Examining the urban ıdentity of Akçaabat

Akçaabat kent kimliğinin incelenmesi

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the elements of urban identity and the effects of urban changes on these elements in the case of Akçaabat City, Turkey. Literature and field studies were conducted. In the field study, the urban identity of the city was examined by the structural analysis and the survey. It has been determined that the city has historically important urban gathering spaces and traditional residential areas lost its ability to reflect the function and city identity over time and new areas reflecting the city identity have been formed. The factors that caused the change of the characteristics of these areas have been identified as natural or man-made interventions since the 1980s. The survey performed indicated the fact that the new generation could not determine the identity elements of the city very well. The results revealed that the city underwent structural, natural and socio-cultural changes. In this study, by obtaining the data which will form substructure for the urban scale planning, including the users in Akçaabat, solution offers have been developed to increase the urban life quality and to transfer the identity to the future with sustainable sense.

Özet

Bu araştırmada Akçaabat örneğinde kent kimlik öğelerinin tespit edilmesi ve kentsel değişimlerin bu öğelere etkilerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaca yönelik literatür ve alan çalışması yapılmıştır. Alan çalışmasında yapısal analiz ve anket çalışması yapılmıştır. Kentin tarihsel olarak önemli olan kentsel toplanma ve geleneksel konut alanlarının zaman içerisinde fonksiyon ve kent kimliğini yansıtma özelliğini kaybettiği, yeni alanların oluştuğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu alanların özelliğinin değişmesine neden olan faktörlerin 1980'li yıllardan itibaren doğal ya da insan kaynaklı müdahaleler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Yapılan ankette özellikle yeni kuşağın kentin kimlik öğelerini çok iyi belirleyememesi kentin eski kimliğini kaybettiğini ve kentin kimliksizleşme sürecine girdiğini göstermektedir. Çalışmadan elde edilen tüm bulgular kentin yapısal, doğal ve sosyo-kültürel değişimler geçirdiğini ve bu değişimlerin kent kimliğini kaybettirmeye başladığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışma ile Akçaabat'ta kullanıcılarının da içinde olduğu, kentsel ölçekteki planlamalara altlık oluşturacak veriler elde edilmiş, kent yaşam kalitesinin artmasına ve kimliğinin sürdürülebilir anlayışla geleceğe aktarılmasına yönelik çözüm önerileri geliştirilmiştir.

INTRODUCTION

In the historical process, the human being has come face to face with the problems of urbanization in the Industrial Revolution. In this period, the negative conditions experienced in the cities which could not meet the needs and expectations of the rapidly growing population have brought the concepts such as city, urbanization, city with identity, quality of life and livable city to the world agenda. These concepts, which emerged after the Industrial Revolution, have become a matter of debate in Turkey recently due to the fast and unplanned urbanization. In urban areas, this process leads to the deterioration of the cultural-natural-built environment, the reduction of the quality of the city-life and the disidentification of the cities. At this point, it is important to protect the cities with identity coalesced with their irremediable natural and cultural assets and transfer them to the future.

Keleş (1990) defines urbanization as a population accumulation process which leads to the increase in the number of cities and the growth of today's cities in parallel with the industrialization and economic development, increasing rate of organization, division of labour and specialization in the structure of society and idiosyncratic changes in human behavior and relations. In the past, the slower development of urbanization movements made the city's change less perceptible. For this reason, these changes in cities have been not sharp

and have continuous patterns which have survived until today. However, due to industrialization, economic, demographic, technological, political, sociological and social changes have begun to transform the natural and built environments of the cities. While these transformations are experienced rapidly, the lack of continuity changed the urban identities and paved the way for unplanned urbanization. On the outskirts of the cities, which have grown in an unplanned and fast way, slum areas and unhealthy living environments arise, unemployment and other social and economic problems of low-income people increase, and these issues result in social crisis (Ulu and Karakoç 2004). At this point, technological developments and migrations can be considered as the most important factors that affect the growth of cities without identity. The change in the demands and expectations of people in the Information Age and the rapidly increasing population with the migration created very complex problems in the cities. In the cities which cannot keep up with this rapid change, the lack of either physical or social infrastructures has caused problems in social, economic, political, technical, psychological, sociological, and cultural contexts. All these problems have negative impacts on the happiness of the people, their sense of belonging to the cities, their identities and cultures in the cities where these problems cannot be solved. The time when a person lives and spends time in a society, the experiences, the symbols, the deep traditional values, the blood ties with the past and future generations, the friends living there are the reasons for the emotional bond to that place. Again, the natural beauty of the region, its climate and architecture add sense of belonging because of its physical characteristics of the place (Tessarin 1990). According to Rapoport (1990), human beings have a physical and semantic connection with the environment they live in, the physical and semantic bonds established with the environment are in constant interaction with each other. The transformation of the physical environment causes the transformation of semantic relations with the environment. Korkmaz et al. (2010) assert that, for this reason, the change of the semantic links revealed by the images produced as a result of the physical, cultural and psychological processes indicate that human beings change in the interaction with the environment. For this reason, many dimensions such as identity, people-oriented, life and space quality, social life, traditional values, cultural assets, habitability, urban texture, urban aesthetics, and urban silhouette gain importance in proper urban planning.

Geographical and topographic structure of cities, climate and vegetation, structural environment and life style form differences in urban identity. However, despite the differences of the cities, the rapid urban changes make the cities begin to resemble each other and put pressure on the cities with identity. Rapidly developing technology and migrations to cities make a constant change in cities and make the transformation unavoidable. Since cities exist together with spaces and their inhabitants, they contain many complex dimensions in terms of structural, technical, economic, geographic, cultural and sociological aspects. For this reason, change and transformation process in cities should be managed well and sustainable practices should be applied to all areas of the city. In this research, the city of Akçaabat, whose historical and traditional texture deteriorated as a result of the negative urbanization since 1980, has been investigated. The housing deficit, which is being tried to be met for the rapidly increasing population in the city, has emerged as unplanned, short-term, daily, single-focused solutions without considering the natural and built environment that gives the city its identity. These practices, especially for the housing problem of people in the city, have damaged the traditional housing texture which is an urban protected area on the southern hill and the urban spaces that have importance for the city identity. These areas are constricted between dense and high-rise buildings and their perceptibility in the city have decreased. Besides, the highway which has been under construction for the last 2-3 years has damaged both the built and natural environment of the city. The highway, passing through the new and old residential areas completely altered the road axes in the old traditional dwellings of the city and destroyed a period of time in the city's memory. These on-going studies show that the problems that need to be solved, such as housing and road construction that the city needs, have been addressed as a technical matter only. However, urban planning is a multidimensional study requiring

