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Urban Landscapes and Identity

Isil Kaymaz

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1. Introduction

Identity has always been a popular research subject for various disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, human geography and anthropology. However, urbanization and globalization processes, which have caused a rapid change on our environments, have brought the concept of identity on the agenda of planners and designers in the last few decades. The major concern of the identity related research is on the sustainability of place identity.

Urbanization and globalization are obviously two major phenomena that affect our social, economic, cultural lives as well as our physical environment. Despite the broad context of the issues related to these two processes, it wouldn't be untrue to say the major global concern that has arisen from urbanization and globalization, is the sustainability of the environment. On the other hand current studies on sustainability of the urban environments mainly focus on factors like water, air, energy, and transport while urban identity is receiving attention rarely [1].

The end of the last century faced a rapid and dramatic increase in urban population worldwide, mainly because of immigration. Today more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. According to United Nation's (UN) 2011 revision of *World Urbanization Prospects*, the population living in urban environments is expected to increase from 3.6 billion (2011) to 6.3 million by 2050 [2]. Therefore it seems that the urban environments will continue to grow in order to accommodate more inhabitants. Consequently, both natural and cultural landscape resources will continue to be under pressure in and around urban settlements. Besides the ecological sustainability issues, expansion of urban areas, increasing urban population and deterioration of both natural and cultural resources raise the concerns on image and identity of urban landscapes.

Today's cities are considerably multi-cultural and heterogeneous, more than ever. The influence of neo-liberalism and globalization is very prominent on the development of

urban areas and this consequently affects identity of urban environments. Hence, management and conservation of local heritage and values have become an important aspect in urban design and planning.

Place identity is an important dimension of social and cultural life in urban areas and continuity of place identity is strongly linked to place attachment and sense of belonging. In environmental psychology, it is assumed that people intrinsically strive to develop a sense of belonging to a place. Place attachment and sense of belonging are crucial in order to establish an emotional and cognitive bond with a place, which leads to the feeling of security and sense of community. Thus, identity of a place is more than just the physical appearance, but also involves a “meaning” for the individual and the community.

Republic of Turkey is a relatively young, developing and transcontinental country which is located on mostly Anatolian peninsula. Due to its geographical context and history, modern Turkey is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Turkey’s lands hosted many great civilizations such as Byzantine Empire, Seljuk Empire and Ottoman Empire; thus were shaped under the influence of many cultures. The traces of those civilizations can still be seen in the form of current settlements, in various parts of Turkey. However, Turkey’s rich diversity of both cultural and natural assets has been difficult to manage and conserve, especially due to urbanization and globalization processes.

The westernization efforts during the late Ottoman Empire period continued after Republic of Turkey was established in 1923. The controlled and planned development of urban areas in the first decades of the Republic created new identities in urban areas. For instance after Ankara’s proclamation as the capital city of the Republic of Turkey, which had been a small degraded and insignificant Anatolian town, it was aimed to construct Ankara as a model city for modern Turkey [3]. Besides new governmental, cultural, financial and educational buildings, and open and green spaces for recreation and leisure were constructed. All these new developments changed life-styles, as well as the perceived urban identity. However, in 1950’s urbanization process gained a dramatic increase, mainly because of immigration, and expansion of urban areas subsequently became uncontrollable, not only in Ankara but across the country. Furthermore economic fluctuations and political instability had deteriorating effects on the urban environment.

One of the significant impacts on Turkish urban landscape has been the emergence of shopping malls as an urban landscape element after 1990’s. On the other hand, a recent study showed that leisure time spent in shopping malls has increased in the last decade while open space use has decreased [4]. Such changes in urban environment are often due to changing lifestyles which is an important factor in identity of urban spaces. According to Erkip; *“shopping malls are the most important additions to urban life in Turkey in terms of civilization, modernity, and the democratization of consumption patterns. Their impact does not seem to be limited to the field of consumption only, as they form a new identity combining global and the local”* [5].

According to the latest census data of Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey has a population of over 74 million, and 77% of the total population lives in urban environments (provinces

and district centres) [6]. However, urbanization patterns are not the same in different parts of Turkey. Işık argues that industry, tourism (in Mediterranean region), and terror incidents (in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia regions) are the major influences on the urbanization patterns of the Turkish cities [7]. As a result, identities of different urban spaces in Turkey change and develop in different directions and rates, which deepen “national identity” crisis in terms of spatial, social and political aspects.

Following a brief introduction on the concept of identity within the literature, this chapter will focus on the relationship between place identity and urban landscape. Concepts related to place identity, such as place attachment will also be discussed and some identity relevant examples from Turkish cities will be provided.

2. The concept of identity

The concept of identity has a broad context. The term is more common in social sciences and it has been employed to describe the “uniqueness” of a person or a thing from very different perspectives and purposes, such as personal identity, political identity, ethnic identity, social identity and place identity. The word identity comes from the Latin “*identitas*” and is defined as “*the fact of being who or what a person or thing is*” in the Oxford English Dictionary [8]. According to Gleason the use of the word dates back to 16th century and until the mid of 1950’s identity is used to describe “the unity of the self” by the philosophers [9].

