Loss Of City Identities In The Process Of Change: The City Of Konya-Turkey

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Abstract

The identity concept from the point of cities and architectural products includes a wide definition covering natural, geographical and cultural products and social life norms. Urban identity, architectural identity and the urban images about them are sometimes formed by very different components in a long period in urban space. In recent days, we often come across with the problem of cities to enter a new architectural and urban formation process in a dimension of losing their original identities. Continuously changing and regenerating cities loses their readabilities and their citizens live perception and memory problems. In those societies the feelings of the inability to be belonged to that city or to own that city grow. As a result of this, it becomes more difficult to preserve the historical – cultural heritage, local originalities and city identities in that city. Konya is one of the cities living this changing and regeneration process. Konya, from antiquity to today, is a city which bears witness to different periods like Seljuks, Seigniory, Ottoman and Republic periods and has a dense building and building groups carrying architectural and vital characteristics of their periods and contributing the unique identity of the city in spatial context. Konya started to lose this meaning and value slowly in the process of change. In this context urban and architectural identity concepts are examined in this study and the role of the buildings in the formation of unique identity of the city and change are emphasized.

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1. Introduction

The identity of a city is formed in a long time period. The city is shaped with its geographical characteristics, cultural level, architectural character, tradition and customs and life style. For this reason the elements making the city gain its identity are handled together as a whole not one by one. However it is a fact that this completeness is formed by separate elements making the city gains its identity [İlgar, 2008]. These elements form stratification in the city and bring the city in different characteristics in each period. The city continues its existence carrying the traces of each period because of the changing society culture in time as well as it is an expression of a historical accumulation. Change is an indispensable process but it is necessary to provide the continuity and conservation of originalities during the change of some values considering the dimensions, conditions and results of change [Beyhan et. al., 2005].

2. Identities And Identity Have The Cities

Identity means to distinguish an object from other objects and accept that one as an apart object [Lynch, 1960]. In other words the identity is the completeness of the characteristics separating or combining the individual or the society from others, the identification of an identicalness or dissimilarity, a problem of belonging [Asiliskender, 2006]. Identity as a cultural and social concept exhibits variety from the point of cities and architectural products. The identity concept from the point of cities and architectural products includes a wide definition covering natural, geographical and cultural products and social life norms. Urban identity, architectural identity and the urban images about them are sometimes formed by very different components in a long period in urban space [Ulu et al, 2004].

Identity covers many concepts like architectural, social, cultural, political, psychological, emotional, etc. concepts in a comprehensive way [Littlefield, 2012]. City identity shapes different factors special to each city and original identities appear in this way. The reason of this is that, the city is not only a visual element composed of physical inputs but it s also evaluated as a social, economical and cultural dynamic.

Social interaction has an important role in urban identity formation, because urban identity is defined not only with physical and natural elements but also with urban life. Urban identity formation includes physical, social, political and economical, cultural change/transformation processes from macro environment to micro environment [Es, 2012]. While the identity of a city is defined that city should be observed in detail meaning; its natural environment, geography, cultural process, traditions, belief system, economical structure, political, legal and governmental frame should be defined. As a result of this observation; its interpretation and the perception of this interpretation defines the urban identity.

Çöl defined urban identity in 1998 as “a meaning loaded unity appeared by the means of a huge process affecting urban image, carrying unique qualities in every city with different scales and interpretations, keeping the improving and sustainable city concept, shaped by physical, cultural, socio – economical, historical and formal factors, formed by the citizens and their life styles”. This definition shows that the urban identity is not only a spatial fact but it has social, cultural, economical etc. dimensions.

In this context; the city identity is formed in the togetherness of natural and cultural values which are required to preserve, unique architectural and spatial characteristics, social accumulation and life style. City identity concept having spatial, social, cultural and economical dimensions, should be handled with a totalitarian approach, it must be qualified as a collective result including the past of the city and every interaction which provided the city to reach today with its past.

2.1. Components Forming The City Identity

There are some determinants forming city identity, differentiating the city from others, affecting the formation and development of the characteristics special to that city. The value judgments and life styles of each society show different characteristics from each other depending on the environment. For this reason the elements forming identity can also show differences. When it is handled in this context, the city identity can be determined by socio-cultural structure, socio-economical structure, physical environment and image elements [İlgar, 2008]. In other words, the determinants of city identity are natural, geographical and artificial environment elements. These
Determinants can be defined in a different way as follows:

- Physical structure of the city.
- Socio-economic structure of the city.
- Cultural accumulation or structure of the city.
- Historical development of the city.
- Spatial characteristics of the city.
- Formal and visual characteristics of the city.
- Life style and life quality of citizens.
- Functions of the city.
- Physical environment and social behavior relation of the city.
- City – nature unity.
- Urban substructure.
- Urban typology [Çöl, 1998].

