

Reclaiming the Forgotten: Adaptive Reuse of Yenice Han as Threshold

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Abstract

This study explores the adaptive reuse potential of Yenice Han, a historic caravanserai located between Antalya and the ancient city of Termessos. Once a resting point for travelers, the structure now lies abandoned within a protected natural and archaeological landscape. Using a design-led research approach, this paper examines how Yenice Han can be reactivated as a cultural threshold by reconnecting ecological systems, historical memory, and contemporary community needs. This reactivation is explored through the rediscovery and reinterpretation of the ancient path linking Yenice Han to Termessos, treating this forgotten route as both a spatial and cultural connector. Through field observation, spatial analysis, and scenario-based design, the study positions the Han not only as a heritage asset but as a landscape interface capable of fostering ecological continuity and cultural engagement. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on architectural heritage, memory, and adaptive reuse by highlighting the role of minimal interventions, landscape-driven strategies, and temporal layering in reviving forgotten places without compromising authenticity.

Keywords: Adaptive Reuse, Cultural Landscape, Heritage Memory

Introduction

Adaptive reuse has become a critical architectural strategy in the context of heritage conservation and sustainability (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel 2020). Beyond prolonging the life of buildings, adaptive reuse offers new cultural, ecological, and social meanings to architectural remains embedded in the contemporary landscape. Within this discourse, the case of Yenice Han represents a unique opportunity to reflect on the relationship between memory, place and design (Fig.1 design proposal). Yenice Han historically functioned as a resting node between settlements, serving travelers and trade along regional routes. Its position—between the modern city of Antalya and Termessos Ancient City—establishes it as a cultural threshold: a spatial and symbolic passage between past and present, nature and settlement, movement and pause. Today, the building stands abandoned (Fig.1 the current situation), yet retains a strong sense of *genius loci*, shaped by its robust stone walls, inner courtyard typology, and immersive forest setting (Norberg-Schulz 1980).

Literature Review

The concept of place-based identity, particularly through memory and landscape, forms

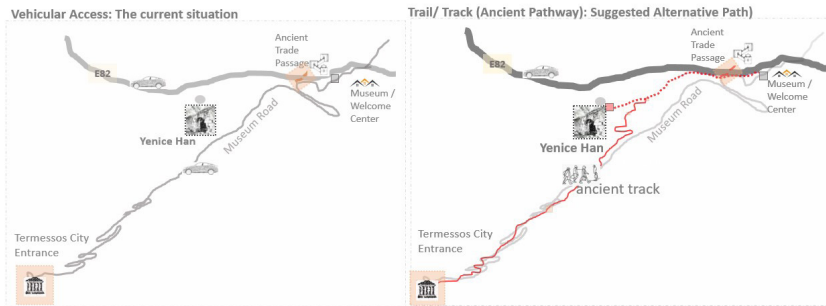


Fig. 1. Yenice Han within the regional mobility network, Antalya–Termessos (author, 2025)

the intellectual foundation of this study. Memory is not merely a trace of the past but an active force that informs contemporary meaning-making (Nora 1989; Ricoeur 2004). In architectural heritage, this translates into preserving spatial character and social significance while allowing new forms of inhabitation (Jokilehto 1999). Critical regionalism frames the project's stance against placeless universalism by rooting design in local geography, history, and materiality (Frampton 1983). By engaging these theoretical perspectives, this study argues for an adaptive reuse approach that neither freezes the Han as a relic nor transforms it aggressively, by instead sustain its capacity for contemporary meaning. By design, it aims to maintain its latent cultural value while enabling new communal encounters grounded in landscape experience. Recent scholarship has further emphasized the role of adaptive reuse in rural and infrastructural heritage, where buildings such as mills, farm structures, and caravanserais act as anchors of local memory and spatial continuity (Cantacuzino 1975; Orbaşlı 2008). In these contexts, reuse is understood not simply as a strategy of preservation, but as a cultural process that repositions heritage within contemporary social and ecological life (Veldpaus and Pereira Roders 2014).

Methodology

This study employs a Design-Led Research methodology, which situates design as both a process of inquiry and a mode of knowledge production. Rather than treating design outcomes as final results, the approach uses design scenarios to interrogate spatial, cultural, and ecological potentials. The research process unfolds in three interrelated phases. The first is the Fieldwork and Documentation. On-site observations, photographic surveys, and spatial mappings were conducted to record the Han's current condition and its relationship with the surrounding landscape. This stage also involved tracing historical routes connecting the site to Termessos and nearby rural settlements, revealing its role within regional mobility and cultural exchange networks (Fig. 2). The second phase is Spatial Reading and Interpretation. It involved analytical drawings and diagrammatic readings of the site, focusing on its spatial organization (square plan, courtyard typology, introversion). These readings identified how light, enclosure, and material decay contribute to the building's atmosphere, interpreting it as a temporal interface between past and future (Fig. 2). The third phase is Design Scenario Development. Based on insights from the previous stages, adaptive reuse scenarios were generated. Each scenario explores a potential mode of reactivation, such as courtyard-

based cultural events, small-scale service units, and ecological linkages. The emphasis lies on reversibility and site-specificity, aligning with principles of *Critical Regionalism* (Frampton, 1983) and sustainable landscape integration (Fig. 3-4). This design-led process does not aim to prescribe a singular architectural solution; rather, it produces a structured yet flexible framework through which the *spirit of place* can be reinterpreted. The iterative feedback between analysis and design enables the emergence of knowledge grounded in both spatial experience and theoretical reflection.