As Fearon points out “even though everyone knows how to use the word properly in everyday discourse, it proves quite difficult to give a short and adequate summary statement that captures the range of its present meanings” [10]. The diverse use of the concept makes it even harder to define and explain. Definition of identity has been subject to mainly sociological studies in the last few decades. However, some previous definition attempts might provide some clues to understand the basics of the identity concept, before moving to next section; spatial dimension of identity.

According to Wendt “*identities are relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self*” [9]. Castells defines identity as “people’s source of meaning and experience” [11]. On the other hand Katzenstein points out that identity is evolving images of self and other and is mutually constructed [10]. In the encyclopaedic dictionary of “Urban Planning” (printed in Turkish) Ocağcı and Türk defines identity as the expression of distinguishing features of a being which are unique to it [12]. They also emphasize that since uniqueness of something can only be understood through its relationship with others, “being in relation” is the central form of activity which produces identity.

Erik H. Erikson, German psychologist and psychoanalyst, is one of the well-known sociologists who had a particular interest in identity. Erikson believed that while identity is shaped by the individual’s experiences and tasks throughout the life cycle, it is also influenced by the social interaction [9]. On the other hand, Jenkins claims that identity is a person’s capacity to know “who is who” and “what is what”; hence the concept of identity involves a comparison between things and individuals [13]. Furthermore, according to Hall, individuals assume different identities at different times and within different contexts [14].

This chapter does not aim to identify the concept of identity. However, given the examples of definitions, some aspects of the identity can be described as follow:

- Uniqueness of a thing or a person is central to the identity concept.
- Identity requires comparison between things of individuals.
- Meaning and experience play an important role in perception of the identity.
- Identity is never a stable construct; on the contrary it is a continuously evolving and dynamic phenomenon.
- Identity involves interaction with others.

Although the characteristics of identity concept given above might not be complete and absolute, they might be useful when integrating the concept into spatial planning and design in terms of place identity which is the subject of next section.

3. Place attachment and place identity

Identity is often perceived to be linked to the concepts of language, culture, minority/majority, dissimilarity, self/other, individuality and sense of belonging [13]. On the other hand “place identity” is relatively a more recent concept recognized in spatial planning and design. Moreover, it is also more difficult to explain and define place identity since “place” itself is a complicated concept.

Although space and place are often used interchangeably in Turkish language, these two words have different meanings and content in English and academic literature in environmental psychology. In his book “Space and Place: The perspective of experience”, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that “place is security” and “space is freedom” [15]. He also states that “space is an abstract term for a complex set of ideas” and “place and objects define space, giving it a geometric personality”.

We need space to realize the activities that are essential for our survival. But when we assign a meaning to a space, it becomes a “place”. As Halpenny puts it “place is a spatial location that is assigned meanings and values by society and individuals” [16]. Therefore meaning is a symbolic tool that links an individual with the physical environment. According to Relph, place is result of the interaction between its 3 components; physical setting, activity and meaning [17].

In environmental psychology research, many agree that development of emotional bonds with places is a prerequisite of psychological balance [18]. A sense of belonging is necessary for psychological well-being which is developed by relationships with the environment [19]. Hence, what should concern planners and designers is to understand how people and places interact and how they form a bond. That is necessary to create liveable places.

There have been many attempts to explain and define the bond between people and their physical settings in many different ways. Place identity, place attachment, and sense of place are some of the concepts that involve the relationship of humankind and his environment. All these concepts refer to the affective and cognitive relationship between

human and the physical environment. However there is no consensus on definitions of these concepts, especially how place identity and place attachment is related to each other [18, 20]. Both place identity and place attachment concepts have been regarded as being components of personal identity, while Stedman recognizes place attachment as an objective dimension for measuring the sense of place [17].

The emotional bonding between people and places has been defined as place attachment by Altman and Low in their work "Place Attachment" (1992) [21]. However, according to Chow and Healey (2008), place attachment is a more complex and multifaceted phenomenon which involves the interplay of not only affect and emotions, but also knowledge and beliefs, and behaviours and actions in reference to a place [20]. Scannell and Gifford (2010) defines place attachment as: *"a bond between an individual or group and a place that can vary in terms of spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place, and is manifested through affective, cognitive, and behavioural psychological processes"* [22].

Milligan (1998) states that an emotional bond with a place is formed by the meaning given to a place by the individual, as a result of his interaction with the place (Inalhan and Finch). People have feelings about places as well as beliefs and memories and they act certain ways in different places [17]. According to Riley (1992), place attachment may be primarily associated with meanings and experiences which often involve relationship with other people [19].

People's affective and cognitive responses to a place are occurred through experiencing the place. Experience is the key action in development of human-place bond. The intensity, duration, content and result of the experience may influence the individual's perception of a place. For instance, "home" is generally associated with the emotions of safety and comfort. Sayings like "there is no place like home" or "home sweet home" display the universal perception of "home" as a place with positive emotions and meanings.

