



THE ROLE OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTS IN CREATING PLACE IDENTITY ON URBAN SETTLEMENTS

Serpil ÇERÇİ

Cukurova University, Engineering and Architecture Faculty, Balcalı - ADANA / TURKEY
e-mail : scerci@cu.edu.tr

Received 12 June 2008; accepted 26 October 2008; available online 21 January 2012

ABSTRACT

Many developed countries have put considerable efforts on the issue of establishing a sense of place and environmental identity to strengthen their national self-image. We should investigate what the criteria for creating a better environmental identity should be in urban settlements, and in what way revitalizing a place with historical and cultural accumulation could contribute to its identity. This study attempts to determine the necessary strategies in order to answer these questions. By comparing the existing situation of the historical and new areas in Adana, the fourth largest city of Turkey situated in central southern Anatolia, the prospective gains of the city when these areas are revitalized have been investigated. Bringing out a historical asset that is gradually disappearing, carrying it to various national and international platforms for its revitalization and active use are the important steps towards the establishment of a city image for Adana.

Keywords: Historic environment, City identity, Adana, Turkey

TARİHİ MEKANLARIN KENTSEL YERLEŞİM KİMLİĞİ OLUŞTURMA ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

ÖZET

Bir çok gelişmiş ülke kendi benlik bilincini güçlendirmek amacıyla mekansal ve çevresel bir kimlik kurma konusu üzerinde önemli ölçüde çaba göstermektedir. Kentsel yerleşimlerde daha iyi bir çevresel kimlik oluşturmak için kriterlerin neler olması gerektiği ve tarihi ve kültürel birikimi ile bir mekanın kimliğini yeniden canlandırmaya ne şekilde katkıda bulunabileceği araştırılmalıdır. Bu çalışmada yukarıda belirtilen soruları cevaplamak amacıyla gerekli stratejiler belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında, Güney Anadolu'nun merkezinde yer alan ve Türkiye'nin dördüncü büyük şehri olan bulunan Adana'nın tarihi ve yeni alanlarının mevcut durumları karşılaştırılarak; bu alanlar canlandırıldığı takdirde kentin ileriye dönük kazanımları incelenmiştir. Gitgide gözden kaybolan tarihi bir varlığın ortaya çıkarılması, onun yeniden canlandırılması ve etkin kullanılması için konunun çeşitli ulusal ve uluslararası platformlara taşınması Adana şehrinin bir kent imajının kurulması doğrultusundaki önemli adımlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihi çevre, Kent kimliği, Adana, Türkiye

1. INTRODUCTION; ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY

An important factor in achieving a region or urban identity is to create a sense of place [1,2]. Accordingly, how to give the area its own physical identity, and how to make it a place with its own character distinct from that of other places is the first aesthetic problem in the design of a district. A creative design responds to the context of the districts by reinforcing local distinctiveness and creating memorable places [3].

For 'better environmental identity' the necessary properties are historical and cultural assets, respect for landscape and nature, ecological balance, and architecture suited. Furthermore, the factors such as climate,

landscape, social and demographic structure, etc. play determining roles in achieving the environmental identity or image. In a sense, identity which reflects natural and artificial values of community like culture, civilization, history, technology etc. is accepted as one of the essentials to create better environments and imageability [4].

Lynch introduces the concept of environmental imageability, which he defines as that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be called legibility, or perhaps visibility in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply to their senses [5]. Scientific studies have determined that historical assets indicating different cultural substructure constitute a considerable datum to orientate the environmental identity and image [6].

The most significant difference between historic cities and new ones has been the ability of the old cities to give a strong sense of belonging and security to their residents. Regulations made to the common areas where the density of buildings is reduced and which are dense, well cleaned, safe and maintained are also the characteristics of successful city identity [7]. Consequently, in these centers, amenities and appropriate services are important to ensure a pleasant shopping environment [8,9].

