

## The Role of University in Local Cultural Development Through Vernacular Architectural Conservation Education: The Case of Havran, Turkey

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### Abstract

*Since the beginning of 20th century, vernacular settlements are under severe threats of losing authenticity and ruin due to changes in human lifestyles, forms of production and worldwide economic developments. Especially in small rural towns, lack of care and abandonment related to loss of young population is causing rapid deterioration of the vernacular heritage. In such towns, safeguarding is possible through initiatives of local authorities. However, as visionary as the authorities may be, knowledge on sustainable conservation of vernacular architecture is a very specific topic of expertise. At this point, the academic knowledge and experience of universities take on a new significance. Furthermore, collaboration between academia and local authorities carry great potential for each party. A similar cooperation between Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and the Local Municipality of Havran, which was inscribed as an urban protected area in the national register in 1995, started with a protocol signed in November 2011. Between 2012 and 2019, extensive surveys were carried out in urban protected area and restoration projects of over 30 traditional buildings were completed by the graduate students. Some of these buildings are approved by the local council for the conservation of cultural property and one of which was restored to be used as a town and memory museum. The aim of this study is to discuss the outcome of experiences acquired from the collaboration between universities and local authorities in the past 10 years. Moreover, mutual benefit of interaction between academia, local community, and the municipality will be emphasized. The cultural heritage preservation activities in Havran have an impact on local cultural development in terms of safeguarding the architectural heritage and creating awareness in the community, as well as making a significant contribution to the vernacular heritage conservation education.*

**Keywords:** Heritage Education; Vernacular Architecture Conservation; Havran.

### 1. Introduction

According to the UN Population Division, since 2007, globally, the number of people living in urban areas has surpassed the number living in rural areas. Today, the percentage differs between 55% and 80% with regard to a nation's wealth, and it is predicted that over two-thirds of the global population will be living in urban areas. (Ritchie & Roser, 2018) While there are

several factors triggering these results, the prevention of the disappearance of rural heritage, which is an important part of the cultural landscape, is mostly up to the local governments' initiative. However, as forward-thinking as the authorities may be, knowledge of sustainable vernacular architectural conservation is a highly specific area of expertise. Universities' academic knowledge and experience take on additional

relevance at this point, and collaboration between the two has a lot of possibilities for both parties.

In this study, it is aimed to discuss the challenges and beneficial results of partnerships between universities and local authorities based on the experiences gained over the last ten years. Firstly, the significance of Havran and the history of collaboration with Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University will be explained briefly. Next, an evaluation of experiences will be discussed in the context of challenges and contributions to education and vernacular architecture. In the conclusion section, it will be discussed in detail how and why collaboration between local governing authorities and universities is beneficial for the protection and conservation of vernacular heritage.

### 1.1. About Havran

Havran district is located within the borders of Balıkesir province in the Marmara Region of Turkey. Located in the valley formed between Kaz Mountains and Madra Mountain, Havran is on the shore of Havran Stream, which is fed by spring water from Eybek and Şap Mountains (Göktaş, 2019). The Havran Plain, which was formed by the alluviums carried by the Havran Stream, offers a rich land suitable for agriculture in the region. Although arable land constitutes 25% of the total land, a large part of the income of the District is based on agriculture and animal husbandry (Uzun, 2018). Olive cultivation is the main agricultural production in the region. Olives are used industrially in the production of olive oil. There are seven olive oil factories in Havran Urban Protected Area, five of which are listed and four of the listed factories are still active.

The history of Havran dates back to the Neolithic Age. According to recent studies, two richest settlements of the Late Neolithic to Iron Age were located within the Havran Province Borders (Saka, 2016). Although there is not enough information about the traces of the present set-

tlement in antiquity, it is known that the area has been inhabited since the Middle Ages. Havran was ruled by the Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman empires, respectively, and hosted many people of different religions, particularly simultaneously after 15th century. In 1877, immigrants from Bulgaria and the Caucasus, after the Balkan War in 1912, immigrants from Rumelia and Lesbos were settled in Havran.



