



A place-making approach to reclaim public space in Istanbul: Transforming haliç metro köprüsü

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Received Date: December 14, 2024

Revised Date: January 30, 2025

Accepted Date: January 31, 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: The transformation of public spaces in urban contexts requires a nuanced understanding of the interplay between architecture, cultural identity, and community needs. **Methods:** This study examines the Haliç Metro Köprüsü (Golden Horn Metro Bridge) in Istanbul, a structure that serves as both a critical piece of infrastructure and a contested public space within the city's historical landscape. Positioned at the intersection of modernist design and the Golden Horn's rich cultural heritage, the bridge has sparked debates about its impact on Istanbul's urban identity and public space. Employing a place-making approach, this research explores how the Haliç Metro Köprüsü can be reimagined to better integrate with its surrounding environment and serve as a meaningful site for public engagement. The study considers the challenges of reconciling the bridge's functional role with the preservation of cultural authenticity, while also addressing the need for inclusive urban spaces that reflect the city's diverse communities. Through a combination of spatial analysis, stakeholder perspectives, and theoretical frameworks on place identity, the research highlights strategies for reclaiming the bridge as a vibrant and culturally resonant public space. **Findings:** Findings emphasize the importance of integrating place-making principles into urban design processes, particularly in heritage-sensitive contexts. **Conclusion:** This approach not only enhances the usability and aesthetic value of public spaces but also strengthens their role as mediums for cultural expression and identity formation. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The study contributes to ongoing discussions on urban authenticity and the evolving relationship between architecture, public space, and place identity.

KEYWORDS: Istanbul; place identity; place-making; public space; urban authenticity.

1. Introduction

Urbanization in Istanbul has brought about profound changes to its historical architecture and cultural heritage, presenting a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities. As one of the world's most historically significant cities, Istanbul embodies a unique blend of cultural layers spanning centuries, from Byzantine and Ottoman influences to modern urbanization. However, rapid urban transformation, often driven by economic growth and developmental goals, has posed significant risks to the city's historical integrity and place identity. The undervaluation of participatory processes in urban planning has compounded these issues, leading to the erosion of cultural authenticity and the loss of historical significance in many of Istanbul's landmarks. Notable examples include UNESCO

Cite This Article:

Saputra, S. A., Maulana, F., & Husni, M. F. D. (2025). A place-making approach to reclaim public space in Istanbul: Transforming haliç metro köprüsü. *Journal of City: Branding and Authenticity*, 2(2), 138-153. <https://doi.org/10.61511/jcbau.v2i2.2025.1395>

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World Heritage sites such as Hagia Sophia and the Istanbul Land Walls, where top-down urban development policies have often overshadowed conservation priorities (Acar & Gündoğdu, 2024; Mutman & Turgut, 2018).

Despite these challenges, urbanization also offers opportunities for heritage promotion through innovative and sustainable urban planning strategies. When urban transformation is approached with a focus on inclusivity and community involvement, it can serve as a catalyst for preserving and reinvigorating cultural heritage. Strategies such as sustainable urban planning and participatory design have demonstrated potential for harmonizing development with heritage conservation (Feng, 2024). These methods not only ensure the physical preservation of historical sites but also enhance their functionality as vibrant, culturally meaningful public spaces.

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü (Golden Horn Metro Bridge) offers a poignant case study of this tension between development and heritage preservation in Istanbul. Completed in 2014, the bridge is a key infrastructural node connecting the city's European districts, yet its modernist design and placement within the historic Golden Horn district have sparked debates about its impact on the area's cultural and historical landscape. While the bridge was designed to address Istanbul's pressing transportation needs, it has largely been criticized for its lack of integration with the surrounding urban fabric and its limited engagement as a public space. These critiques highlight the broader challenge of reconciling modernist architecture with the preservation of place identity in heritage-sensitive contexts (Yagci & Mazlum, 2015).

This paper seeks to explore the transformative potential of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü through a place-making approach, focusing on strategies to reclaim the bridge as a dynamic public space that resonates with Istanbul's cultural identity. Place-making, a human-centered urban design methodology, emphasizes creating spaces that are not only functional but also inclusive and culturally engaging. By situating the bridge's transformation within the broader context of urban authenticity and participatory design, this study addresses key research questions: How can the Haliç Metro Köprüsü transcend its utilitarian role to serve as a meaningful public space? What place-making strategies can reconcile its modernist architecture with the historical and cultural identity of the Golden Horn?

