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ANALYSIS OF A NODE AS AN ACTIVE PUBLIC SPACE IN TERMS OF URBAN LIFE

KENT YAŞAMI BAĞLAMINDA AKTİF BİR KAMUSAL MEKAN OLARAK BİR DÜĞÜM NOKTASININ ANALİZİ

Dr. İpek ALTUĞ TURAN

Ege University Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Landscape Architecture, Bornova-Izmir/TURKEY

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emine MALKOÇ TRUE

Ege University Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Landscape Architecture, Bornova-Izmir/TURKEY



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ÖZ

Kamusal mekânlar, kamusal aktiviteyi barındıran, toplumsal yaşantıyı besleyen ve yönlendiren mekândır. Toplumun her kesiminden insanın sürekli etkileşim halinde bulunduğu bu mekânlar, kent kimliğini şekillendiren en önemli öğelerden biridir. İzmir kenti açısından önemli bir düğüm noktasını kentsel kimlik ve kalite öğeleri temelinden analiz etmek bu çalışmanın çıkış noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada ayrıca sağlıklı toplumların vazgeçilmezi olan kamusal mekâna / yaşama odaklanmanın gereğine de vurgu yapılmaktadır.

Bu çalışma üç aşamada gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk olarak, araştırma alanını öncelikle fiziksel özellikleri (konumu, çevresel kullanımlar, erişilebilirlik, ulaşım alternatifleri, tasarım özellikleri vb.) yönüyle irdelenmiştir. Sonrasında, araştırma alanı sosyal (kullanıcı bilgileri, sosyal etkileşim, çevre - davranış ilişkisi, kullanıcı davranışları, aktivite türleri) ve duyuşsal (algılama sürecindeki duyular) yönlerden değerlendirilmiştir.

Çalışmada değerlendirilen materyallerden elde edilen bulgular dikkate alınarak bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Buna ek olarak, mekân ile kullanıcı arasındaki ilişki tartışılmış, çevre kalitesini arttırmak için planlamacılar, tasarımcılar, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve yerel yönetimleri yönlendirici bazı önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Düğüm noktası, Kamusal mekân, Karşıyaka

ABSTRACT

Public spaces are spaces that host public activity, nurture and direct social life. These places, where people from all walks of life are constantly interacting, are one of the most important elements shaping the identity of the city. The starting point of this study is to analyze an important node in terms of the city of Izmir on the basis of urban identity and quality elements. The study also emphasizes the need to focus on public space / life, which is indispensable for healthy societies.

This study has been conducted at three phases. At first, the research area was examined in terms of physical characteristics (location, environmental usage, accessibility, transport alternatives, design features etc.). After then, the research area was evaluated as social aspect (user information, social interaction, environment - behavior relationship, user behavior, activity types) and the last sensorial (sensations in the perception process) aspects.

Some suggestions were made considering the findings obtained from the materials evaluated in the study. In addition, the relationship between space and its users has been discussed and some suggestions have been made to planners, designers, NGOs and local government in order to improve the quality of the environment.

Key Words: Node, Public space, Karşıyaka

1. INTRODUCTION

From past to present, cities have been dynamic and constantly changing and transforming structures (Erdönmez Dinçer and Ataoğ Akpınar, 2016). Cities that provide people with the opportunity to meet, interact with, and interact with the different can offer this opportunity to individuals through many tools. The most powerful element of these vehicles in urban areas is undoubtedly public spaces (Uzgören and Erdönmez, 2017).

The social life of man is possible with the existence of “others” and the concept of public emerges where other people exist (Uzun, 2006). At this point, the concept of public appears as a concept describing the whole of society.

The public space is as defined “the place of work dealing with the public, the place where public works are done” in General Turkish Dictionary of Turkish Language Institution (TDK, 2019) and this word is derived from the English word “public”. Public as word is quoted from the Latin word “publicus” (Etimolojiturkce, 2019).

Clutch loaded meanings and functions, starting from Ancient Greece Middle Ages, after the bourgeois revolution in the 20th century and shows the differences. The rapid progress in the public sector, especially in communication and information technologies, has brought a new dimension to this field (Çalışkan, 2014).

A clear distinction between “public” and “private” that and still have a great philosophical and political importance of the opinion that this separation is only an opinion, even the well-established daily political debate, not a thought that tries to protect the few philosophers (Guess, 2007).

