

Research Article

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# The Evaluation of Public Open Space Quality from the Perspective of Syrian Refugees Living in Bursa, Turkey

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## Bursa'da Yaşayan Suriyeli Göçmenler Açısından Kamusal Açık Alan Kalitesinin Değerlendirilmesi

**ABSTRACT:**

Public open spaces are the areas where social relationships take place and cultures mix, where people interact with each other and with the local authorities. When these spaces are well-designed, relationships are built between users of these spaces; cooperation is improved, and benefits to the communities that accommodate newcomers, refugees, or migrants are increased. The scope of this research is to gain a better understanding of how refugees use, perceive, and experience public open spaces. The research sheds light on a case study of incoming Syrian refugees in Altıparmak and adjacent neighbourhoods in Bursa, Turkey. A mixed-method approach is used to gather information consisting of literature review, observation, and interviews. The questions of the interviews were designed based on the principles of the Project of Public Spaces (PPS) approach to measure the quality of a space, as well as to define the basic elements that make a space good, and make refugees feel welcomed and comfortable. The findings show that the public open spaces in the case study area have been successful in creating social networking, access, and links, uses, and activities, but have not met the criteria of image and comfort. The research highlights that public spaces are affected by the national and cultural identity of refugees. The findings also show that the best public open spaces for refugees give importance to create links between their homeland and host country.

**KEYWORDS:** public open space; quality of public space; Project for Public Spaces; placemaking; refugee.

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**ÖZ:**

Kamusal açık alanlar, sosyal ilişkilerin oluştuğu ve kültürlerin karıştığı, insanların birbirleriyle ve yerel yönetimlerle etkileşimde bulunduğu alanlardır. Bu alanlar iyi tasarlandığında, kullanıcılar arasında iyi ilişkiler kurulur; işbirliği geliştirilir, yeni gelenleri, mültecileri veya göçmenleri barındıran topluluklara sağlanan faydalar artar. Çalışmanın amacı, mültecilerin kamusal açık alanların kullanımını ne şekilde algıladıklarını ve deneyimlediklerini araştırmaktır. Makalede Suriye'den Türkiye'ye, özellikle de Bursa, Altıparmak mahallesi ve çevresine göç eden mültecilere yönelik bir alan çalışması yapılmıştır. Yöntem olarak, literatür tarama, gözlem ve görüşmeler kullanılmıştır. Görüşmelerde mekan kalitesini ölçmek için Kamusal Mekanlar için Proje (PPS) yaklaşımının ilkelerini temel alan sorular sorulmuştur. Sonuç olarak, çalışma alanının sosyal ilişkiler, erişilebilirlik, kullanım ve aktivite konularında başarılı olduğu, ancak imaj ve konfor kriterlerini karşılamadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırma, kamusal açık alanların mültecilerin ulusal ve kültürel kimliklerinden de etkilendiğini göstermesi açısından önemlidir. Bulgular, en iyi kamusal açık alanların mültecilerin anavatanları ile ev sahibi ülke arasında bağ oluşturmaya önem verenler olduğunu göstermektedir.

**ANAHTAR KELİMELEER:** kamusal açık alan; kamusal alan kalitesi; kamusal alan için proje; yer yapma; göçmen.

**INTRODUCTION:**

In the case of war, seeking refuge is an internal motivation for man. According to Maslow's Pyramid, shelter is one of the basic biological needs of human survival. After finding shelter, food, and other biological needs, people start to look for safety, security, stability, and freedom from fear, which are secondary requirements. The third level of human needs is social needs, that involves feelings of belonging, trust, and acceptance as a part of a group. Fourth, there is the need for the appreciation that Maslow classifies as deriving from peers, along with the desire for respect from others. The final need is self-realization (Maslow, 1981). Accordingly, a person hopes for living in a good place that can meet his/her psychological and physiological requirements. However, there are not many tools to determine the quality of the place, but it seems obvious that the evaluation of the place by its users is one of the most important ways for measuring the quality of the place.

This research concentrates on the evaluation of the quality of public open spaces. It can be seen that public open space has an indispensable role in urban life, as it has multiple impacts on the physical, social, functional, and perceptual space qualities. Carr et al. (1992) claim that public spaces can be seen as a means to represent and pass on cultural values and concepts. Public spaces can be looked at, preserve cultural values, and help individuals obtain their rights and meet their requirements. Davies (2012) claims that public spaces can be used as an indicator of the level of the quality of life in a city, by measuring the quality of those spaces and the desire of people to use them and spend time in them. For instance, Gehl (1987) demonstrated the essential role and function of public spaces in a city in providing the opportunity for individuals to meet, communicate, interact and share experiences. Thompson (2002) argues that public open spaces are viewed as "places to celebrate cultural diversity, to engage with natural processes, and to conserve memories".

