SİMGESEL PEYZAJ TASARIMI ARACILIĞIYLA KİMLİĞİN SERGİLENMESİ[1]

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Sema MUMCU[2]
Yrd. Doç. Dr. Serap YILMAZ[3]
Araş. Gör. Doruk Görkem ÖZKAN[4]

Özet

Sürekli değişen dünyada tutarlılık insanlar için vazgeçilmez bir ihtiyaçtır ve tutarlılığın arayışında mekanlarla kurulan duygusal bağlar, psikolojik dengenin önemli bir bileşenidirler. Bu nedenle insan-mekan etkileşiminin sonucu oluşan yer kimliği, yere bağlılık, yer duygusu gibi kavramlar çevresel psikoloji ve çevresel tasarım alanlarında son yıllarda daha sıklıkla dile getirilmektedirler. Bu araştırmada yer kimliği kavramına odaklanılmıştır. Mekanın tasarlanması süreci içinde kimlik ve simgesellik nasıl ele alınır? Bir topluma ait değerler ve kimlik, mekan bileşen ve öğeleriyle nasıl ilişkilendirilir? Bu sorulara ilişkin çevresel tasarım ve çevresel psikoloji alanında önemli bir boşluk vardır. Tasarımcıların yerin kimliğini göz önünde bulundurarak yerin oluşumunda neleri önemsediği, neleri daha sık kullandığı bu çalışmada anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, Peyzaj Mimarlığı Bölümü'nde farklı yıllarda toplam 97 son sınıf öğrencisi ile yürütülen araştırmada öğrencilere Trabzon'daki bir kent parkında simgesel bir mekan tasarlanacağı; bu durumda öğrencilerin tasarım konseptleri, tasarlanacak mekanın türü, mekanda yer alacak etkinlikler ve mekan bileşenlerinin neler olacağı sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Konseptlerin sınıflandırılması en çok kentin kültürel özelliklerine, daha sonra sosyal özelliklerine ve ardından doğal özelliklerine odaklanıldığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca mekan türleri, etkinlikler ve mekan bileşenlerine ilişkin analizler de yürütülmüştür. Kente ilişkin kültürel ve sosyal özelliklerin ve kentle özdeşleşmiş etkinliklerin (horon/kolbastı oynamak, kemençe dinlemek, hamsi şöleni vb. gibi) ağırlık kazanması yerel kimliğe ağırlık verildiğini, milli/ulusal kimliğin de vurgulandığı ancak yerel kimlik kadar tasarım kararlarına yansımadığı saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Peyzaj Tasarımı, mekan kimliği, simgesel mekan, etkinlik türleri, mekansal bileşen

PERFORMING IDENTITY THROUGH A SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Abstract

In the ever changing world the need for stability is crucial for humans and in search for stability emotional bonds with places are important component of psychological balance. Therefore concepts such as place identity, place attachment, sense of place which is the results of people-space interaction are expressed more often in recent years in the fields of environmental psychology and environmental design. This study focuses on place identity term. How identity and symbolism are dealt with in space designing process? How values and identity that describes a society is related to spatial components of space? In terms of these questions there is a gap in the field of environmental design and psychology researches. What are emphasized by designers, what (concepts, spatial components etc.) are used by them most frequently was aimed to understand by this study. In the research which was conducted in Karadeniz Technical University, Landscape Architecture Department with 97 senior students in different years students were asked to define their design concepts, the type of space, the activity patterns that will take place, and the spatial components of the space if they were to design a symbolic space in an urban park in Trabzon city. Categorization of design concepts showed that cultural attributes of the city were mostly focused on followed by social attributes and natural attributes. Also analyses of types of spaces, activity patterns and spatial components were conducted. Relatively higher frequency of cultural and social attributes of the city and the activity patterns which are identified with Trabzon reflects the importance given by designers to local identity; national identity was also revealed in some answers but did not gain importance at the same level with local identity.