According to Altman and Chemers (1984); all cultures have developed mechanisms of behavior that allow individuals to regulate their relationships with others. "Regional behavior" is one of these mechanisms. These regions are divided into three main groups as "primary, secondary and public regions" according to the degree of relationship between space and human behavior. Primary (private) areas include private spaces owned and used by individuals or groups, which are clearly recognized by others. The secondary zones have established a bridge between the primary zone, where users have certain control over it, and the public zone, which can be used temporarily by anyone following basic social rules (Uzun, 2006).

Public space is defined as spaces belonging to the society as a whole and open to everyone (Uzgören and Erdönmez, 2017) what activates the possibility of public space to become a public space is the degree to which people can use it (Çetin, 2006).

Urban public spaces are spaces devoted to the public benefit and generally appear as a reflection of an average of the needs, tastes and awareness levels of the city people (Bayar, 1991). The public outdoor tradition, which began with the “Agora” in Ancient Greece and the “Forum” during the Roman period, has occupied a privileged place in all aspects of urban life in the historical process (Rubenstein, 1992).

Greatly simplified, outdoor activities in public spaces can be divided into three categories: *Necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities.*

- Necessary activities include those that are compulsory - going to school or to work, shopping, waiting for a bus or a person, running errands, distributing mail - in other words, all activities in which those involved are to a greater or lesser degree required to participate.
- Optional activities – that is, those pursuits that are participated in if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible – are quite another matter. This category includes such activities as taking a walk to get a breath of fresh air, standing around enjoying life, or sitting and sunbathing. These activities take place only when exterior conditions are favorable when weather and place invite them.
- Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. Social activities include children at play, greetings and conversations, communal activities of various kinds, and finally - as the most widespread social activity - passive contacts, that is, simply seeing and hearing other people. These activities could also be termed “resultant” activities,

because in nearly all instances they evolve from activities linked to the other two activity categories (Gehl, 2011).

In this context, it is important for the environment to be equipped with all the means to meet the needs of the user, in order to maintain a healthy physiological and psychological life (Atabek, 2002).

Public spaces are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender and as such represent a democratic forum for citizens and the society. When properly designed and managed, they bring communities together, provide meeting places and foster social ties of a kind that have been disappearing in many urban areas (Cho et. al, 2016).

Kevin Lynch identified five basic dimensions of good urban space performance. There are namely;

- Vitality; the degree to which the form of the settlement supports the vital functions, biological requirements and capabilities of human beings,
- Sense; the degree to which the settlement can be clearly perceived and mentally differentiated and structured in time and space by its residents and the degree to which that mental structure connects with their values and concepts,
- Fit; the degree to which the form and capacity of spaces, channels, and equipment in a settlement match the pattern and quality of actions that people customarily engage in, or want to engage in,
- Access; the availability to reach other persons, activities, resources, services, information, or places, including the quality and diversity of the elements which can be reach,
- Control; the degree to which the use and access to spaces and activities, and their creation, repair, modification, and management ate control (Lynch, 1982)

Jacobs and Appleyard proposed a number of goals for essential for the future of a good urban environment namely;

- Livability;
- Identity and Control;
- Access to opportunity;
- Imagination and joy;
- Authenticity and Meaning;
- Open Communities and Public Life;
- Self - Reliance; and
- Justice (Jacobs and Appleyard, 1987).

Since 1975, the PPS, Project for Public Spaces, has been developing an extensive place making approach, as well as one of the most comprehensive of the available frameworks for public open space. The four key attributes of successful places, presented in their “Place Diagram” are:

- Access and linkages, including the ways in which a place should be visually and physically connected to its surroundings;
- Comfort and image, addressing more tangible design aspects;
- Uses and activities; including the main attractors for people to come to a place, and to come back;
- Sociability, addressing the most difficult quality of place, which is creating a comfortable environment for social interaction between local user and strangers (Cho et. al, 2016).

PPS developed “The Place Diagram” below as a tool to help people in judging any place, good or bad (PPS, 2019) (Figure 1).