The degree of attachment to a particular place depends on its ability to meet our physiological and psychological needs. Place attachment is often assumed to develop in a long period of time. However, it can also be disrupted very quickly [19]. Furthermore, a person can be attached to a place either emotionally or functionally. Altman and Low (1992) attempted to define theoretical typologies of place attachment [23]. These are [23, 24]:

1. Genealogical attachment (formed through ancestors, family heritage)
2. Economic bonding (material ownership, working, etc.)
3. Attachment via loss or destruction of a place
4. Cosmological bonding (through spiritual or mythological relationship)
5. Bonding through religious or cultural activities.
6. Narratives (stories, place-naming, legends etc.)

On the other hand, Scannell and Gifford (2010) propose a framework for place attachment which consists of three dimensions [22] (Figure 1):

1. The person dimension: Who is attached? To what extent is the attachment based on individually and collectively held meanings?

2. Psychological process: How are affect, cognition, and behaviour manifested in the attachment?
3. The place dimension: What is the attachment to? What is the nature of this place?

According to Scannell and Gifford, place attachment can occur at both the individual and group levels. Personal memories and experiences influence the degree of place attachment at the individual level. On the other hand, place attachment is built through shared historical experiences and symbolic meanings of a place [22].

Their second dimension of psychological process involves three components: (i) affect (emotional connection), (ii) cognition (memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge), and (iii) behaviour (attachment is expressed through actions).

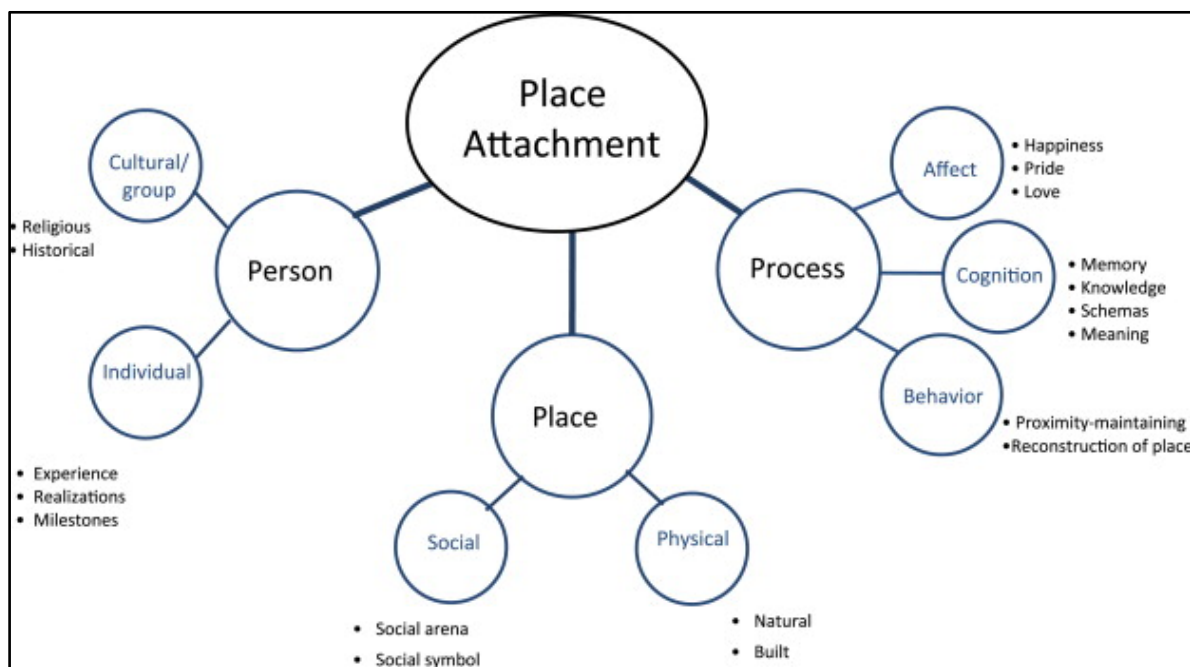


Figure 1. Scannell and Gifford's tripartite model of place attachment (Reprinted from Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30/1, Scannell L. and Gifford R., Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework, 1-10, 2010, with permission from Elsevier).

Place attachment has different scopes and scales in terms of place as a physical setting. Therefore the place dimension of the framework has been divided into two levels by the authors: social and physical place (natural and built) attachment. They stress out that physical characteristics of a place can be central to attachment; nevertheless *"people are attached to places that facilitate social relationships and group identity"*.

Place attachment is influenced by many factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, environmental factors (type of involvement, familiarity to a place, activities in a place etc.), past experiences, culture, psychological factors, biological factors, and place itself [17, 23]. Place attachment is also linked to environment friendly behaviour [16]. It is assumed that people, who develop positive meanings and emotions to a place, tend to protect and care for that particular place.

As expressed before, the relationship between place attachment and place identity is still controversial among researchers. Some researchers consider place identity as a dimension of place attachment; while some others suggest that place identity is necessary for the formation of place attachment [18]. There are also researchers who assume place identity and place attachment are two separate concepts.

