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ANALYSIS OF URBAN IDENTITY OF A PALIMPSEST CITY: BURSA CITY CENTER AS A CASE

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ABSTRACT

Urban identity, as a distinctive characteristic of each city, can be defined as the sum of tangible and intangible values of the city. Globalization and economic concerns increased the emphasis on the concept of urban identity by promoting the unique cultural values of the city. In recent years, local governments have been carrying out studies in order to uncover the distinctive urban environments symbolizing the different periods of the city. As a result of these studies, the concept of urban identity is often on the agenda.

Bursa, as the fourth biggest city in Turkey, is among the cities that preserved its palimpsest structure. The city witnessed several civilizations such as Bithynian, Roman and Byzantine, until it was conquered by Ottomans in 1326. During Ottoman period, with a unique urban settlement idea, the boundaries of the city began to be shaped and the city preserved its pattern until the 19th century. In the second half of the 20th century depending on industrialization, immigration and globalization urban areas began to increase towards peripheries. While Bursa was affected from these developments, historic city center sustained its location and character with minor changes until now. Depending on its tangible values, the city has been included in UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014.

The historical urban layers that continue to exist in the city center still have a strong influence in the definition of urban identity of Bursa. The aim of the study is to evaluate the transformation of urban identity in the historical city center of Bursa under the forces of various thresholds. In the content of this study, in order to understand how these thresholds affected the city center, a comparative study is carried out by using city maps, planning notes and visual materials. The findings of the study have revealed that urban environments shaping the collective memory of the city are still part of the urban daily life, although the city center has been subjected to several transformations throughout history.

Keywords: *Urban identity, palimpsest city, Bursa*

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ÖZET

TÜRKÇE ÖZET EKSİK??

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities accumulated urban layers that witnessed different societies and civilizations in different periods of time. The concept of palimpsest, as a metaphor, refers to cities consisting multi-layers and sustaining their distinctive characteristics. Palimpsest means the parchment that had been numerously reused. Writing on top of writing reveals several layered of document which the previous text overlapped by later text. To put it differently, palimpsest creates a condition where rediscovered and reinterpreted layers composed in one complex meaning (Koo, 2009). On the other hand the concepts of palimpsest, as a metaphor, refer to cities consisting multi-layers and sustaining their distinctive characteristics. This palimpsest structure prevents cities to develop in a stereotyped manner. Cities are subject to change depending on social, economic and technological developments. During this transformation, some of them preserves their identity throughout history, while others are condemned to obsolescence.

Bursa which is the fourth biggest city in Turkey has been able to sustain its identity in its urban core owing to its palimpsest structure. The aim of this paper is to discover the traces of different layers in the city center that manifest various thresholds in the urban history of Bursa from the end of 19th century to the present by using maps and photographs. The palimpsest structure includes various thresholds such as 1855 Bursa Earthquake, the period between 1923-1940: Lörcher Master Plan, 1958 Bursa Grand Bazaar Fire and Piccinato Master Plan, the period between 1940-1960: Henri Prost Master Plan, the period between 1960-1980: Multi-Storey Apartments Process on Atatürk Street, the period between 1980 and 2000: Shopping Mall on Atatürk Street, and the period between 2000-2017.

The earliest map depicting the existing urban pattern in Bursa was prepared under the direction of Suphi Bey in 1861-1862 by a group of surveyors from Erkân-ı Harbîye, the Ottoman General Staff (Figure 1). This map displays the spatial structure of the city around the middle of the 19th century and is likely to have been prepared in order to record the city for reconstruction following the devastating earthquake of 1855 which destroyed major part of the city center (Erder, 1975). The city map that was prepared in 1911 reveals that new axial routes were opened in the center of Bursa at the beginning of the 20th century (Figure 2).

The photographs used within the content of this study include Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 represent-

ing the period between 1940-1960, Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 representing the period between 1960-1980 and Figures 12, 13, 14 and 15 representing the period from 1990s till the present.