interdisciplinary expertise. The city's topography, climate and vegetation, its location on the seaside, its cultural structure, its historical and traditional texture, and the identification of its elements on both the built environment and its users should be the basis for the sustainable urban planning. Therefore, it is aimed that the data gathered by this research will play an important role in sustainable urban planning in Akçaabat and other cities.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Literature and field studies were conducted in order to carry out this research. In the literature research conducted on Akçaabat, the history, natural structure, socio-cultural characteristics, natural and physical changes and the old photographs of the city were ascertained. In the field study which was carried out in the light of this information, the city was primarily analysed in terms of natural structure, settlement and buildings. Then, a survey was conducted with the settlers in random sampling method. The data taken from the survey were analyzed by using SPSS program. The socio-cultural and socio-economic structure of the city was tried to be determined with the survey conducted on 100 randomly chosen people in the area. In accordance with all these data, the identity components of Akçaabat were revealed. In addition, transformation of the natural and built environment in the earlier and present days have been tried to be stated with the obtained results from the literature and field studies. All findings related to the city; the sustainability of identity, the natural and physical changes from past to present, and the statistical results of the effects of these changes on the people have been expressed in the findings and discussion sections.

Urban Identity and Identity Elements

Identification of urban identity is important to reveal identity elements. Identity elements are affected by many factors. For examples, Lynch (1960) states that an urban space is made up of natural and artificial environments, which are derived from the soil, water, vegetation and human structure. Tunçer (2017) states that "environmental elements" and "building elements" are the most important elements which constitute the urban

identity. According to Tekeli (2009), "identity is a qualification related to the integrity of activities and physical environment, and the formation of the identity is a historical phenomenon that has been formed in time" (Canbakal Ataoğlu 2017).

Aslan and Kiper (2016), point out that the elements constituting the urban identity can be grouped as concrete and abstract elements. The concrete identity elements are the natural environment and the human-made built environment whereas the abstract elements of identity represent the historical, social, cultural and economic characteristics of the city. The cities with their dynamic structure form their identities and their unique characteristics with all their accumulations from the past. These accumulations of cities are important values that connect the past and the future and provide intergenerational communication while at the same time, are limited sources that are non-renewable. If these cities, which survive to the present day, can maintain their identity in a continuous manner, they become liveable cities with identity and high quality. At this point, the sustainability of the city memory is important to protect the urban identity. Urban spaces, urban and social life or working areas that are frequently changed with urban transformations, altered streets, street or place names alienate the citizens from their neighbourhoods, create gaps in their memory and increasingly lead to non-ownership of their cities (Kiper 2006). Memory is a common entity produced by society, and this formation should be called 'common memory'. According to Halbwachs the individual memory cannot be described without the social and physical environment of the individual (Çalak 2012).

In this context, urban identity elements are evaluated and discussed under four main headings as follows;

1. Identity elements of the natural environment
2. Identity elements of the built environment
3. Identity elements of the socio-cultural environment
4. Identity elements of the socio-economic environment (Topçu 2011).

Identity Elements of the Natural Environment

Natural environmental conditions are one of the main factors in the establishment of a city. Schulz (1980) investigates identity under the title 'Spirit of the Place-Genius Loci" in terms of 'originality-locality'. He states that human settlement is determined depending on the nature of the place and gives typical characteristics of the settlements. Identity elements arising from natural environment are topographic status of the city, climatic conditions, vegetation, general location etc.

Identity Elements of the Built Environment

Buildings are the most important events, the most concrete documents in the life of a city or country. In later periods, the people of that period also put new functions in the building and for this purpose they have made more or less changes in it. The changes in the building reflect the social and cultural change of the settlement (Madran 2001). According to Eyüce (2005); the fact that the buildings exist together with other buildings, and that they take place together with natural conditions in nature cannot be ignored. First of all, the city should be liveable, flexible, readable, understandable, walkable, high quality, aesthetical and so on. The urbanologist Lynch (1960) has made the elements of the movement points, which emerge, become prominent, can be remembered in the built environment and gives the environmental image to the city, depending on 5 factors.

Identity Elements of the Socio-Cultural Environment

Tylor (1871), who has a great importance and place in the formation of the city identity, defines the culture as a complex whole, including art, custom-tradition, similar abilities, skills and habits which are learnt (gained) by human beings as a member of the civilized society. Adding to this definition of Tylor that culture is not a stable but dynamic phenomenon, Rapoport (1969) argues that culture is a typical world-view and emphasizes the role of this world view in perceiving the universe. Urban culture is a phenomenon that changes from society to society. In this context, the historical consciousness of the cities, the physical characteristics specific to the city, the traditions and customs, the lifestyle give to the city and

make them idiosyncratic (Güler et al. 2016). People unconsciously communicate with their own culture, become a member of that culture, and behave appropriately as a result of being social. Rapoport (1969), referring to the close relationship between form and culture, argued that every society has a decisive form, which is accepted as true in the context of cultural values, and resists change. As society adopts them, it becomes a tradition, which explains the close relationship between culture and form (Aydınlı 1993). The different cultures have led to the formation of different architectural cultures. People are influenced by their environments, and what's more, they influence the happiness and unhappiness of the setting, environments and people, the architectural product should reflect the culture of the environment; otherwise people feel uncomfortable (Kızıl 1993). Architectural environments cannot be separated from their cultures, they collect the cultures of the time they belong to and reflect the characteristics of that culture. Physical environments established within the natural environment; in the formation such as historical structures, the locations of the buildings according to each other, gardens, indoor / outdoor usage, and materials used, construction techniques, etc. it carries the traces of the previous periods and the societies that live in these periods, reveals the identities of the societies. 'Identity', which possesses the characteristics of belonging and continuity, is shaped with the continuity of physical and social structure under the circumstances of the day and transferred to future generations (Tutkun 2015). As a result, the socio-cultural environment is another category that limits the phenomenon of urbanization except for physical, geographical, economic, requirements and technical factors (Kuban 1992).

Identity Elements of the Socio-Economic Environment

The identity of the built environment in a city, on the one hand, constitutes an important part of the urban identity, on the other hand, gives clues about the economic, social and cultural life in that city. The strong socio-economic structure of the city is also an expression of the richness of the built environment (Birol 2007).

CASE STUDY- AKÇAABAT

Akçaabat is surrounded by Ortahisar and Maçka in the east, Çarşıbaşı in the west, Düzköy in the south and Black Sea in the north (Figure 1). It is 13 km away from Trabzon with 10 m altitude and surface area 385 km2 (URL 1).

