



The Relationship Between Planting Design And Urban Identity^A

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Abstract: Every city develops an identity according to its geography, nation, culture, and history which builds it. This identity is the main factor that shapes the collective memory of dwellers and visitors. It is an undeniable truth that plants which are used in squares, boulevards, and parks contribute a great value to collective memory. The material of this research consists of the books, dissertations, and articles written about planting design in urban identity and collective memory. Spaces that harmed or may harm in the future because of the changes in planting design have been examined and criticized. Besides the structural elements which create urban identity, plants are one of the main factors that affect the image of the city in the collective memory of people massively. The plants present in the open and green areas of the cities contribute to the formation of the identity of the city as much as the structures, and the protection of this vegetation also means protecting the identity of the city. To carry out research in the planting design and urban identity relationship line, 4 cases are selected. These cases express a unique example of plants' existence and space's identity; and it is registered that planting design contributes the protection of the space's identity via collective memory; and makes people feel more attached to the place.

Keywords: Planting design, urban identity, collective memory.

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Bitkisel Tasarım ve Kent Kimliği İlişkisi

Öz: Her kent bulunduğu coğrafyaya, onu inşa eden ulusa, kültüre, tarihe bağlı olarak bir kimlik geliştirir. Bu kimlik, orada yaşayan ve orayı ziyaret eden insanların kolektif belleğini şekillendiren temel unsurdur. Meydanlarda, bulvarlarda ve parklarda kullanılan bitkilerin de, bu kolektif belleğe katkısı olduğu yadsınamaz bir gerçektir. Bitkisel tasarımın kent kimliği ve toplumsal bellek ile ilişkisine dair yazılmış kitaplar, tezler ve makaleler bu araştırmanın materyalini oluşturmaktadır. Bitkisel tasarımın değiştirilmesiyle kimliği zarar görecektir ya da zarar görmüş mekânlar incelenmiş ve konu dâhilinde eleştirilmiştir. Bir kentin kimliğini oluşturan yapısal elemanların yanında bitki materyali de toplumun belleğindeki kent imajını oldukça etkileyen bir unsurdur. Kentlerin açık ve yeşil alanlarında var olan bitkiler kentin kimliğinin şekillenmesine en az yapılar kadar katkı sağlamakta, bu bitkisel varlıkların korunması da aynı zamanda kentin kimliğini korumak anlamına gelmektedir. Araştırma kapsamında bitkisel tasarım ve kent kimliği ilişkisi dört mekan üzerinden irdelenmiştir. Seçilen bu alanlar bitki varlıkları ve mekana kattıkları kimlik açısından özel bir yere sahiptir. Bitkisel tasarımın mekanın kimliğini korumaya yönelik katkıları bu tasarımlar üzerinden görülebilmektedir. Ayrıca insanların buldukları mekana daha bağlı hissetmelerini sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bitkisel tasarım, kent kimliği, kolektif bellek.

Introduction

That people colonies settled down on specific places in the Neolithic era, is a kind of an indicator, which is about the relationship between humankind and plants were evolving. Discovery of agriculture brings a beneficial and practical lifestyle between plants and humans. Over time, this relationship has been enriched not just for food supply, but in terms of aesthetic and functional uses. Not only settled down colonies use plants in settlements for their function or aesthetic value, but also nomads mark their landings with some special plants to find the exact location next time. And this marking instinct includes some functional benefits, though.

During the development of civilization, city planning has become an essential profession because of the increasing number of population and industrialization. The importance of green spaces in human life is increasing day by day in the fast growing cities due to population growth and housing need (Ender and Uslu 2016). Along with monumental statues, buildings, bridges, etc., green zones, such as parks, boulevards, gardens, even specific plants that have been used in particular places began branding cities all over the world. Central Park in New York, Hyde Park in London, Tiergarten in Berlin, Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, Park Güell in Barcelona and so on, have become very important destinations of their cities. Besides of all green volumes in the cities, some plants and planting zones contribute to the exhilaration of urban identity.

A city is a place, a settlement where many technical, economic, social, political, and cultural issues are concerned. These settlements differ because they consist of various cultural and social structures. Different

characters of cities are explained by the concepts of city identity, city profile, and city image. Urban identity is shaped over a long period of time. The city's geographical content, cultural level, architecture, local traditions, lifestyle, form the town as a mixture of qualities. The profile of the city is an assessment of integration with its natural form profile, socio-economic profile, and the profile of the space made by human hands (Topçu 2011). Urban identity is defined by the environment, natural and artificial elements, and socio-cultural characteristics of the city.