The term “place identity” has a duality in its meaning. In spatial planning and design, place identity is generally linked to the place itself. It refers to the distinctiveness or uniqueness of a place which is a result of the interaction between its physical features and its users. For instance Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) use the term “landscape identity” and they point out that the concept lacks clarity and is not well-defined [25]. They define landscape identity as the perceived uniqueness of a place. Moreover they assert that perceiving has both personal and social dimension and uniqueness is based on the interaction between the physical environment and social factors.

On the contrary, in psychology “place identity” concept is a “personal” issue and linked to self-identity. One of the well-known works on place identity in psychology field is Proshansky’s “The city and self-identity”. In his work Proshansky (1978) defines place identity as [26]:

“those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioural tendencies and skills relevant to this environment”.

In summary, Proshansky’s definition proposes that physical environments influence self-identity as a result of the interaction between a person and a place. One of the well-known examples of how place affects one’s identification of self is expressions like “New Yorker” or “Londoner”. Similar to place attachment, place identity may also occur at different levels and scales of places; such as “European” at the continental level or “East ender” at the neighbourhood level or “Turkish” at the country level. In this respect, place identity overlaps with social identity.

While Proshansky promotes “place identity” as a separate concept, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) suggest that all aspects of identity have place-related implications and place should not be considered as a separate part of the identity [27]. They also comment that place attachment can function to support or develop aspects of identity.

Place is not merely important in developing and maintaining self identity, but it also has a significant effect on human well-being and behaviour [17]. There is a two-way relationship between a person and a place. While place influences self identity, people also tend to create, change or maintain their physical surroundings in the way which reflect themselves. Hence, the physical environment is a reflection of the identity of its users.

So far basic approaches to place attachment and place identity have been presented in this section. Next section will focus on development, maintenance of and current issues on the identity of urban landscapes from the perspective of urban planning and design.

4. Urban landscape and identity

Landscape is a dynamic phenomenon which is shaped by both natural and cultural forces. Thus, change is an inherent character of any landscape. Changes in landscape may not always happen as a result of planned actions, but may also be an unexpected effect [28]. Although change of the environments does not necessarily have to result in negative ways, it is a process that is often perceived in negative terms. The magnitude and speed of the change that has been faced since the 20th century is dramatic and environmental problems it has caused is apparent and alarming. Besides current landscape changes are characterized by the loss of diversity, coherence and identity of the existing landscapes [29].

The major forces of landscape change can be defined as [28]:

1. Socioeconomic driving forces (primarily economic factors; market economy, globalization etc.)
2. Political driving forces (political programs, laws, policies etc.)
3. Technological driving forces (information technology, developments in transportation etc.)
4. Natural driving forces (changes in climate, topography, soil characteristics etc. and natural disasters)
5. Cultural driving forces

On the other hand, Antrop (2006) is more specific and definite when defining the driving sources [30]. According to him the main driving forces of landscape change are [30]:

1. Mobility patterns related to accessibility of places
2. Urbanization process
3. Decisions affecting large areas that overrule local decisions
4. Calamities

Landscape change is a continuous and rather complex process. Dealing with it requires a multidisciplinary approach. The above factors are all in some extent linked to each other. However, landscapes are considerably complex systems where it is often difficult to understand how driving forces interact and influence each other. This section will focus on the effects of two major driving forces of landscape change on urban landscape identity; urbanization and globalization.

Urbanization has been one of the significant phenomena which has dramatically changed our physical and social environments since the second half of the last century. Antrop (2004) defines urbanization as *"a complex process that transforms the rural or natural landscapes into urban and industrial ones forming star-shaped spatial patterns controlled by the physical conditions of the site and its accessibility by transportation routes"* [31]. Certainly, improvements in transportation and increased mobility have led to expansion of urban areas, as well as the transformation of rural areas into urban ones. Terms like urban sprawl, urban fringe and suburbanization emerged in relation to urbanization process.

Urbanization process is mainly about industrialization and economic activities. People prefer living in urban areas rather than rural areas because they hope to achieve a better

quality of life in cities. However, urbanization processes in developed and developing countries do not necessarily shape cities and towns the same. In most of the developing countries, planned development of urban areas cannot always “catch” the population increase rates (mainly caused by immigration from rural areas) due to insufficient development and management strategies, as well as funding. Therefore, in contrast to mostly planned urban expansion in developed countries, developing countries face with low quality environments such as slums and squatter housings. This not only affects the quality of physical environment and image of the city, but also leads to fragmentation of social coherence and social identity. As Antrop (2004) summarizes; “urbanization is primarily a complex of functional changes, followed by morphological and structural ones” [31].

Cities are not only physical constructs, but also involve social structures. The citizens are the fundamental elements of cities that keep it alive and functioning. There is a mutual relationship between a city’s physical characteristics and its citizens. While the physical dimension of a city (buildings, open and green spaces, streets etc.) is shaped and formed under the influence of its citizens, it also shapes its citizens life-styles and social identity throughout the time. Cities are thus cultural heritages. As Stephenson puts it culture and identity are not merely about social relationships, but also spatial [32].

