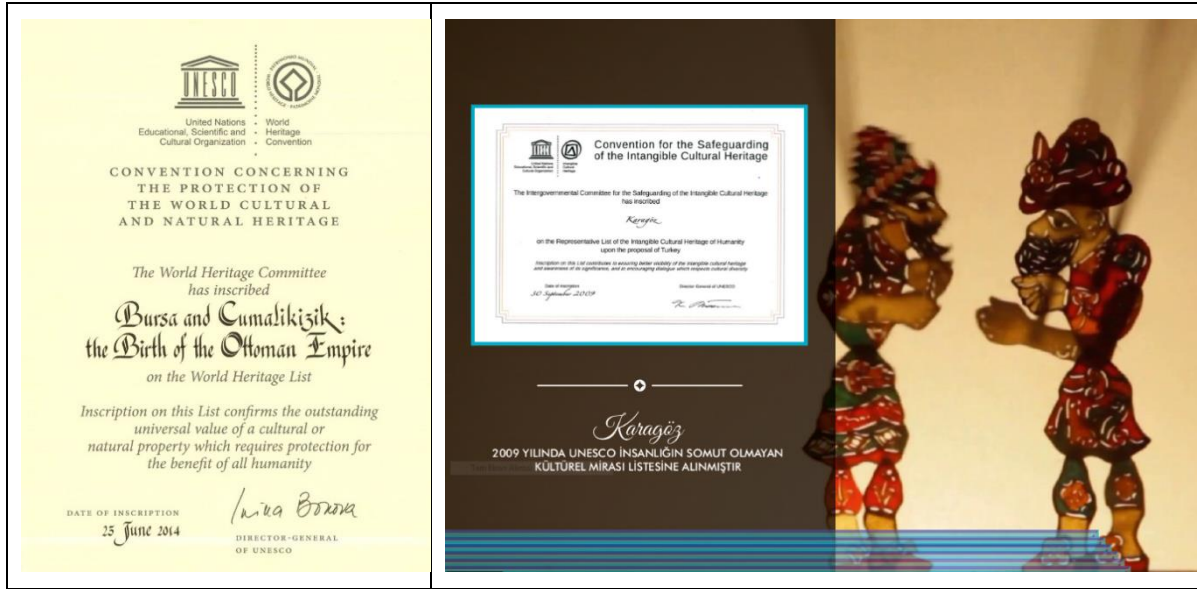


**Figure 10.** "Cumalıkızık Village Conservation and Survival '98 Project" (from the archive of the Municipality of Yıldırım Town, Bursa, 2018)



**Figure 11.** The competition titled 'Living Environments for the Future in the Historical City – Bursa 2000' (the images from the archive of the Chambers of Architecture in Bursa, 2018)

In the meantime, the symposium and workshops, which were organized by the Municipality to increase the recognition of the village in the international arena, also paved the way for the creation of Urban Memory for Bursa. It was aimed to raise public awareness about the historical urban identity and cultural values while trying to preserve the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Bursa, in a holistic manner by balancing it with contemporary needs. As a result of all these efforts, this Ottoman Village was accepted as a cultural landscape and a WHS that has preserved its authenticity for centuries (Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** The certificates revealing international acceptance consisting of tangible and intangible heritages of Bursa, to be conserved as World heritage. (<https://bursaunesco.org/>)

## 2. Current Conservation Approaches in Ottoman Identity of Bursa

After the approval of new Conservation Acts<sup>9</sup> dated to the beginning of the 21st century, there appears the era of change in conservation legislations in Türkiye (Şahin Güçhan and Kurul, 2009). These new legal regulations have rapidly influenced the practical and theoretical conservation approaches in Bursa, since focusing on 'innovation' in the terminology used for urban conservation which results in the application of Urban Transformation and Urban Design Projects, Conservation Development Plans, and Environmental Management Plans Management in abandoned and earthquake risk historic neighborhoods. Although these implementations encourage business relocation and residential development, they might cause economic inequality and a threat to local businesses. In addition to these applications, there appears a restructuring in the organization of conservation activities, while Municipalities, General Directorates of Pious Foundations, and the Ministry of Culture have become the dominant institutions responsible for the whole process of conservation plans and projects<sup>10</sup>.