In some countries policies, it is accepted that a city is a product of 'a cultural creativity' and 'architecture' and its investigation in this respect is supported. In addition, a new concept 'heritage industry' is defined, and it has been argued that the historical identity, as an advertisement tool, has been a kind of economic initiative [10]. In this respect, they have succeeded in creating an identity and an understanding of quality through a number of housing and settlement schemes representing their national image and political identity. In order to revitalize their city centers, some countries have given particular importance to guiding private corporations by means of public and private funds. In the past, many settlements in Turkey accommodated environmental identity and visual richness by means of human scale, local materials, settlement tissue etc., and they met psychological and physical human needs. Therefore, these places have properties quite different from today's common and ordinary settlements. Traditional architecture and associated environments created by residential buildings provide an important focus of interest in contemporary Turkey. They are generally accepted as physical witnesses of the past to be preserved and studied. Continuity in the traditional characteristics of the social group living in these environments has been observed in many of the extant settlements in Turkey [11].

Unfortunately, many historical buildings have disappeared with time and the remaining ones are likely to disappear due to lack of financial sources and environmental consciousness. Very few historic and characteristic buildings have attracted considerable attention with revitalization and have provided economic gains by means of tourism. As a result of urban development in Turkey, especially after the 1980s, housing areas with multi-storey apartment blocks which replaced few-storey buildings have brought about monotonousness and a loss of identity [12].

The shops under apartment blocks, on the other hand, have replaced the trade and social centers. In addition to this, with the increase of urbanization in recent years, big trade centers far from the city centers have started to develop without proper environmental quality and social and technical infrastructure. Because of the conveniences they offer, these huge trade centers have been quickly adapted by the urban public and they relieved the population pressure in the city. But, in this process of change, the city has gradually diverged from its own values. Therefore, it has become necessary to develop meaningful public spaces not only in central civic and business districts, but also in urban and pre-urban quarters which have become more important as population density increases [4]. Environmental identity and quality with contemporary styles and designs reflecting the history have only been seen partly in the mass housing projects realized by public institutions and private building companies although new settlement areas has not received enough consideration yet.

2. THE CITY OF ADANA, AN EXAMPLE FROM TURKEY

The city of Adana has been selected as a case study. Located in the South of Turkey, Adana is the fourth biggest city with a population of 1,849,478 (the DIE data of 2000 year). The city is located in the southern part of Toros Mountains and along the river of Seyhan and it has witnessed various civilizations since the early times of history (Figure 1). This region is called the Çukurova Region, and it has always been a favoured settlement area due to its rich natural sources, extensive cultivation and processing of cotton, strategic location and mild Mediterranean climate. This socio-economic progress brought about changes to the physical structure of the city, and it began to expand towards the north as anticipated within the scope of the Urban Development Plan

1939. In parallel to these developments, a new trade center apart from the old one has developed to serve the new settlement district and consumer activities have also underwent considerable changes. As a result of the wealthy people in old region preferring the new and more modern places, the city gradually lost its own values and historical identity [11].

Within the scope of this study, the urban centers have been considered because of their properties which symbolize the identity, gather the public together and reflect the urban culture. Endeavoring to bring such a historical asset to light in order to orientate the city's general identity, this study is expected to be an important step towards the solution of the cipher separating Adana from other cities in Turkey.

To this end, two areas of the city containing center also were investigated. One was the historical tissue located on a tumulus and it was the first settlement of the city. The other center serves the new settlement developed away from the historical tissue. A comparison was made between the old and the new areas, and the role of regional identity with respect to the historical area was evaluated. And finally, the results of the symposium, workshop etc. activities organized in the last few years on the urban identity for the city of Adana have been investigated at the end of this study.



Figure 1. Adana City Planning
(Located in the South of Turkey)

- With the variables determined, forming questioning techniques on different scales.
- The quota application based on physical, social and economic data was performed. It was done for a total of 500 people in the two different settlement regions which made up 40 percent of the whole urban population.
- Interviewings in March and April 2008 with some apartment managers, shopkeepers, consumers, and local administrators by means of 500 standard forms.
- Using Chi-Square test based on whether the difference between observed and expected frequencies is significant.

2.1. Study Areas

The two regions chosen as the study area due to considerable differences in their characteristics, physical environment and socio-economic data are as follows;

Region 1: The old historic area which developed in the 16th century and includes few-storey buildings (Figure 2).