Keywords: landscape design, place identity, symbolic space, activity patterns, spatial components

1.Introduction

In an age of increased loss of identity as our lives and places lose their distinctiveness into a predictable sameness in a rapidly changing world, the need for stability is crucial for humans. In search for stability development of emotional bonds with places are prerequisite of psychological balance since it helps to overcome identity crises and may also facilitate involvement in local activities (Lewicka, 2008). Therefore people's relations with places have been explored using a wide array of psychological constructs such as place identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983), place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992, Lewicka, 2005), and sense of place (Tuan, 1980; Hay, 1998). This study deals with place identity term. Identity is seen as a fundamental need that encompasses all aspects of human life therefore, the themes of place, place identity, and place making can facilitate valuable linkages among a wide range of disciplines and professions, including architecture, sociology, geography, environmental psychology, landscape architecture, and urban design and planning (Casakin, & Bernardo, 2012). In the following sections we will firstly focus on the definition of place identity and researches about it. Then we will analyze its relationship to symbolism and open space design.

2. Place identity; theoretical approaches

Place identity is defined as a way to express identity through the physical environment, and a manifestation of self (and collective) memory (Birol Akkurt, 2012). The widely accepted definition of place identity in environmental psychology explains it as the "ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being" (Proshansky et al., 1983, p.59). From this point of view place identity is reflected as a result of the interaction of the self and components of the environment, and the actions and interactions that take place there, a psychological structure that arises from the individuals' attempts to regulate their environments (Birol Akkurt, 2012). In other words it refers to the personal meanings, symbols, and significance that places have for their residents, visitors, and users (Casakin, & Bernardo, 2012). How place identity promotes positive feelings and allows people to develop affective bonds to place, as well as a sense of belonging that brings people together around shared values, issues and localities was emphasized (Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007; Manzo, 2003; Tuan, 1980). Place identity also contributes to forge the image of an environment, as well as its vitality, liveability, and performance (Casakin, & Bernardo, 2012). Other contributions of place identity to a person are to preserve a sense of continuity, to build positive self-esteem, and to create a sense of self-efficacy (Lewicka, 2008)

2.1. Different dimensions and components of place identity

Various researchers have defined various dimensions and components of place identity with varied approaches. Relph's (1976, p.45) definition of place identity is as: "The identity of something refers to a persistent sameness and unity which allows that thing to be differentiated from others. [...] the identity of place simply as that which provides its individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the basis for its recognition as a separable entity". Similarly Lewicka (2008) refers to sameness (continuity) and distinctiveness (uniqueness) dimensions of place identity. Aguilar (2002) emphasizes the dimensions of social life (e.g., solidarity, strong social networks), the existence of traits in the environment that people feel

143

represent them (e.g., order, cleanliness), and the presence of physical elements that acquire a symbolic and emblematic character (e.g., points of reference at a local level). According to Relph (1976) the static physical setting, the activities, and the meanings are the three fundamental components of the identity of places which are irreducible to the other, yet are inseparably interwoven in our experiences of places.

The concept of place identity is being investigated in relation to different terms such as its effect on supporting sustainability and environmental behaviour (Pol, 2002), its relationship with psychological needs (Casakin, & Elliot, 2012; Noormohammadi, 2012; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), restorative environments and human well-being (Vidal, Troffa, Valera, & Fornara, 2012), how it develops in different scales (neighbourhood, city, region, nation or continental) (Lewicka, 2008), how to integrate it in design process (Seamon, 2012). Most frequently society's relationship with places in terms of place identity or how existing places are identified (Lewicka, 2008) or the relationship between place identity and place attachment or sense of place were dealt with (Chow & Healey, 2008; Hernandez et al., 2007; Hernández-Garcia, 2012; Knez, 2005; Lewicka, 2008).