While the identity of the built environment in a city forms an important part of the city identity, it also gives clues related to the social and cultural life in that city. The richness of the values forming the identity of the built environment is also an expression of the richness of the social and cultural life in that city. Because, collective identities are social structures built by means of spatialization of social life [Neill, 1997]. Besides, the identity of built environment and social and cultural identity of the society mutually affect each other. For this reason, the values forming the identity of the physical environment which organizes the whole life in the city are very important. When it is handled in this context, architectural works’ contribution is very important in the formation of city identity. Architectural works reflect the different life styles in the city in different periods, its socio-economical situation, building technologies reflecting the knowledge, taste and skills of its citizens. The contributions of these works to the formation of the city identity are:

- Architectural works and the environments formed by them provide the readability of the societies’ life style.
- They are the concrete documents in the life of the city, region or the country.
- As documents of the local history they provide the changes in the city to be read.
- They tell about different periods other than the materials and building techniques of their own period [Rapoport, 1979].

2.2. The Effects of Architectural Works on The Formation of City Identity

City is the spatial association of the past and present citizens of the city providing the togetherness with the ones who will live there after them. The city identity formed at the end of a process, is a historical concept and formed by the formation of a harmonious and meaningful whole with different periods. Components like geographical location, physical structure, socio-cultural structure, religious facts, climate, topography, trade structure, economical environment, history, culture, roads, streets and architectural works contribute the formation of unique city identities. The identity facts sourced from the human made environment are the characteristics of every arrangement in the city. Any kind of urban components like squares, streets, monuments, etc in the city can be in these arrangements. Architectural works and buildings – as members of these components – play important role in the formation of architectural identity of the city. Space in the development of local identity is an identity builder element. For this reason the facts with highest potential of forming identity and placed in the human made environment are the monument buildings in that city, building groups and the city fabric formed by togetherness of these buildings [Birol, 2007].

The buildings and building groups which witnessed the different periods of the city are placed in a privileged location as included to city life. For this reason, the building and building groups having contribution to the unique identity of the city and carrying architectural characteristics of its built period play important role on providing the cultural continuity of that city, forming the city identity and transferring this identity to the next generations. The role of the architectural works in the formation of urban memory in city space and perception of the unique identity of the city is great. For this reason, it is possible to classify architectural works forming the city identity as symbol...
buildings, memorial buildings, witness buildings, document buildings, representation buildings, technological buildings, traditional buildings and monumental buildings.

3. Research Area

3.1. Material and method

In the designation of settlement identities, the determinants are city history, cultural structure, physical structure and spatial characteristics of the city. In this scope, historical city center in Konya - Turkey is handled. In this study aiming the determination of the lost city identity of Konya firstly; identity concept in cities, factors in the formation of city identity and architectural identity concepts are designated by a detailed literature research. The area studies in Konya city center and archive investigations formed the basic materials of the study. The current maps, development plan studies, Google map views, archive photographs and the photographs of the existing situation directed at the study area are examined. The elements make the Konya city gain its identity, historical city center and its close environment are handled, the visual analyses of the change in some of the architectural works in that place and their environment.

The scope of this study especially focuses on the changes lived in the historical city center, some architectural works placed there and their environment as they contribute the formation of city identity. In this frame, the findings are interpreted and the effects of the change in the architectural works and their surroundings in change process on Konya city identity are determined.

3.2. Research Area and Findings

In recent days, cities are losing their unique identities, and going through a new urban and architectural formation process. Konya is one of the cities living this process.

3.2.1 Urban identity of Konya

From pre-history periods till today, Konya is a city which bears witness to different periods like Seljuks, Seigniory, Ottoman and Republic periods and has a dense building and building groups carrying architectural and vital characteristics of their periods and contributing the unique identity of the city.

3.2.2. The Buildings Forming the City Identity in Konya and the Change Lived in Their Environment

Konya is one of the oldest settlement centers of Anatolia. The excavations in Alaeddin Hill and places near the city center showed that the city history goes to 6000’ B.C. The city - hosted many civilizations from past to present – exhibits a multi – layered structure. In Rome and Byzantine period, settlement areas were densely around Alaeddin Hill and its surroundings [Tanyeli, 1987]. In Anatolian Seljuks period settlement areas developed through the east of the city [Önder, 1971]. The city developed through the west of Alaeddin Hill in Karamanoğulları period and then through south and south east in Ottoman period [Konyalı 1964; Ergenç 1995]. In this period, as Mevlana dervish convent was located in the east of the city, city center shifted through there [Alkan, 1982]. In 1897 new development actions began as a result of the fire happened in covered bazaar in new city center. The main street in Alaeddin Hill and Mevlana axe which has important contributions to city identity was opened, Government Hall and many 2-3 floored buildings were built in this period [Yenice, 2011]. The land usage and transportation network changed at the end of 19th century as a result of that the Bagdad Railway reached to Konya, a third center is formed around the train station after Alaeddin Hill and Mevlana environs.