Fig. 1. Location of Havran District in Balıkesir Metropolitan Area (Source: Google Maps, 2020)

Wars and migration movements in Europe and the Ottoman Empire affected Havran in the beginning of the 20th century as well. It is known that a military hospital was established in Havran during the First World War (Göktaş, 2019). Many men from Havran took part in the WWI and Turkish War of Independence. One of which was Seyit Onbaşı of Havran, who was remembered and yet respected for lifting a 276 kilogram cannonball all by himself during the Battle of Gallipoli. Havran remained under Greek occupation during the Turkish War of Independence. Havran was liberated from occupation in September 1922. After the population exchange in accordance with the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the Orthodox Christian population living in Hamambaşı Neighborhood left, and immigrants from the Aegean Islands, Crete and Rumeli (Kıroğlu, 1953) settled in the neighborhood (Özdemir, 2008).

Although its population is 28000 today, about 11000 of this population reside in the city center and 17000 in the villages (Havran, 2021). Today, as a result of the young population preferring to live in city centers due to job opportunities, a large part of the population of the district consists of citizens over the age of 60.



Fig. 2. An Image Representing the Traditional Urban Texture of Havran (Source: Istanbul Municipality Atatürk Library Archive)

The protection of the cultural and natural heritage in Havran started with listings in 1990 and continued with the listing of the district center as an urban conservation area in 1995. In 1999, Conservation and Development Plan was prepared for Havran Urban Conservation Area and was approved by the Bursa Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board. Havran Conservation and Development Plan was revised ten years after its approval date, and this revision was accepted by the conservation board.



Fig. 3. Urban Conservation Area of Havran (Source: Google Maps, 2020)

As mentioned above, the decrease in the population of the district and the fact that it is mostly composed of citizens over the age of 60 appear to pose a challenge to the preservation of vernacular architecture. Consequently, for age-related reasons, the residing elderly eventually leave their houses, and many listed buildings are abandoned. When there are too many inheritors for the same property, deciding who will provide the care for the building is another challenge, mostly resulting in neglect and even loss of structural integrity. On the other hand, the buildings that are still used by the elderly population have maintenance problems. Moreover, many examples of civil architecture in the district center are partially used with commercial function on the ground floors only, simply because the upper floors are no longer suitable for residency (Fig 4). Although this provides partial care for the building, the upper floors and roofs are usually neglected. Thus, besides causing structural damage, it also poses a risk to the safety of users.



Fig. 4. A partially used building, which was studied by graduate students in 2019, in Urban Conservation Area of Havran (Source: MSFAU - Department of Restoration Archive)

## 1.2. Collaboration between Havran Municipality and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University

In 2011, the “Collaboration Protocol on the Protection of the Natural and Cultural Environment in Havran” was signed between the Balıkesir Province Havran District Municipality and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (MSFAU) Architecture Faculty, Department of

Restoration under the Department of Architecture. Soon after, studies on the preservation and documentation of the cultural assets in Havran were carried out between 2012-2019<sup>1</sup>.



Fig. 5. A Photograph with students and the Mayor, in front of the New Havran Municipality Building, 2019 (Source: MSFAU- Department of Restoration Archive)

Within the scope of the “Evaluation and Conservation of Sites” course lectured by Prof. Dr. Demet BİNAN, identification, documentation and analysis studies were carried out on the designated city blocks within the Urban Conservation Area of Havran in the 2012-2013, 2014-2015, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. At the same time, the registered cultural assets determined by the Municipality of Havran were documented within the scope of the “Conservation Project 1” and “Conservation Project 2” courses, and conservation projects were prepared by the students throughout the academic years.