Drawing on spatial analysis, stakeholder perspectives, and theoretical frameworks of place identity, this research contributes to ongoing discussions about the relationship between architecture, public space, and urban authenticity. By advocating for a balanced approach that integrates sustainable urban planning with community engagement, this study underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage while fostering dynamic, inclusive public spaces that reflect Istanbul's rich historical identity (Mills, 2008; Mills, 2011).

2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze the potential for transforming the Haliç Metro Köprüsü into a meaningful public space through a place-making lens. The methodology is designed to address the intersection of architecture, public space, and cultural heritage, employing a combination of spatial analysis, stakeholder interviews, and theoretical frameworks to develop actionable insights. The following subsections outline the specific methods employed.

2.1. Research design

This study is structured as a case study, a method particularly suitable for in-depth exploration of complex urban phenomena within their real-life context (Yin, 2018). The case study approach enables the examination of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü as a unique but generalizable example of modernist infrastructure in heritage-sensitive contexts. The research focuses on understanding the physical, cultural, and social dimensions of the

bridge and its surrounding urban landscape, providing a holistic basis for analysis and recommendations.

2.2 Data collection

2.2.1 Spatial analysis

Spatial analysis involves mapping and documenting the physical characteristics of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü and its surrounding urban fabric. Tools such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and on-site observations are utilized to assess the bridge's spatial integration, connectivity, and usability as a public space (Mbuh et al., 2020). Photographic documentation and historical maps are also examined to understand the evolution of the bridge's context within the Golden Horn district (Mutman & Turgut, 2018).

2.2.2 Stakeholder perspectives

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders, including urban planners, architects, policymakers, local residents, and commuters. This method allows for the collection of nuanced perspectives on the bridge's functionality, cultural significance, and potential as a public space. Stakeholder perspectives are critical for capturing the lived experiences and expectations of communities that interact with the bridge (Feng, 2024).

2.2.3 Archival and policy research

Archival research involves reviewing historical records, planning documents, and policy reports related to the Haliç Metro Köprüsü and the broader Golden Horn area. This includes examining urban planning policies and heritage conservation frameworks to understand the regulatory and socio-political dimensions influencing the bridge's development (Acar & Gündoğdu, 2024).

2.3 Analytical framework

2.3.1 Place-making framework

The analytical lens for this study is grounded in place-making theory, which emphasizes the human-centered design of public spaces to foster social interaction, cultural expression, and a sense of belonging (Friedmann, 2010). The framework is applied to evaluate the potential of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü as a public space that contributes to Istanbul's cultural identity.

2.3.2 Place identity and urban authenticity

The concepts of place identity and urban authenticity are integrated into the analysis to assess the bridge's alignment with the historical and cultural narratives of the Golden Horn district. These theories help explore how architectural interventions can harmonize with and enhance the place-specific identity of heritage-rich urban areas (Lynch, 1964; Mutman & Turgut, 2018).

2.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is employed to identify key patterns and insights from the qualitative data. Spatial data is analyzed to identify gaps and opportunities for improving the bridge's functionality and aesthetic integration within its context. Stakeholder interviews are coded to highlight recurring themes related to public perceptions and expectations. Insights from

archival research are triangulated with spatial and qualitative findings to ensure validity and depth (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Introduction to the location and function of Haliç Metro Köprüsü

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü (Golden Horn Metro Bridge) is a critical piece of transportation infrastructure located in the heart of Istanbul, spanning the Golden Horn waterway and connecting the districts of Beyoğlu and Fatih. This bridge is part of Istanbul's M2 metro line, facilitating daily commuting for thousands of residents and tourists. Completed in 2014, it has become an essential transit link in Istanbul's metropolitan network (Abi, 2022).

However, its location within the Golden Horn—a historically significant area featuring landmarks such as the Süleymaniye Mosque, the Fener-Balat neighborhoods, and the Galata Tower—places it at the center of debates concerning the balance between modern infrastructure and heritage preservation. The bridge's modernist design contrasts with its historical surroundings, raising concerns about its visual and cultural integration (Mills, 2017).