Researches on how place creation/making and promoting place identity are related, how environmental designers dealt with this relationship in design process are lack and inadequate for providing design guidelines especially in landscape architecture discipline. In the rapidly changing world the landscapes with which people interact (either at a concrete or at a cultural/abstract level) are undergoing constant change. These changes can strongly affect people's identity. Butina-Watson and Bentley (2007) emphasizes the importance of the meanings of cultural landscapes (landscapes modified by human interventions), and human identities. According to Butina-Watson and Bentley (2007), the key dimension of the identity-construction process that helps users to construct a rooted sense of community is incorporating 'rooted' elements into new designs at all scales. Goličnik Marušić and Nikšič (2012) state that when identity by design is in question, the everyday practice shows that approaches are partial, and do not address multi-layered aspects. Therefore this study aims to understand the relationship between landscape design and place identity and the role that landscape architects play in landscape design process.

2.2. Place identity and environmental design; How they are related?

Place making/creation is an essential dimension of people-place relationship which plays an important role in place identity process, in this study place identity is dealt with in terms of place creation or making. In place making people (especially designers and planners) draw on their knowledge of the place to make changes so that the experience of place is strengthened and positively supported. Adam (2012) emphasizes the responsibility of environmental designers in their ability to transform and create the built symbols that contribute to the identity of people and communities. Place identity can be affected by the physical or spatial features of a setting (e.g., structure, spatial characteristics, built form, landscape, and furniture). But also the activities carried out in place (circulation flow, behaviour patterns), and its meaning (legibility, cultural associations, and semiotics) affects its identity. In consequence, how place identity is perceived and understood strongly influenced by the interaction between people and these fundamental elements of the environment. It was stated that some environmental physical factors can act as facilitators of the subject's identification with the space, and of the external perception of such a space as fostering a strong identity (Bernardo, & Palma-Oliveira, 2012). How designers know and decide about these physical factors? How designers make decisions in design process in order to develop a place identity? How values and identity that describes a

144

society is related to spatial components of space? Depending on design's function as supporting the identity of groups, Lang (1994) highlights the responsibilities of designers as they have to recognize the group's symbols of identity and how they may be used or transformed to continue to provide that support. Padua (2007) criticises the post-traditional landscapes of many contemporary cities as being characterized by symbolic references that create a discontinuity with the local history of the society. Creating place identity has emerged as a solution to the effects of modern societies. Consequently this field has largely influenced designers and seeks to connect people with their environment and increase the sense of attachment and belonging in architectural spaces. Designers should take some share of responsibility as major contributors to the physical changes that contribute to the current crises of identity (Adam, 2012; Noormohammadi, 2012). For modernist environmental design two techniques for identity that relates a place to its locality are defined: the spirit of place or site-specific design; and symbolic identity or the designer's personal discovery of local symbolism. Choosing a symbolic identity is defined by Adam (2012) as the choice of a symbolic aspect of a design that seems to be in some way relevant to the location or finding the local elements that can be interpreted into a new spatial component.

According to Padua (2007) one of the places where symbols of collective identity can be seen in their most clear and compelling form is the design of public space. The symbolic references that provide a design vocabulary for these open spaces speak volumes about the shared values of the group and have often been developed to reinforce peoples' identification (Osborne, 2001; Padua, 2007). Such places include landscapes, monuments, and sites where commemorations are performed, collective memory is reinforced, and national identity is constructed, both formally and informally. Landscape components (or urban reminders) such as monuments, public buildings and statues as well as carnivalesque rites, ceremonies, and popular festivities have been used as tools to identify the place identity, since they remind citizens about their roots and symbolically link people with a common past, and they encourage the faith in a common future (Birol Akkurt, 2012; Osborne, 2001). In this way, individuals are encouraged to see themselves as part of a collectivity with shared objectives (Osborne, 2001).