## 2. An Evaluation of Experiences

### 2.1. Challenges

Today, traditional settlements all over the world face many threats, such as population loss, rapid change, and loss of traditional knowledge. Although the problems are common, the way they

are handled differs due to cultural backgrounds, management styles, and financial capabilities. Nevertheless, the case of Havran District shows similarities to Turkey in general in many aspects. Although there are many efforts by the Ministry of Culture to improve the protection of rural heritage with new laws and regulations, it is mostly up to the local governments to take initiatives for the conservation of vernacular architecture.

For instance, two important heritage management structures, the Site Management Office and the Conservation Implementation and Supervision Bureau, were inured by Law No. 5226 in 2004 in Turkey. Although there is an approved conservation and development plan for Havran, which was prepared by the local authority, a heritage management structure is not yet established. Moreover, within the municipality, there is a lack of trained employees to ensure the follow-up of the conservation processes and inter-institutional communications, such as the Regional Council for the Conservation of Cultural Properties. Consequently, the municipality is obliged to outsource heritage conservation-related technical services with the help of the university's consultancy. Most of the conservation projects that were submitted to the Regional Council for the Conservation of Cultural Properties require minor revisions. Even though these minor setbacks are manageable, with the current system, a simple conservation process can take up to several years, causing more damage to vulnerable structures.

The fact that any attempt regarding the conservation of the heritage site is at the initiative of the local administration without public participation has negative consequences. The implementation of the major interventions in the Urban Conservation Area with top-down decisions causes public reactions. The most recent attempt by the municipality was a controversial street rehabilitation project, which has been criticized by the local people and academic circles. During the first stage of the rehabilitation project,

<sup>1</sup> Upon the invitation of Balıkesir Province Havran District Municipality, graduate students in the Conservation and Restoration Graduate Program under the Restoration Department went to Havran for the first time in October 2010, and studies were carried out for the documentation and preservation of its cultural heritage. An official protocol was signed between the Municipality and MSGSU Department of Restoration on 3 November 2011 and this protocol was renewed in 2019.

municipal authorities attempted to interview the property owners one by one about their opinions on the proposed project, yet a common ground could not be found. Soon after the start of the construction, opposing comments arose from the users and the local property owners.

## 2.2. The Contribution of Collaboration to Conservation Education

The importance of conservation education has been expressed in almost all charters and conventions (Jokilehto, 2005). In 1993, ICOMOS emphasized that conservation is a subject that requires expertise by constituting the charter “Guidelines On Education And Training In The Conservation Of Monuments, Ensembles And Sites” (ICOMOS, 1993).

As stated in the charter, conservation education should produce professionals who are able to "read" a cultural asset with the aim of understand its value, history, and technology in order to plan for their conservation and work with inhabitants, administrators, and planners to develop conservation strategies (ICOMOS, 1993). Starting in the early 2000s, the Architectural Conservation and Restoration Graduate Program under Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture<sup>2</sup> has been organizing field studies in different parts of Turkey every year, taking into account the educational values of vernacular architecture.

Field studies consist of three stages: preparation, fieldwork, and presentation. In the preparation stage before the field studies to be carried out onsite, theoretical information about inventory creation and identification criteria is given to graduate students. In addition, maps of the area

are prepared, and written sources about the area are shared with students for reading.



Fig. 6. Balıkesir-Havran Cultural Heritage Conservation Studies conducted between 2011-2013 were published in 2014 (Source: Binan, Aşkun & Çobancaoğlu, 2014)

During the weeklong fieldwork stage, first, following a short introduction to the site, students in groups of two or three photograph all the buildings in the designated building blocks and prepare inventory slips. Following that, students begin surveying and documenting their designated heritage buildings. (Fig. 7) By the end of the week, measurements, photographs, and written and oral information about the heritage buildings and the site are gathered.

In the presentation stage after the fieldwork, all groups come together to gather the data they have obtained, make analyses and evaluations by carrying out a joint study. The preparation of conservation projects continues to be submitted at the end of the academic year. Students are expected to have prepared professional conservation projects to be delivered to the municipality.