Figure 1. Akçaabat on the Map of Turkey, (URL 2), (Adapted)

The city climate is temperate and has a marine character, and the mountains rising from the coast towards Northwester have caused the formation of lush vegetation in the city.

Akçaabat population is 116 744, of which 50 000 live in the central, according to the data of Statistical Institute of Turkey (TUIK) by 2015 (URL 3). Examining the population data since 1965 in Table 1, the migration into the city by years can be seen. According to the data, there is a three-time population increase between 1980 and 2000. The rapid, dense and high-rise construction movements, which have increased significantly in the built environment of the city of Akçaabat, have also been observed between these years.

Although the date of establishment of the city is not known, it is known that it was used as a market place and port in Trabzon for caravans coming from Iran, Iraq, East India, China and Central Asia. The effect of colonies from the Aegean coast is observed in the establishment (Gedikoğlu 1996). After the sovereignty of Miletus, Scythian, Met, Komnenos, Rome, Byzantine, the dominance of the region was passed on to the Ottomans in 1461 after the conquest of Trabzon (Lermioğlu 1949). In addition to the Turkish population, the Greek population continued to exist in Akçaabat until the population exchange (overhanging the 1930's), (Çakıcı 2018).

Table 1: Akçaabat's Population by Years

Year	Population
1965	7.6002
1970	9.4992
1975	10.756 (Karabulut 1981)
1980	13.312 (Karabulut 1981)
1985	16.17 (URL 3)
1990	25.285 (URL 3)
2000	39.102 (URL 3)
2012	40.589 (URL 3)

Akçaabat, which has survived to the present day, is the largest district of Trabzon with its location, topography, climate and vegetation, cultural heritage and life style. Akçaabat, the only natural port of the Eastern Black Sea, which dates back to very ancient civilizations, gained importance as a port city and the development of the city increased during periods of intense harbor activities. Itineraries written in various periods confirm this information (Nemlioğlu Koca 2013). The fact that the city is a natural harbor and that all the ships' coming to the region waiting, loading and unloading makes the city gain economic and cultural importance until the construction process of Trabzon Harbour. For this reason, life in Akçaabat has been closely connected with the city of Trabzon from the past to the present, and its cultural, commercial and social activities have been perpetual. Therefore, it has become a rich city both economically and culturally. The size of the traditional houses, plan schemes and decorative elements to be very similar to each other show that the social life and income levels of the people are also close to each other (Akın et al. 2014). Sea and folklore have an important place in the social life of the city. However, the city's relationship with the sea begins to decrease due to the Black Sea Coastal Road built in 1950-1960 (Kuran 2014) and the sea pollution caused by rapid urbanization. Nowadays, swimming is impossible whereas fishing activities are still going on. Black Sea Coastal Road, which is seen as the first step of disconnecting the city and the sea, did not affect the sea connection of the city much due to the low traffic.

However, despite many experiences in the history of the city, there was a great flood in 1990 due to the construction activities carried out without taking into account the natural geography and caused a lot of damage to the city. The biggest impact of this flood shows up as the reconstruction of the coastline. Because of the debris which the flood brought and left, filling the coast line towards the sea became a current issue. Between 1995 and 2005, the road was expanded by filling the seaside and recreation areas were built. In this process, between 1990 and 2005, the city was completely separated from the sea. After the year 2005, the maritime connection of the city with the recreation areas on the embankment area were re-established (Akın et al 2019).

The fact that the north of the city of Akçaabat is bordered with sea and the topography rise from the north to the south is of great importance in the settlement. The city, which on the one hand, is constricted by the sea and on the other hand by topography, has a linear settlement in the east-west direction. The historical neighbourhoods of the city where the topography is often divided by the valleys, Çolaklı, Nefsipulathane, Orta and Dürbinar are separated by streams from each other (Akın et al. 2014). The old residential areas are located between 50-60 / 110-120 m. in the elevation range (Saka 1996). The new residential areas, spreading towards the coast, have a dense and high-rise layout that do not fit into the

topography of the traditional texture. However, today, the highway built around the traditional residences in the urban protected area, regardless of the topography and the built environment, has had an important place in the deterioration of the urban identity (Figure 2). The road construction continues, with very high retaining walls, passing through the traditional residential area where the slope is quite high. Due to this road and retaining walls, links in the traditional road network have been broken off and some traditional houses have been demolished. As seen in Figure 3, the connection of the traditional residential settlement with the city has been broken (Akın et al 2019).
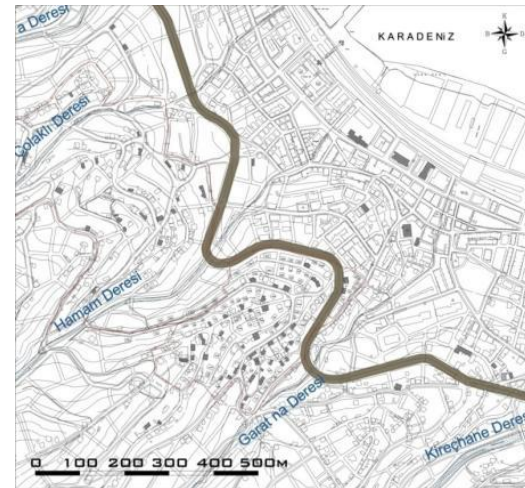

Figure 2. Traditional Natural Road Axis which the Highway Intersects (Adapted from the Map Taken from Akçaabat Municipality)

Figure 3. The Traditional Road Axis Before and After the Highway(From the Author's Archive, 1993, 2018)

In Akçaabat, there are many urban spaces and buildings which take place in the memory of the city. Some of these

urban spaces and structures still retain their old character and many of them have lost their former quality. As a

result of the urban analysis and survey studies, urban gathering places were determined as Hamam Çimeni (Gazhane), beach-club (plaj), Ak Mosque + Tekel Building, Government Building + Central Primary School + Post Office and women's market (Akın et al. 2019), (Figures 4, 5).

Among these social areas; Hamam Çimeni, Government Building+Central Primary School+Post Office located in the west side of the city and Ak Mosque+Tekel Building located in the east of the city are used as the commercial areas and gathering and dispersing locations by the people coming from the west and southwestern villages

and the people coming from the east and south-eastern villages, respectively. Between the gathering places located in the east and west of Akçaabat, parallel to the coastal road, İnönü Street, which is located near the Istiklal Avenue, extends towards the women's market and forms the commercial areas of the city.