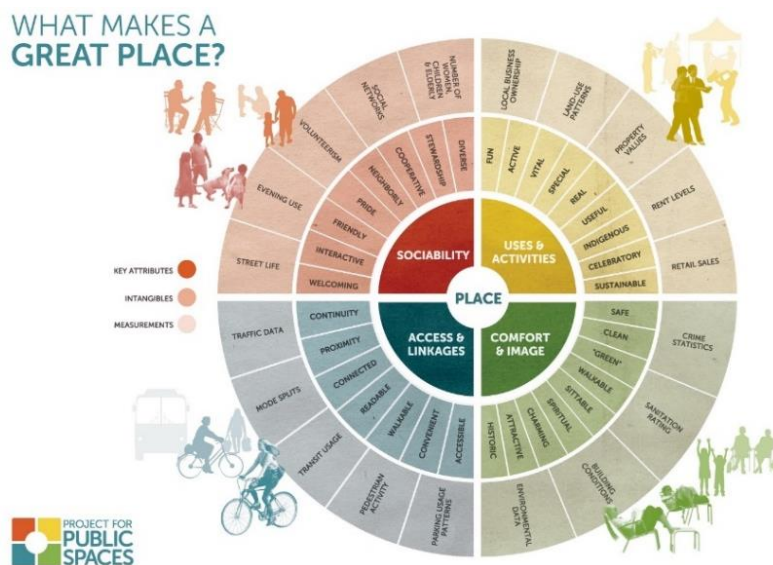


Figure 1. Place diagram (PPS, 2019).

Public spaces, which are a very important component of the urban fabric; transforming into living spaces that meet the needs of the city people, which is used every day of the week and every hour of the day, will also contribute positively to the strengthening of urban identity.

In this context, this study aims to select a node which is the scene of the interrelation between the user and the user of the space and to analyze the space on the basis of urban identity and quality elements. The study also aims to draw attention to the need to focus on public space / life, which is indispensable for healthy societies.

2. MATERIAL and METHOD

2.1. Material

The research area is one of the most well - known nodes, located at the beginning of Karşıyaka's main shopping street where you can find everything in various shops. The history of the research area dates back to the Ottoman period (Figure 2).

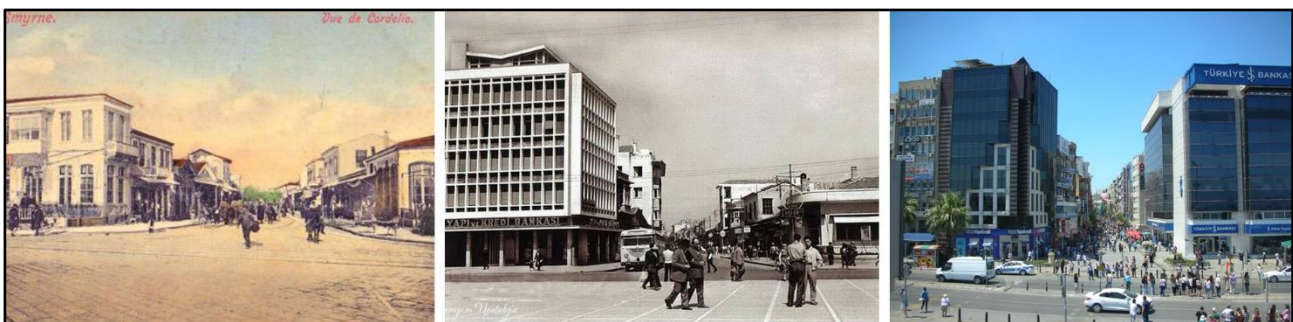


Figure 2. Historical process of the research area

Kevin Lynch classified five types of elements, which can conveniently refer to physical forms; paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks (Lynch, 1959). The research area corresponds to the node part of these five elements.

In this context, Lynch identified nodes as strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is travelling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another. Or the nodes may be simply concentrations, which gain their importance from being the condensation of some use or physical character, such as a street-corner hangout or an enclosed square. Some of these concentration nodes are the focus and epitome of a district, over which their influence radiates and of which they stand as a symbol. They may be called cores. Many nodes, of course, partake of the nature of both junctions and concentrations. The concept of node is related to

the concept of path, since junctions are typically the convergence of paths, events on the journey. It is similarly related to the concept of district, since cores are typically the intensive foci of districts, their polarizing center. In any event, some nodal points are to be found in almost every image, and in certain cases they may be the dominant feature (Lynch, 1959).