Figure 1: 1861-1862 Suphi Bey Map (obtained from Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Archive)

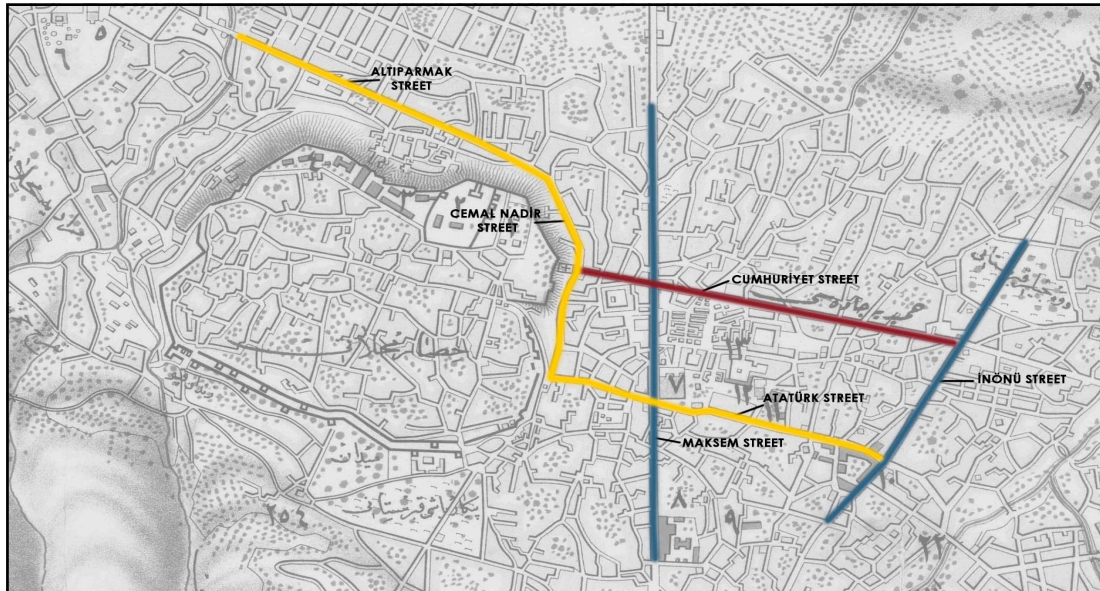


Figure 2: The New Transportation Lines in the Center of Bursa at the beginning of the 20th century (adapted from 1911 Bursa Map obtained from Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Archive)

2. URBAN PLANNING DEVELOPMENT in BURSA CITY CENTER

When Bursa (Prusia) was conquered by Ottomans in 1326, there was only settlement within the boundaries of the fortress. Around 1339, Early Ottoman urbanization model began to be applied. Briefly the city consisted of two basic subdivisions. The first of these subdivisions was inner part of the fortress where the Ottoman governors were located in. The second subdivision was out of the fortress where commercial activities were active. In this area there were a main mosque, a grand bazaar near the mosque, Turkish baths and inns for merchant's accommodation. The dual city structure was surrounded by neighborhood units that were shaped around mosques became as the traditional Ottoman urban structure.

The first capital of Ottoman Empire, where a new urbanization idea was applied, began to change with the preparation of master plans at the beginning of the 20th century. The first master plan for Bursa was developed by German planner Lörcher in 1924. That plan was followed by Prost master plan in 1940 and Piccinato master plan in 1960. Although the first master plan for Bursa was developed in 1924, the earthquake hit in 1855 necessitated reconstruction activities in the center of the city.

2.1. 1855 BURSA EARTHQUAKE AND DEVELOPMENT of CITY CENTER

In 1855 a massive earthquake occurred and caused major damage on buildings in the trade center of Bursa. Works for remedying damage of the earthquake and reconstruction activities of ruined historic buildings, set the scene for the change of the city center. Ahmet Vefik who was appointed as governor of Bursa in 1879 was reknown for his radical interventions in the city center of Bursa. He invited French architect Violette-le Duc and his assistant Leon Parville to Bursa for the reconstruction of ruined historical buildings depending on the original construction system. Even though Ahmet Vefik performed successful applications about conserving historical heritage, he changed historic urban fabric to some extent with the introduction of new transportation lines in city center (Cakici, 2009). In the end of the 19th century new transportation lines were opened in Bursa city center like Atatürk Street, İnönü Street, Cumhuriyet Street. All of these streets are referred as high streets of Bursa now.

