

Evaluation of Urban Identity and its Components in Landscape Architecture

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Abstract

Today, globalization, industrialization and technological developments have caused radical changes in cities. As the cities of the world become increasingly similar, the change emerging from the functional and aesthetic direction affects the urban dimension of identity. In this context, it is necessary to determine the “existing” and “missing” of the city by determining the ways of reaching the identity of the city. Within this whole environmental context, density, public space including streets and streets, the relation of urban functions, building and urban open space associations, monuments, urban facilities are being discussed as the elements that constitute urban identity. Determination of the identity of the city is important for assessing urban life. The aim of this research which evaluates the original texture of the urban settlement on “urban identity” is to determine the urban identity components in the urban settlement and to reveal these components in the city center scale.

Keywords: Urban, Urban Identity, Urban Components, Landscape Architecture

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, living and growing problems in cities are common. Especially in developing countries such as Turkey, economic, technological and political reasons brought by modern population together with rapid population growth have formed the source of unplanned structuring and many infrastructural problems. In these rapid restoration activities, practices have been realized that harm the natural and historical environment of the cities. In countries that do not care about identity, unidentified cities continue to grow together with their problems in an uncontrolled manner.

Urban Identity Concept

The word “identity” is generally described as a collection of features that serve to define any object. In addition, urban identity is defined as the natural and artificial elements of a city, its social, cultural and historical characteristics. Among these characteristics, the most obvious and impressive are the identity of that city. Every feature that differentiates one city from the other and appears differently is counted as the identity component of that city.

Each of the cities has had an identity over time, and today they are remembered and living with the identities they have created. The identity of a city has its own characteristics with many factors. For example, geographical features such as the Bosphorus and Venice Channels (Fig.1), monumental structures such as the Istanbul Mosques and the Paris Eiffel Tower (Fig.2), urban space features such as Moscow Red Square and London Hyde Park (Figure 3), socio-cultural features such as Viennese Walts and Rio Carnival (Fig.4) bring urban identity to cities.



Figure 1. Istanbul strait, Venice canals (URL1).



Figure 2. İstanbul mosques and Paris Eiffel Tower (URL2).



Figure 3. Moscow Red Square and London Hyde Park (URL3).



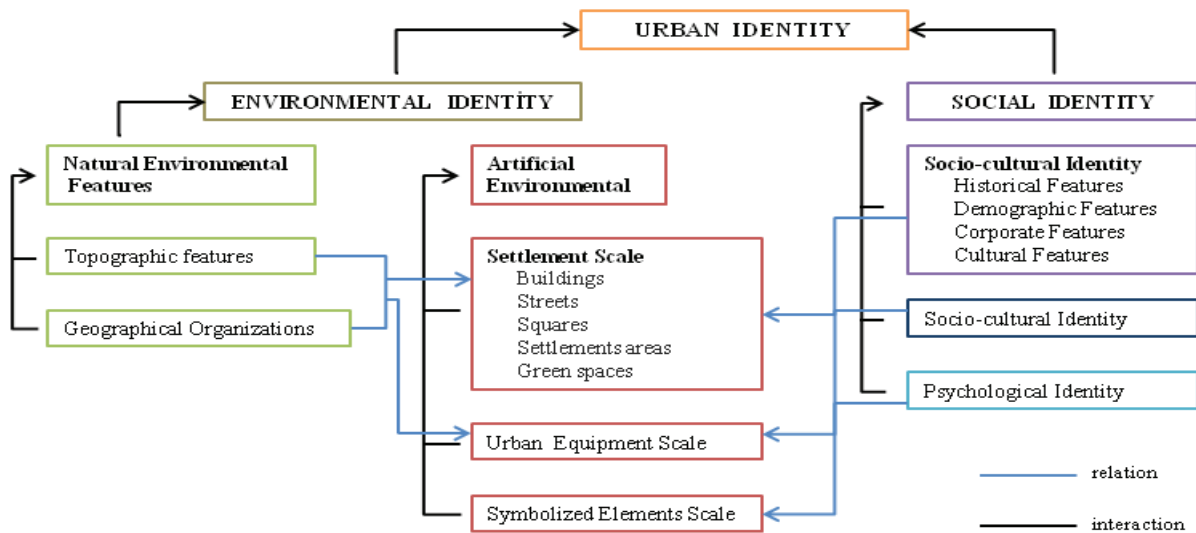
Figure 4. Venice waltz and Rio carnival (URL4).

The formation of an identity takes place in the context of the continuity of certain/identified conditions. Some of these conditions are stated below [1].

- Cultural heritage or traditions
- The quality and character of society's needs
- Factors caused by geographical, climatic and topographic conditions
- Technology produced by the nation
- The ability to adapt to changing conditions.

It is the identity of the city that tells us whether any kind of planning for the city is appropriate, sufficient and right. In each city, it is also possible that the identity (a historical phenomenon shaped by physical, cultural, socio-economic, historical and formal factors) of the city with its unique qualities is formed over time, and that it changes over time.

Table 1. Urban Identity Components [1].



For the preservation of the identity and the development in the cities. There is a need for a creation of a holistic urban plan comprising ecological, social, cultural and aesthetic dimensions with economic needs [2].