According to the Kaymaz (2013), identity has consistently been a high-ranking research topic for different disciplines like sociology, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and human geography. Nevertheless, urbanization and globalization processes, which have caused a rapid change in our environments, have brought the concept of identity to the agenda of planners and designers in the last few decades. The impact of neoliberalism and globalization on the development of urban areas is very prominent. This impact inevitably affects the identity of cities. Therefore, it has become an essential aspect of urban design and planning to manage and conserve local heritage and values.

The identity of a city should be evaluated as a whole with its spatial elements; natural, socio-cultural, socio-economic and structured environment. For this reason, the components of city identity have been classified as follows as a result of the literature research conducted within the scope of the study (Figure 1).

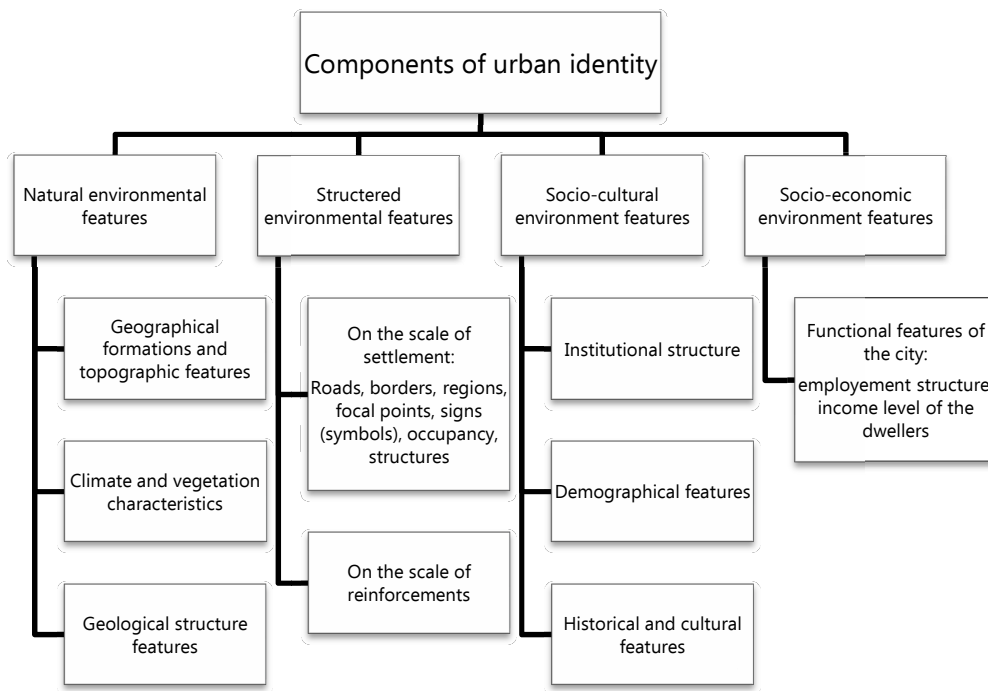


Figure 1. Components of urban identity (Lynch, 1960; Ocakçı, 1994; Kılınçarslan, 1995; Ünügür, 1996; Topçu, 2011).

The urban artificial environment consists of human-made objects shaped by the mutual relations of action areas resulting from the ongoing human needs in the cities (Ocakçı and Southworth, 1995).

Considering that memory is a process of remembering and forgetting, remembering and forgetting are important tools for the existence and survival of the individual and society; this is never done objectively (Pérouse 2006) and "consciously" the action appears to contain very important meanings and information. Because, to what extent the individual and society remember / forget or how they remember their historical journey towards becoming individuals and society is an important indicator of its cultural structure. For this reason, it is very important to record and transfer all kinds of events, people, images, places, sounds, odors and similar items that are accumulated consciously, whether in individual or collective memory (Ünlü 2017).

The research on collective memory is an essential component of mental images of the past which takes over an important role for the people in creating and shaping the space's identity. The landmark structure of a city links to its identity, through the processes of imagining and recalling that are interconnected and in a way overlapped. (Rogač Mijatović, 2014). The term of identity has its place in a broad content. The concept is more familiar within social sciences, and it's been used to define the uniqueness of a person, a thing or a place from very distinctive angles and purposes (Kaymaz, 2013).

