CONSERVATION VS. REGENERATION?
THE CASE OF EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2010 ISTANBUL INITIATIVE

The purpose of this empirical research is to seek different perceptions on the possible future role and impact of European Capital of Culture 2010 Istanbul Initiative in enabling conservation to contribute to regeneration.

Culture has become increasingly important as a tool for regeneration in today’s competitive milieu. Cultural heritage, in that sense, is one of the most powerful instruments for enjoying this potential through the creation of cultural identity and generation of economic development. Historic cities are confronted with serious problems of deterioration, though; making the use of cultural heritage can act as a shield for changing the ongoing path and possessing a competitive advantage in the global world.

It has also become a common phenomenon recently to put cultural heritage at the heart of urban regeneration projects in Turkey. But this process raises some questions on the conservation of cultural heritage that the recent regeneration experiences are encouraging the destruction of built heritage in the way to provide a profit market for developers. The problem is due to the balance between conservation and regeneration, along with the changing market conditions. Today the challenge is European Capital of Culture 2010 event for Istanbul, though, it has to be proved that the initiative can also help conservation to contribute to regeneration.

With regard to this, the dissertation attempts to understand the vicious relationship between conservation and regeneration concentrating on the discussions in the literature. In addition, it analyses the ways in which the European Capital of Culture initiative can resolve that vicious circle enabling conservation to contribute to regeneration by constructing an empirical study based on interviews and documentary research. It concludes with specific remarks in the name of attaining more effective and sustainable outcomes from the process both for Istanbul and Turkey.