Field study as an educational technique, supports students' active learning and competencies by enabling them to examine the details and construction systems on site, as well as by encountering real situations onsite. Therefore it creates and opportunity for theoretical knowledge and practice to improve together. Additionally, students can see the concrete results of their work and gain professional experience.

<sup>2</sup> Started in 1960 as an applied course, Architectural Survey at the undergraduate level, two decades later, the Architectural Conservation and Restoration Graduate Program under Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture was established in 1982. The department's academic staff, most of whom are international and national ICOMOS members, have executed many conservation projects in several scales since the beginning of the program.



Fig. 7. A Photograph which was taken during 2019 field study in Havran (Source: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University - Department of Restoration Archive)

### 2.3. Contribution of Collaboration to the Conservation of Vernacular Architecture

According to the criteria set by the Ministry of Culture and the Chamber of Architects, the cost of preparing a 100 m<sup>2</sup> cultural property conservation project is approximately 100 thousand Turkish liras, roughly equivalent to seven thousand Euros. This indicates that the municipality's support of the workshops also saves millions of Liras for the district. Restoration projects are prepared in accordance with the wishes of the property owners, as well as in line with modern necessities and health and safety requirements. It can be said that field studies also contributed to conservation awareness at various levels. A common challenge in the conservation of vernacular architecture in Turkey is the lack of heritage awareness. Many property owners oppose registration fearing that they will not be able to renew their building, or that the state will expropriate their property. During the field studies, graduate students spend a significant amount of time in the Urban Conservation Area, which creates an opportunity to get to know the local residents and learn about the history of the town, as well as explaining the works that they are doing. At the same time, students interact with the inhabitants over the length of their field studies as well as throughout the academic year.

There were 115 registered buildings (plots) within the Havran Conservation and Development Plan, which was revised in 2009. With the

examples added as a result of the work done by the students, the number of registered civil architecture examples today has increased to 154, an increase of over 20%.

As mentioned above, one of the most important achievements of field study is that students prepare conservation projects at a professional level. The Terzizade Mansion is one of the buildings whose restoration process took place in this manner.



Fig. 8. Left: Front Façade of Terzizade Mansion, Right: Back Façade of Terzizade Mansion (Source: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University - Department of Restoration Archive)

The Terzizade Mansion is recognized as one of the most important buildings in Havran and one of the most impressive examples of civil architecture in the region. Although the building was actively used as a residence until the early 2000s, it has been in need of urgent maintenance and repair since it was abandoned for more than a decade (Fig. 8). During the 2012-2013 academic year, conservation projects of the Terzizade Mansion were prepared by three graduate students with B.Arch. degrees. Projects were completed as part of the year-long Conservation Studio with the consultation of conservation expert professors. In 2014, Havran District Municipality signed a protocol with the property owners, and the building was rented for 25 years (Binan, 2019).



Fig. 9. Left: Front Façade of Terzizade Mansion During the Restorations in 2017, Right: Front Façade of Terzizade Mansion After Restorations in 2020 (Source: MSFAU-Department of Restoration Archive)



Fig. 10. Interior decorations of Terzizade Mansion (Source: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University - Department of Restoration Archive)

After being submitted to the Conservation Board by the Havran District Municipality, conservation projects<sup>3</sup> were approved for implementation in 2015. Upon the request of the Conservation Board, additional documentation and intervention planning studies were carried out for sensitive elements such as built-in cupboards, hand painted murals, and wooden decorations within the building. Although the additional drawings were approved by the Conservation Board in 2018, Havran Municipality had difficulties finding a budget for the restorations. Finally, with financial support from Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, restoration work was tendered to the contractor company by the municipality. Between 2018-2021 restorations were continued under the official consultancy of Prof. Dr. Demet Binan. (Fig. 9, Fig. 10 Fig. 11) Havran Terzizade Mansion, which is still being furnished, is planned to be opened as the “Terzizade Mansion Atatürk and Seyit Onbaşı Museum” in 2022.