2.2. THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1923-1940-LÖRCHER MASTER PLAN

Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. When the Republic of Turkey was founded, Bursa was a city with a population of 400 000. Atatürk Street was located as main artery of the city with social changes. Public buildings such as Grand Mosque, Community House (the building is being used as Ahmet Vefik Pasha Theater) and Tayyare Cultural Center were located on the north side of Atatürk High Street. The south side of Atatürk High Street consisted of mainly two or three storey houses and buildings such as hotels, coffee house (kıraathane), eating house, post office. The buildings on Atatürk High Street were not in alignment with each other. Generally the ground floors of the buildings were used as retail function, when the upper floors used as residential function. In 1924 a master plan for Bursa was designed by German urban planner Lörcher, also developed a master plan for capital of Turkey. However this master plan wasn't applied totally. Connecting city center to the

fortress area was one of the applied decisions of the master plan. In this period building Governor's Office, Revenue Office, Courthouse, Tayyare Cinema and Community House on Atatürk High Street were so important that Bursa city center became a local government center besides being trade center (Dostoglu and Vural, 2002; 2004).

2.3. THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1940-1960-HENRI PROST MASTER PLAN

In 1940 a new master plan was developed by Henri Prost. With this master plan decisions, the existing routes were strengthened and monuments were defined as landmarks at the end of the axis. For example The Green Tomb was a landmark at the end of Atatürk Street. In spite of strengths of the master plan, unpredictable population growth and increasing of the houses in city center weakened the decisions of the plan that aimed conserving historical city center. Another remarkable aspect of this master plan that widening Atatürk Street and proposing apartments on it. Building multi-storey apartments and office blocks on Atatürk Street began with this master plan decisions. Henri Prost proposed buildings with arcades which were applied on south part of Atatürk Street (Dostoglu and Vural, 2002; 2004).

2.4. 1958 BURSA GRAND BAZAAR FIRE AND PICCINATO MASTER PLAN

A fire occurred at Bursa Grand Bazaar in 1958 and destroyed all of historical trade center. Italian planner Piccinato proposed a master plan for city center of Bursa after fire disaster. He worked on Bursa city center with integrated planning approach. According to Piccinato historical urban areas must be conserved with physical, economic and social features. We could observe this approach from his 1958 Bursa Master Plan. Piccinato suggested reconstructing all historical buildings which were destroyed in fire. Nearly all of destroyed stores in Grand Bazaar rebuilt. Only the stores which has noisy working environment like carpenter etc. moved out from traditional city center. For improving the historical area socially, buildings that lost their functions like Turkish baths, inns refunctioned as café, restaurant etc. with Piccinato master plan. Generally axial routes in city center of Bursa like Atatürk Street, İnönü Street, Cumhuriyet Street were preserved with this master plan (Dostoglu and Vural, 2002; 2004; Vural, 2007).

1940



Figure 3: South Side of Atatürk Street, Two or Three Storey Detached Houses in 1940
Source: Bursa Municipality Archive, 2017



Figure 4: A View of Heykel Square in 1945
Source: <http://www.bursadakultur.org/images/heykel-1945.jpg>, Date of Access: 10th February 2017

1950

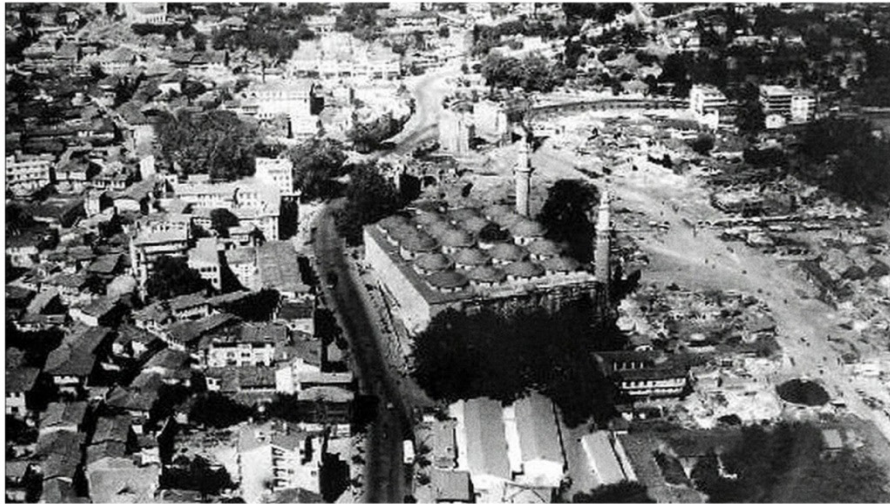


Figure 5: Atatürk Street Aerial View in 1950, Bursa.
Source: Aydoğan, E. (2011, 20 April), www.wowturkey.com, Date of Access: 20th February 2017