Fig. 1. Map of Haliç Metro Köprüsü and Surrounding Urban Context (S.J. Turkey, 2024)

Fig. 1. above illustrates the geographical positioning of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü (Golden Horn Metro Bridge) within Istanbul. The map and aerial views highlight the bridge's central location, connecting the historical peninsula to Beyoğlu across the Golden Horn. This strategic placement not only facilitates metro transportation along the M2 line but also situates the bridge amidst a rich cultural and historical fabric, including landmarks such as the Süleymaniye Mosque, Fener-Balat neighborhoods, and Galata Tower (Arslanlı et al., 2011).

Despite its vital infrastructural role, the bridge has been criticized for its disconnection from the surrounding historical aesthetic and urban fabric. Its modernist design contrasts with the heritage-sensitive Golden Horn area, raising questions about its integration into the cultural and spatial identity of the region (Secor, 2004). As visible in the aerial imagery, the bridge provides essential connectivity but lacks features that enhance its role as a meaningful public space, such as pedestrian-friendly design elements or cultural integration with its surroundings. This duality of functionality and controversy makes the Haliç Metro Köprüsü a pivotal case study for exploring place-making in heritage-sensitive urban contexts (Tuominen, 2013).

3.2 Theoretical foundations and their application

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü serves as a focal point for examining the interplay of architecture, public space, and place identity in urban contexts. Public spaces, as argued by Lynch (1960), are integral to fostering urban cohesion and shaping place identity. They function not only as areas for physical activity but also as arenas for social interaction, cultural exchange, and the reinforcement of collective memory. In this regard, the concept of place-making emphasizes the need to design spaces that are both functional and culturally resonant (Project for Public Spaces, 2016). However, as Bilgin and Gündoğdu (2024) highlight, Istanbul's rapid urbanization often undermines the participatory processes essential for meaningful place-making, leading to conflicts between modern infrastructure and historical preservation.

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü exemplifies this tension. Designed as a utilitarian infrastructure for Istanbul's growing transportation needs, its modernist aesthetic clashes with the historical and cultural narratives of the Golden Horn district (Mutman & Turgut, 2018). Analysis of spatial data reveals the bridge's limited role as a public space, with restricted pedestrian accessibility and minimal integration with surrounding urban elements. This disconnect underscores the challenges of aligning contemporary urban design with heritage-sensitive contexts.

Public spaces are critical for fostering urban cohesion and shaping place identity. However, rapid urbanization in Istanbul, particularly in heritage-sensitive areas, has led to tensions between modernist infrastructure and historical preservation. The Haliç Metro Köprüsü exemplifies these challenges. Based on spatial observations and archival analysis, the bridge is physically disconnected from surrounding historical areas and lacks elements that reflect the cultural narratives of the Golden Horn (Aksoy, 2012).

Table 1. Spatial Characteristics of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü

Aspect	Findings	Implication
Accessibility	Limited pedestrian pathways; prioritization of transit use.	Low usability as a public space.
Integration	Weak visual and spatial connection to Balat and Galata.	Missed opportunity for heritage integration.
Design Language	Modernist design; lack of historical or cultural elements.	Perceived dissonance with surrounding context.

Table 1 above summarizes the key spatial characteristics of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü, identifying critical aspects that affect its role as a public space. The table highlights three core issues accessibility, integration, and design language that collectively limit the bridge's usability and its connection to the surrounding urban fabric.

The accessibility of the bridge, while functional for transit users, is constrained for pedestrians due to the prioritization of metro operations. The pedestrian pathways, although present, are narrow and lack features such as seating, greenery, or shaded areas that could encourage leisure and social interaction. This limitation reduces the potential of the bridge to serve as a vibrant public space (Yagci & Mazlum, 2015). In terms of integration, the bridge fails to create strong visual or spatial connections to the historic districts of Balat and Galata, which lie on either side of the Golden Horn. This weak integration represents a missed opportunity to link modern infrastructure with the cultural richness of these neighbourhoods, further emphasizing the dissonance between the bridge and its surroundings (Mills, 2005).

Finally, the design language of the bridge, characterized by a stark modernist aesthetic, lacks historical or cultural references to the Golden Horn's heritage. This design choice contributes to perceptions of alienation among local communities, as the structure is seen as discordant with the area's historical context.