In her study about the relationship between landscape components, place identity and social identity in Hong Kong Padua (2007) revealed that the design vocabulary draws on a new international set of symbols that are linked to a new materialism—the production and consumption of commercial goods. According to Padua (2007) by using elements of Mediterranean design in one of the study areas designers offered people an opportunity to affirm their identities as cosmopolitan members of an affluent global society, while the other study area provides people with an opportunity to affirm their identities as bearers of Chinese culture. The findings of her study showed the role and responsibilities of landscape architects in shaping and reflecting the cultural values of a community and revealed the importance of supporting place identity through design process. In this context research questions of this study are: how identity and symbolism are dealt with in space designing process? Identity and symbolism are related to belonging to a place and place attachment, these feelings supports psychological needs of humans. In this case how designers do approach to place making/creation in order to support these feelings?

3. The purpose of the study

Given the impact of environmental design on supporting place identity that reflects a society's shared values and identity, understanding which landscape components are used as symbols of identity and how they are related to society's values by designers is important. In order to better

145

understand the relations between the major components of place identity and based on Relph's (1976) definition of place identity components this study focused on three dimensions of a design: concept (meaning), activities (behaviour patterns) and spatial components (physical space). In context of designer, user and place triangle identity is mostly approached from place and user point of view, the lack of studies that emphasises designer point of view is noticed by the researchers of this study. Which approaches are emphasized by designers, what (e.g., concepts, spatial components, activities) are being used by them most frequently were aimed to understand by this study.

4. Methodology

The research was conducted in Karadeniz Technical University, Landscape Architecture Department with 97 senior students in different years. Previous to research students were informed about the symbolic space, how it is related to place identity and enhancing basic human needs like affiliation and self-esteem. Different examples of landscape designs with symbolic spaces were shown and how they used symbolism to refer to an identity or a social value is discussed with students in Spatial Behaviour course. At the end of the term students were asked to define their design concepts, the type of space, activity patterns that will take place and the spatial components of the space if they were to design a symbolic space in an urban park in Trabzon city. The question was asked as part of final exam of Spatial Behaviour course which is obligatory and 25 (over 100) points were appointed to this question. Answers were coded and then categorized by 5 landscape architects who work as a researcher with Ph. D. degree in the field of landscape design and environmental psychology. The frequencies of concepts, space types, and behaviour patterns were analyzed and the relationships between them were investigated.

146

5. Findings

5.1. Respondents

Table 1 shows the frequencies of students according to their gender, and locality and the year of the research. 8 students did not answered or their mentioned another city, not Trabzon. 75% of these students were non-local.

Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic data

Demographic Data	N=97	Frequency (%)
Gender		
Female	71	72,4
Male	26	26,5
Locality		
Local	34	37,7
Non-local	63	64,3
Year of research		
2017	49	50,0
2014	48	49,0

5.2. Frequencies and categorization of design concepts

The design concepts were firstly analysed without any categorization in order to determine the most common ones. 27,6% percent of students defined "to make feel the culture of Trabzon", 16,3% of students defined "Trabzonspor (Football team), Maroon and Blue (the colours of the team), the spirit of Trabzonspor", 8,2% of students defined "the colourful personality of citizens of Trabzon", 8,2% of students defined "cultural heritage", 7,1% of students defined "anchovy", and 4,1% of the students defined "Black sea" as their concepts (others 19,2%, missing value 11,2%).

In the second phase of analysing design concepts, they were categorized according to what they refer to. Researchers of the study defined the groups as cultural attributes, natural attributes, and social attributes of local identity. The answers which were not referring to any of these were grouped as other. Then 5 researchers were categorized each answer into one of these groups. With at least two same answers each concept's category was determined. The frequencies of categories are as: 38, 8% cultural attributes, 27, 6% social attributes, 19, 4% natural attributes, and 3, 1% other with 11, 2% missing value.

In order to determine the distribution of concepts into categories crosstab analysis was done. "Cultural attributes" category consists of "to make feel the Trabzon culture, 27%", "cultural heritage, %21", and "folk dance (of eastern Black sea region), horon, and kamancha, 7,9%". "Social attributes" category consists of "Trabzonspor (football team), 59,3%", "the colourful personality of citizens of Trabzon, 29,6", "anchovy festival, 7,4%", and "spring celebrations, Hıdırellez, 3,7%". "Natural attributes" category consists of "anchovy, 36,8%", "Black sea, waves of the Black sea, 21,1%", "sloping topography of Trabzon, 15,8", "traditional materials, wood, 10,5", "the combination of blue (Black sea) and green, 5,3%", and "rainy weather, rain, 5,3%". Concepts refer to more general categories such as "peace" or "focal point" was categorized as other. Chi square test was conducted and the results showed that the distribution of concepts into categories is meaningful (χ^2=261,000; 48 df, p<0,01).