From a psychological perspective Göregenli (2005) asserts that urban identity or urban identities are a result of complex relationships between individual self, place identity and urban environments [23]. Cities are a product of continuous interaction between the physical environment and social life; their image reflects the communities’ experiences, beliefs and values. Consequently identity of an urban place is the total of both physical and social distinctive features that is unique to it [12].

Meaning and sense of belonging are central to perceived urban identity. According to Lalli developing sense of belonging to a city requires coherence in urbanization process [23]. Unfortunately, today’s cities are shaped under international influences and it is quite difficult to define planning and design forms which are necessary to maintain the local identity [33].

According to Lynch, identity is part of the image of a city. Although the image of a city is not necessarily the same as its identity [34], it is the physical and most instant perceived reflection of its identity. In his work “The Image of the City”, Lynch (1960) defines three components of an environmental image as; (i) identity, (ii) structure and (iii) meaning [35]. The first two are more related to physical structure of the city, but meaning involves more difficult processes between the individual and the city. According to Lynch, identification of an object is the first step for a workable image. He points out that individuality or oneness, spatial or pattern relation of the object to the observer and to other objects, and finally practical or emotional meaning are the requirements of a workable image.

Lynch defines paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks are the five elements of a city image. He especially focuses on the legibility of the cityscape and asserts that the overall

pattern of all city image elements determines the legibility of a city. Hence, a city's identity depends on the easiness of identifying the image which is a result of the way how its elements are composed of and interact with each other. Obviously, how human experience influences a city's image and identity is missing in Lynch's approach. Although he admits meaning is necessary for a workable image, his work basically focuses on the physical construction of the city. However, even though he is often criticized for neglecting the social dimension in his work, his work is still influencing and popular in urban planning and design.

On the other hand according to Relph, identity of a place is strongly linked to the existence of authentic sense of place [36]. Sense of place is about a person's understanding of a place; hence it involves (i) experience and (ii) a subjective dimension. Therefore the composition and characteristics of physical components of the built environment affect the sense of place perceived and interpreted by people. Rogan et al. defined three variables of sense of place; legibility, perception of and preference for the visual environment and the compatibility of the activities with human purposes [17].

Legibility is a concept that is often linked to the identity of an urban space. So what determines the legibility of a place? According to Lynch visibility, coherence and clarity are the factors that determine the degree of legibility and should be taken into account in forming the city [35]. On the other hand, these characteristics may not be sufficient alone for creating legible cities. According to Carr et al. (1992) a meaningful space has to be comfortable enough to allow an experience with it to occur and positive meanings can be created by positive connections to people [37]. Relph argues that ignoring the meanings attached to places creates inauthentic places and damage authentic ones [17]. He names this transformation as *placelessness*. Placelessness has become an important concern for the sustainability of the urban environments these days.

Although urbanization has some negative impacts on sustainability of the environment, what really raises the concerns on identity of urban areas is globalization process, which also influences the context of urbanization worldwide. In social sciences, globalization is studied primarily in context of economics. Since economical activities are basic to the functioning of a city, globalized economy's "global production and consumption" patterns play an important role in the change of urban environments, making them a product of "global culture". Homogenization of urban landscapes is an apparent and concerning effect of globalization process. Global brands are everywhere, not only selling or presenting or serving their products, but they also bring their unique architectural patterns, signboards etc. to wherever they open their branches. One can easily recognize a McDonalds shop or HSBC branch any city in the world. What is more concerning is the change of life-styles and thus cultural homogenization which global brands cause.

On the other hand what defines a city lays in its citizens' and visitors' minds. A city's identity is what the insiders (citizens) and outsiders (visitors) perceive, feel and remember about it. Unfortunately, what globalization causes on the image of cities through homogenization is often irreversible.

Built heritage is definitely one of the most important aspect of the authenticity and subsequently identity of an urban environment. Cities are formed and develop throughout the time. They constantly change, develop and transform. Built heritage is the most apparent reflection of this change. It might also include symbolic meanings for the citizens and visitors, often because of the significant historical events associated with it. Buildings and structures of a city tell a story of past with meanings and cultural values involved. Therefore, built heritage is assumed to be a distinct indicator of urban identity and thus conservation of the built heritage is one of the major concerns in sustainability of urban identity. Certainly, it is impossible and senseless to protect all the “old” buildings and structures. Cities are growing faster than expected and overcapacity; hence “empty lands” are scarce and precious. It is often needed to restructure and reorganize the existing built environment. Recently some researchers have argued that urban conservation practices create morphologically standardized urban landscapes and do not contribute to place identity at all [38]. So identity concerns bring the question of “what to protect”. Actually, recent research show that not only historical buildings but also contemporary and newer structures and buildings are as well associated with the city’s image and identity by its citizens and visitors.