Project for Public Space PPS (2000) claims that successful public spaces in cities play a significant role in building a strong sense of belonging in the community amongst individuals. Public open space is not only important to promote and provide for physical activity, but also to give people many opportunities to come together. It provides benefits for community interrelationship. In the case of refugees, public open space can play a more important role in supporting well-being and connection.

In this study, the satisfaction of Syrian refugees with the quality of the public space in Altıparmak and adjacent neighborhoods, have been evaluated according to the parameters constructed from the four determinant factors of successful public places (access & linkage, comfort & image, uses & activities, and sociability) formulated by the Project of Public Spaces.

**1. Literature Review****1.1 Definition of Public Open Place**

Creating places for people is more than the distribution of building masses and the space between buildings. Designing a public open space includes various concerns, both physical and sociocultural. According to the recent international

definitions, public spaces are “all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive” (UN-Habitat, 2015).

A broad definition of public space relates to all those parts of the man-made and natural environment, public and private, internal and external, urban and rural, where the public can feel freedom in it. The term “public open space” is a significant element of urban design which includes streets, parks, plazas, squares that are publicly owned and used for many activities in public life (Carmona et al., 2008). They are not only the publicly owned empty spaces between the buildings but also a spatial aspect of social consciousness as an interactive background for social activities. Public space can help to reduce anti-social behavior (Painter & Tilley, 1999), promotes neighborliness and social cohesion (Massey et al., 2002), and provides a venue for social interchange and for supporting the social life of communities (Watson, 2006). Public space is able to deliver a range of benefits across economic, social, and environmental spheres (Dunnett et al., 2002).

Public place, in the Project of Public Space, may be defined as “a place that is open and accessible to all citizens, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level”. However, public open spaces have opened a new concern about the quality of space both physical and socio-cultural, and creating places for people to enjoy and use which is more than the distribution of building masses and the spaces.

## 1.2 Quality of Public Open Place

There are many studies emphasizing the value of public open spaces and identifying quality criteria for successful public open spaces: Gehl, 2010; Carmona, et al., 2008; Gehl and Gemz, 2004; Carmona, et al., 2003; Lloyd and Auld, 2003; Hass-Klau, et al., 1999; Montgomery, 1998; Carr, et al., 1995; Whyte, 1980; and Jacobs, 1961. (Table 1). The main aim of designing public spaces is to achieve the greatest benefit to society. Montgomery (1998) notes that urban quality must be considered in much wider terms than physical attributes, and the notion of urban quality is clearly bound up with the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of a place. The place should be designed to provide certain qualities that make people willing to spend time in it and increase the user's desire to use that space. The quality of a place is related to its ability to meet the psychological and socio-cultural needs of the users of this place. Therefore, it is important to include users when measuring the quality of the space.

Authors	Definitions
(Jacobs, 1961)	Activity is the main quality indicator of urban environment.
(Carr <i>et al.</i> , 1992)	The more that different groups of people use the place means the more successfully designed the place was. The most vital places are the best used places, which are full of people engaging in different activities.
(Gehl & Gemz, 2004)	The quality can be affected by both the numbers of people in a space, and by the extent to which the quality of the space encourages users to linger, whatever the physical context.
(Montgomery, 1998)	Successful urban places combine activity, meaning and physical setting.
(Hass-Klau et al., 1999)	The factors that make public spaces popular include: places for sitting and relaxing, and something to watch (preferably other people).
(Whyte, 1980)	The best-used plazas are sociable places with a high proportion of people in groups, more people meeting others or exchanging good-byes.
(Lloyd & Auld, 2003)	The extent to which environments encourage socialization impacts directly on the quality of life of those who use them.
(Carmona <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	The key attributes of successful places are accessibility, so that people can engaged in activities, comfort, and a good image, and sociability, where people meet each other.
(Carmona et al., 2008)	It is a mistake to think of better-quality public spaces only as purely a visual concern. Instead, these are matters that have an effect on the way users understand, function, and socialize in the public space, and by inclusion in the viability of public space for different economic activities.

(Gehl, 2010) A successfully built environment arises from ordinary daily street life, where several activities occur and people may interact.

Table 1: The different definitions of quality of public place

According to the Project of Public Spaces (PPS), there are four key qualities of a successful place which good public space generally needs to offer them: (1) it must be accessible, (2) it must be comfortable and have a good image, (3) it must be sociable, and (4) it must enable people to engage in an array of activities. PPS developed the Place Diagram as a tool to judge any place whether it is good or not (figure 1). Looking at the qualities of the Place Diagram, some other characters that contribute to make a good public space can be recognized.

**-Access and linkages;** Access and linkages relate to how well space is connected to its surroundings, both visually and physically. Physical accessibility points to the proximity, and accessibility of buildings or places. On the other hand, visual accessibility refers to how well the spaces can be seen by people. As noted, accessibility is seen as a key feature of public space. The places which are not accessible cannot be considered as truly public (Madanipour, 2013).

