

FACTORS AFFECTING URBAN QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN SPACES

Kentsel Mekanlarda Kentsel Yaşam Kalitesini Etkileyen Etmenler

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ABSTRACT

The population growth resulting from urbanization requires that a balanced distribution of the social and technical infrastructure be a priority in urban planning. In this specific component of urban planning, the urban structure should be designed on the basis of various data, including the economic, construction and development features of the urban area, as well as the spatial dimensions of the social and cultural living spaces. It is important that the data related to these areas include quality of life measures of the inhabitants of the city and its spaces, and that the data be analyzed according to the security of the spaces and their functions in the social infrastructure. In designing the social and technical infrastructure, urban lifestyle, well-balanced spaces, use of space, deficiencies in social infrastructure and security issues must be taken into consideration. In this research, the key features of urbanization, namely, the social and technical infrastructures, of the urban area of Amasya, were examined to ascertain the livable standards of the spaces of the city. In preparing the development plan of a city, not only the physical plan, but also the role of the urban spaces in the social and cultural living area should be considered. In other words, urban planning should not only involve a city's physical design but also its spatiality, social life, and social and technical infrastructure, as the use of a city's physical space that has been created based on economic and technical requirements needs to be analyzed in terms of spatiality. This requisite feature of urban planning should be centered on the human right to life and therefore understood as the means to create a balance between the population, the residential area, and the services required by the population. This study aims to show that in the urban areas formed out of urbanization processes, spaces must be created so as not to be elements conducive to breeding criminals but rather, to serve to facilitate the well-being of its inhabitants. To accomplish this task, this study evaluated the spatial areas in the city of Amasya in terms of quality of life and life security and proposes planning suggestions from the results obtained.

Key Words: Social infrastructure, quality of life, urbanization, urban space, social life

ÖZET

Kentleşme olgusu, bir yerleşmenin nüfusunun artması ve artan nüfusa dayalı yapılan planlamada, sosyal ve teknik alt yapının dengeli olarak dağılımını gerektirir. Kısaca ifade edilen kent yapısındaki bu planlama gerekliliği sadece kentsel alanın ekonomik, yapılaşma ve gelişmeler olarak değil, mekansal olarak sosyal ve kültürel yaşam alanı bağlamında verilere dayalı oluşturulması gerekir. Bu yönüyle sosyal altyapı alanındaki mekan güvenliği ve kullanımında, kentte ve kentin mekanlarında yaşayan toplumun yaşam kalitesini içeren verilere ve bunlara dayalı analizlerde ihtiyaç vardır. Planlı herhangi bir kent sosyal ve teknik altyapıyı dikkate alırsa kentsel yaşamı, dengeli oluşturulmuş mekanları ve mekan kullanımındaki planlama kararlarını sosyal altyapı ve güvenlik verilerindeki eksikliklerde incelemelidir. Bu araştırmada Amasya kentsel alanının kentleşme gereği olması gereken sosyal ve teknik alt yapısı incelenmiştir ve bu analize göre kentin mekânlarının yaşanabilir standartları ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Kısacası bir kentin imar planının hazırlanmasında, sadece fiziki plan değil, oluşacak olan kent mekanlarının sosyal ve kültürel yaşam alanındaki rolüde düşünülmelidir. Bu yönüyle konu ele alınarak Amasya kentsel alanının, kentleşme gereği olması gereken sosyal ve teknik alt yapısı incelenmiş olup bu analize göre kentin mekânlarının yaşanabilir standartları ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır. Dolayısıyla bir kentin planlanmasının sadece fiziki plan olarak değil, mekan, sosyal yaşam, sosyal ve teknik alt yapı yönünden de planlanması

gerektiği üzerinde durulması gereği saptanmıştır. Çünkü bir kentin ekonomik, teknik, vb. gerekliliklere dayalı oluşturulan fiziki alan kullanımını mekansal alan kullanımı boyutunda da gerekli verilere dayalı analiz edip plan kararına yansıtılması gerekir. Bu gereklilik insanın yaşam hakkı gereği yapılması gerekirken sadece nüfus, yerleşim alanı ve nüfusun gereksini olan hizmetlerin dengeli olarak planlanması olarak yapılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak kentleşme sürecinde oluşmuş bir kentsel alanda mekânların suçlu yaratan öğeler değil, yaşanabilir olmasını sağlayan gereklilikler olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmaya çalışılacaktır. Bu araştırma ile, bir kente ki mekansal alanların yaşam kalitesi ve yaşam güvenliği yönüyle değerlendirme yapıp olması gereken yapılacaktır ve planlama önerileri ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal altyapı, yaşam kalitesi, kentleşme, kentsel mekan, sosyal yaşam