Instead of the Hamam Çimeni which was used as a trade, gathering, official ceremony and festivity space with a wide area, a commercial building called Hamam Çimeni has been built today. This commercial building, built by the municipality, has an inner courtyard which is now used as a social area (Akın et al. 2019).
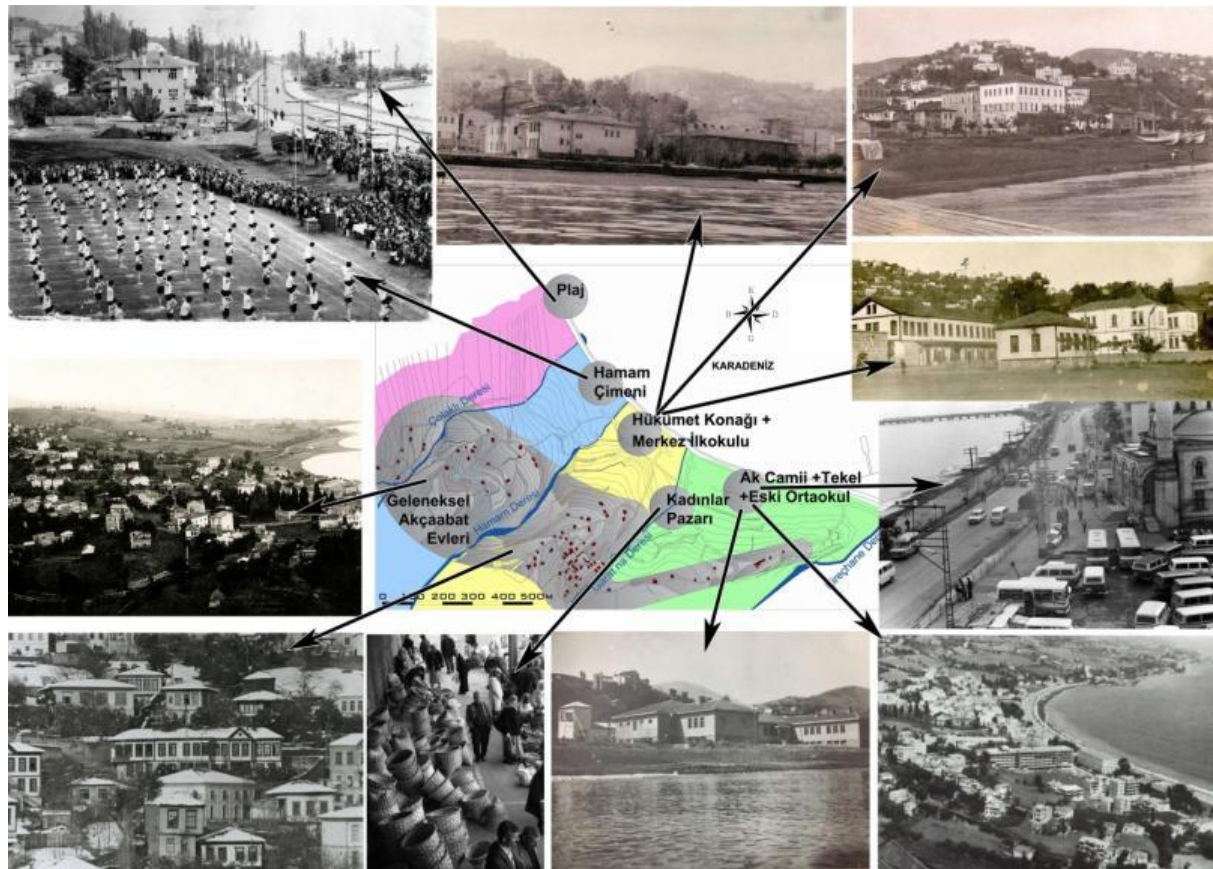

Figure 4. Akçaabat Urban Areas Formed in History (Fotographs taken from Bölükbaşı, 2010)

Figure 5. Today's Urban Spaces of Akçaabat (From the Author's Archive, 2018, URL 4)

The beach-club (plaj) was a social space in front of a tea garden by the sea, where the fishermen used to dock their boats and people swam. This area has lost its feature in the flood disaster in 1990 and is used as a restaurant today (Akın et al. 2019).

The Government Building + Central Primary School + Post Office is an area where the trade is dense due to the continuation of the women's market established on Tuesdays, the official works are carried out and official ceremonies are held (Akın et al. 2019).

Ak Mosque + Tekel Building + Secondary school carry on their existence as busy areas. The Tekel Building was a place where at least one person from each family worked as tobacco production was quite abundant in Akçaabat. Cease of the tobacco production caused this building to be vacant for some time. The building was re-functioned as the Faculty of Fine Arts in 2005. The demolished secondary school was replaced with another education building (Akın et al. 2019).

Evliya Çelebi states that there is a market established in the city one day (Tuesday) a week (Nemlioğlu Koca 2014). The market he mentioned is the women's market, which has been established every Tuesday for centuries. In this market, local products and especially famous butter are sold. For this reason, people from other cities come to the women's market for shopping. People from all villages of the city are still selling their products to this Tuesday Market, which had an important place in the commercial life of Akçaabat in the past (Akın et al. 2019). Again, in Akçaabat's food culture meatballs have an important place.

There are also monumental structures in the city which can be considered as landmarks. There are only few examples among these collapsed structures surviving so far. Educational structures, similar to the traditional residential façade typology, have an important place in urban identity. Everyone who was born and raised in this city received education in these buildings. Therefore, the emotional ties of the local people with these structures

were also formed. These structures are 23 April Kindergarten (Gramba, Devrim Primary School), Fevzipaşa and Central primary schools which still continue their educational functions. 23 Nisan Anaokulu (23 April Kindergarten) (Gramba, Devrim Primary School) and Fevzipaşa Primary School were built as a church school. Although there are many churches in the city, only one of them, The Church of Michael, has survived. Unqualified housing add-ons using the walls of this church were destroyed in 2017. The Yeni Mosque (1908) is one of the major historical buildings surviving till now. The Orta Mahalle Mosque (1807-1808) is located in the center of Orta Mahalle with its courtyard at the entrance of the mosque and a café next to it. Ak Mosque on the Akçaabat coastal road was built in 1953. It has an important place in the city identity with its building domes and minarets which are one of the gathering places of Akçaabat (Akın et al. 2019).

The traditional houses which have a great effect on the formation of the city of Akçaabat are located in the protected area. Although the traditional housing typology is found in all four neighborhoods, the richest silhouette is found in the Orta Mahalle. Some of these houses are in danger of collapse due to abandonment and neglect.