Region 2: The new area located in the middle of the city which started to develop as the sub-city center in 1950's. It is now covered with multi-storey buildings (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Views of the Old Center



Figure 3. Views of the New Center

According to the findings of the study;

- . The most important parameters affecting environmental identity in both the old and the new areas were determined as disordered and dense structures, and need sufficient car parks and green areas.
- . Today the old districts with narrow streets remain inadequate and the urban population using the areas rather uncomfortable about the disorderliness in the traffic.
- . Today, few-storey buildings in the trade core and its surroundings encounter problems like being surrounded by unsuitable buildings, and lack of maintenance.
- . Nevertheless, the historic region and the attractive river side create a positive impression on the visitors as regards the urban image and at present, unlike the old area, the new area encompasses residence, shopping and entertainment facilities which are used intensively in a complex manner.

It is understood that the users are not satisfied with the general view of the new area in terms of density, number of floors, form, color, etc. of the structures. On the other hand, it has been found (% 68) that the existence of sports, shopping and social areas, schools and facilities like easy transportation have made life easier for the users in the new center.

In the new area of the city, social and shopping areas are located under multi-storey adjacent apartment blocks. Due to the Mediterranean climate characteristics of hot and humid summers, these facilities can only be used with proper air-conditioning systems. The old area, however, provides its users with natural microclimatic environments owing to its specific architectural form and suitable materials used. But, alienation and neglect of the local authorities and the desire to have more modern houses and living conditions led the people to prefer new settlement areas. The families (%90) in the old area do not have the means to restore or repair their buildings. The new areas provides the shoppers with pubs and cafes along with high-tech goods, name brand clothing and auto dealers of various national and international brands. This reflects a new diversified shopping concept which is more foreign-based than traditional. However, they (%75) are disturbed by the lack of contemporary regulations which eliminate visual pollution created by elements like cars, billboards and awnings. In this study, the percentages of the satisfaction levels were found to differ depending on gender in the upper middle-aged group.

The old historical city area contributes to the urban identity with its ecological properties, natural landscape, and warm and friendly atmosphere different from those of contemporary places. In the new area, however, it was found that the problems such as weakened friendship and other social relations were alleviated by environments like the cinema, cafe and shopping. Despite the chaos and lack of maintenance of historical buildings caused by recent developments, the interviews revealed that the old area was still well-liked and found attractive for its pleasant and beautiful natural surroundings and historical context.

This finding is supported by the fact that the urban population has recently begun enjoying the original and friendly nightlife in the narrow streets of the historic places which are also used for commercial activities during

daytime. These historic places, converted at nights into entertainment areas with music and the region's specialty food served, have the potential to be in service for long hours. These features constitute a natural attraction site for the urban population which might be an indicator of the enlivenment for urban use and an important parameter for architectures.

Due to the negligence of the old area and overpopulation of the new area, the social and physical conditions are far from the expected and desired level in either of these centers. This situation has yielded the fact that most of the urban public prefers to live in the villas over viewing the reservoir, even though they are far from both the old and the new areas. Another striking finding is that the old area is likely to remain a preferred area provided that the historic buildings are structurally strengthened and their appearances along with surroundings are improved. Also, more appropriate environments should be created to help people gain new skills or improve them. Increasing safe shopping facilities should be another major concern of the authorities.

The education levels(%50) and income levels (%20)of the inhabitants in new area more than ones of the old area. Most of the inhabitants (%80) in high and middle education group not satisfy with car park and green area's sufficiency. They prefer (%70) to move areas which has social possible and general view. Moving with increasing in their income level has parallel because of their income levels are important factor to move.

Consequently, although educational background and demographic structure differ, attitudes such as the feeling of belonging to and taking charge in an environment or the desire to move to other places emerge according to people's satisfaction levels in given surroundings.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In line with the results mentioned above, it is necessary to form a better identity of Adana as a whole. So, the social and physical conditions should be improved in either of these centers.

In this context should include the following steps:

The new region

- Rehabilitating the general view in terms of density, number of floors, order, form, color, etc. of the structures.
- Increasing social and green areas and providing sufficient car parks.

The old region

- Preserving historical structures and traditions,
- Rehabilitating it socially, culturally and environmentally,
- Grouping commercial, cultural and social activities within historical context.
- Prevention of people (with presenting job possibilities etc.) from leaving the region.