For instance Gospodini’s (2004) research on place identity was conducted in Bilbao where urban landscape is formed by the combination of modern and historical architecture [38]. The findings of the research showed that both innovative design and built heritage contribute to the image and identity of the city equally, as perceived by the citizens and tourists. The Guggenheim Museum (Figure 2) in Bilbao is one of the significant examples of how innovative design schemes can contribute to urban identity. In Gospodini’s research Guggenheim Museum was highly rated as a unique and distinct feature of the Bilbao’s urban identity by both the inhabitants and the tourists.

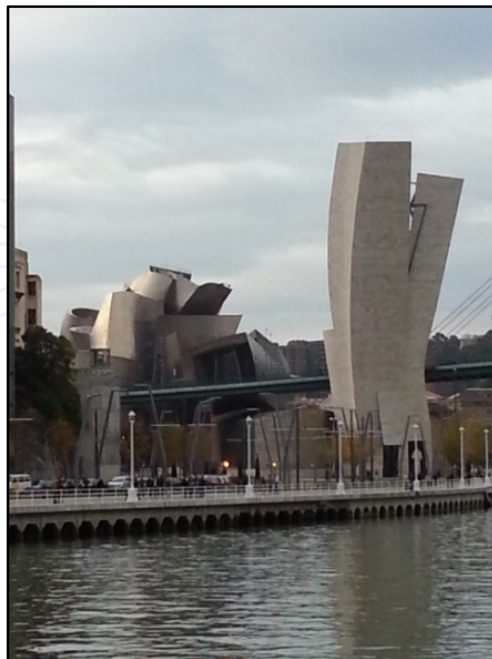


Figure 2. Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

Another significant impact on urban identity is the decline in public realm. Public spaces are crucial parts of a city where social, cultural and economic activities take place. Therefore they are the heart of the cities. Public spaces bring citizens together, providing them with opportunities for relaxing, recreation, socializing, gathering, performing arts, sports activities, public art and cultural activities. In summary they liven up the city life and create a sense of community. However, public spaces decrease or lose their importance in many contemporary cities, mainly due to changing life-styles where people spend most of their time in virtual environments. But how does this affect identity of urban environments? Firstly, public spaces are where social interaction and activities occur. Secondly, public spaces are where individuals and groups experience the city most freely. Thirdly, they provide spaces where people can express themselves and be themselves. Finally, they benefit mental and physical health through the opportunities they offer, that are mentioned above. Therefore, they play an important role in developing and maintaining both self-identity and place-identity. The loss of public spaces will not only damage social cohesion, but also reduce the quality of life of an individual.

It is hard to know how the progress of current urbanization trends will exactly shape our lives and our environments in the future. However, we can only predict the possible outcomes and so far it is only concerning.

Identity issues in Turkish cities

The characteristics of landscapes in Turkey significantly vary between its regions. For instance while Black Sea region's landscape is characterized by the plateaus, meadows, tea farms/gardens and wooden houses, landscape in Aegean region of Turkey is dominated by olive trees, maquis and stone houses. Similarly, the settlements in different regions have



Figure 3. Local architectural identity in Göreme, Cappadocia region, Turkey.

been shaped and formed under the influence of different physical, natural, social, cultural and economic conditions. In regions where urbanization process is relatively slower, local unique characteristics can still be seen in towns. In some towns, local landscape and built heritage is used as marketing products to attract tourists. Although tourism activities (especially mass tourism) cause irreversible impacts on local environment and resources and sometimes lead to loss of diversity and identity, there are examples where local character still exists (Figure 3).

The major problem in maintaining identity of urban environments in Turkey is the lack of awareness and sensitivity of national and local authorities. The most deteriorating actions on urban identity of Turkish cities have been decided and implemented by governmental organizations and local municipalities through urban renewal and urban transformation projects. Below some of the recent and significant examples are presented.

Housing projects of TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey)

Due to the migration from rural to urban areas In Turkey, housing developments cover 95% of the total building production [39]. TOKİ is currently the leading and the only legal authorization in development of new housing projects throughout the country. The total number of TOKİ's housing projects as announced on TOKİ's web page is; "in 81 cities, 800 towns, with 2522 worksites, 560866 housing units" [40]. This might seem a huge number, and it is indeed. But how does TOKİ manage with so many housing projects in terms of local identity and character? The answer is quite a disappointment; the body simply ignores these issues. It rather works like a housing "factory". In fact, their vision statement is solely based on economy and financing, rather than basic principles of urban planning and design;

"TOKİ's vision for the future strives to:

- Create a model framework for quality low-cost housing,
- Prevent real estate speculation that might use low-quality materials in the construction of low-margin housing,
- Produce housing for regions in Turkey where the private sector is not active,
- Offer low and middle income groups the opportunity to finance their own homes,
- Offer rural housing opportunities that decrease the pressure on the migration to urban areas,
- Collaborate with local municipalities to create urban renewal projects and
- Create financial opportunities to finance social housing projects such as innovative income-sharing projects with the private sector" [40].

Bursa branch of the Chamber of Architects of Turkey organized a photography competition on the negative impacts of TOKİ projects in Bursa in 2011. The photographs submitted to the competition revealed the disharmony and incoherence of the housing projects within the city's existing character (Figure 4).