**-Comfort and Image;** Comfort and image are the keys to defining whether a place will be used or not (PPS, 2016). According to (Holland et al., 2007), people want to spend more time and stay longer in public open spaces that give a big degree of comfort. On the other hand, perception of, and fear of crime influence people’s patterns of use of public spaces (Lloyd & Auld, 2003). Security is one of the features that make public spaces comfortable. The requirement of safety is a criterion that is important to user preferences. Comfortable public spaces can be affected by several elements such as relative humidity, human activity, etc.(Stathopoulos et al., 2004). A lower sound level is important to create a comfortable public space (Yang & Kang, 2005). The good maintenance makes the user enjoy the public space.

**-Uses and Activities;** Activities are defined as the action of using something for the purpose of achieving something. Activities in a place are the reasons that motivate why people come to the place and decide to return there. So, a good place has more activities that are going on and people have an opportunity to participate in those activities. If there are things to do, people want to spend time, and have activities in public places more than just walking and sitting. Activities are needed for different age groups, gender, income level, ethnicity, so spaces should be designed to consider the disabled, women, low-income people, children, ethnic and elderly minorities. Moreover, they are used throughout the day and in different seasons.

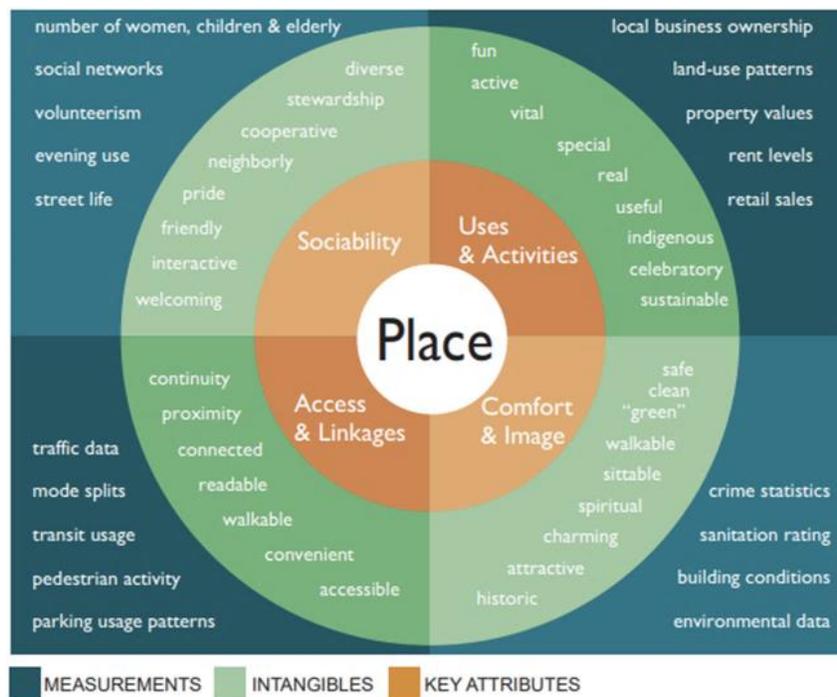


Figure 1: The Place Diagram (Source: <http://www.pps.org/articles/grplacefeat/>, 2016).

**-Sociability;** Sociability is important to make a good place, but it is one of the hardest qualities to be achieved (Williams & Carr, 2019). When people meet and welcome their neighbors, feel comfortable, or react to others, they feel a stronger sense of space, or attachment to their community, and to the place which fosters these kinds of social activities (PPS, 2016). Public spaces play an important role in developing communication by triggering tolerance and mutual understanding in society, and increasing different groups' tolerance (Whyte, 1980). Users of public spaces can get a sense of well-being (Cattell et al., 2008). On the other hand, public spaces can help to reduce crime and anti-social behavior (Carmona et al., 2008).

### 1.3 Immigrants and Refugees in Public Open Places

Public open spaces should address the needs and aspirations of all users. These needs vary depending on the circumstances of the users, whether they are local residents, immigrants, refugees, or tourists. According to the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a migrant is a person who chooses to move from his/her home for any reasons, not necessarily due to a direct threat of persecution or death, but in the main to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, or other reasons. The 1951 Convention defines the one who flees armed conflict or abuse as a “refugee”. It additionally outlines the basic rights that states ought to afford to refugees. From the above definitions it can be said that what the refugees wait for are different according to the problems they suffer.

One of the most important problems of refugees is the ability to adapt to a new physical and social environment. Newcomers use public open spaces to meet so that they could reflect upon their past experiences in their home country. In these spaces, they could meet friends and relatives facing similar challenges and offer advice and support to each other. (Lanfer and Taylor, 2005).