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of urban planning is to develop a proper balance between the population and the physical area of an urban settlement. Unlike rural areas, the formation of cities, or urbanization, involves planning and developing sociological, cultural and economic living spaces. Before defining the concept of city, it is important to first explain what we mean by rural areas. In rural life, as opposed to urban life, the majority of the population is generally engaged in agriculture and livestock work and families are large, with extended family members all living together. Cities, on the other hand, are far removed from the life of agriculture and livestock. To use an analogy describing this dynamic, the residence is to the individual, as the city is to the society. In the field of sociology, the city is discussed in terms of human relations, meaning that it viewed on the basis of society, not on the basis of isolated individuals (Ergen, 1981). In this context, rural areas that have transformed over time into urban areas, or into urban spaces created within urban areas, have had an impact on the quality of life within cities.

The definition of 'city' or 'urban area' varies according to the distinctive culture of each place. Until recently, in order for an area to be considered a municipality, it had to have a population of at least 2000 according to the Municipal Law No. 1580, yet the new Municipality Law No. 5393 changed this, requiring that for an area to have municipality status, it must have a population of at least 5000. Table 1 presents the areas considered to be urban in Turkey based on population group size, the corresponding number of municipalities attached to each population group, and their proportion to total municipality populations (Anonymous, 2007).

Table 1: Description of urbanization based on population

| Population group | The ratio of population group to municipalities (%) | The ratio of population group to the total municipal population (%) |
|------------------|---|---|
| 0-2000 | 11 | 1.1 |
| 2001-5000 | 51.3 | 9.7 |
| 5001-10,000 | 17.4 | 7 |
| 10,001-20,000 | 8.5 | 7 |
| 20,001-50,000 | 5.7 | 10.8 |
| 50,001-100,000 | 2.6 | 10.9 |
| 100,001-250,000 | 1.9 | 18 |
| 250,001-500,000 | 1.2 | 23.3 |
| Above 500,000 | 0.4 | 12.2 |

Source: Anonymous, 2007

In cities where the forces of urbanization emerged according to the population criteria, population has been the most important factor driving sustainability, which suggests that the development of urban facilities should be considered immediately when populations of cities in Turkey reach 5000. This in fact has been seen in situations where there has been a sudden transformation from rural to urban areas, that is, the urban development of these areas has largely involved the creation of urban spaces, infrastructure services and urban facilities. If urbanization and urban development are to proceed in a planned manner, where the relationship between the population and the settlement of the population in the urban area is key focus, then the planning requires that the social and technical infrastructure be developed in accordance with urban standards. When assuming the average size of families living in cities in Turkey to be four members, rural areas (villages) with 1250 residences will start to form urban spaces.

This situation, however, can lead to the unplanned development of cities in Turkey and thereby raise questions about the health and safety of urban spaces that have been created under such conditions. To ensure healthy and safe urban spaces in this development phenomenon, the quality of the spaces in cities

must be improved and livable spaces must be created. The health and security problems in urban spaces that are caused by unplanned urbanization and uncontrolled population growth in cities can be eliminated by increasing social and technical services.

2. NEGATIVE INTERACTION AND EMERGING PROBLEMS IN THE URBANIZATION PROCESS

The urbanization phenomenon is governed by physical, environmental, social, economic, political and urban life components. In the urbanization process, the streets, squares, and green areas constituting urban spaces should be created in a balanced way in terms of social and technical infrastructure. Since the 1950's there has been a steady rise in urbanization and migration in Turkey, a trend that has continued to date (Ersoy, 1985). There is a direct correspondence between low quality of life in cities in Turkey and technical and social infrastructure inadequacy. If population growth cannot be managed in a planned manner during the urbanization process, negative situations, the magnitude of which will be determined by population density, will arise in urban spaces. While population growth is one of the most important indicators of urbanization, a healthy urban infrastructure is essential for sustainable, well-planned urbanization.