In light of these proposals, the historic trade center in the heart of the city of Adana will have a chance of providing people educating, exciting and fun activities often sought in touristy. According to these evaluations, it is deemed necessary to attract people's attention to the bazaar and its surroundings including the Grand Clock Tower, the Grand Mosque, the Turkish Bath, and Madrasah, all of which restoration. The common important conclusion reached by various scientific researches, meetings and workshops conducted in Adana since 1990 is that the old historical area is unique and has an important role in forming the urban identity. According to this conclusion, it is without doubt that rehabilitating the old center is a crucial step in re-exploring the city of Adana. Based on this view, this article analyzed the ways to form the urban identity for other cities in Turkey.

The experimental results in this article suggest that the properties of identity like comfort, easily accessible activities, attraction sites etc. are at different levels in the historical and the unhistorical areas.

Considering these criteria it is important ;

- . to revitalize the elements of symbolizing the urban culture and identity the historical area.
- . to improve the unhistorical urban area according to the contemporary standards.

It is certain that, when compared to the new area, revitalizing the old historic area would provide much more value to the city of Adana in terms of activities, attraction sites and identity. In this respect, the efforts to integrate the cultural and historical values could make Adana a more preferred city with a better identity. However, no noteworthy development has been observed up till now mainly due to financial problems and the uncertainly in policies.

In recent years, the recreation facilities by the Seyhan River developed by the local municipality have constituted important attraction sites for the people of Adana (Figure 4). It is necessary that the historic area also achieve to be an urban attraction point by the investment of adequate time, effort and capital.



Figure 4. The Seyhan River

This study is expected to constitute a model for similar research on other cities in Turkey. In this respect, long-term and short-term suggestions to create areas with a better identity can be listed as follows.

- . to prepare urban improvement and growth master plans for regional improvements.
- . to make better use of the historical and cultural infrastructure and some contemporary Turkish models in forming the criteria of an environmental design with an identity.
- . to select natural recycling and regional materials for new building constructions which contribute to the environmental identity as well as providing financial solution.

However, the most important factor emerging from this study is to establish organizations to look after the cultural heritage. People who are aware of the contribution which the historic center makes to the cities' identity should participate in such activities by means national and international funds like EU Frame Programs [13]. Their active participation is important because achieving the city center's livability and making urban investments in Turkey are mainly at the responsibility of municipalities. In this context, it is expected that the architects undertake the important mission of forming creative products with contemporary designs reflecting traditions and history which have an important role in the city's image and identity.

REFERENCES

1. PUNTER, J., "Participation in the Design of Urban Space", Landscape Design, 24-27, 1991.
 2. RELPH, E., "Place and Placelessness", Pion, London, 1976.
 3. MOUGHTIN, C., "Urban Designs Street and Square", Butterworth Architecture, Oxford, 1992.
 4. OKTAY, D., "Urban Identity in the Changing Context of the City", The Case of Gazimagusa, 26-34, Livenarch 2001, Livable Env. Arc Intern. Congress, 4-7 July, Trabzon, Turkey, 2001.
 5. LYNCH, K., "The Image of the City". The MIT Press, 15 June, 1960.
 6. KARAMAN, F., ÇERÇİ, S., "Importance of Environmental Quality in Looking for a Quality Living", Livenarch, Livable Environments, Architecture International Congress, 36-39, 4-7 July, Trabzon, Turkey, 2001.
 7. LAGERFELD, S., "What Main Street Can Learn From The Mall", The Atlantic Monthly, November, 110-120, 1995.
 8. RODRIGEZ, A., "Up Against the Mall", Landscape Architecture, 38-43, January 1997.
 9. PUNTER, J., "Participation in the Design of Urban Space", Landscape Design, 24-27, 1991.
 10. HEWISON, R., "The Heritage Industry", London: Methuen, 1987.
 11. ASATEKİN, N., G., "Understanding Traditional Residential Architecture in Anatolia", The Journal of Architecture, 389-414, September 2006.
 12. ÇERÇİ, S., "Adana Yaz Okulu", Mimarlık Dergisi, TMMOB, Mimarlar Odası, ISSN, 1300-4212, Sayı 303, s.39, Şubat 2002.
 13. UMAR REPORTS, Union of Mediterranean Architects, Summer School, Adana, Turkey, TMMOB, Architect Members, 15-31, 2001.
- Figure 1, Adana Şehir Planı <http://www.adana-bld.gov.tr/sehirplani/harita.html> - 3k
Figure 2-3, Serpil Akay Çerçi

Figure 4, www.hasseyahatdergisi.com/hsd_3/_gezi/adana3.jpg