A good place for refugees, whether it's a garden, a street, or a community center, plays an important role in integrating refugees into the fabric of the new community. It also enables them to take their role in improving public open spaces and services themselves and for that new community. Public open spaces reveal how a city welcomes refugees and provides them with their needs. Moreover, a good public space gives the city's new residents more than just a place to spend time. It connects them with new neighbors, gives them a way to explore their new home country, and gives them an opportunity for holding on to cultural traditions while building new community bonds (PPS, 2018). For example, Türkenmarkt (Turk's market) in Berlin Neukölln, the person thinks himself in Istanbul. Turkish Market is one of the liveliest and sensational marketplaces in the city. It is easily accessible, spanning along the Landwehrkanal River. This market and the neighborhoods close to it become the center of Turkish immigrant life in Berlin. Türkenmarkt promotes cultural diversity in the cultural mix of Berlin, it is an excellent example of a public space that shows how public spaces provide a positive impact on both the immigrant and local community (figure 2).



Figure 2. Berlin's bustling canalside Türkenmarkt. (Source: <https://www.pps.org/article/>, 2016)

In open public spaces, immigrants and refugees have a chance to develop a sense of place and maintain traditions as well as help building social ties. For example, the Little Haiti Community Garden in Miami, Florida has been seen as a place where the Haitian community uses traditional farming technicalities in producing unavailable products. This place provides an opportunity for cultural exchange (figure 3).



Figure 3: Little Haiti Community Garden in Miami, Florida. (Source: from <https://www.pps.org/article/refugees-and-public-space.2018>).

Another example is the Open-air kitchen in Warsaw. It is a riverside food bar and a cultural venue run by refugees. It is not only a typical truck food bar, it is an informal outdoor eating venue with a convenient sitting space located adjacent to the riverbanks. Besides, it is a busy pedestrian promenade next to a volleyball court and a sandy beach (figure 4). Jarmila Rybicki, one of the founders, says that the project aims to enable refugees to gain confidence in going out and being active in the new communities. The kitchen from a conflict zone provides a space for interaction between refugees and Warsawians. It gives a welcoming and open aspect with a sense of intimacy to explore the richness of the heritage that newcomers bring to Poland, and enjoy a conversation. This public space offers a small-scale possibility of integration, inclusion, and welcome in the Polish political environment that stands against refugees and asylum seekers (Rishbeth et al., 2017).



Figure 4: Open air kitchen in Warsaw (Source: Rishbeth, et al, 2017)

Open-air language class in Paris gives free French courses to refugees and anyone in the Platz de la Bataille de Stalingrad at six p.m. everyday (figure 5). The aim of the classes is to accompany people to linguistic autonomy alongside the learning of cultural norms needed for daily life. These open-air public classes are not only good spaces to help refugees to get on with the French language, but also play a role as social spaces to meet up, make new friends and exchange information (Rishbeth et al., 2017).



Figure 5: Open-air language class seekers in Paris, (Source: Rishbeth, et al,2017)

Both locals and refugees could view public open spaces differently, the public open space could be a place where refugees feel unwanted or uncomfortable and maybe feel a lack of confidence to spend time for fear of hate crimes. On the other hand, for the locals, open public spaces generate a sense of ownership, care, and concerns about anti-social behavior. It can be said that good public open spaces for refugees should be easily accessible, provide economic, cultural, social activities, and summarize the cultural mix of communities. In addition to that, they should give a welcoming and positive effect to the locals generating a sense of ownership and care (Rishbeth et al., 2017).

## 2. Syrian Conflict & Refugee Crisis in Turkey

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: “Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time.” Millions of Syrians have escaped across borders, (the updated data of 31 Jan 2020), 5.681.901 people have fled Syria to seek safety since 2011. According to the last statistics from the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM), Turkey hosts the largest number of registered Syrian refugees as 3.671.811 refugees, (GDMM, 2021) and only 142.676 refugees stay in the camps, the rest distributed to various Turkish states with varying rates.