These findings reflect a broader need for more context-sensitive approaches to urban design. By addressing the issues outlined in the Table 1, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü could

evolve into a space that not only fulfills its functional role but also enriches the cultural and social fabric of Istanbul. This finding aligns with Lynch's (1960) theory that public spaces require coherence with their urban context to enhance place identity. Without such alignment, the space fails to resonate with the collective memory and cultural expectations of the community.

3.3 Stakeholder perspectives: Challenges and expectations

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, including urban planners, architects, and local residents, provide valuable insights into the bridge's contested identity. While policymakers emphasize the bridge's functionality and economic benefits, local residents express concerns over its visual and cultural dissonance (Duben, 2012). Many stakeholders highlight the bridge's failure to foster a sense of belonging or act as a meaningful public space. This finding aligns with Yagci and Mazlum's (2015) observation that urban interventions in Istanbul often neglect traditional architectural values, leading to a loss of place identity.

Residents also critique the bridge's limited usability, pointing to a lack of inviting spaces for public gathering or cultural activities (Secor, 2004). This resonates with Lynch's (1960) theory that public spaces should evoke a sense of orientation, connection, and purpose. Without these qualities, the bridge remains an underutilized asset in Istanbul's urban fabric.

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders reveal divergent perspectives on the bridge's role. While policymakers emphasize the bridge's functionality and economic benefits, residents and architects critique its limited role as a public space and its visual dissonance with the Golden Horn.

Table 2. Summary of Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholder Group	Perspective	Key Quote
Policymakers	Focus on transport functionality and economic efficiency.	"The bridge is a necessary infrastructure for Istanbul's growth."
Local Residents	Criticism of cultural disconnect and lack of usability.	"It doesn't feel like it belongs to the Golden Horn."
Architects/Urban Planners	Concerns about lack of participatory design processes.	"The bridge missed an opportunity to connect past and present."

Table 2 above, captures the diverse perspectives of stakeholders regarding the Haliç Metro Köprüsü, revealing contrasting priorities and concerns about its role and design. Policymakers emphasize the bridge's critical function in enhancing transportation connectivity and economic growth, underscoring its importance as an infrastructural asset for Istanbul's development. However, this narrow focus on functionality overlooks its potential to serve as a meaningful public space or integrate into the historical and cultural landscape of the Golden Horn (Beyinli, 2022).

Local residents express dissatisfaction with the bridge, criticizing its lack of cultural resonance and limited usability. They view the structure as an intrusion into the historic fabric of the area, lamenting its failure to create a sense of place or community. This sentiment aligns with broader critiques of urban projects that prioritize efficiency over inclusivity, often resulting in spaces that feel detached from their cultural contexts. Architects and urban planners echo these concerns, pointing to the absence of participatory processes in the bridge's design and planning (Eldem, 2013). They highlight missed opportunities to connect the modern infrastructure with the area's historical and cultural narratives, which could have enriched its role as both a transit link and a public space (Ajjo, 2021).

The insights from Table 2 above, emphasize the need for inclusive urban design that incorporates community voices and cultural considerations. Without such efforts, projects like the Haliç Metro Köprüsü risk alienating the very communities they are meant to serve,

reducing their value to functional infrastructure rather than dynamic, socially engaging spaces (Belivermiş & Eğribel, 2018). This reinforces the critical role of participatory design in achieving balanced urban development that respects both modern needs and cultural heritage. These perspectives highlight the need for inclusive urban design that incorporates the voices of local communities. As noted by Yagci and Mazlum (2015), neglecting participatory approaches can result in spaces that are physically functional but socially alienating.



Fig. 2. Functional and Structural of Haliç Metro Köprüsü
(Istanbul Metro Quiz by JetPunk, 2021)

The images in Fig. 2 above, illustrate two key features of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü: its functionality as a metro station and its structural underpinnings. The first image showcases the station platform at sunset, highlighting the bridge's role as part of Istanbul's M2 metro line. The platform, bustling with commuters, demonstrates the bridge's efficiency in facilitating daily transit and its strategic importance in connecting Istanbul's European districts. The iconic backdrop of Istanbul's skyline, including the Suleymaniye Mosque, juxtaposes the bridge's modern infrastructure with the city's rich historical identity.