If the distribution of concept categories show any differences in terms of students' gender and academic years were analysed. It was found that gender has no effect on the concept decisions. However, a difference in design concept categories between students from different academic-years was determined (χ^2=16,205; 3 df, p<0,01). This can be result of the students' past design studio experiences.

5.3. Frequencies of activity types and their distributions according to design concepts

Totally 225 answers were given by students which addressed 40 different types of behaviour patterns. The activity types that were mentioned at least 10 times were listed. The most frequent activity is sitting-resting-waiting with 14,7% followed by folk dances (horon and kolbastı) with 11,6%, taking photographs with 6,2%, eating-drinking with 5,8%, watching-observation with 4,9%, listening to folk music-kamancha with 4,9%, shopping traditional hand-crafts, souvenirs with 4,9%, and anchovy festive-anchovy grill parties with 4,4%. Other activities include mostly activities related to local attributes or daily-life such as tasting local food, traditional hand-crafts exhibits, visiting exhibitions, watching football matches-public demonstrations-cheering, picnic-barbecue, playing folk instrumentals.

How activities are distributed into the concept categories was also analysed in order to see the relationship between concepts and activity types. For cultural attributes category sitting-resting-waiting, folk dances (horon and kolbastı), tasting local food, listening folk music, traditional hand-craft exhibitions, shopping souvenirs, and taking photographs were most frequent

activities. For social attributes category sitting-resting-waiting, folk dances (horon and kolbastı), watching performances, and watching Trabzonspor demonstrations and matches were most common. For natural attributes category similar to other two sitting-resting-waiting was common and followed by eating-drinking, anchovy grill/cooking, and walking around. Though activities that refer to basic human needs are common for each category in terms of other activities there can be seen a difference between the categories that reflect the effect different attributes. The results of the chi square test showed that the distribution of activities into categories is meaningful (χ^2=236,022; 117df, p<0,01)

5.4. Types of Open Spaces

What kind of open spaces are related to symbolism or thought to be reflecting symbolism was also investigated. Totally 115 answers were given which defined 23 different types of open space. Demonstration/gathering areas were most frequent with 9,3% and followed by squares 7,1%, festive/celebration area 5,8%, and exhibition/information area 4,4%. The other answers indicated seating areas, dance floor, eating areas, open/street market and such as.

For cultural attributes categories demonstration areas, festive areas, squares, exhibition areas and open markets were mostly defined. For social attributes categories squares, demonstration areas and eating areas were defined. For natural attributes category squares, festive areas, and waterfront parks were defined. The results of the chi square test showed that the distribution of open space types into categories is meaningful (χ^2= 78,987; 66df, p<0,5).

Students were also requested to define spatial components of the symbolic space that they suggested. Because of the complexity of analysing phase depending on the variety and multitude of data statistical analyses were not conducted. The most frequent components that were suggested by student designers are sculptures/monuments (e.g., horon/dancing figures, kamancha playing figures, anchovy, historical persons, famous football players), emblems/figures (Trabzonspor, Kamancha), and colours which can be seen around the city frequently and already examined by the students in their previous design studio tasks since their study areas had contained some of these (Fig. 1, Fig. 2).

148

Figure1. Sculpture in city centre that depicts folk dance "horon" and instrumental "kamancha"

6. Discussion

Based on Relph's (1976) definition of place identity components this study focused on three dimensions of a design: concept (meaning), activities (behaviour patterns) and spatial components (physical space).