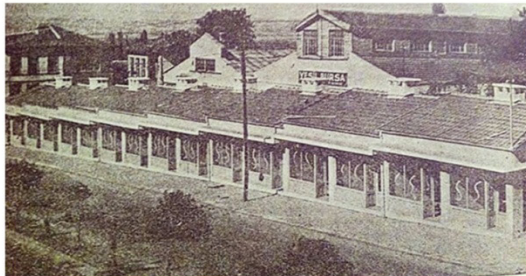


Figure 6: Row Retail Stores Built for the Retailers After 1958 Covered Bazaar Fire
Source: https://twitter.com/eski_bursa
Date of Access: 18th February 2017



Figure 7: South Side of Atatürk Street-Opposite of Tayyare Culture Center, 1960 (View before apartments constructed)
Source: <https://www.lifeinbursa.com>
Date of Access: 20th February 2017

1960

2.5. THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1960-1980: MULTI STOREY APARTMENTS PROCESS ON ATATÜRK STREET

Bursa was a city which took place in the first five-year economic development plan after establishment of Turkish Republic. Weaving and knitting factories were established in Bursa with government grant (Kaprol, 2002). The establishment of Bursa Organized Industrial Zone in 1961 was another significant development. These developments and the new factories attracted labor force to Bursa. In this way migration to Bursa from other cities began. This event means rapid population

growth and housing needs in Bursa. Consequently industrialization and urbanization which had affected nearly all cities in the world began to affect Bursa city center. Hereby a new type of residential building called apartment emerged which is not incompatible with traditional Turkish life.

Buildings reflect society's way of life in social, economy, culture, religion, technic and tradition. Industrialization and modernism which affected all of the world especially the period after 1960, began to affect Bursa city too. Modern needs, rapid population growth and housing needs because of rapid population growth caused change of traditional Turkish life in the city center of Bursa. This change also was appeared on the character of the buildings. Two or three storey detached houses generally with a bay window exchanged with multi-storey apartment buildings. Architectural character of Bursa city center transformed and began to describe a different life (Kağıtçıbaşı, Yaşar, 2016).

“Apartment is a new format, a new fiction and fact in history of housing. Apartment is an image, a metaphor and a reality by itself. Apartment is an image that must be detected cultural and social context. It is a clear example for social change in research. Apartment is a central notion and metaphor for understanding momentous issues like modernization, industrialization, wealth, urbanization, comfort, council housing. Apartment that has some common properties with previous house emerged based on architectural, cultural, social, economic, political, technical reasons. Apartment expresses a transformation process, even radical transformation process as content and meaning (Alver, 2011)”.

The conditions which brought out apartments in Turkey were directly relevant with improvements in the world. Especially new construction materials and techniques triggered for a new kind of housing (apartments).

Apartment which allows more family to reside in same land was brought out as new kind of housing. People had been able to construct only one building on a land till the law of property ownership in 1954. After Second World War, land price in city centers raised rapidly because of industrialization and urbanism. Middle class citizens couldn't afford the high price of the lands. Therefore the price of the lands was afforded by a few middle class citizens. So property ownership became legal. Apartments were not an architectural preference, they brought out as an economic obligation (Teke- li, 2011). After 1965, multi storey apartments created character of Bursa Atatürk Street with effects all of these improvements and decisions of Henry Prost Master Plan. The apartments that reflect the materials, technique and power of modern period were built instead of two or three storey detached houses on Atatürk Street. Atatürk High Street preserves this architectural character. Multi-storey apartments and office blocks are still located on Atatürk Street (Vural, 2007).

1970



Figure 8: A view from Bursa Atatürk High Street, 1970.
(The situation after apartments constructed)

Source: www.wowturkey.com, 2008
Date of Access: 16th February 2017

1970



Figure 9: A view of Heykel Square in 1970s
Source: <http://www.bursadakultur.org/images/heykel-1970.jpg>

Date of Access: 18th February 2017



Figure 10: Atatürk Street, 1982, Bursa
Source: Ünlü, Y. (2013, 1 February)

www.wowturkey.com
Date of Access: 12th May 2017.