The second image provides a closer view of the bridge's structural foundation, emphasizing its robust engineering. The detailed construction elements, including support mechanisms and mechanical components, reflect the complexity of the design. While the structure is a testament to modern engineering capabilities, it also underscores the utilitarian focus of the bridge, which prioritizes transportation and technical efficiency over aesthetic and cultural integration.

These dual perspectives—functionality and structural design—highlight both the strengths and challenges of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü. While it successfully meets the demands of urban mobility, its design largely neglects the opportunity to harmonize with the surrounding cultural and historical context of the Golden Horn. This disconnect underscores the need for further interventions to enhance its cultural resonance and potential as a public space.

3.4 Opportunities for transformation: Place-making and urban authenticity

Despite these challenges, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü holds significant potential for transformation through place-making strategies. Spatial analysis indicates opportunities for integrating the bridge with adjacent urban elements, such as the historic neighborhoods of Balat and Galata. Design interventions, such as creating pedestrian-friendly access points, establishing cultural nodes, and incorporating elements reflective of Istanbul's historical character, could enhance its usability and identity.

The findings align with Feng's (2024) argument that sustainable urban planning can bridge the gap between development and heritage preservation. For instance, temporary installations or cultural events could activate the space, fostering a sense of ownership among residents. Furthermore, participatory design processes, as advocated by Bilgin and

Gündoğdu (2024), are essential for ensuring that such transformations reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities.

The spatial and stakeholder analyses point to several opportunities for reimagining the Haliç Metro Köprüsü as a meaningful public space. A place-making approach could involve integrating cultural programming, enhancing pedestrian accessibility, and incorporating design elements that reflect Istanbul's historical identity.

Table 3. Place-Making Opportunities for the Haliç Metro Köprüsü

Opportunity	Proposed Action	Expected Outcome
Improved Accessibility	Add pedestrian-friendly pathways and green spaces.	Increased use by residents and visitors.
Cultural Integration	Install public art reflecting the Golden Horn's history.	Strengthened place identity and cultural resonance.
Programming and Activities	Host cultural events and markets on/around the bridge.	Enhanced community engagement and vibrancy.

Table 3 above, outlines actionable strategies for transforming the Haliç Metro Köprüsü into a vibrant and inclusive public space, emphasizing the potential of place-making principles to address its current limitations. The proposed actions focus on three primary opportunities: improving accessibility, fostering cultural integration, and introducing community-centered programming. Improved accessibility is a critical first step in enhancing the bridge's usability. By adding pedestrian-friendly pathways and incorporating green spaces, the bridge can become more inviting and functional for residents and visitors alike. Such enhancements would encourage greater pedestrian engagement and create a more comfortable and inclusive environment.

Cultural integration is another key strategy, as the bridge currently lacks elements that reflect the historical and cultural significance of the Golden Horn. Installing public art that draws inspiration from the area's heritage could strengthen the bridge's identity and foster a deeper connection with its surroundings. These cultural interventions would transform the bridge from a purely functional structure into a symbolic space that resonates with the community. Finally, programming and activities, such as hosting cultural events, markets, or exhibitions, can activate the bridge and its adjacent spaces, fostering a sense of community ownership and vibrancy. These initiatives would not only enhance social interaction but also position the bridge as a dynamic venue for cultural expression and engagement. By implementing these place-making strategies, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü could transcend its role as a transit corridor, becoming a meaningful public space that reflects Istanbul's unique identity while meeting the needs of its diverse population. Such interventions align with Feng's (2024) emphasis on sustainable urban planning as a tool for harmonizing development with cultural heritage preservation. These strategies can transform the bridge into a space that fosters both connectivity and cultural expression.

3.5 Broader implications for urban design in heritage contexts

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü case underscores critical lessons for urban design in heritage-sensitive areas. First, architecture should not be treated merely as infrastructure but as an opportunity to reinforce place identity and cultural continuity. As demonstrated by Mutman and Turgut (2018), integrating modernist structures with historical contexts requires a careful balance of form, function, and symbolism. Second, participatory processes are indispensable for achieving sustainable urban transformations. Engaging local communities in the planning and design stages ensures that interventions are inclusive and culturally resonant.

Finally, this case highlights the need for a holistic approach to urban planning that incorporates spatial, social, and cultural dimensions. By adopting place-making principles, cities like Istanbul can address the dual imperatives of modernization and heritage

preservation, creating spaces that are not only functional but also deeply connected to their historical and cultural roots.