In the case of Bursa, Doğanbey and Tayakadın Districts, which previously included Ottoman period residential buildings as a part of an old neighborhood, were approved as one of the urban transformation areas to be re-planned for regeneration. In this section, a general examination of the effects of neoliberal policy on the preservation of cultural heritage in Bursa is possible, through the reasons and outcomes of an urban transformation impacting the traditional architectural character of the Ottoman Bursa. Thus, it would be feasible to determine the extent to which changes in conservation legislation and organizational systems have been mirrored in practices since the beginning of the 21st century. Doğanbey TOKİ Urban Transformation Project (**Figure 13**), which was completed between 2009 and 2012, has become a convenient example to observe the whole process of renovation and regeneration since acting like a time bomb placed in the historical center of Bursa. In the 1981 report of the High Council of Conservation, it was marked as an area to be protected<sup>11</sup>. However, the traditional two-storey residential texture in this area was opened to new construction in

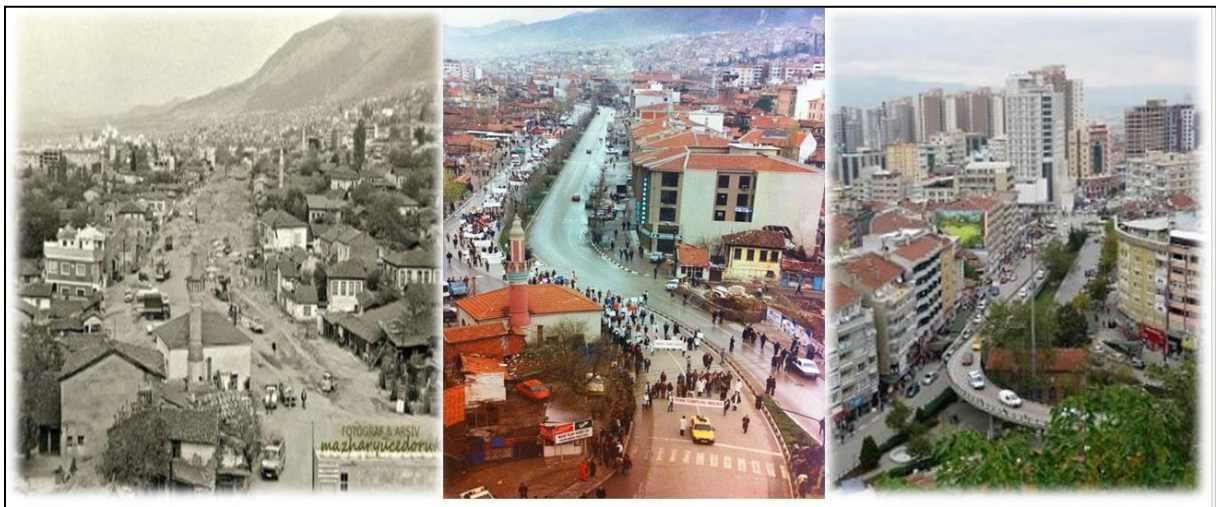
<sup>9</sup> No: 5366 Conservation of Deteriorating and Cultural Property through Renewal and Re-Use Act – the changes in the Conservation act of Cultural and Natural Artifacts, (5<sup>th</sup> July 2005); No: 5226 Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation and Revision Act, (27<sup>th</sup> July 2004).

<sup>10</sup> No: 5391 Special Provincial Administration Acts; No: 5216 and 5393 Metropolitan Municipality Acts; No: 5390 Greater Municipality Act, (5<sup>th</sup> July 2005).