The changes in the physical environment of the city also cause the urban memory to change (Ringas et al. 2011). According to Rossi (1982), the city itself is the collective memory of the people living in the city and the locus of the collective memory. The concept of Locus is defined by Rossi as "the relationship between a certain place and the buildings within it" and is described as "both singular and universal". Social relations in Locus directly affect the identity and character of that place. In this framework, the buildings, streets and other physical components of the city, together with an urban memory within the locus, provide the formation of an urban identity. Similarly, Norberg-Schulz (1984) states that any action that takes place cannot be evaluated independently of its locality. According to Norberg-Schulz, "place" is an integral part of existence and, besides an abstract position, it adds character to the locality with its form, texture, color and material.

Public spaces, in particular, are areas where social relations are produced, which are very important in the formation of social memory and urban identity (Boyer 1996). That is why urban landscapes have very crucial place. Therefore, urban space offers the basic plane that "enables us to discover the past in the present" in the formation of collective memory and urban identity (Halbwachs 1980). These two following situations could harm the relationship between planting design and urban identity: changing a solitary plant or planting design, and removing vegetation. Of course, these two situations can be explained in countless examples. In this paper, the relationship between planting design and urban identity has been investigated through the conflicts in cities about redesigning urban landscapes, attempts of changing planting design or removing them completely. To do so, 4 cases have been selected to exemplify how this relationship is strong, because of their distinctive facilities and stories.

Material and Method

The material of this research consists of previous works about urban landscapes, collective memory, urban identity, and plants - space relationship. The methodology of this research based on compiling issues about the relationship between plants and urban identity on the internet, published articles, and books. This relationship is explained in 4 cases: Konak Square from Izmir, The Avenue des Champs-Élysée from Paris, Bucharest squares and Mevlana Square from Konya. In Izmir and Paris's example, plant species and space relations have been examined; how it is difficult offering to change even a single plant with another species. In Bucharest example, climate and plant selection has been criticized, and in Konya's case, how it'd harm the urban identity removing an important, well-known green space has been examined. These cases have been selected because of their unique positions in the context.

Research Findings and Discussion

Urban identity consists of two components: the tangible component is urban spaces, and the intangible component is collective memory. When these two components overlap, the identity of the city is formed.

People create unique, personal images of their cities in their minds. The creation of those images is all about individual perception. Yet, no matter how many people perceive the space in their own perception, there are some common images about cities in dwellers' mind. First example, the clock tower in Izmir, Konak Square, is completed with two *Phoenix canariensis* trees around it (Figure 2).

In every picture, every postcard of this square, it is almost impossible to capture clock tower without these two date palms, which are entirely suitable for space. Those date palms have become like a part of the clock tower in terms of urban identity over time. In case of any attempt to change that date palms instead of some other trees, or completely remove them, it becomes a kind of harming behavior to the collective memory about this square. Because, planting design is an important component of urban identity. Dwellers and visitors know this scene with date palms. If we change date palms with *Magnolia grandiflora* (as seen in Figure 2), or with any other tree, people would easily notice this change. Because there is a considerable difference between these two photographs in terms of mass—space relation. When date palms let the clock tower to be seen in every angle around, magnolias block the view from two sides. Aside from the relationship of the mass and space, this square is defined by these two date palm trees in the minds of people.



Figure 2. Clock tower in Konak Square, Izmir, with date palms and with magnolias (Original, 2016).

This situation can be explained in another example from Paris with The Avenue des Champs-Élysée, a prestigious street (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The Avenue des Champs-Élysée with strictly pruned *Platanus x acerifolia* allee (Original, 2014).

It is one of the most famous streets in the world. The avenue runs for 2 kilometers between the Place de la Concorde in the east, and the Place Charles de Gaulle in the west, location of the Arc de Triomphe, built by Napoleon Bonaparte to honor his victories. The Champs-Élysées is a proud boulevard, and it defines a formal elegance, unmatched, and much noticed and appreciated. The Champs-Élysées, this aesthetically pronounced allee of magnificence and stately grandeur is lined with the *Platanus x acerifolia* (London Plane), a storied tree

worthy of its place in the history of street trees (URL 1, 2019), which looks healthy for the context. However, one of the most famous landmarks of Paris, Arc de Triomphe, is located at the end of the street and London Plane is not a columnar tree. To save the visibility of Arc de Triomphe, these trees have been pruning periodically (Figure 2). Pruning such a big tree like *Platanus x acerifolia* all the time in the shape of a cube can be seen like wasting time or a design failure. However, this is the way the street is for years. Those planes could be changed with some other trees which can grow columnar, not demanding much pruning; but like in the first example, it means harming the urban identity and collective memory. So, in order to protect urban identity, it has to be protected with collective memory, as well.