1982



Figure 11: Atatürk Street, 1982, Bursa
Source: Ussoy, N. (2014, 25 October)

www.wowturkey.com
Date of Access: 28th March 2017

1982

2.6. THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1980 AND 2000: SHOPPING MALL ON ATATÜRK STREET

Orhangazi Square which is located to the north of Atatürk High Street and east of Great Mosque transformed parallel to the transformations that effected the street. Various strategies related to this area have been generated by local authorities in different periods since 1960. First of them was constructing an underground garage parking in this area between Orhan Mosque and Great Mosque in 1970. However this idea wasn't realized in practice. Although by the end of the 1970s, it was considered that the non-historical buildings in the area would be pull down and the region would turn into a recreation area, it didn't also realize. In 1982, a project was developed by Şaziment and Neşet Arolat for same area upon the request of the local government of the period. Putting emphasis on historical monuments, providing access to the area through constructing an underpass below Atatürk High Street, preserving the existing plane trees in this area was designated as the main purposes of this project. According to this project Orhangazi Square was built between 1983-1985 (Dostoğlu, 1999).

Another radical/important change on north side of Atatürk High Street was opening of Zafer Plaza Shopping Mall. An architectural design competition was organized during 1990s for the renewal and transformation of the area known as Row Retail Stores which were built after the fire of 1958, into a large retail area. Faruk Eşim and Hayri Anamurluoğlu won the competition with the project which started to erect in 1996. This project was the best expression of social and economic changes in Bursa in this period. The shopping mall was designed to be underground with the care of minimizing visual impact on the surrounding historic urban texture (Shakur, et. al, 2014).

2.7. THE PERIOD BETWEEN 2000-2017

After the 1990s was a period that the out-of-town growth is quite rapid in Bursa. In this period, the development of the cooperative system in relation to the housing production process facilitated the possession of a residence in one hand and the spreading towards new settlement areas outside the city center in the other. In this process, especially region of Nilüfer continued to grow rapidly, while new alternative centers in the city began to emerge. In addition, many new retail areas such as shopping malls, supermarkets and diy stores have been built outside the city. This situation has reduced the economic and social importance of Atatürk High Street. In response to these developments, the local government of the period initiated a facade improvement project with the purpose of rehabilitation of Ataturk High Street. In this project, which was held in 2010, it was aimed to remove the sign irregularity that would cause image pollution on the street and meet a common approach in the facade arrangements.

After 2000s in Bursa, the number of motor vehicles and therefore the traffic density in the center has increased considerably. In this period, various projects related to the center also put forward. In 2012, Bursa Orhangazi Square and Surrounding Urban Design Project Competition was opened. With this competition, it is targeted to develop solutions that will increase the relationship with Atatürk High Street by improve a new vision for the region. However, none of the projects awarded in the competition were applied.

Although ideas such as pedestrianisation of Ataturk High Street were put forward for some time, these ideas have not been realized because alternative routes to connect the north and south of the city couldn't be resolved due to topography and property problems. Regarding this situation, in order to reduce traffic concentration in the center, the Tramway line began to work in 2013 to connect Altıparmak, Heykel and Kent Meydanı.

1990



Figure 12: Atatürk High Street, 1990, Bursa.
(The situation after apartments constructed)
Source: www.wowturkey.com
Date of Access: 12th May 2017

1996



Figure 13: Construction Process of Zafer Plazain the Place of Row Retail Stores
Source: https://twitter.com/eski_bursa
Date of Access: 20th February 2017



Figure 14: Actual View of Zafer Plaza
Source: <http://haritane.com/m-a-c-zafer-plaza-detay23290.html>
Date of Access: 20th February 2017



Figure 15: Actual View of Heykel Square
Source: <http://www.bursa.bel.tr>
Date of Access: 20th February 2017

2017

3. CONCLUSION

It is possible to read the economic and social transformations of cities by interpreting the tracks belonging to different periods in the city center. Within this context, Atatürk Street, high street of the Bursa city center, is a significant urban space where social, economic and physical changes are displayed.

Although Atatürk Street has undergone many important transformations, it carries the traces of the past until now with historical buildings that witnessed different periods in time. The street has maintained its vitality with the retail activities and housing areas. In order to sustain the identity of the street, it is necessary to utilize programs which are already developed to improve the economic and social vitality in the city center with a holistic approach and through a participatory process.

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