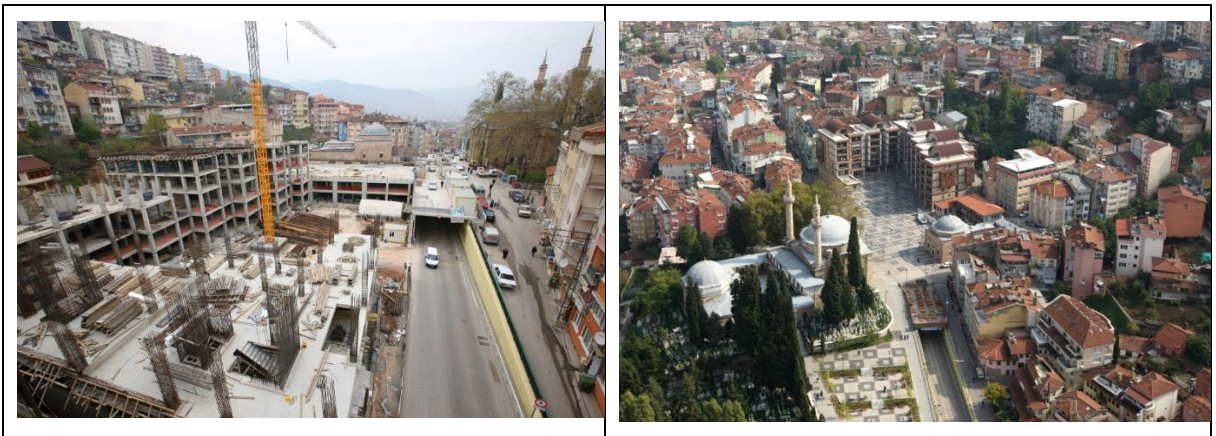
<sup>11</sup> GEEAYK decision no: 13333 of 1981

the following urban development activities, due to the lack of declaration as a protected area (Figure 10). Despite the rejections of the local associations, NGOs, and the citizens, this historic neighborhood was faced with a complete change and was filled densely with multi-storey uniform building blocks which also distorted the authentic city silhouette<sup>12</sup>.

Another urban transformation project was designed for the Emirsultan Mosque and its surrounding landscape which has been created and authorized as part of the 'Emirsultan City Square Arrangement Works' dated 2006 (Figure 14). In this application, the automobile route was buried beneath in front of the Emirsultan Mosque, which caused physical deformation in time due to the ground vibration. Meanwhile, the area surrounding the Emirsultan Mosque ' was also renovated while proposing the demolition of the existing historic dwellings and the Emir Buhari Primary School, as well as the construction of new building blocks within the expropriated lands in this area. Consequently, a regeneration has appeared in the authentic use of the area, and the solid-void dimensions in the area were completely transformed.



**Figure 13.** Before and After the urban transformation in Doğanbey District and its Surroundings (from the 1980s to the 2000s) (from the archive of Chamber of Architects in Bursa, 2018)



**Figure 14.** The process in application of the urban transformation project of Emir Sultan Complex and its Surrounding (source: the archive of Great Municipality of Bursa, 2021)