The harmony between the settlement, plan, cross-section and façade elements of traditional houses and their topography and natural vegetation have an important place in the formation of the identity of the city. As seen in Table 2, all of the buildings are in the garden and usually the entrance is not from the street, but from the garden. Of the 53 traditional houses examined in the area, 48 of them have interior type plan layout and their occupancy-space ratios are very close to each other and mostly symmetric (Saka 1996), (Figure 6).

Table 2. Street-Garden-House Relationship of Akçaabat Traditional Houses (Akın et al. 2014)

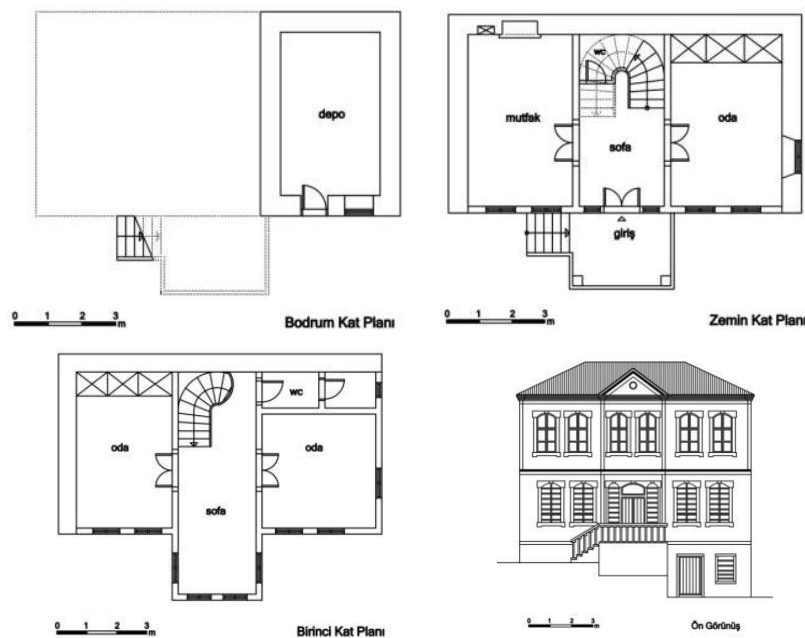| House-StreetRelations	Garden Entrance of the House				Street and Garden Entrance
The Location of the House in the Garden					
Sample Numbers	19	14	13	4	3

Figure 6. An Example of Akçaabat Traditional Houses (Saka 1996)

Due to the lack of suitable areas for the construction as a result of the topography, high-rise buildings began to be built on the coast in 1980s. This movement, which gained momentum in the 1990s in an unplanned and uncontrolled manner, constituted high-rise residential areas with retaining walls, which did not conform to the

.

climate and topography, were far from nature, and were dense and intercepted each other (Akın et al, 2019: 668), (Figure 7). Especially, the high construction made the historical gathering places and the traditional houses lose their perceptibility and damaged the city identity

Figure 7. Traditional Texture Behind Dense and High Buildings (From the Author's Archive, 1993, 2018)

Cities do not gain identity only with the built and physical environment elements. The urban identity is related to the social life of the people living in the city and it is also formed by the combination of the physical and built environment. In this context, 100 people were randomly surveyed in order to determine the identity elements of

the city and to measure the effect of rapid changes in recent years on the inhabitants. In the survey, questions were asked regarding the demographic and urban scale by taking the time of living in Akçaabat into account. Table 3 below shows the demographic results of the respondents.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics

	Percentage		Percentage
Gender		**Occupation**	
Female	54	Housewife	21
Male	46	Civil Servant	15
Age		Worker at private sector	23
18-25	9	Student	5
26-35	24	Self-employed	12
36-45	28	Retired	18
46-60	26	Unemployed	6
60 years or older	15	**The lifetime in the city**	
Educational status		Less than 1 year	0
Illiterate	2	1-5 year(s)	5
Literate (not graduated)	3	6-10 years	9
Primary school graduate	15	11-15 years	6
Secondary school graduate	11	More than 15 years	80
High school graduate	46	**The place of birth**	
Bachelor's degree	21	Akçaabat	58
Postgraduate	2	Outside Akçaabat	42

In the evaluation of the questionnaire, relations were established between age and duration of living in the city

and questions about the urban identity. The subjects were asked to choose three of the options which

determine the Akçaabat city identity. Within these options, subjects aged between 25 and 60 years considered the historical texture, traditional houses and natural structure of Akçaabat as the most important elements determining the urban identity. When the same question was asked to the subjects with long life spans, they said the most important elements are the historical texture, traditional houses and natural structure (Figures 8-9).
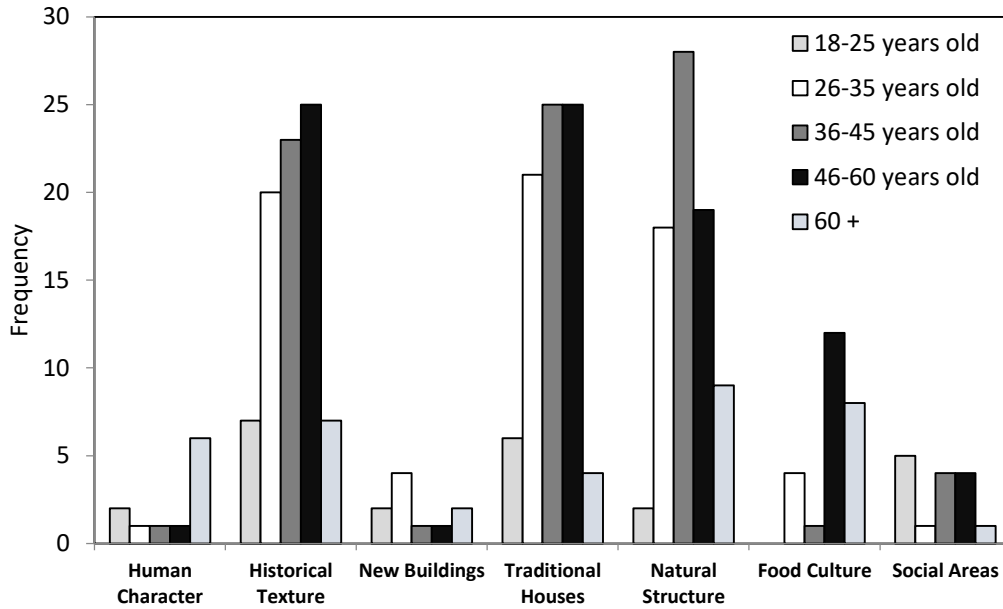