Assuming population growth to be most important indicator of urbanization, both urban infrastructure and healthy urbanization are nonetheless the main factors affecting this phenomenon. As mentioned above, urbanization in Turkey picked up pace in the 1950s, but it developed in an uncontrolled manner as a result of increased migration and natural population growth. Today, this uncontrolled development can be seen in the unplanned urbanization and unplanned building density. The problems related to urbanization were discussed under the following two main headings in the meetings held between November 30 and December 3, 2007 by the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement to create policies regarding urbanization and healthy urbanization opportunities (Anonymous, 2007):

- ✓ Technical areas (Space, physical infrastructure, ecology and planning techniques)
- ✓ Economic, social, institutional areas

When examining the subject within the framework of the problems discussed above, it is clear that the spaces constituting the technical and social infrastructure and its users have been negatively affected by unplanned urbanization, and this has adversely affected the quality of urban life. This unplanned urbanization creates functionally dilapidated areas within urban centers, weakening security and driving up crime rates in these areas. The following are the main consequences of unplanned urbanization and unplanned urban development:

- ✓ Unemployment
- ✓ Deterioration of family
- ✓ Disintegration, slums and cultural conflict

These issues affecting the quality of urban space should be discussed and properly evaluated as part of urban planning, as they are the most important factors affecting the urban quality of life. When there is an imbalance in the community life that results from urban development, this creates abandoned areas due to changes in living standards. These areas of abandonment and unuse, which are defined as "unsecure" urban spaces, tend to have high crime rates, as they become the living areas for delinquents (AtaçTagm, 2007).

3. HEALTHY AND SAFE URBAN SPACES

In order to ensure economic prosperity, social justice, environmental protection and development, objectives that complement and strengthen each other are necessary (Anonymous, 1999). The European Union set forth the following main objectives for cities to achieve sustainable, balanced urban development (Anonymous, 1999):

- ✓ Increase economic well-being and employment in urban areas,
- ✓ Promote equality, social participation and urban revitalization in urban areas,
- ✓ Protect and improve the urban environment in terms of local and global sustainability,
- ✓ Contribute to city management and local capacity growth.

If urbanization is well planned and sustainable through controlled development, the quality of life can be increased within the framework of the planned development of social and technical infrastructure in urban areas. It is possible to create healthy, high quality of life urban spaces by incorporating social and technical infrastructure services into urban development approaches designed according to the objectives highlighted above. In 2015, the European Union set 17 goals for sustainable development in Brussels. The most important of these goals in terms of urbanization are as follows (Anonymous, 2015):

- ✓ Alleviate all forms of poverty,
- ✓ Providing a healthy life and support healthy living for all age groups,
- ✓ Build durable infrastructures, support comprehensive and sustainable industrial development, promote innovations,
- ✓ Support the construction of durable, safe and sustainable cities and settlements,
- ✓ Provide sustainable production and consumption models.

In short, sustainable urban development requires that urban development planning take into consideration the ecological, social and economic factors that affect the development of urban spaces. The planning and designing of urban spaces that are healthy and livable spaces for the population residing in them can be achieved by using planned, sustainable approaches. In effect, these approaches will serve to minimize the urbanization problems associated with urban spaces. Those who plan and design cities are responsible for creating not only places where economic needs are met, but also places where livability and sustainability are prioritized as key components of urban quality of life (Tağmat, 2006).

In addition to the above requirements necessary for creating healthy and safe urban spaces, urban spaces should be functionally adapted to the current conditions, as this encourages the city inhabitants to use the area in accordance with their needs. Furthermore, in reviving urban spaces, it is necessary to design illuminate them and make them usable. In other words, healthy spaces can be created by ensuring that the social and technical infrastructure is capable of sufficiently responding to the needs of the population and is suitable to the current conditions. In securing the functionality of the spaces and adapting them to the current conditions, safe spaces emerge. In this context, it is necessary to illuminate the urban spaces well, ensure the integration of the user with the space through pedestrianization, and establish the integration of interior and exterior spaces with urban furnishings.

4. EFFECT OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN CITIES

When urbanization is well planned, the city center will reflect the adequacy of the infrastructure, and the quality of life can be improved with social services. Unplanned urbanization, however, can generate such dramatic changes in the social lives of the individuals living in the city that it results in them experiencing psychological disturbances and an increase in crime rates. Ayhan (2007), in his study classified the factors responsible for causing crime under four main headings;

- ✓ Social and cultural factors
- ✓ Economic factors
- ✓ Demographic factors
- ✓ Spatial factors

In urban management, these factors play an important role in increasing the quality of urban life. As space affects the development of and changes in the environment of the individual, planned and sustainable approaches should be taken into account as ways to increase the quality of urban life when designing urban spaces. In sociological theories, crime is associated with the environment and is viewed as a social problem that occurs with changes in the environment (Aksoy, 2007). When social infrastructure services and the use of space are planned and designed, the quality of life in cities increases, resulting in peaceful urban structures with reduced crime rates.