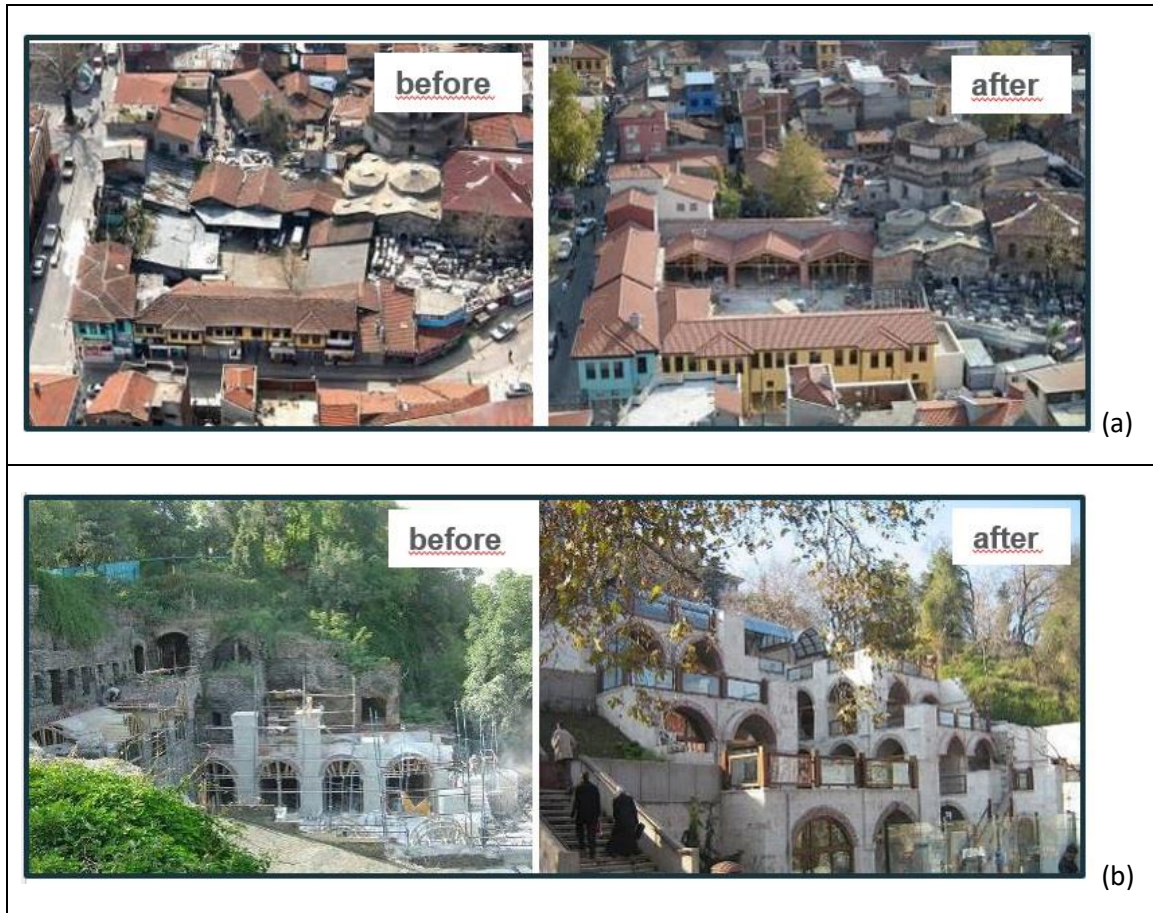
Most of the current restoration practices in Bursa are applied as reconstruction implementations which are not as innocent as they were fifty years ago. At present, the activities on restoring and rebuilding demolished historic buildings "without enough clue" are against international regulations

<sup>12</sup> For detailed information about before and after the application of this project please look at (Çakıcı Alp, 2021)



concerning the sustainability of cultural heritage since this would cause misconceptions about the original architectural character of the buildings. Moreover, the contemporary materials and construction techniques preferred to be used during maintenance and repair applications are not compatible with the traditional ones. As a popular approach in recent years, the frequent preference of projects to resurrect monuments causes the loss of antiquity value of the historical texture in time, leading to misconceptions in future generations. **(Figure 15)**

Whereas the historic commercial center, which is located at the heart of Bursa, has preserved its vitality since the 15th century, it requires renovation depending on the different needs of the tradesmen. However, the additions to facades and roof coverings could not show unity and harmony either with the historical texture or with themselves **(Figure 16)**. For example, the current applications that cover the gap between Uzun Çarşı and the adjacent shops made the historical buildings almost crushed and imperceptible both in terms of material and form. It is noteworthy that the original architectural identity has been changed from the original as a result of changing the cladding and openings, such as windows and doors on the facades of the Grand Bazaar. Consequently, the historical identity of this commercial center is not preserved as a whole.