Recently with the guidance of the municipality, several local property owners have applied for European Union’s Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) financial support fund to restore their buildings. One third of the applied conservation projects were conducted by the Architectural Conservation and Restoration Graduate Program under Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture.

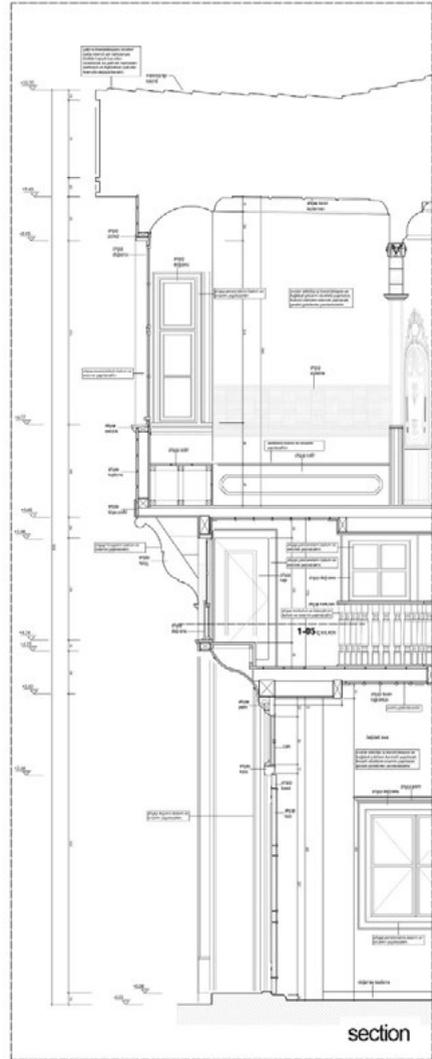


Fig. 11. System Detail Drawings of Terzizade Mansion. (Source: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University - Department of Restoration Archive)

### 3. Conclusions

Collaboration between Havran and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University has been going on for more than a decade. This is due to maintaining relations between the two parties even when different

<sup>3</sup> Terzizade Mansion. Project Team: Şevket Sak, Gökhan Teker, Cem Balcan. Project Advisor Prof. Dr. Demet Binan.

mayors were elected since the first protocol was signed. As mentioned earlier, for relatively small local governments, knowledge on sustainable conservation of vernacular architecture is a very specific topic of expertise. It is important to support the municipality in this regard. Moreover, it is critical to have a shared conservation vision among local government, academia, and the general public. Universities should have a leading role in the creation of this vision. Although several conservation projects are carried out in the district, the local people do not have enough resources and information about conservation. Therefore, it is important for the municipality to engage with the citizens, following a participatory approach. In this regard, municipality employees were contacted to organize community engagement organizations in the future. Meanwhile, learning from past experiences, local authorities conducted meetings with the property owners for the second stage of the street rehabilitation project, with significantly higher participation rates. It can be stated that as the number of restored buildings, such as the Terzizade Mansion, and street rehabilitation projects increases, so does the awareness of the heritage values and the motivation to protect the built environment of the local population. The third stage of the street rehabilitation project is planned to be implemented in accordance with Adalı's masters thesis; "A Proposal for the Protection of Havran Urban Conservation Area and Dumlupınar Street" (Adalı, 2013), which was conducted in the Architectural Conservation and Restoration Graduate Program under Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Department of Architecture. Another issue that we had the opportunity to observe during the COVID-19 pandemic is that students' motivation in the field studies in the rural settlements is higher than in projects in the city. It can be said that students' direct communication with the local people and property owners enables them to create more visionary and detailed conservation projects. It can be stated that in the 21st century, conservation is mainly about the management of change,

and change is constant. In this regard, along with individual initiatives, it is of great importance for Havran Municipality to create the necessary structure for the sustainability of this cultural heritage management.

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