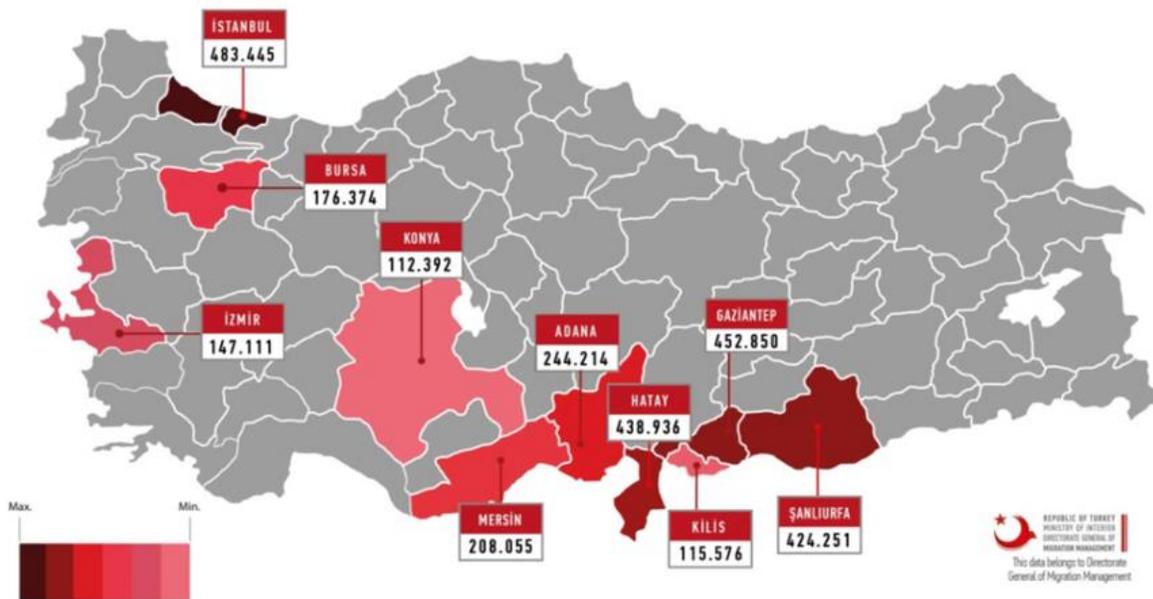


Figure 6: Syrian refugees in the first ten cities. (Source: Directorate General for Migration Management <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>, Last updated 31 Jan 2020)

Figure 6. lights the distribution of the Syrian refugee population that is registered in the first ten provinces of Turkey. The density of the refugee population is much higher in provinces close to the border, like Gaziantep, Hatay, and

Şanlıurfa. İstanbul has the highest Syrian refugee population of 483.665 which forms %3,5 of the total number of residents, whilst Bursa which is located far away from the border hosts the seventh-highest number of refugees with 176.374 Syrians, constituting %5,9 of its total population.

Bursa is one of the largest cities in Turkey, comprises 17 local districts. Due to its developing industry, Bursa has become an attractive urban center for local immigrants and international refugees. According to 2019 statistics, Osmangazi is the highest populated district with 881.490, at the same time it is one of the districts that hosts a high number of Syrian refugees (table 2).

District	Census of the Syrian refugees
Bilinmiyor	6743
Büyükorhan	4
Harmancık	41
Keles	32
Orhaneli	23
İznik	644
Kestel	2434
Orhangazi	2787
Nilüfer	3851
İnegöl	15.084
Mustafakemalpaşa	1649
Gemlik	298
Gürsu	6590
Karacabey	2503
Mudanya	140
Osmangazi	44.258
Yenişehir	883
Yıldırım	59.404

Table 2: Distribution of Syrian refugees under temporary protection in the districts of Bursa (Öztürk, according to General Directorate of Migration Management document dated 24 May 2018)

### 3. The Case Study Area in Bursa, Turkey

The study was conducted in an area densely populated by Syrian refugees in Bursa. The area of Altıparmak and adjacent neighborhoods are located near the city center. It contains multiple functions: residential, commercial, entertainment, educational functions, and a good public transport network. The area is surrounded by a number of important streets in the city center, such as Ulubatlı Hasan Boulevard, Stadium Street, Fevzi Çakmak Street, and Altıparmak Street (figure 7).