The research area has the characteristics of the above-mentioned nodes. It is easily accessible (within walking distance to living areas or with convenient public transport) and includes functional diversity that can attract users from different segments and age groups.

The area is a transit-passing route, a meeting point and the focus of activity in everyday life. In order to ensure continuous use and vitality in the vicinity of the area, there are public functions such as shops etc., which can strengthen the relationship with the outdoor space, on the front faces of the buildings that surround / define the area. They also provide a strong sense of space and usefulness for outdoor and indoor users, while giving the public space a rich structure.

2.2. Method

The method of the study is composed of four main phases as the definition of the subject, data collection, findings and discussion, and conclusion.

1st Phase - This phase is composed of a **literature review** (previous studies related to urban, public and public open space concepts and the research area) and **pre - observations** of the study area to understand how the space is used.

2nd Phase - **Data collection:** Evaluation approach were determined with regards to the results of pre - observation and literature study. By considering this approach, the visual analysis research method was used in the study. At first, the research area was examined in terms of physical characteristics (location, environmental usage, accessibility, transport alternatives, design features etc.). After then, the research area was evaluated as social aspect (user information, social interaction, environment - behavior relationship, user behavior, activity types) and the last sensorial (sensations in the perception process) aspects.

3rd Phase - Findings and **discussion:** Findings from literature sources, and observations were analyzed, the research area, and their immediate surroundings which were handled in an integrated manner evaluated in terms of 3 aspects.

4th Phase - **Conclusion:** Some suggestions were offered by considering the findings from the materials evaluated in the study. In addition, results were discussed for relationship user and space relationship and some proposals were offered for planners, designers, nongovernmental organizations and local administration in order to increase environment quality.

3. FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

3.1. Physical Status of the Node Area

The study area was examined in terms of physical characteristics and the data listed below were obtained.

- The area is a very active node and is located at the intersection of the linear shopping street on the northwest-southeast axis and the Karşıyaka Ferry Port which provides sea transportation to the region. Also, the main motorway passes between this node and the ferry pier on its south and so the region is under the pressure of heavy vehicle traffic (Figure 3).
- The shopping street on the northwest of the node is one of the most active public spaces in the region. Also at the end of this axis, on the northwest, this street is connected to Karşıyaka Metro Station and the minibus departure center. Therefore, the street is not only used for shopping purposes, but it also mediates the access of the residents, located in the northwest of Izmir province, to the south or central districts of Izmir by sea.
- Also, residents of this district can be provided access to Karşıyaka District Governorate, Courthouse, Tax Office and Municipal Buildings through the mentioned node and the shopping

street. All of these possibilities make the node a part of the heavily used pedestrian traffic and daily life.

- Another factor that makes the node an active urban space is a fact that there are bus and tram stops as well as the central bus stop in the immediate vicinity that make the public transportation to the area easily possible. Besides, the private car park in the vicinity of the node facilitates access to the area by private vehicle and the taxi stops located in the region are also elements supporting transportation.
- The recreational shoreline along the coast of Karşıyaka district supports pedestrian and bicycle access to the node through the walking and cycling routes along it.
- The node area is under the dominant influence of the high construction that suppresses the human scale in terms of the building space / open space relationship, and the construction in the space is in the surrounding form. In addition to the irregular construction in terms of building heights and façade structures, the presence of many different types of signboards on the building facades causes visual confusion. Besides, this construction which limits the space, reinforces the users' orientation to the shopping bazaar with the concave boundary line.
- The node where different uses take place has a formal and dynamic structure and also contributes positively to the urban image with the plastic elements it contains.
- While the sitting, lighting and pavement elements in the node area are of good quality, the garbage cans are not present in the area for public safety reasons and at the same time there are no shading elements.



Figure 3. Research area and its environs

3.2. Social Status of the Node Area

The study area was examined in terms of social characteristics and the data listed below were obtained (Table 1). There are many different types of usage at the node, these activities are active at different times of the day and also the user densities change depending on the day time (Figure 4).