The levels of satisfaction associated with lifestyle and all the aspects of a city, such as safety, health, education, culture, family, individual development, physical environment, working conditions, housing areas, and social infrastructure, are the most important determinants of quality of life (Üçer, 2009). Therefore, to increase the satisfaction of the urban population, in addition to prioritizing physical planning,



the social expectations of those living in the city should also be considered as important factors for improving the quality of life. This point is highlighted in the European Declaration of Urban Rights, which states that the vital rights of the individual are of primary importance. In this context, the quality of urban life is important for those living in the city in terms of protecting and developing the image of the city and of creating a livable city perception, as informed by various factors, including the safety, peace, comfort and spaces of the city (İçişleri Bakanlığı Mahalli İdareler Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996). The physical plans of cities are therefore tools that function to increase the quality of life and create a safe and healthy environment for the individuals living in the planned urban spaces.

5. QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE URBAN SPACES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS AREA OF AMASYA

The central business area of Amasya is a square, with city spaces surrounding it. In the urbanization process of Amasya, this area has not been transformed into fully functional areas and has therefore deteriorated over time. There is a wide range of people who traffic through the Amasya city center at different parts of the day, and some do not consider every area of the center to be safe. When city centers are well-planned and properly integrated with infrastructure and social services, there are generally no problems experienced and quality of life is high. This issue has been addressed by comparing the Kızılay-Sakarya Street in Ankara with the Amasya city center square. In this study, we closely examined not only the size of the city center but also its safety, the adequacy of its illumination and social and technical infrastructure, and how these reflected on the quality of life in terms of socio-cultural services.

While the exact establishment date of Amasya is not included in historical records, studies have shown that it was a settlement area around 4000 BC. Based on known important historical findings, the city of Amasya hosted the Hittite, Assyrian, Phrygian, Cimmerian, Scythian, Lydian, Persian, Helen, Pontus, Roman, Byzantine, Danishmend, Seljuk, Ilkhanid and Ottoman civilizations (Yüksel & Dönmez, 2010). Some Ottoman princes grew up in Amasya and many of them went on to rule Anatolia as Ottoman Sultans from this region. This is why Mustafa Kemal Atatürk chose to declare the establishment of the Republic with the Amasya Circular issued from Amasya. From the 1950s to the 1980s, all aspects of the urban structure of Amasya were safe and healthy, and the urbanization phenomenon in Turkey during this period maintained a high quality of urban life. However, after the 1980s, rapid and unplanned urbanization has caused problems in the urban space of Amasya and reduced the quality of life in the city, as can be seen in the changed texture of the Amasya Historical city center shown in Figure-1 below.