The findings of this study highlight important lessons for urban design in heritage-sensitive areas. Architecture serves as a medium for place identity, as demonstrated by the Haliç Metro Köprüsü, which can either reinforce or undermine cultural narratives. Integrating historical and cultural elements into the bridge's design could help mitigate the current perception of dissonance (Mutman & Turgut, 2018). Furthermore, participatory urban planning is crucial for creating spaces that are inclusive and reflective of local identities. Involving stakeholders in the redesign process could address the bridge's existing limitations and foster a sense of community ownership (Bilgin & Gündoğdu, 2024). Moreover, balancing development and heritage preservation remains a key challenge. Feng (2024) emphasizes that sustainable urban planning provides a framework for accommodating modernization while preserving historical and cultural values.

3.6 Haliç Metro Köprüsü reveals significant challenges and opportunities

The analysis of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü reveals significant challenges and opportunities in reimagining it as a meaningful public space. The findings underline critical tensions between modernist infrastructure and the preservation of Istanbul's rich historical and cultural identity. This discussion synthesizes these findings, situating them within the broader theoretical and practical contexts of urban design, place-making, and heritage preservation.

3.6.1 Modernist design vs. historical context

The Haliç Metro Köprüsü embodies a utilitarian, modernist approach to infrastructure design, prioritizing functionality over cultural integration. While effective as a transit link, the bridge fails to harmonize with the Golden Horn's historical landscape, a criticism commonly directed at urban developments in heritage-sensitive contexts (Mutman & Turgut, 2018). This design dissonance mirrors a broader trend in Istanbul's urban planning, where rapid modernization often marginalizes historical and cultural considerations (Bilgin & Gündoğdu, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, the bridge's inability to resonate with its surroundings reflects Lynch's (1960) concept of place identity, which emphasizes the importance of spatial coherence in fostering a sense of belonging. The visual and cultural discontinuity created by the bridge disrupts this coherence, leading to perceptions of alienation among local communities. As urban designers increasingly advocate for culturally sensitive approaches, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü highlights the consequences of neglecting this principle.



Fig. 3. View of Haliç Metro Köprüsü and Adjacent Urban Environment

Fig. 3 above captures the Haliç Metro Köprüsü and its immediate surroundings, highlighting the bridge's modernist structure within the broader urban landscape. While the bridge effectively connects key districts across the Golden Horn, its design prioritizes transit efficiency and functionality over integration with the cultural and historical character of its environment. The lack of visual or spatial harmony with the surrounding

historical sites, such as the Süleymaniye Mosque and Fener-Balat neighborhoods, is evident in its stark modernist form and limited pedestrian amenities.

This image also underscores the absence of features that could foster public engagement, such as spaces for gathering, cultural activities, or design elements reflective of the area’s heritage. This disconnects, as discussed in the preceding analysis, reinforces perceptions of alienation and undermines the bridge’s potential as a site of cultural and social resonance. Reimagining such spaces with culturally sensitive interventions is crucial for harmonizing modern infrastructure with Istanbul’s rich urban heritage, aligning with Lynch’s (1960) concept of spatial coherence and place identity.

3.6.2 The role of stakeholders in place-making

Stakeholder perspectives reveal a critical gap between top-down urban planning processes and community needs. Policymakers prioritize functionality and economic growth, while local residents and cultural advocates emphasize the importance of heritage and public engagement. This divergence underscores the need for participatory planning processes, as advocated by contemporary place-making theories (Project for Public Spaces, 2016; Feng, 2024).

The lack of community involvement in the bridge’s design and subsequent integration has resulted in a space that fails to serve as a vibrant public hub. As observed in global case studies, inclusive urban design processes that engage local stakeholders often yield spaces that are both functional and culturally resonant (Feng, 2024). By neglecting this approach, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü remains underutilized as a public space, limiting its potential to contribute to Istanbul’s urban authenticity.

3.6.3 Opportunities for reclaiming public space

Despite its shortcomings, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü offers substantial opportunities for transformation through strategic place-making interventions. Spatial and stakeholder analyses suggest that improving pedestrian accessibility, integrating cultural elements, and hosting community-driven activities could redefine the bridge’s role within Istanbul’s urban fabric (Alvarez & Yarkan, 2010; Belivermiş & Eğribel, 2018).