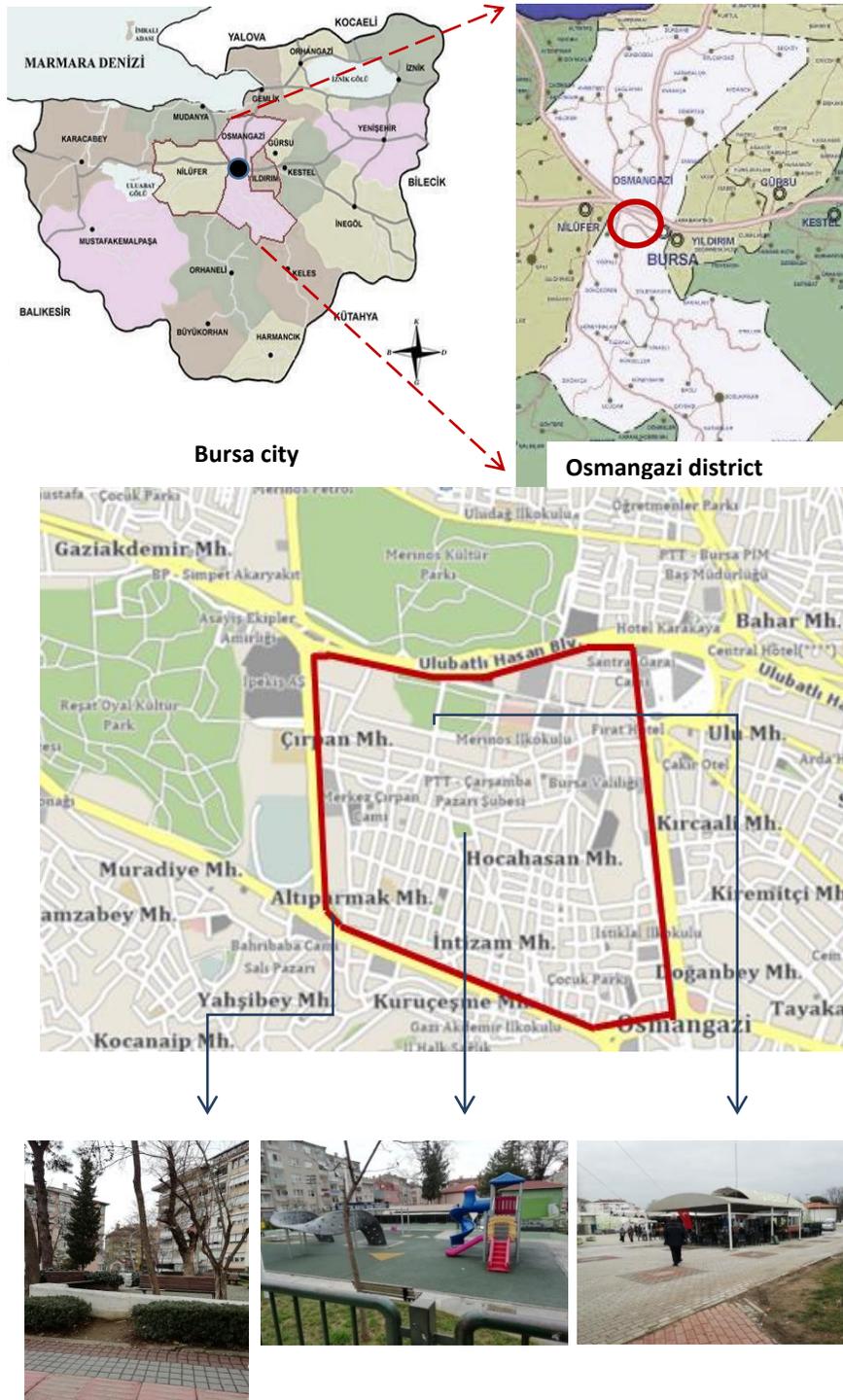


Figure 7. Location of the case study area in the city center of Bursa (Source: Author elaboration based on Google Earth maps, imaging date 11.09.2020)

#### 4. Methodology

Observations in the case study area, and interviews with Syrian refugees as users of public open spaces. The literature reviews adopted included studies about the quality of public open space.

It was necessary to observe the public open spaces by the researcher in order to understand the social relations and interactions in the case study area. Some public spaces were visited in the area, such as Çarşamba Park, İlkbahar Street, and Çarşamba Open Bazaar.

As it is seen, asylum is a phenomenon that brings a series of problems. Whatever the reason could be, seeking refuge may lead to psychological trauma. There are a variety of reasons for this trauma: the depression from fleeing the home country, the abandonment of normal life, the separation from all social relations, even the family, added to the severe feelings of uncertainty about the future, the inability to adapt to the new culture, the isolation from social life, dealing with the negative attitudes of the local population, and the isolation from social life due to language problems.

Many of the studies exploring the experiences of refugees are usually based upon quantitative research, such as a survey. A survey offers a good way to make general statistical inferences about a broad range of matters which may affect refugees, like educational level or health conditions. The survey is useful to understand what truly interests the respondents. In this study, face-to-face interview is considered the most appropriate technique to get a detailed range of opinions and experiences. Interviews also allow researchers to investigate different responses, eliciting further clarification (Glassner & Miller, 2004).

Fifteen interviews were made by the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of Syrian refugees' evaluation of public space in the case study area. The interviews contain six parts: the first part is about personal information. The second part is about the neighborhood in general, such as the duration of living in the area, the reasons for choosing the neighborhood to live in, as well as the feelings, the needs, and the problems faced while living as a refugee in the neighborhood. The other four parts are structured according to the four keys of the place diagram. First, accessibility and linkages (continuity, proximity, connectivity, readability, convenience, accessibility); second, the degree of comfort and image (safe, green, stable, spiritual, charming, attractive); third, the uses and activities (active, special, vital, useful, real, celebratory, indigenous, sustainable); forth, sociability (diverse, cooperative, neighborly, stewardship, pride, interactive, friendly, welcoming).

#### 5. Results and Discussion

The results of observations and interviews are summarized based on the Project of Public Spaces (PPS) subtitles:

##### -Access and Linkages

In the comments of the users, it is noted that physical and social accessibility affects their preference for that public open place. Actual availability is a feature that supports space usage. Everyone has the ability to use public space equally, regardless of different parameters such as social class, race, and religion. Generally, in the neighborhoods, outdoor spaces (streets, parks, and squares) are open to all users. There is no discrimination in terms of social availability. It can be used by different groups.

“When I go to the Çarşamba Bazaar (a public open market), I usually spend 20-30 minutes with some of my female companions sitting and resting in the Çarşamba Park which is very close to the Bazaar”, said a 45-year-old woman. “After picking the children up from school in the afternoon, I go to the park, the children play for a while there”, said a 38-year-old lady.