Table 1. The data on social characteristics of the research area

User Information		Social Interaction	
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female and male users Distributed evenly Homogeneously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solitary User Two People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Groups Big Groups
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All age groups 		
Environment-Behaviour Relationship		User Behaviour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User behaviour is compatible with environment Part of daily life 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Focused Observing User 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbally User Active User
Activity Types			
Necessary	Optional	Social	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to work Going to school Using public services (bank etc.) Waiting for a person Waiting for a bus, taxi, tram Shopping (food etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seating / Resting / Relaxing Observing Eating and drinking Reading Photographing Listening to music (alone) Passing Shopping for recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating and drinking for socializing Chatting Performing Photographing Listening to music as a group Working for the benefit of charities (Unicef, Lösev etc.) 	

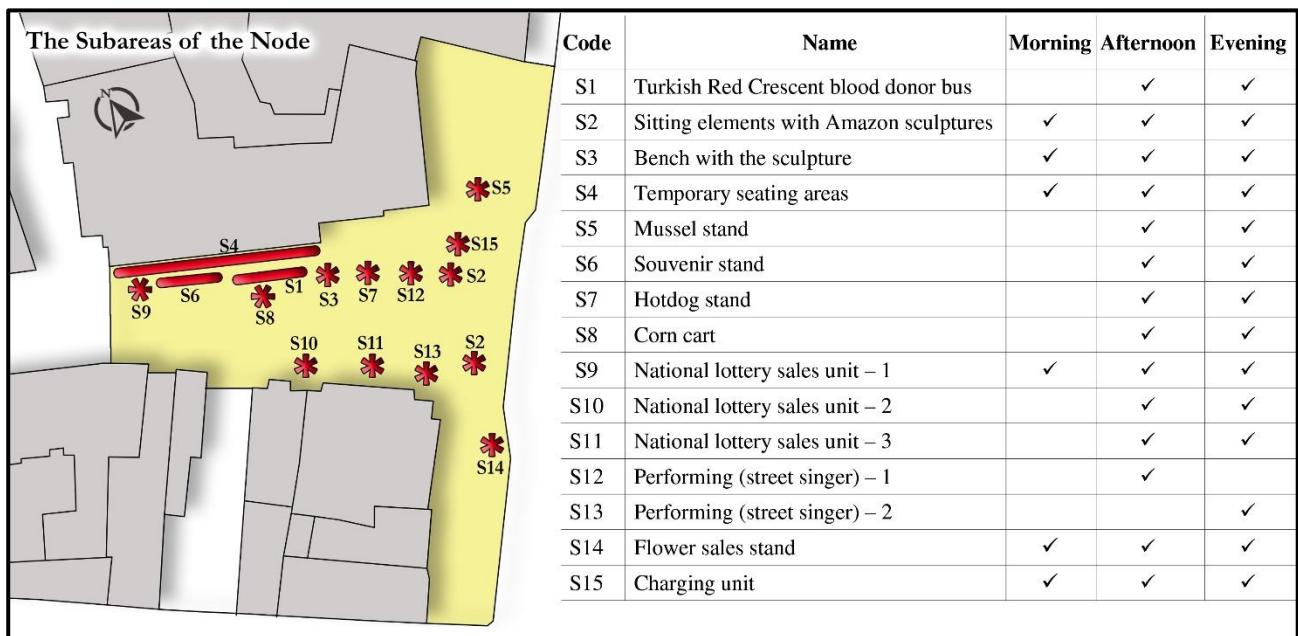


Figure 4. The subareas in the research area

▪ In the area, a pedestrian axis is formed which is dominant in different directions in the morning and evening hours. According to this, in the morning a pedestrian axis of the users going to workplaces in different districts is formed from the northwest and in the evening from the southeast (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Morning, afternoon and evening view of the node

▪ The node is also used for short - term rest, waiting and meeting. For this purpose, there are seating elements at the node. Although the elements are positive in terms of quality, they are not sufficient for the potential of the place in terms of quantity. Besides, it does not contain living or non-living overhead cover for sunny and rainy conditions which limits its usage and prevents its use on sunny summer days and rainy winter days. In case of adverse weather conditions, different sub-spaces are formed to wait in the space and building recesses are used which protect from sun and rain (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Sitting opportunities at the node

▪ Besides the semi-stationary spaces used for seating purposes, there are 3 national lottery sales units, 3 portable fast food kiosks, 1 souvenir sales stand, 1 flower sales stand and 1 charging unit which can be displaced according to climate and solar conditions. While these units have limited user potential in the early and sunny hours of the day, they are actively used in the afternoon and evening hours (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Some subspaces at the node