**Figure 15.** The reconstruction projects applied in (a) Eskişehir Hanı (the photographs were taken from the archive of the Municipality), (b) Balibey Hanı, (c) the remains of the Zindan Gate along the Citadel Walls (photographs by the Author, 2020)



**Figure 16.** New Roof Covering Additions along the Bazaar in the Historic Trade Center of Bursa (source for aerial photo: googmaps.com; the photographs taken by the Author, 2020)

Likewise, the street rehabilitation works carried out in the early 1980s, and the recent applications differ from each other. While it is expected that there should be more analytical approaches to preservation in terms of the use of contemporary materials and construction techniques, there is no effort to preserve the traditional texture as a whole, from the ground texture to the facade details, as being applied in an independent language. On the contrary, today's practices consist only of repairing the facade covering materials, using uniform cladding materials, and renovating the interior spaces and facades completely. Moreover, as in the Hanlar District, the introduction of non-original street elements and nostalgic vehicles such as trams in these street rehabilitation works means not conserving but creating a misconception against the traditional social identity of these historical areas.

The abandoned areas including the factories and their surrounding cultural landscape, which were constructed for the contemporary silk industry in the Early Republican Period of Bursa, were subjected to urban transformation activities, after the application of new legal aspects approved in 2005. Although the buildings were restored, there is still a gap in consciousness to conserve their surrounding landscape as a part of the historic urban identity of Bursa. To reuse the lands including industrial heritage in Bursa, such as İpekiş Textile, Tolon Machines, and Merinos Factories, urban design and urban transformation projects were planned and implemented without taking care to sustain their

historical and economic value for the public (**Figure 17a**). Besides, the land of *Bursa Central Bus Terminal*, which was constructed in the 1930s as one of the Early Republican modern architectural structures in Bursa, was transformed to be a 'City Square' as a result of the application of an urban design project that was organized by the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa in 2006. Since its location is crucial for the enlargement of the new trade center to the north of Bursa, its surrounding administrative and new trade center was already revised to be used for a 'Special Project Area' according to the Master plan of Bursa (1995-1998) (**Figure 17b**).



**Figure 17.** Before and After the Urban Regeneration Projects and Urban Design Projects in (a) Central Bus Terminal (Santral Garaj), (b) Merinos Silk Factory and its surrounding landscape

On the other hand, this project reduced the functional value of this Terminal Complex by leaving access to multiple modes of transportation, composed of dense pedestrian axes from various directions and commercial public services. In addition to the new building mass constructions in this demolished region, instead of reusing the buildings of the Terminal, even the name of this region was shifted from the 'Central Garage' to 'City Square'. Hence, that attitude caused the loss of urban identity and public memory of this Early Republican heritage. That kind of new urban design and renovation applications not respecting the Republican period architecture in Bursa has increasingly continued due to the new regulations applied in urban conservation practices in this historic city. As the most recent example, the demolition of the Central Bank and the Red Crescent Building, which reveals the architectural character of the Republican period, once again reveals this undesirable situation in terms of the holistic preservation of the multi-layered structure as a part of historic urban identity of this Ottoman city (**Figure 18**).