Findings and Discussion

The design exploration produced three interrelated narratives. (i) The Courtyard as Cultural Core; the existing courtyard was reinterpreted as a civic platform—an open, yet protected

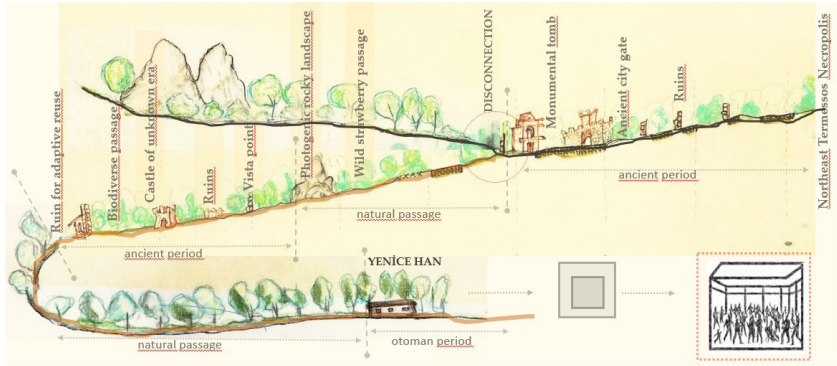


Fig. 2. Reactivation of ancient paths and ecological flows, Yenice Han, Antalya (author, 2025)

space for small exhibitions, performances, and workshops. By preserving its calm and proportion, the intervention retains the Han's meditative atmosphere while extending its social role (Fig. 3). (ii) The Landscape as Active Interface; the surrounding forest and terrain are engaged as part of the architectural experience. Lightweight wooden decks and pathways link the Han to its ecological context, inviting visitors to move between built and natural space (Fig. 4). (iii) The Threshold as Regenerative Connector; positioned between the modern settlement of Döşemealtı and the Termessos National Park, Yenice Han acts as a hinge—a spatial and symbolic connector. Through small, reversible additions, the building becomes a site of encounter between conservation and use, past and future (Fig. 5). The discussion emphasizes how *genius loci* can be operationalized through design and a critical mediator. The Han's adaptive reuse proposes an alternative to restoration: it preserves erosion as a form of memory while inserting new layers that enable continuity. The approach demonstrates that rural heritage can serve as both ecological infrastructure and cultural commons, reframing preservation as active participation rather than static protection.

Conclusion

The study reclaims Yenice Han not as a static monument, but as a living threshold within the cultural landscape of Termessos. Through a design-led research process, the project



Fig. 3. Courtyard activation for social and cultural use, Yenice Han, Antalya (Merve Artkan and Zeynep Durgut, 2025)

demonstrates that adaptive reuse can transcend conventional restoration by engaging with the spatial, ecological, and mnemonic layers of place. The Han's courtyard, introverted geometry, and environmental setting form the foundation of an approach that privileges continuity over replacement, dialogue over reconstruction.

By activating the building through minimal and reversible interventions, the study contributes to broader debates on sustainable reuse and critical regionalism. It reveals how small, precise design gestures—open-air courtyards, lightweight additions, and ecological connections—can catalyze new forms of cultural engagement while preserving the integrity of place. In doing so, the project reframes adaptive reuse as an act of stewardship, where memory and landscape are reconnected through architectural empathy.

Future work will extend this conceptual and methodological framework toward applied collaborations with local authorities, academic studios, and heritage organizations. The proposed scenarios serve as an open platform for participatory development, encouraging

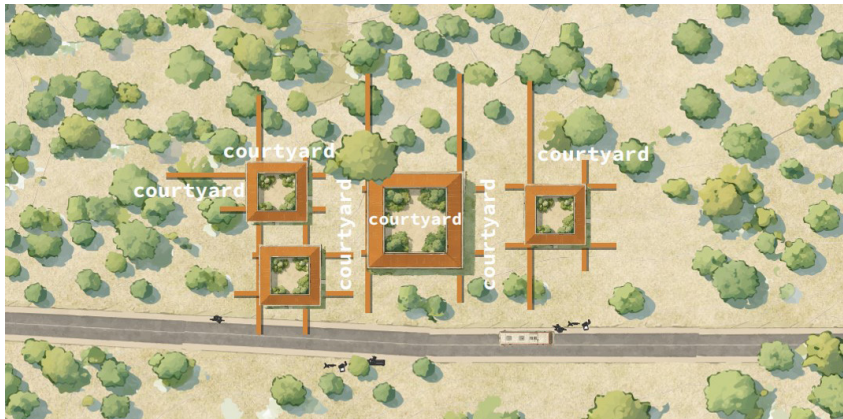


Fig. 4. Landscape connections through small courtyards, Yenice Han, Antalya (Berat Koksall, 2025)

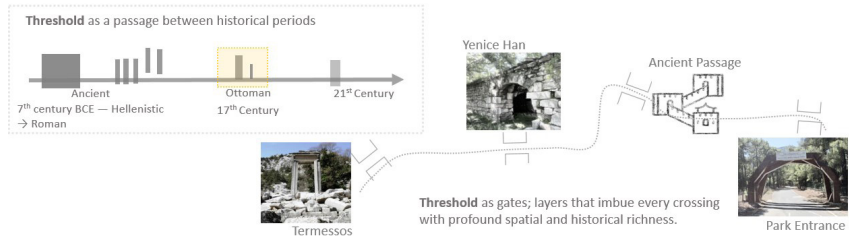


Fig. 5. Threshold: Yenice Han as temporal interface and spatial gates (author, 2025)

site-based experimentation and community involvement. Ultimately, Yenice Han exemplifies how design-led inquiry can reactivate neglected heritage as both a spatial and social catalyst. It transforms the forgotten into the formative once again.

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