The incorporation of cultural programming, such as temporary art installations and public events, could activate the bridge as a dynamic cultural node (Bodnar, 2015; Toolis, 2017). These interventions align with Feng’s (2024) framework for sustainable urban planning, which advocates for blending heritage preservation with contemporary urban needs. Additionally, design enhancements that draw inspiration from the Golden Horn’s historical narratives could mitigate the perceived dissonance between the bridge and its surroundings, fostering a stronger connection to place identity (Boyar & Fleet, 2010).

Table 4. Potential benefits of place-making interventions

Intervention	Expected Impact
Enhanced pedestrian amenities	Increased usability and visitor engagement.
Cultural programming	Activation of the bridge as a vibrant public hub.
Heritage-inspired design	Strengthened cultural resonance and place identity.

Table 4 highlights the anticipated impacts of specific place-making interventions for the Haliç Metro Köprüsü, emphasizing their potential to transform the bridge into a more functional, inclusive, and culturally resonant public space. The proposed interventions focus on three key areas: enhanced pedestrian amenities, cultural programming, and heritage-inspired design.

The introduction of enhanced pedestrian amenities would directly improve the usability of the bridge and its surrounding spaces. Features such as wider walkways, shaded areas, and seating would create a more welcoming environment, encouraging greater use by residents and visitors. These enhancements would not only support leisure activities but

also establish the bridge as a pedestrian-friendly space within Istanbul's urban fabric (Eriksson et al., 2007).

Cultural programming represents another critical intervention. Hosting events such as exhibitions, cultural festivals, and pop-up markets would activate the bridge as a vibrant public hub, fostering social interaction and engagement. These activities would create dynamic opportunities for community involvement, ensuring the bridge serves as more than a mere transit corridor (Walliser, 2013).

Lastly, integrating heritage inspired design would reinforce the cultural significance of the Golden Horn, bridging the gap between the bridge's modernist aesthetic and the area's historical identity (Rashdan & Ashour, 2024; Li et al., 2024). Architectural elements or public art reflecting Istanbul's heritage could strengthen the cultural resonance of the bridge, enhancing its place identity and fostering a deeper connection with the surrounding community (Su & Ismail, 2024) (Maleckas, 2024). By implementing these interventions, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü could transcend its current limitations, evolving into a space that supports cultural expression, community cohesion, and urban vibrancy, while respecting Istanbul's unique historical character.

These strategies demonstrate how infrastructure projects like the Haliç Metro Köprüsü can transcend their functional roles, evolving into meaningful public spaces that reflect the cultural richness of their settings.



Fig. 4. Public Space and Pedestrian Pathways Around Haliç Metro Köprüsü

The images in Fig. 4 showcase the current state of public spaces and pedestrian pathways adjacent to the Haliç Metro Köprüsü. The first image highlights the open, landscaped areas and pedestrian walkways near the bridge, designed to provide a connection between the infrastructure and its surrounding environment. The second image focuses on the underpass area beneath the bridge, emphasizing the wooden platforms and sparse greenery. Despite these elements, the spaces appear underutilized, lacking vibrancy and activities that could transform them into more dynamic public spaces (Dong & binti Jamali, 2024).

These images illustrate both the challenges and opportunities for reclaiming the areas around the Haliç Metro Köprüsü as active, inclusive public spaces. While the infrastructure provides a physical foundation for pedestrian access and social engagement, its current design does not sufficiently encourage community interaction or cultural integration. The lack of shaded areas, engaging features, and programming further limits the potential for these spaces to become hubs of activity (El Mansoury, 2024).

Incorporating place-making strategies such as hosting cultural events, integrating local art, and enhancing pedestrian amenities could revitalize these areas and foster a stronger connection between the bridge and its users. By creating spaces that are inviting, functional, and culturally resonant, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü could transcend its role as a transit hub and become a meaningful public space that reflects Istanbul's rich historical and cultural identity.

3.6.4 Broader implications for urban design in Istanbul

The case of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü highlights broader implications for urban design and planning in heritage-sensitive cities like Istanbul. The tension between modernism and heritage preservation underscores the need for balanced approaches that prioritize both contemporary urban needs and cultural continuity.