The other example is from Bucharest. According to Tudora et al. (2011), there was a conflict about planting design and urban identity in Bucharest. As they report the situation in their article, usually, Bucharest's politicians, counselors, mayors generally prefer southern countries with Mediterranean climate for vacation, and come back home filled with ideas like pranking out the city with palms and colorful flowers. Without any consideration about winters in Bucharest feature -20°C and so much of snow, anyway palms made many dwellers appreciated. Most of the Bucharestian saw the new designs as beautiful and welcome into the city's landscape. On the other hand, minority of the people, mainly professionals like architects, landscape architects, urban planners, historians were horrified by the city's new look (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Planted palms (mostly *Chamaerops excelsa*) all over the Bucharest (Tudora et. al., 2011).

After some surveys, researchers came up with some research findings of why some people liked the new landscape designs. Because of economic depression in Romania, the majority of people could not afford a holiday in southern countries; and they would love to see some exotic implants around the city. However, they

have no background about collective memory, urban identity, and especially about biodiversity, ecology. However, in the end, the majority of planted palms could not survive through the winter.

This case shows that sometimes it is hard for people what is right for their city. Conservatory approach about cities can be sustained with people who live in and can be strengthened with collective memory, and education. People may not notice that these attempts could help ending up with losing the history of the city.

The last example of this paper, the Mevlana Museum, is the undisputable brand of the city of Konya. It is the most famous destination for domestic and foreign tourists in this city (Figure 5).



Figure 5. *The park in front of Mevlana Museum before and after the renovation in 2012 (Original, 2008 and 2014).*

Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, who left a deep impression on the history of Turkish culture and Sufism, is one of the cornerstones of Turkish society with his works in this field (Temizel, 2009). Mevlana Museum has been a museum since 1926; the place was formerly used as dervish lodge. It was the second museum that brings the most income to the Ministry of Culture after Topkapı Palace Museum. But entrance is free since 2014.

The architect of the Mevlana Tomb is Bedreddin Tabriz. The tomb building belongs to the Seljuk period; the other buildings around the tomb belongs to the Karamanid and the Ottoman periods, which are the rulers of the domain after the Seljuks (Boduroğlu Yazıcı and Keypour, 2017).

There is a big mosque built next to Mevlana Tomb in 1558, named Selimiye Mosque. Although the mosque was constructed while Mimar Sinan held the post of chief architect, the building is not listed in any of his autobiographies. The double-minaret mosque is a typical 16th century Ottoman mosque, and it resembles Fatih Mosque in İstanbul (Necipoğlu, 2005).

These two essential buildings of Konya history, Mevlana Museum and Selimiye Mosque creates a square in front of them. This square has many full-grown linden, fir and pine trees with an ornamental pool and some grassland. This park is used frequently by the dwellers around. There was cotton candy, boiled corn sellers at the corners, and children were playing under the trees, on the lawn. This space has an essential place in the collective memory. However, this park was transformed into a concrete square during the renovations made between 2009 and 2012. All the green space is removed, and new so-called square embraces the grandeur of the Seljuk and Ottoman-style structures around, along with newly planted topiaries, which belongs to the Renaissance culture. Topiaries have nothing to do within this historic urban landscape. Like in Bucharest example, this attempt made this square nothing, but kitsch. There is a sad difference between the previous and next form of this square. Along with the removed trees, the collective memory integrated with this space has also been damaged.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the examples examined, the contribution of planting design in urban spaces to urban identity and collective memory is undeniable. Frequent changes in urban spaces can weaken its place in the collective memory. This may cause difficulties in transferring cultural heritage to future generations, and leads to the formation of cities without identity, where people do not feel any attachment to the place.

Sometimes, not only removing green spaces all along from a public domain but also changing plant species may harm the urban identity. First of all, climate of the city matters in this case. Renewing the public green spaces with exotic species wouldn't be permanent and would be a severe amount of money loss for the municipality.

Especially in the case of historical cities, municipalities have to be more conservative about urban landscapes. There is no other way to preserve cultural heritage through the generations. Paris, Prague and Rome, for instance, have seemingly traversed the centuries without rupturing the continuity of life, despite wars, revolutions, and great crises.

In this regard, the city administration has great duties. Managers and their ideologies may change. However, each must remain faithful to the city, and respect its history, identity, and the memory of the society living there.

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.

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