**Figure 18.** Before and After the Collapse of the Central Bank and the Red Crescent Building (source: the archive of the Chamber of Architects in Bursa, 2023)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The variety of conservation activities in Bursa is required to be discussed to understand what extent it has been able to sustain its multi-layered identity composed of cultural assets and landscapes from prehistoric to the present day. In other words, the question of interest of this study is how much of the cultural heritage that belongs to the pre and post-Ottoman periods in this historical city can be preserved and kept alive until the present day. Hence, it would be possible to reason whether the current local and central government has a preference and ideological approach regarding the sustainability of the dominant Ottoman identity in Bursa, which has been selected on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The international declarations approved in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have emphasized the importance of holistic conservation decisions and practices by reconciling the architectural heritage with the current life requirements, which helps to define the total urban identity of a historic city. However, there has been a periodic prioritization of activities aimed at preserving the cultural heritage in many historical cities in Turkey, such as Bursa. Although pioneering efforts were witnessed between the 1980s and 2000s, within the context of social awareness and social sustainability in preserving both the urban and rural Ottoman identity of Bursa, many structures of modern architecture constructed in its historical city core were subjected to the exact opposite approach, which has not included any effort to transfer the building groups to future generations by reusing them instead of erasing from the urban history of Bursa. On the contrary, this historical city, which lost its importance in the silk trade to its competitors abroad for a while during the late Ottoman period, was reborn from its ashes with the opening of new establishments serving the silk industry. Just after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, Bursa became one of the major industrial cities of Turkey, with modern silk factories, one of which is the Merinos Complex established under the instructions of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1935, constructed in Modern Architectural character. Even if only for this reason, Bursa owes a debt

of loyalty to sustain that Republican identity, and there should be a holistic approach in the whole process of conservation development plans including these industrial heritage buildings.

Local attempts for increasing social awareness and participation, which are essential for the sustainability of conservation in urban and rural areas, have been on the agenda of local governments in Bursa, since the early 1980s. However, in the last 20 years, it has been observed that people are often deceived by promises different from the truth and excluded from the implementations. After such an intense and active period in terms of preserving and keeping alive the historical urban identity of Bursa, an irreversible change - transformation, and even 'metamorphosis' has been observed within the historical city center, with the adoption of the Renewal Law no. 5366 dated 2005. Even if the project titles related to the protection of cultural heritage are the same, a more destructive perception was adopted as the approach, while a tendency towards actions with individual responsibility was observed rather than collective works. Moreover, the placement of new users instead of the people who were removed from their homes also caused gentrification as a result of the urban transformation projects carried out within the historic neighborhoods. The environmental regulation, rehabilitation, and urban design projects, which are produced for the renovation of cultural landscapes surrounding urban streams of Bursa, are still far from the conservation of both the ecological and structural character of these regions.

Urban plans and projects for the sustainability of the historical identity of metropolitan cities, such as Bursa, should be produced in a way that will protect not only the architectural heritage but also the cultural landscape around them. As Ekrem Şaker, who was appointed as Bursa Mayor in the 1990s, stated, "If we consider Bursa our home, the Bursa Plain is its balcony.". Therefore, in the case of this study, it is deeply emphasized that the approach of conserving the architectural structures of the city for a single period should be abandoned while sustainable policies should be developed for a holistic preservation of the Plain, including the agricultural lands at the north and the forest texture along the Great Mountain at the south of Bursa. There is still a lack of integrity in the conservation approach to the sustainability of cultural heritage in Bursa, even though many conservation activities were carried out in the social dimension at the urban scale until the 21st century. Hence, it should be possible to reconcile the needs of modern life with the traditional texture and to promote all kinds of tangible and intangible cultural assets defining its historic urban identity for the sake of holistic conservation in this Ottoman capital city. Hence, it is surely necessary to protect not only the architectural heritage but also the natural heritage of the city, and even in new city plans, a holistic city plan should be prepared for the protection of the urban streams flowing from the city center to the plain in the north of the city together with the forest on the southern ridges of Uludağ (Great Mountain).

Consequently, even though many conservation activities were related to the preservation of social authenticity until the beginning of the 21st century, it is not possible to talk about a sincere conservation phenomenon on the physical structure of the Ottoman Identity in Bursa.

### ***Compliance with Ethical Standards***

*There is no conflict of interest between the authors or any third-party individuals or institutions.*

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