Analyses of the data revealed that the most frequent design concepts for a symbolic open space in Trabzon city are "to make feel the culture of Trabzon", "Trabzonspor (Football team), Maroon and Blue (the colours of the team), the spirit of Trabzonspor", "the colourful personality of citizens of Trabzon", "cultural heritage", "anchovy", and "Black sea" all of which refers to locality. This result reveals the importance given to traditional identity or social values and how they are seen as related to symbolism by students. The design vocabulary of students draw on a set of symbols that are linked to city's most known features. In other words the concepts they define are references and symbols used to represent elements rooted in local history and the experience of the local population. Lang (1994) highlights the responsibilities of designers as they have to recognize the group's symbols of identity and how they may be used or transformed to continue to provide that support. Students' design approaches reflect a wide spectrum of concepts which is related to city's different salient and well-known attributes. In this context we can say that their design concepts are result of a responsive approach to citizens' identity.

Figure 2. Trabzonspor football team's emblem and sculptures in city centre

Categorization of design concepts showed that cultural attributes of the city were mostly focused on and followed by social attributes and natural attributes. Cultural attributes mostly

point to traditional hand-crafts, folk music, music instrumentals, and folk dances. Social attributes are partly overlapped with cultural attributes but mostly refer to public gatherings and social customs. Natural attributes consists of concepts related to city's ecological, geographical or climatic attributes.

A difference in design concept categories between students from different academic-years is determined. This can be result of the students' past design studio experiences. The subjects and study areas of environmental design projects vary each year therefore; senior students at different academic years can have different design studio backgrounds. For example year 2017 respondents had designed an urban park next to city's football stadium at previous term and year 2014 respondents had designed open spaces of city's one of the most historical places at previous term. Future researches can focus on the reason of this difference and investigate how past design studio experiences affect students' knowledge and design decision making.

Behaviour occurs in landscapes and can be an element of its symbolism, and behaviour too can be symbolic (Backhaus, 2009). Therefore suggested activity patterns were also analysed in order to understand how students relate them to symbolism and a symbolic space design. The activity types defined by students also showed a strong relatedness to city's daily-life and customs. While activities that relate to basic human needs such as sitting-resting, watching or eating- drinking were common in order to continue the daily life in suggested open space it was also determined that activity types that belong to society's customs and local identity were of importance for designers. Violich (1985) stated that "a key test of sense of place rests with the degree to which a place in its physical form and the activities it facilitates reflects the culture of those who use it". In this case students' suggestions such as public gatherings and demonstrations for folk dance and music performances, or watching to city's football teams matches and cheering all together can be good starting point for a design which aims to create a strong sense of place.

150

Relatively higher frequency of cultural and social attributes of the city and the activity patterns which are identified with Trabzon reflects the importance given by designers to local identity; national identity was also revealed in some answers but did not gain importance at the same level with local identity.

7. Conclusion

Adam (2012) states that with the fragmentation of society set in motion by the forces of globalisation, individual and community identity have become more complex and vulnerable. Place identity is a complex concept but is reduced to a few aspects in the field of urban planning and design too often; most often to visual perception of places. There is an insufficient application of people in places and their notions of places into practice. Therefore it is crucial to apply them in the design process as soon and as effective as possible (Goličnik Marušić, & Nikšič, 2012). In this study we aimed to move beyond the visual perception dimension and analyse place identity in terms of meaning, activity types and space components through symbolism since as with all identity, place identity relies on shared symbolic markers. Any attempt to deny or remove these symbols will be a challenge to the identity of those who use them as identity markers (Adam, 2012). Therefore designers' awareness of their responsibilities in terms of place identity and responsiveness of their designs in this context are crucial for the quality of open space, so the life quality of users. Student designers' level of awareness can be enhanced with appropriate courses and contents such as Spatial Behaviour.

This study is dealt with the design concepts and activity patterns. Future research can focus on the effects of differences of designers in terms of their familiarity to local identity or their design experiences. Also the spatial components can be studied in detail related to defined place identity.

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151

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152

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153