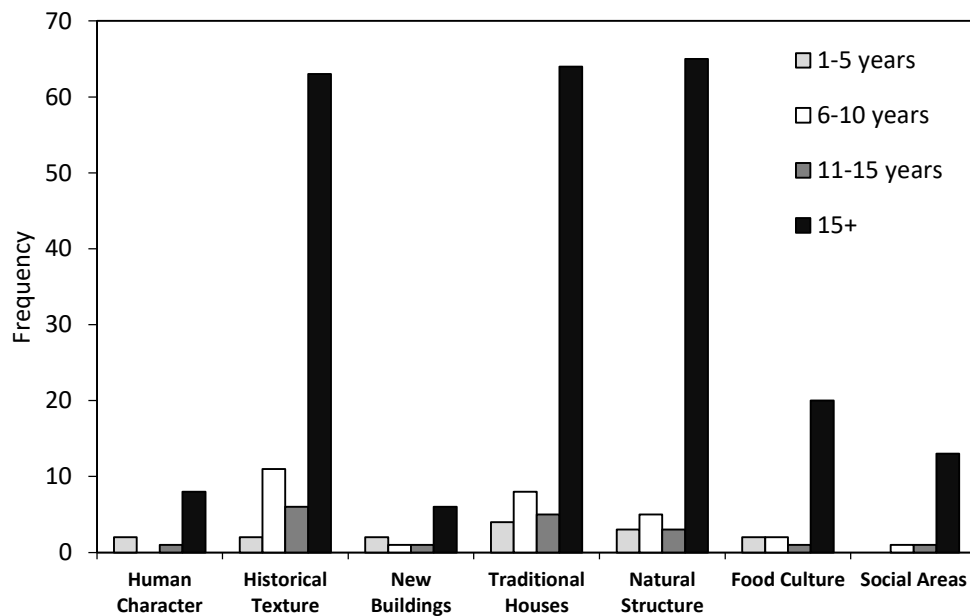**Figure 8.**The Relation of Age and Determinants of Urban Identity

Figure 9. The Relation of Lifetime and Determinants of Urban Identity

The most important structural element which introduces Akçaabat was asked to be selected in one option. The subjects stated that Akçaabat Traditional Houses (Ortamahalle) were the most important structural elements that introduce Akçaabat in the relation regarding the age and the duration of living (Figures 10-

11).The relationship of the change in the city of Akçaabat
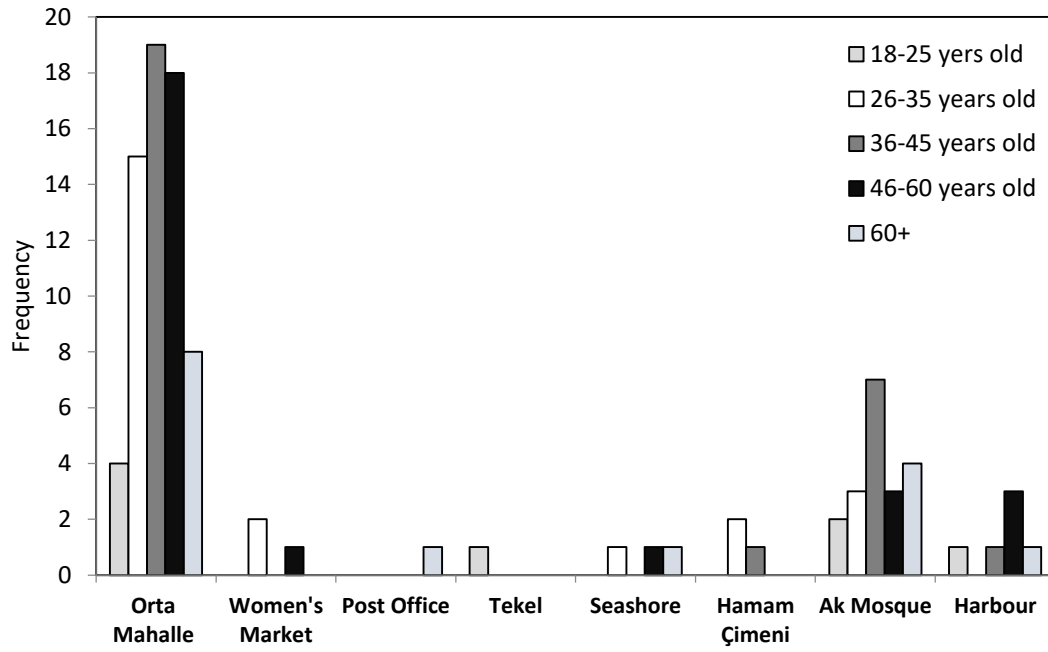with age is shown in Figure 12.

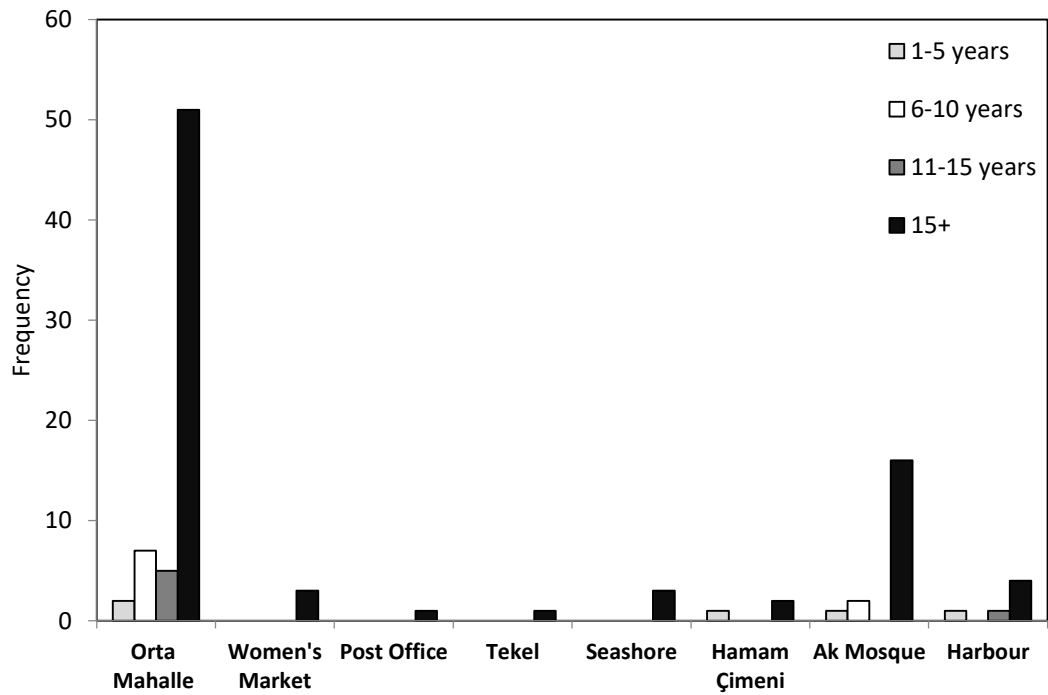**Figure 10.**The Relation of Age and the Most Important Structural Elements