▪ At the node, there are plastic elements that positively contribute to the urban identity and user imagery. These elements include the statue of Mustafa BAYKARA, a famous supporter of Karşıyaka Sports Club, and statues of Amazonian women who symbolize the power and freedom of the women who founded Karşıyaka. These sculptures, which are the focus of attention, also support the socialization of the users who can take photographs and sit around them (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Plastic elements at the node

▪ Another use that increases the user potential at the node is the parked Turkish Red Crescent blood donor bus. The presence of this bus makes the node a main focus for donating blood with social responsibility awareness, apart from being an area used for crossing (Figure 9). In addition, there are also people working on behalf of charities such as Unicef and Lösev in the node area.



Figure 9. Turkish Red Crescent blood donor bus at the node

▪ Another usage type in the node area are the semi-stationary spaces formed by the street singers and the audience around them listening and watching their performances. With the formation of these sub-spaces, the area is used as a focus for groups and its impact on social life increases (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Performing artists and the semi-stationary spaces formed around them

3.3. Sensorial Status of the Node Area

The study area was examined in terms of sensorial characteristics and points were given for the properties between 1 (the least) and 5 (the most). The data obtained by the observations are listed below (Table 2).

▪ The node is an urban space with intense user potential due to its location and its wide range of usage types. These feature makes it perceived as hearty, attractive, well-kept, safe, active, relaxing and variable. The well-kept perceived space also creates a feeling of being physically and psychologically safe. It is also a positive situation that the node, perceived as active and variable, and at the same time is also perceived as relaxing.

Table 2. Sensorial evaluation of the research area

Closely spaced	3	Roomy	Unkempt	4	Well - kept
Annoying	4	Hearty	Unsafe	5	Safe
Boring	4	Attractive	Passive	5	Active
Noisy	3	Quiet	Untraditional	3	Traditional
Irregular	3	Regular	Distributive	4	Relaxing
Disproportionate	3	Proportionate	Monotonous	5	Variable

4. CONCLUSION

The effects of urban space activities on the social structure and the driving force on this structure should never be ignored. Urban gaps and open public spaces, as well as the structures that make up the city, should be considered as elements that directly affect all segments of the society and that must be well designed and analyzed correctly. When designing a public space, the potential of spatial formations to prepare the ground for various urban space activities should be emphasized. In this context, the most fundamental point to be adopted is to be aware of the fact that social structure, urban space activities and spatial quality indicators in open public spaces are the elements that constantly feed on each other (Uzgören and Erdönmez, 2017).

The starting point of this study is the analysis of the current situation of the node area that is the

entrance of Karşıyaka Shopping Street and its vicinity as an urban outdoor space. “Physical”, “Social” and “Sensorial” characteristics of the research area were evaluated. According to this:

- It has been determined that access and transportation facilities are sufficient.
- In terms of design principles, it has been found that it has a positive structure that invites the users in it, but on the other hand, because of the high buildings around it, there is perceptual pressure on the users.
- It was concluded that although the seating, lighting and pavement elements had positive properties, the top cover facilities were insufficient. In this context, organic (trees, shrubs etc.) or inorganic (pergola, membrane etc.) elements that facilitate the use in rain and sun conditions and support the perception of the space on a human scale should be placed at the node area.
- It is determined that although there is an intense pedestrian circulation from the node area, to many different functions in different locations, there is no information system that organizes this circulation. It is concluded that this system is very important for a node. In this context, it is necessary to include information-communication boards and directive signs in the relevant locations of the node area.
- It was determined that there was no plant design in the area. To support the general design approach and to define the sub-activity spaces more clearly, plant design should be included in the node area.
- In terms of the social properties of the node, it is concluded that it offers many different socialization opportunities to the users. It has been determined that the donation opportunities and various performances that are included in the scope of social responsibility are especially positive at the node. It has been concluded that the nodes, which can reach many users both visually and physically, are very important urban spaces in terms of increasing social awareness. These activities must continue in the field of research by increasing. When designing urban outdoor spaces, it should not be forgotten that space should allow social activities to reinforce social cohesion as well as respond to expectations of individual users or small groups.
- It has been concluded that the node has a positive and important place in user imagery in terms of sensory properties. In general, it should be noted that physical identity factors and spatial quality indicators affect the sensory properties of space as a whole.

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