The vehicular circulation is well connected to the main route, but the size of the parking lot is insufficient. “I have a car; I spend about 15-25 minutes to park my car”, said a 35-year-old man.

For the pedestrians as a whole, there is no integrated pedestrian network. The pedestrian route is mixed with traffic, except for the footpaths of the Çarşamba Park and the nearby Kültürpark. In general, the condition and the size of the walkways in the study area are insufficient. “Except for the main route, the sidewalks are narrow and you may find cars on them so you will find yourself with your children forced to walk in the traffic route”, said a 40-year-old lady.

It is agreed that the road network in the area is well connected to the city's public transport network (figure 8) and close to the bus, train, and tram stations. "It can be said that the best thing in this area is that it is very well served by public transport (buses, metro line, tramway line)", said a 25-year-old lady.

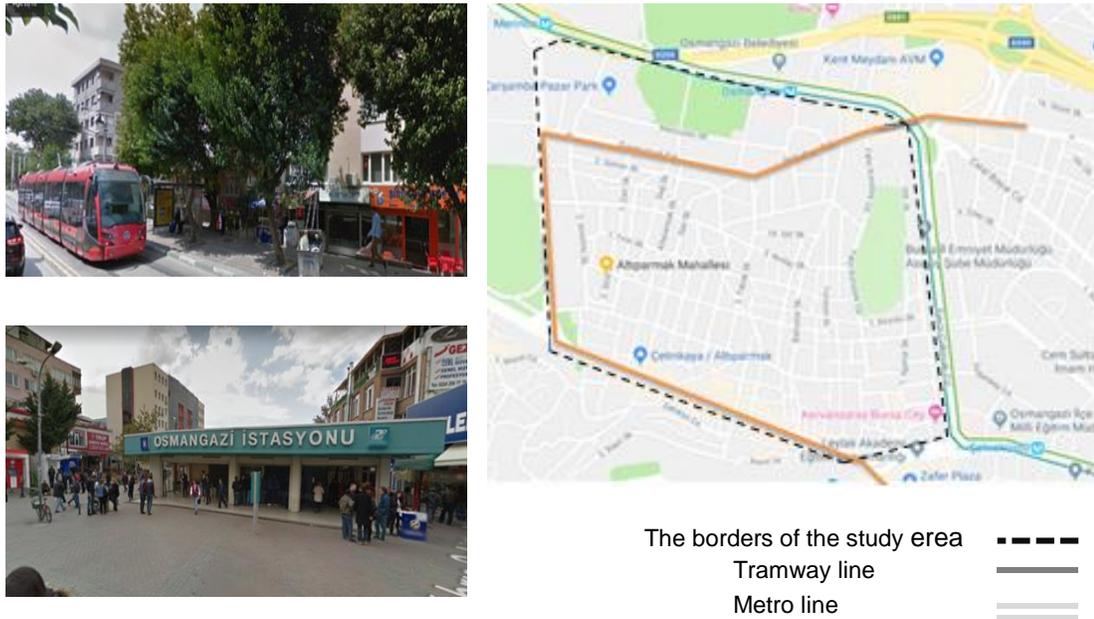


Figure 8. Location of the case study area in the city centre of Bursa (Source: Author elaboration based on Google Earth maps, imaging date 11.09.2020)

### -Uses and Activities

The results of the observations and data obtained from interviews about the activities that can be carried out in the study area are as follows: open public spaces are not considered suitable for persons with disabilities or special requirements (disabled persons, elderly citizens, pregnant women).

In Çarşamba Park people may spend time walking, jogging, or relaxing, and children may use the playgrounds (figure 9), but there is neither jogging, walking, nor biking tracks or local attractions (fountains, water bodies, sculptures). In addition, in Çarşamba Park there are no spaces for some activities: neither space to fly a kite, space for boats, space for a walk, space for eating, nor a playground.

"I cannot find a space to do a lot of activities here... When I want to do some activities or when some of my friends come from outside we go to Kültürpark..." said a 29-year-old man. "I go to the park only on the days of the Bazaar, after shopping I sit in the park, and rest with my family or have a little chat with some friends..." said a 29-year-old lady.



Figure 9. Children's play areas and seating areas near the bazaar in Çarşamba Park (Source: Images by author, 2020).

### -Comfort and Image

The interviews show that most of the seats in the park are unprotected and few (see figure10).

"There are not enough seats in the park and they are not adequately protected from the weather... It is better to go to Kültürpark...." says a 45-year-old lady.

In the study, generally, a large number of Syrian refugees interviewed said that they feel insecure and fearful of racist behavior.

"Although I do not interfere with any problems, my shop windows were broken more than once" says a 40-year-old shopkeeper.

One of the ladies says that a group of Turkish youths attacked her 12-year-old son with a knife while he was going to the mosque.



Figure 10. Photographs from Çarşamba park show the few number and unprotected seats (Source: author, 2020).