Urban Identity Components

The identity of the city belongs to the city itself, which makes the city different from the others and adds value to that city and is the whole of the city-specific components. These components are also important features in the formation of that city's identity. Concepts that constitute urban identity are gathered under two main headings as environmental and social identity. The relationships and interactions of these concepts forming urban identity are shown below (See Table-1) [1].

Ocakçı (1995) examines the elements of city identity under three headings as elements originating from the natural, human and human-made environment/landscape.

- The identity elements originating from the natural environment form the conditions of topography, climate, water element, geological and general location.
- The identity elements that originate from the surrounding of human beings consist of the individuals and the society. These are also of sub-elements belonging to demographic structure, institutional structure and cultural structure.
- Identity elements originating from the human-made landscape, consist of artificial environment elements, action areas arising from ongoing human needs in the city, and objects made of human hands.

A number of attributes identified with the city can add a symbolic value to the identity of the corresponding city [3]. In this context, the use of Dutch windmills and bicycles can be exemplified for the identification of symbolized elements (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. The identity at symbolized elements scale (URL5).

Today, some cities are associated with functions providing the life of that city and give life to that city. In cities with a single type of function and business area, the identity is formed by the function. Examples in Turkey are Kocaeli (industrial city), Eskisehir (university city), Antalya (tourism city) and Zonguldak (mine city) cities. Some of the examples of these functions of the cities in Turkey are as follow: Kocaeli with industry, Eskişehir with university, Antalya with tourism and Zonguldak with mining (Fig.6) [4].



Figure 6. The identity revealed by the functions of the city (URL6).

The symbols of the city that come to mind while visualizing consist the image of the city. Lynch's "good city structure" (1960), which states that these images (urban images) can be resolved in three parts, namely identity, structure and meaning, corresponds to or refers to the dimension of the feelings (sense of space or identity) of city dwellers. It is shown that the image elements that Lynch defines are the dominant characters according to the triangulation points/landmarks and the links of others, and that these elements also play a part in the formation, perception and expression of identity [2].

Lynch (1960) classifies urban image elements as districts, paths, nodes, edges, and landmarks (Fig.7). Lynch (1960) emphasizes that urban texture is a complex structure and moreover the city must be visualized in order to be able to work on it. In this way, it will be easier to see, understand and comment on the problems and possibilities in the city. According to the urban image theory, the urban environment is visualized through five main elements [5].

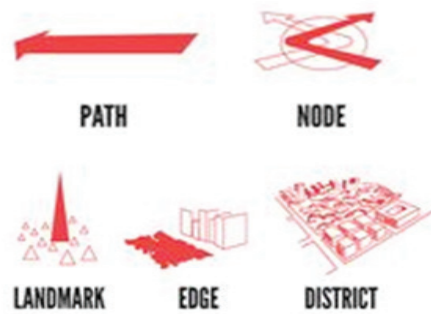


Figure 7. The elements of a city (URL7).

Urban Identity and Landscape Design

Urban landscape arrangements play an important role in urban image and urban identity. The landscape features of cities are the cultural images and images of the city and should be developed by preserving the identity, character and periodic characteristics [6]. The landforms, plant material, buildings, pavement, site structures and water that Booth (1990) used in the landscape / environmental assessment are also the elements forming the urban environment [7].

In this context, landscape is a cultural image and it is the whole environmental element that symbolizes, represents and constructs specific things, and is represented by natural resources such as many materials, surfaces, soil, stone, vegetation. The landscape features of the cities are cultural images and images of the countries along with their urban identities and should be developed by preserving their identity, character and historical characteristics [4].

SCOPE

Due to rapid urbanization and population growth, the meaning and identity of the cities are constantly changing. In this direction, it is aimed to determine the characteristics / components that constitute, identify and bring about the identity of the city and to evaluate these components on the landscape of the city center with the discipline of the landscape architecture.

This study is essentially a literature search for revealing how urban identity is defined and investigated in Turkey. For this reason, the general framework of work was limited to studies of identity in the field of national academic research.

METHODS

As a method of conducting the study, literature reviews about urban identity and urban identity components were made and theoretical explanations and conclusions were given. In line with the literature reviews, urban identity components were tried to be determined at city center scale and various parameters were determined. The steps of the method used by Kevin Lynch (1960) from the conceptual framework he used to read urban spaces; the study of the concept of urban identity and the clarification of the synonyms and differences between these concepts and related concepts, the examination of urban and urban areas with identity, the attempt to determine the urban identity components at the city center scale and the use of landscape designs as a planning tool in the sustainability of urban identity information collection.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to predict exactly what the globalization phenomenon is and what the future transformations and options for the city are. However, the effects of a single type of lifestyle formation of which globalization has increasingly transmitted are changing the identities of all our residential units and cities. The rapid cultural and spatial change that is under the influence of our country is rapidly increasing its influence on urban imagery in recent years. This process, which is caused by the change of urban dynamics, causes the urban images and their values to change. The identity of the city is a very comprehensive unity that affects the image of the city, which is constantly evolving and emerging for a long time.

In this context, it is important to develop the identities and images of our cities, taking into account all the natural and cultural values of our living environments that have reached the present day. In order to be able to use the city we live in for the benefit of society, it is necessary to make urban planning with the consciousness of city identity.

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