

**Documentation Design Studio Winter 2005/ 06**

# **Istanbul**

**Urbandesign between East & West**

**Chair for Architecture and Urban Design ETH Zurich - Kees Christiaanse**



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Control & Laissez Faire

## **New Waterfront Galata-Karaköy**

The area in focus in Karaköy, Istanbul is one of the most central and prominent places in the city. It is located on the northern shore of the Golden Horn next to Galata Bridge, one of the most important bridges in the inner city. To the north rises the European-influenced district of Beyoglu with the current city center and the most important shopping mile, the Istclal Cadesi. To the south one looks over the Golden Horn towards Eminönü, the district with an unparalleled silhouette, thanks to prominent landmarks such as the Hagia Sofia, the Blue Mosque, and the Topkapi Palace.

The site itself is built up only partially with low and, to some extent, run-down buildings. These buildings were once used by craftsmen and shops, which primarily sold goods for the crafts and fishing industries here. Only the abandoned Mosque of the famous Turkish builder Sinan (1490 – 1588) sets an accent on the western edge of the site.

The Galata Bridge borders the area to the east, and the Atatürk Bridge borders it to the west. In addition, the Yemenciler Cadesi Street separates the area from the densely built districts to the north. The shore to the south is currently accessible in part or restricted to the public due to industrial uses.

This project has exemplary character in several respects: the special location of the site demands for an urban design that is capable of representing the Istanbul of the 21st Century. The question is how one can build a new piece of the city, which represents both modern Turkey as well as help it flourish?



In addition to its significant stature, the project will also decisively influence urban development in the vicinity. This is because in the middle and long-term, the large areas along the Golden Horn will lose their industrial uses and be available for new developments. Already for a while an intensive discussion among planners as well as private investors has heated up as to how the waterfront along the Golden Horn should be developed. The pressure on the city and interested investors is high; various concepts are in circulation and first projects have already been realised. For this reason, the “New Waterfront Galata-Karaköy” can be considered a model for the future development of Istanbul’s waterfront. Based on this project, exemplary design and planning methods can be developed and tested, which fulfil the demands on urban planning in Istanbul today.

Furthermore, the area is confronted with inherited political burdens of the 80s, since parts of it were expropriated and demolished by the city in order to be re-developed according to the priorities of the city government at the time. After intense disputes with residents, these plans of the city were stopped. However, the partial demolition of the city fabric created wounds, which have been covered by a park to this day. As a result, the transformation of the area will be significantly influenced by the coming to terms with the conflicts of that time, especially with respect to clarifying land ownership issues.

Due to the complex constraints on the site, an adequate design not only requires the definition of built structures, but also a consideration and incorporation of historical, cultural, and political issues in the development of the area. What is the relationship between control and *laissez-faire*? How much planning and control from a Western viewpoint is necessary to realise a representative and high quality planning project in Istanbul? How much dynamism and self-initiative must be allowed in order to be able to productively take advantage of the demands and habits of stakeholders as design tools?

In our planning semester, we have worked along the interface of architecture and urban planning. The strategies of this spatial planning investigation oscillate on several scale levels between control and *laissez-faire*.