In 1946, the first planned development actions began for the city of Konya. These actions developed and continued in the years of 1954, 1966, 1982. Conservation Aimed Development Plan is made for historical city center in 1996. This plan is renewed with partial changes in 2000-2002 [Yenice 2011]. The building and development actions related to historical city center were stopped in 2010 [Özcan, 2009]. Conservation Aimed Development Plan studies has been continued in 2012-2013 (Fig. 1-2).
This change of Konya from the point of development actions is reflected to architectural works, historical and cultural works forming the city identity and their surroundings. The change process lived in Konya historical city center and its close environment is evaluated by grouping the architectural works placed in this area and formed city identity as symbol, memorial, witness, document, representation, technological, traditional and monumental buildings.

**Symbol buildings:** the buildings which have importance in city life, define address and carry the architectural characteristics of his period and are given as reference by citizens.

One of the most important symbols forming Konya city identity is Alaeddin Hill. Alaeddin Hill and its surroundings, where is the best to read the settlement and planning culture in the city, changed in time. Although wide vehicle roads and a tramline are opened around it and new buildings and arrangements were applied, it did not lose its symbol characteristics in the memory of citizens. Konya Alaeddin Mosque and Kişçaslan Pavillon are symbol buildings for city identity. These buildings placed on Alaeddin Hill can still be perceived with their original identities despite the change in time (Fig. 3-4).
Mevlana Mausoleum and its environment is one of the most affected symbolic buildings in the change process. The green area in front of the building is destroyed and formed an unidentified square. The roads around it are widened and opened to heavy traffic. The library building right across it which belonged to II. National Architecture Period, had horizontal lines, provided the transparency between the inner and outer space and was an expression of a specific period’s architectural culture is destroyed. Hereby the unique perception of the fabric formed here within a specific process is eliminated (Fig. 5-6).

**Representation buildings:** these are the buildings which played role in the administration of the city and had the characteristics of representation.
The road between Alaeddin Hill and Mevlana is opened in late 1800s. The area which had a harmonious view in the quality of an orderly city space with the buildings, the form of buildings, their dimensions and façade arrangements in its environment in the first years, started to lose its unique characteristics is 1970s. The arrangements independent from each other, the disorder in new buildings highly affected the unique character of the area (Fig. 7-8).

Konya Government Hall and its near environment are highly affected by the rapid and irregular change in historical city center. The arrangements in the city square in front of Government Hall, usage of the place under the square as bazaar, the doors and elevators placed in the middle of the square for entrance and exit of the bazaar caused this place to lose its characteristics. However, despite all interventions, the solutions belonged to common past and national identity can still be read.

**Memorial Buildings and Witness Buildings:** The memorial buildings built for the memory of an important event for the city and citizens. Witness buildings are the buildings witnessed an important event for city and citizens.
It is built as a synthesis of last Ottoman period Neo-Classical monument understanding and monument-sculpture understanding in the first years of Republic. After the declaration of Republic, with the idea of building monuments telling about National Fight and Atatürk in city squares, it is decided to use the Ziraat Monument in the square as the base for the monument. In following periods there are major changes in its environment. Its empty environment is filled with high rise buildings in time. Atatürk Stadium and DSI building were built (Fig. 10-11). Atatürk Pavilion is in the character of both memorial and witness building (Fig. 12). Ziraat Bank and its environment was highly affected by the change lived in the city of Konya. The square in front of the building is arranged as bus stops in time and opened to heavy vehicle and pedestrian traffic. However the building still reflects the Architecture of Republic Period on its facade with its most unique form (Fig. 13).

The building located in Atatürk Monument environs and built as “Darul Muallimin” and its environment differentiated by time. The building is still used as an education building; two additional buildings were built near it. New development regulations with 5 floors and wide vehicle road opened in front of the building caused it to lose its unique perceptional identity values (Fig. 14).