The main threat caused by TOKİ is the standardization and homogenization of urban landscapes throughout Turkey. Although TOKİ claims that it will pay more attention to the Turkish architectural styles in its new development projects, Gür discusses that TOKİ's

“Ottoman” and “Seljuk” style architecture approaches in its projects will only be “characterless imitations” as long as TOKİ continues with projects which are unfamiliar with Anatolian culture in terms of site selection, organization of neighbourhoods, accommodation characteristics and social and cultural services.



Figure 4. TOKİ housing projects in Bursa [41] (Left: 2nd Prize Winner- Photo by Egemen Ergin, Right: Photo by Bülent Suberk).

Ankara

As explained previously in the introduction of this chapter, Ankara is the first planned city of the modern Turkey, and the prescribed identity for Ankara was a modern republican capital city. Like other metropolitan areas in Turkey, Ankara’s urban environment has been affected by the impacts of immigration, uncontrolled and unplanned urbanization and globalization since 1950’s. However the most destructive actions on its identity have been taken in the last two decades by the Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara.

Although it is not directly linked to identity of the urban landscape, one of the most controversial attempts to manipulate Ankara’s identity was the change of Ankara’s city emblem by the Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara. Ankara’s old emblem was formerly the Hittite Sun which took its roots from the fact that Ankara’s history goes back to Hittites. In 1995 Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara took a decision to change the emblem of the city. The new emblem was the combination of Kocatepe Mosque (construction completed in 1987) and Atakule Shopping Mall (opened in 1989). Figure 5 shows the current and the old emblem of the city.

One might argue whether the both emblems symbolize the identity of Ankara. However it is obvious that the latter one does not emphasize the “modern republican city” concept with a mosque and shopping mall in it.

Despite Ankara has struggled with more serious problems which concern quality of life and sustainability of urban environment, the change of the city emblem was only the beginning of Municipality’s policies and future actions on the Ankara’s urban landscape.

Ankara has suffered the negative impacts of squatter housing or as said in Turkish “gecekondu”s, especially after 1950’s because of the high rates of migration. Urban renewal and urban transformation projects have been the most popular and favourite

tools for the municipalities for the last decade. However, similar to many other attempts on the built environment, these projects have always been controversial and have received serious criticism from academicians and professional organizations. This is mainly due to the fact that urban renewal or urban transformation projects in Turkey often ignores the social, economic and cultural dimensions and based on merely the physical transformation of the environment. The *gecekondu*s are replaced by TOKİ's apartment blocks, transforming the city into homogenized units as explained before. In Figure 6, the urban transformation project (by TOKİ) on North Ankara is presented. Such projects do not contribute to the social and cultural aspects of the city and moreover they are unsustainable and not incoherence with the Ankara's identity envisaged when the Republic was first established.



Figure 5. The current emblem of Ankara is on the left and the former is on the right [42].

Traffic is one of the other significant issues in Ankara which affects the urban quality of life. Because of the community life styles and lack of sufficient public transportation systems, traffic is a growing problem for Ankara. Besides urban expansion policies which ignored the transportation dimension has worsen the situation. Moreover, most of the governmental organizations and ministries have been moved out of the city centre and because of the lack of public transportation to these units, individual car use has been increased, especially during the peak hours. Although traffic is a common issue for many metropolitan cities, what damaged urban image and human experience in Ankara has been the construction of underground roads within the city centre which ignored the pedestrian movement and focused on vehicle traffic flow (Figure 7). The initial aim was to relieve the vehicle traffic within the city. However, building more roads underground did not solve the problem, but seriously harmed the city image. As stated before, people and social activity are necessary for the vitality of a city. Moreover, identity is developed by experiencing the environment. People experience the city best by walking and by using the public spaces. If vehicle traffic becomes the prominent priority, the city might lose its basic function and vitality.



Figure 6. North Ankara urban transformation project [43].



Figure 7. An underground road in Ankara [44].

Today there are more than 20 shopping malls in Ankara, which is the result of rapid growth of market economy globalization and liberalization processes. Besides the consumption based-culture they partially contributed to and supported, shopping malls have been one of the reasons of decline in use of public spaces in Ankara. Oguz and Çakıcı (2010) have found that people tend to prefer spending their leisure time in shopping malls rather than outdoor public spaces due to the services and facilities shopping malls offer [45]. However, public

spaces are crucial parts of a city that support social integration and cohesion. They contribute to the overall city image and liven up boring city life and the built environment. They bring different social, ethnic and economic income groups together. They are where communities express themselves by gathering, protesting, etc. Therefore they play an important role in the development and maintenance of urban identity. On the other hand, public spaces have not always been paid the attention they deserved in Ankara. Today Ankara lacks of public squares which are hearts of the cities and where social interaction is the highest. The most famous and historical squares of Ankara, Kızılay and Ulus squares have become “urban junctions” which have limited pedestrian access and movement.