Figure 11. The Relation of Lifetime and the Most Important Structural Elements
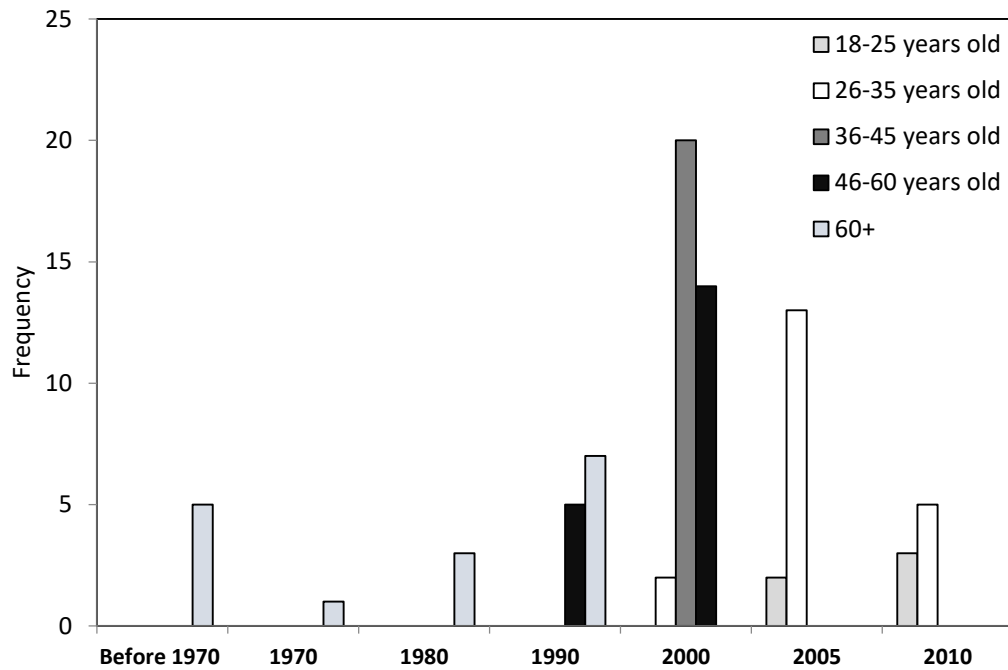
Figure 12. The Relation of Age and the Commencement of the Urban Change

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Physical changes can occur as natural or human source such as floods, earthquakes, wars, technological developments, migration, rapid urbanization and construction. All these factors lead to changes in the natural and built environments of cities. At the same time, these factors have changed people's the needs and expectations. The reflection of these changes on the lifestyle has also led to the change of urban identities. Habraken (1972) draws attention to the necessity of meeting the new requirements and desires within the conditions of social change and in determining the needs in the designs correctly and well (Çerçi 2012). In this context, responding to the needs, demands and expectations of people in the cities that are constantly changing will ensure that the identities of the cities are protected and sustainable. However, in recent years, to respond to the problems which the rapid growth and industrialization in the cities revealed, similar construction tendencies aiming at easy, rapid and mass production make the cities resemble each other (Beyazıt et al. 2017). Cities that start to resemble each other gradually lose their original identity.

Development plans preparation process, which shapes the cities in Turkey, is basically seen as a means of land division and the process cannot include the city's image and morphology of the street patterns, building forms, settlements textures (Sezik 2017). Urban identity elements such as the traditional texture of the city, topography, road-street patterns, built environment or settlement texture were not taken into consideration in the zoning activities of the Akçaabat.

The highway passing through the traditional texture of the city has blocked all the roads of the traditional residential areas that provide coastal connection. This plan also revealed high-rise dense structures and retaining walled roads around urban gathering spaces and urban the fabric of traditional houses. For this reason, revealing the city identity elements and images of the cities, especially in the development plan or urban transformation process, will make a great contribution to the formation of cities with identity.

In recent years, local governments have been trying to produce temporary solutions that have no scientific basis for becoming a brand city for tourism. Enlil (2000) expresses the efforts to attract rich visitors, that is, to attract everything to revive the urban economy, as

'selling the cities' strategy (Akın 2014). García, Gómez and Molina (2012) argue that by ignoring the goals of local people and entrepreneurs, a visitor-oriented traditional marking strategy would reveal some risks. Enlil (2000) states that the most important risk of visitor-oriented strategies is the removal of city dwellers from the areas where they live. Such short-term solutions often damage urban residents and urban spaces. However, visitors will want to see or live in the physical environment where they are located in order to know different cultures and to have information about another way of life (Akın et al. 2017). For this reason, the evacuation of urban residents from the areas, in the long term, will not let such achievement. In this context, the urban identity elements are not only dependent on the characteristics of the natural and built environment, but because it is a whole with the socio-cultural and socio-economic lifestyles of the city dwellers, seeing the cities as a means of meta will not be enough to protect the healthy and sustainable city identity. Akçaabat Municipality restores the traditional houses which have not been used for five years, out of use or in danger of collapse and uses them for social purposes. Inspired by the municipality's initiative, some of the traditional house owners started to use their homes as local businesses. It is important that these conservation works, which are pioneered by the municipality to protect traditional houses and make them participate in urban life, should be continued and expanded by local users. Particularly the involvement of local users in such practices brings a sustainable understanding of conservation of the socio-cultural

characteristics of traditional texture. However, traditional houses, which are quite numerous, need maintenance.

The efforts for meeting the housing deficits which emerged due to the migration from the villages of Akçaabat to the city in the last 30 years caused not only the rapid and dense construction but also the devastation of the old social life and culture. At the same time, the growing need for labour force that came with the development of technology caused migration from rural to urban areas. While creating living spaces for the population increasing with immigration in cities, many problems have emerged. These problems have caused both physical and socio-cultural changes in cities. With migration, people take their value judgments, culture and identity to their new environment. Before the migration, people have certain identities; however, they begin to question their identity, who they are, where they belong with the codes / messages which they take from the new environment (Ilgın and Hacıhasanoğlu, 2006: 60). In this context, while migrating people are trying to maintain their cultural identity, they also cause the transformation of their culture and the culture of the city they come from. In recent years, the city of Akçaabat has started to lose its physical face and culture by entering into a rapid building process for the housing problem due to the migration from the villages. For this reason, the city identity elements were revealed by analyzing the unique natural and built environment of the city and the socio-economical and socio-cultural structures of the habitants and immigrants, through physical surveys and interviews (Table 4).