Key lessons from this study emphasize the significance of contextual sensitivity, participatory design, and the reclamation of public spaces in urban planning. Modern infrastructure should be designed to integrate harmoniously with heritage landscapes, ensuring the preservation of historical narratives while fulfilling functional requirements (Mutman & Turgut, 2018). Additionally, participatory design processes play a crucial role in urban development, as engaging local communities ensures that interventions align with collective needs and cultural identities, thereby strengthening the connection between residents and their surroundings (Acar & Gündoğdu, 2024). Furthermore, reclaiming public spaces through strategic place-making presents an opportunity to transform underutilized infrastructure into vibrant, inclusive, and culturally meaningful urban environments (Mills, 2008). These lessons are particularly relevant as Istanbul continues to navigate the dual imperatives of modernization and heritage preservation. By adopting a more holistic and inclusive approach to urban design, the city can ensure that its public spaces remain dynamic, authentic, and reflective of its rich cultural history.

4. Conclusions

This study has examined the Haliç Metro Köprüsü (Golden Horn Metro Bridge) as a contested site of modern infrastructure within a historically rich urban fabric, focusing on its spatial characteristics, stakeholder perspectives, and potential for transformation through place-making. The findings highlight the duality of the bridge's role: while it serves as a critical transit link that addresses Istanbul's transportation needs, its modernist design and limited integration with the Golden Horn's historical and cultural context undermine its capacity to function as a meaningful public space. This disconnection reflects broader challenges faced by rapidly urbanizing cities, where infrastructural modernization often comes at the expense of cultural authenticity and place identity.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the understanding of place-making in heritage-sensitive contexts, particularly in reconciling the tensions between modernist architecture and historical preservation. The bridge's lack of spatial coherence and cultural resonance underscores the importance of Lynch's (1960) concept of place identity, which emphasizes that urban spaces must align with their context to foster a sense of belonging and continuity. The research also reinforces the critical role of participatory urban planning in creating spaces that not only meet functional needs but also reflect the values and aspirations of local communities. By failing to engage stakeholders and incorporate heritage elements into its design, the Haliç Metro Köprüsü represents a missed opportunity for inclusive urban transformation.

The novelty of this study lies in its application of place-making principles to a piece of modern infrastructure in a heritage-sensitive area. While existing literature often focuses on preserving historical sites or designing new public spaces, this research positions infrastructure as a potential medium for cultural and social engagement. The study proposes actionable strategies, such as enhancing pedestrian access, integrating cultural programming, and incorporating heritage-inspired design elements, to transform the bridge into a dynamic public space that bridges Istanbul's past and present. This approach highlights the capacity of modern infrastructure to evolve beyond its functional role, fostering urban authenticity and enriching collective memory.

Ultimately, the transformation of the Haliç Metro Köprüsü offers valuable insights for urban planners, architects, and policymakers navigating the dual imperatives of modernization and heritage preservation. As Istanbul continues to grow, this case

underscores the necessity of adopting a holistic approach to urban design—one that integrates functionality, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement. By doing so, cities can reclaim infrastructure not only as a tool for connectivity but also as a platform for fostering identity, cultural expression, and social cohesion. The findings and strategies presented in this research serve as a framework for addressing similar challenges in other heritage-sensitive urban contexts globally, marking a significant step forward in the discourse on sustainable urban development.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their heartfelt gratitude to Istanbul Kent University for their invaluable support and collaboration in this research project. The institutional resources and academic environment provided by the university greatly facilitated the successful completion of this study.

The authors also extend our sincere appreciation to Dr. Eko Nursanty for her guidance and mentorship, as well as for inviting the authors to join her research team as part of her Visiting Researcher activities in Istanbul. Her dedication to fostering international research collaborations and her insights into urban design and cultural heritage preservation were instrumental in shaping the direction of this study.

This research was conducted as part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative under the *Penelitian Kampus Merdeka* program, which aims to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance academic exchange across institutions. The support from MBKM has been pivotal in enabling the integration of international research experiences into the academic pursuits of the authors. The authors are deeply grateful to all institutions and individuals who contributed to the success of this collaborative research.

Author Contribution

The authors have equally contributed to the conception, writing, and revision of this article, ensuring its accuracy and integrity.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Ethical Review Board Statement

Not available.

Informed Consent Statement

Not available.

Data Availability Statement

Not available.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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