Ankara is a city shaped by the influences of many civilizations such as Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Seljuk Empire, Ottoman Empire and finally the Republic of Turkey. It has its unique topographical features, climate, vegetation and fauna, as well as built environment characteristics. There are too many aspects which can contribute to its identity. Unfortunately, today’s Ankara has been losing its values and meanings belonging to its history and local character. What is more concerning is the citizens’ inert response to the transformation.

Ankara’s identity should be reconsidered in urban design and planning in order to emphasize Republican values and its history.

İstanbul

İstanbul is the most well known Turkish city worldwide because of its historical importance, geographical position (as a transition point between two continents, Europe and Asia) and outstanding landscape features. It is also the most crowded city in Turkey with more than 13 million inhabitants. Due to inward migration the city’s population have been doubled in the last two decades. Similar to Ankara, İstanbul has been suffering uncontrolled and unplanned urban expansion which led to urban transformation and urban renewal projects, again lacking of urban identity aspect.

Haydarpaşa Train Station, constructed in 1908, has always been one of the significant landmarks of İstanbul. It has been frequently included in the opening scenes of Turkish movies, where characters arrive the first time in İstanbul and have the first glimpse of the city while standing on the stairs of Haydarpaşa Station. It has always been one of the “entrance” points to the city and an important part of the city silhouette (Figure 8). However, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality approved an urban transformation project which will change character of Haydarpaşa Train Station and consequently İstanbul’s silhouette forever; “Haydarpaşa Port Project”. The project has received many criticisms but it did not prevent taking the project next level. The project will transform this historical and public site to an economy centre based on tourism and commercial activities. Such privatization trends by the authorities in urban design and planning definitely cause irreversible impacts and damages on urban character and identity. However, the government and the Metropolitan Municipality seem to be content with the project. The following paragraphs, which reflect the authorities’ opinions, were taken from the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s website [46].

"The Istanbul Municipal Assembly has approved reconstruction plan for protection of the Haydarpaşa Train Station and Port, paving the way to change the entire appearance of a historical location marked for about a century by one of the architectural symbols of Istanbul's Asian side.

.....

The municipal assembly met Sept. 14, with members representing the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP), according to a report from Anatolia news agency. The project was approved with affirmative votes from the AKP members, while the CHP members voted against it.

Akif Burak Atlar, assistant secretary-general of the Istanbul City Planners Chamber said: "The Haydarpaşa Train Station may lose its public function [with this project]. We want to defend the protection of the train station feature of the Haydarpaşa building and leave it as it is for future generations, because it is part of our cultural heritage."

Commercial and tourism functions would close the building and the surrounding area to public use, he said. Haydarpaşa is planned to become the city's main tourism port, where giant cruise ships will dock.

.....

The government deems it to be one of the most important "prestigious projects" planned for Istanbul, along with the Galata Port project on the European side of Istanbul.

.....

Both projects were approved this year by the Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation Board, despite having stirred great public controversy. Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş had previously said that the two areas, which have cultural and historical value, would be opened to tourism."



Figure 8. Haydarpaşa Train Station [47].

Haydarpaşa Port Project is not the only project that will change the unique character of İstanbul forever. There are many attempts by the government and the Metropolitan Municipality to change the urban landscape irreversibly. Non-governmental organizations, professional organizations and academicians are the primary opponents of these projects. Regarding these kind of projects in İstanbul, Steele and Shafik well summarize the threat İstanbul is facing [48]:

“None of these have sufficiently addressed the singular character of Istanbul as a world class city which is stepped in multiple layers of history and tradition. Its most distinctive aspect has always been its silhouette and relationship to the water. By erasing this most important feature, Planners and Developers have erased the very identity of this city. This is a tragedy.”

5. Conclusion

Urban landscape is a complex structure which is a result of the interaction between human and his environment. It also involves a social dimension, a cultural dimension and an economic dimension. Urban landscapes are formed and shaped mainly under the influence of human activities. Therefore, they inherit communities' values, beliefs, symbolic meanings which occur and change throughout the time. They change as communities change, lifestyles change, and world economy change. Thus, they are the physical reflection of urban identity.

Similar to self identity, urban identity is also flexible and evolving. The change is an inevitable process. However, the question is how to manage the change and urban identity in today's cities which are more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic than ever. Therefore sustainability should not be limited to only natural resources, but should also include urban identity as cultural heritage. Hence there is a need for methodologies of analysis and assessment of urban identity.

The main goal of planners and designers is to create liveable places for people. “Liveability” of a place can be determined through the quality of the environment. On the other hand the quality of a place not only is determined through physical features of an environment, but also involves subjective factors. Thus, social and psychological dimension of the urban environments should be taken into account in planning and design schemes. The mutual relationship between people and their environments should be well understood and interpreted in order to create and maintain liveable places. Unfortunately, it is often too late when we realize the effects of our actions that lead to loss of coherence, diversity and change. While we put all the blame on globalization and urbanization processes, we should also acknowledge that we need to develop plans and policies that would adapt the change.

Author details

Isil Kaymaz

Department of Landscape Architecture, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey

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