### -Sociability

According to the results of the observations and data obtained from the interviews, the streets in the study area, especially the İlkbahar and Darmstat Streets, mainly function in terms of access and linkages. Moreover, they perform a crucial function for the Syrian refugees where they can sell and buy Syrian products. However, the most important function is that the commercial streets become spaces for public discussion, and cultural expression, as well as a stage for everyday life.

In open public spaces of the study area, Syrian refugees can enjoy an easy connection with people who share the same language and the same elements of culture (figure 11).

"A lot of Syrians go to the public market and rest in the nearby park, so sometimes I go to Çarşamba Park or to Çarşamba Bazaar only to be able to speak to someone," says a 44 -year-old lady.

Some refugees say that they do not feel safe especially when they are away from residential and commercial zones. "I feel scared when I enter the park of Çarşamba because there might be unethical behavior, especially after sunset, in the section near the Osmangazi station", says a 25-year-old lady.

"Despite the deployment of police and security in the area, I feel insecure...."

"I can't let kids play without watching", says a 36-year-old lady.

Some Syrians express the interest of municipal authorities in the region to maintain and clean the public areas. However, it is pointed out that the large number of stray dogs there, especially in the garden, spreads panic in the hearts of some Syrian refugees. These stray dogs are considered as a source of filth in their culture, as well.



Figure 11: Syrian stores with Arabic and Turkish billboards in the streets of the study area (Source: Images by the author, 2020)

I have chosen to stay in this area because of the large number of Syrians, and the presence of Syrian shops where I can find what I need from the Syrian products", says a retired, fifty-year-old man.

In general, interviewees explain that social communication is very difficult to achieve with the local Turkish community. Consequently, public spaces in the study area present an opportunity to meet with Syrian friends and to comfortably interact with them.

These types of social relations foster a sense of belonging to As a result, it is observed that the public spaces are very important for Syrian refugees. It is a place where they can socialize. They need a space to use their language since they do not speak Turkish, and they still feel like outsiders, this being the most important problem that the users emphasize in this regard.

## CONCLUSION

This study deals with the project of the public space (PPS) in terms of its definition as an environment in which people gather and interact. It also sheds light on the advantages of public space, especially its vital role in facilitating socialization and human relationships. On the other hand, it spots the negative aspects of certain public open spaces and their bad effect on the lives of both locals and refugees alike.

It conducts research based upon observation and making interviews with Syrian refugees. It investigates the refugees' perspectives towards different kinds of public space. Their perspectives roam around the difficulties they suffer in their attempt to integrate with the Turkish community and the role of public open spaces in their lives. Those spaces present a feeling of comfort that somehow makes up for their bitter feelings of nostalgia for their homeland.

According to the study, Syrian refugees regard public spaces in Altıparmak and the adjacent neighborhoods as being perfectly convenient in terms of access and linkage, but partly convenient with regard to usage and activities.

However, according to the Syrian refugees, these spaces still have not met the criteria of image and comfort (as principles of PPS project). Therefore, it is recommended to increase the comfort level in the study area. Refugees often have very constrained life circumstances, trying to adjust to the new environment, many of them live with poor psychological health, in order to have a sense of belonging to the new cultural texture.

As far as comfort is concerned (as potentially provided by public open spaces and activities), it is about the enjoyment of taking part in activities, or the enjoyment of doing something well, as in the examples mentioned earlier, the activities in which the refugees participated increase their appreciation of the public place. The Turkish Bazaar in Berlin and the open-air kitchen in Warsaw can be described as examples of good public spaces.

In terms of sociability, the public open spaces in the study area have supported social communication among Syrians but, unfortunately, there are obstacles for social communication between the Turkish population and the Syrian refugees. In a previous study of the researcher on the social problems that Syrians suffer from in the city of Bursa, it is noted that the most important obstacle for social attachment within the Turkish community, expressed by the Syrian refugees is the language barrier. Often non-Turkish speaking refugees are unable to communicate effectively with Turkish citizens due to language barriers. The lack of social attachment leads to an unintended low ethnic sociability; as a consequence, it leads to a low evaluation of public spaces.

It is concluded that it is necessary to take what matters to the refugees in general into consideration and their right to stick to their cultural values and backgrounds while integrating into the new community. Their interests have to be investigated to achieve social integration that depends on issues of social equality, acknowledging their right to maintain their original culture and identity (Lanfer and Taylor, 2005).

Removing social barriers such as language and social inequality is the most effective way to increase neighborhoods' public space quality and social equality (Brand, 2018). Doing as such contributes to estimating the evaluation of the public place in the neighborhoods. Actually, it can be said that this problem can be solved by teaching the Syrian refugees the Turkish language and culture, to bridge the social gap between the two groups and achieve social peace and equality.

### Compliance with Ethical Standard

**Conflict of Interests:** The authors declare that for this article they have no actual, potential or perceived conflict of interests.

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