Table 4. Akçaabat City Identity Elements

Natural Environment Identity Elements	Built Environment Identity Elements	Socio-Cultural Identity Elements	Socio-Economical Identity Elements
Vegetation	Traditional Houses	Historical	Butter
Topography	Urban Gathering Areas	Human Character	Meatball
Sea	Urban reference Points	Horon	Fish

As a result of the field study, surveys and literature research, it is seen that the city identity of Akçaabat has been carried in a sustainable manner until the 1980s. However, between 1980s and 2000s, the city identity began to change due to the reasons such as; migrations, floods, road construction and rapid construction

activities. Eighty percent of the subjects stated that the beginning of the urban change was between 1980 and 2000 (Figure 9). The construction movements, which started in the 1980s, continued to gain momentum in the 1990s and in 2000, and the transformation of the city began to be felt. While revealing the change, all the

analysis and survey results correspond to each other. However, it was seen that the changes were not felt before 2005 by the subjects who are between the ages of 18 and 25, two percent of the subjects stated that in 2005, three percent in 2010, the change had begun and the others said that there had been no change (Figure 9). This result shows that the old identity of the city does not take place in the memory of the new generation and is disappearing.

The most important reasons for the deterioration of the city's vegetation, climate, topography, urban gathering and traditional residential textures and not being perceptible, are high-dense construction and road works. In the city, which has a wet and humid climate, the traditional dwelling texture is located on the south hills of the city in order to avoid these climate problems. In the city where the vegetation is rich, the traditional houses

with gardens have a refreshing climate on the warmest and humid days. Today, however, the high-rise buildings on the shore cut off the sea wind and make the negative characteristics of the climate more noticeable. In addition, high-rise buildings cover the buildings on the south hill of the city and obstruct their perceptibility. The ongoing road works continue to damage the old street patterns and do not take the topography into account. In the survey, the subjects stated that the distorted urbanization and roads are the most important factors that disrupt the identity of the city.

As a result of the analysis, the changes in the old and new urban patterns of the identity elements of the city are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Changes of Identity Components of the City of Akçaabat to Old and New City Textures

Identity Items	Old City Texture	New City Texture
Natural Environment	• Climate and vegetation • Topography • Sea	• Climate and vegetation are changing due to construction. • Topography disturbance • Riprap works
Built Environment	• Historical constructions, traditional house texture • Available road patterns fitted to topography • Traditional houses correspondent with nature • Formed urban areas	• Reduction of traditional and historical buildings • Roads without considering the topography • High and dense residential areas not suitable for nature • Reduction of the perception of traditional textures and urban areas due to construction
Socio-Cultural	• Sea culture • Life culture in touch with nature • City culture • Local folklore • Food culture	• Decrease in marine culture • Disappearance of life intertwined with nature • Decreased urban culture due to intensive migration • Local folklore • Many restaurants for food culture
Socio- Economical	• Social life based on maritime trade • Non-class income level	• Unbalance in unemployment and income level due to intensive migration

The analysis performed between the age and determinants of urban identity suggested that individuals over 25 years old determined the historical texture of the city, the traditional houses (Orta Mahalle) and the natural structure of the city as city identity elements. Individuals under 25 years of age could not give a prominent answer to none of the seven choices as urban identity elements. Again, analysis performed between the life time and the identity elements indicated that those who live in the city over 15 years (most of them were born there) determined the historical texture, traditional houses and natural structure as urban identity elements. The others could

not give a prominent answer to none of the seven choices as urban identity elements (Figures 5, 6).

In the structural analysis carried out in the study area, Hamam Çimeni (Gazhane), beach-club, Ak Mosque + Tekel Building, Government Building + Central Primary School + Post Office and women's market were the important gathering areas of the city. With the survey study, it has been observed that the Ak Mosque and partly women's market continue to be of importance today. The information obtained from the literature research and photographs show that Hamam Çimeni has

a great importance for the old city identity of Akçaabat. In the old photographs of Akçaabat, it is seen that every kind of activities have taken place in this area, however, it is clear in the survey results that, this area has lost its importance because of the office block called 'Hamam Çimeni'. As a result while giving new functions to a historical area; a type of understanding such as using its name cannot be sufficient and successful for a sustainable protection. Besides, the social facilities on the coastal riprap areas and the port have become important in the new identity of the city (Figures 7, 8).

In the light of the data obtained from this study, the following suggestions were given for an urban scale planning which is to be done in Akçaabat that would address housing, social life and transportation problems arisen due to the population growth and provide the sustainability of city identity.

• When the highway, whose construction is proceeding, takes place along the housing zone in the city, is finished, the city will be divided into two due to the heavy traffic. Therefore, in order to reduce the density of this road, another alternative highway should be constructed in the south of the city, which needs to be outside the residential areas.

• High-rise buildings in flat areas across the city and on the shore should be avoided, and the number of floors should be reviewed for the future urban transformation projects. New residential areas should be established with approaches that take the settlement patterns into account. While initiatives towards traditional houses in the city are positive, it should be ensured that these areas remain as residential settlements that reflect local culture without focusing on tourism. Therefore, tourism investments should be planned and local people living in those regions should not be allowed to leave their homes. The establishment of their own family businesses can be provided by encouraging the local people.

• The physical comfort conditions should be improved in the urban gathering areas which are in the commercial areas. The site of the women's market, which is set up every Tuesday, is in a very bad situation. Tuesdays are important for everyone living in Akçaabat. It is therefore a cultural responsibility to incorporate this market into the city identity.

• Resources should be created as soon as possible for the restoration of traditional dwellings that are in danger of collapse due to abandonment and neglect.

• Maintenance of monumental buildings and their environment should be improved and activities should be planned according to the social needs of the city.

• Measures should be taken with rehabilitation works for natural disasters in areas where precipitation and rivers are dense.

• A city development plan alteration should be made in the city, taking all the above recommendations into consideration.

In the context of preservation and sustainability of urban identity in urban planning;

• Natural, built, socio-cultural and socio-economic identity elements of cities should be identified.

• An understanding of conservation which considers the urban users should be established.

• Urban planning should be holistic, transparent and questionable as well as flexible.

• One of the important reasons of urbanization is the development in legal and managerial processes. Local governments should support interdisciplinary studies as urban design covers many fields of science.

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