The building was built as “Darul Muallimat” in the first years of Republic. It has been used as Selcuk University Rectorate Building. The road levels around the building were raised therefore the building stayed in cavity, the additional buildings near it and the disordered urban works destroyed the perception of its unique physical values (Fig. 15).
The building was built in 1901 as Industry School and today it is used as City General Assembly Service Building. Uncontrolled urbanization was lived near the building-located on the Alaeddin Mevlana route- and its environment by opening wide vehicle roads and constructing high rise buildings (Fig. 16).

**Document Buildings:** the buildings forming the document of a period in the context of society development and completeness with contemporary life. These buildings can also be characterized as monumental buildings.

**Monumental buildings:** the buildings fulfilling the common religious, cultural, social and economical requirements of the society. These buildings are more magnificent, more complex and more ornamented then the traditional buildings as dimension and quality.
Urban arrangements like opening wide vehicle roads around monumental buildings, high rise and unconscious development activities, turning green area arrangements into stone squares causes the unique monumental identities of monumental buildings no to be perceived (Fig. 17).

The change lived in monumental buildings and their environments show that the buildings are tried to be conserved one by one in urban conservation understanding. A totalitarian conservation approach with the consideration that each building affects itself and the buildings in near environment, is a more positive approach for historical city center (Fig. 18).

**Traditional buildings:** the buildings where the traditions special to the region and daily lives of individuals are placed.

Traditional dwelling fabrics and their environments in historical city center in Konya were also affected by the rapid change and development in the city. Today the building is within a dense trade fabric and used as a trade place
different from its original dwelling function (Fig. 19). In this region dense vehicle roads were opened because of the dense trade pressure, high rise unordered buildings without architectural identity were built in adjacent parcels. The spaces where the traditional dwelling fabrics are placed become breakdown region.

**Technological buildings:** The buildings in which a function, a production or an industry branch is placed.

![Fig. 20. Google earth views of the change in Kule Site Shopping Mall and its environment in different periods [https://maps.google.com/]](https://maps.google.com/)

(a) 2004s  
(b) 2011s  
(c) 2013s

Any facility directed at income is tried to be “monument”alized in Konya. This inclination reflects to the city space in the form of huge parking lot areas and skyscrapers, high rise shopping malls, shopping areas and multi star hotels. In this change process historical buildings, green areas known as the most important symbols of the city left their places to high rise shopping malls with huge masses and skyscrapers (Fig. 20-21).

3.3. Evaluation

The architectural works in Konya historical city center were important reference points for the city in their built periods. Alaeddin Hill and its environs has been the center of the city from Early Bronze Age till today. The city was developed around Alaeddin Hill in Rome, Byzantine, Seljuks and Ottoman periods. Especially in Seljuks period; madrasa buildings, mosques, central authority and public architectural works connected to that authority were located at this point. Dwelling and trade areas were out of this scale. In Ottoman period the axe between Mevlana Dervish Convent and Alaeddin Hill become fairly important and new trade areas were fed through this axe. In the middle of this period the train station and its surroundings started to develop as a secondary center as the Bagdad Railway passed through Konya. This region became the development axe of the city in the first years of the Republic. In the first years of the Republic, namely the National Architecture Period, buildings forming the architectural identity of the period were built in Alaeddin –Mevlana axe (Government Hall, Banks, schools) and train station environs (Atatürk monument, and teacher school). However in following periods wide streets and roads were opened in every point of the city, high rise and unordered developments were applied and the building culture formed by stratifying in the city was not considered in the planning.

4. Result

The most negative effect of the unplanned and disorganized development of the cities is the developments damaging natural and historical fabric. While the unique spaces of the city, monuments, streets and settlement
arrangement are destroyed with high rise buildings and within themselves, in fact the urban identity of that city is harmed (Perşembe 2011). The disorganized formations in cities are important factors in degeneration of the urban identity. There are deficiencies and insufficiencies in planning and application process in this formation process. Problems like; unplanned development of the cities because of the planning away from the dynamics of the era and speed urbanization, insufficient regulations and organizational structure, separated planning and application, unhealthy and illegal construction causes our cities to develop in a unhealthy way with a negative identity.

With the similar building and development activities lived in the most of the cities, same cities are formed rather than cities conserving their identities. The cities become more and more similar in time because of the high rise buildings constructed with the same style building technologies, materials and architectural style (Kiper, 2004). Hereby the city identities determined by local originalities are eliminated.

As a result constantly changing and renewing cities lose their readabilities in time, the perception of the city and belonging feeling of the citizen are damaged. At the end it becomes harder to preserve the cultural historical values, monumental buildings, civil architectural examples, characteristics special to place, culture and city identity giving meaning and value to the city. However the architectural values formed in each period are the alternate reflection of national identities and important parts of city identity. These values are the cultural potentials from the point of expressing identity (Delanty at all, 2002).

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