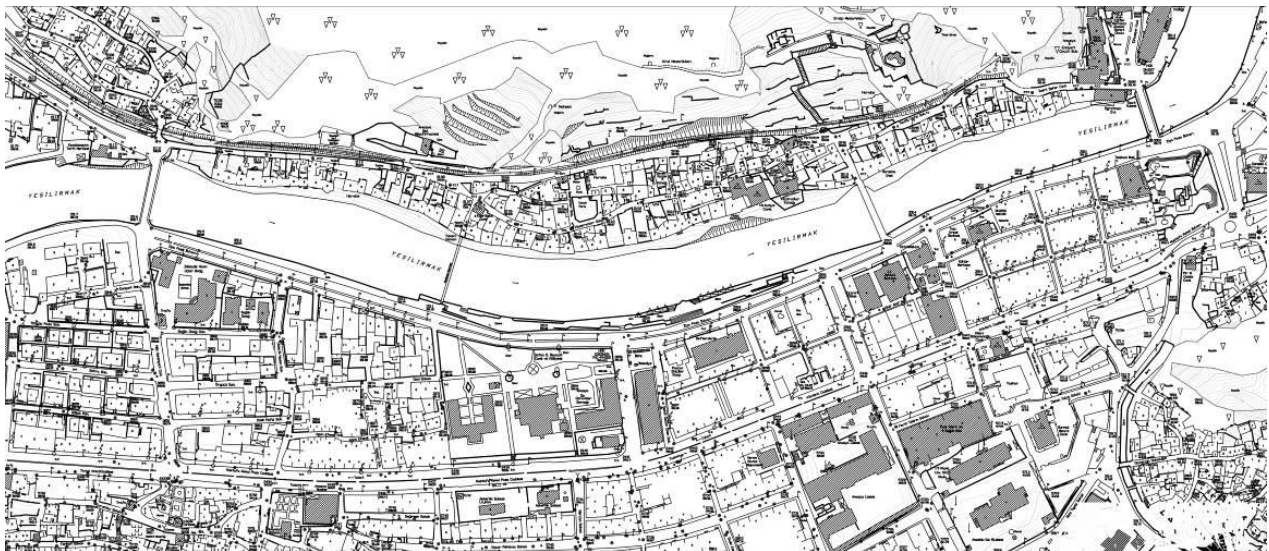


Figure-1: Amasya City Center
Source: The Present Map of Amasya City

In examining the current conditions of Amasya, it can be clearly seen that the historical texture has been destroyed. The photographs of Amasya High School and the surrounding residential areas, located north of the Yeşilirmak River, show how narrow streets and high-rise buildings have deteriorated the historical texture (Figures-2,3).



Figure-2 (14.04.2011)

Surroundings of Amasya High School



Figure-3 (14.04.2011)

Surroundings of Amasya High School

According to the research carried out in the city center of Amasya, old photographs and existing structures show that the city has a unique historical structure, texture and construction. It is possible to see from the structure and texture of the city and from its cultural life that the city, where Ottoman Princes had lived and were raised, was one of the most prestigious cities of the Ottoman Empire and had a high quality of life. While the urban spaces were originally designed in a spacious and livable style, today, the opposite can be seen.

6. COMPARISON OF ANKARA KIZILAY-SAKARYA STREET AND AMASYA CITY CENTER IN TERMS OF SAFETY AND USABILITY

According to the results of a questionnaire administered to users of the Kızılay-Sakarya Street in Ankara and users of the Amasya Central Business Area, the users of the latter found the city center to be a problematic area from 08:00 PM until 08:00 AM. Although the results of the questionnaire were similar in terms of perceptions of safety, the city structure of Amasya was reported to be more controllable than the city structure of Ankara due to the historical background of Amasya, and the crimes rates were lower in Amasya, though at night, users preferred not be present on the street. Moreover, while the users had similar perceptions of safety about their respective cities, the sense of insecurity was higher for users of the Amasya Central Business Area due to reservations about their safety there at night. The rate at which users felt less safe in Amasya was double that of the users in Ankara. According to the data derived from the questionnaires, it is clear that the quality of urban life in Amasya is lower (Tables 2-3).

Table-2: When is the main street in the city problematic?

| | Not problematic | From 06:00 AM to 08:00 AM | From 8:00 AM to 02:00 PM | From 02:00 PM to 08:00 PM | After 08:00 PM to 12:00 AM | Midnight | Do not know |
|--------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Amasya | 16.0% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 2.0% | 62.0% | 12.0% | 6.0% |
| Ankara | 5.71% | 10.00% | 47.14% | 14.29 % | 12.86% | 10.00% | 0.0% |

Table-3: Is the central business street a safe area?

| City | Parameters | | |
|--------|------------|----------|---------|
| | Yes | Slightly | No |
| Amasya | 42.86 % | 22.86 % | 34.29 % |
| Ankara | 46% | 50% | 4% |

When comparing Ankara and Amasya in terms of social infrastructure and social services, excluding the issues of safety discussed above, the inadequacy of the service functions (entertainment, recreational uses, and variety in service delivery) in the city center of Amasya make the users feel that the area is less safe. The levels of satisfaction with these service functions can be determined from the comparison of the two cities (Table 4).

Table-4: Does the main street have sufficient pedestrian and recreational uses?

| | Sufficient | Partially sufficient | Insufficient |
|--------|------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Ankara | 28% | 32% | 40% |
| Amasya | 4.23 % | 14.08% | 81.69 % |

As seen in Table 4, the city of Amasya city has insufficient facilities for entertainment and recreational uses. Overall, the present study found that the city center of Amasya is not safe at night and lacks pedestrian activities, and that the functional transformations in the building use of the city center are not suitable for today's needs.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of this study, it can be said that in the Amasya city center business area, the quality of life is low and the social infrastructure is insufficient, negativities that could increase the crime rate and decrease the quality of life in the city. Socially-driven, well-planned development is key to eliminating these drawbacks. Accordingly, in the Amasya city center business area of the municipality, the following measures should be taken:

- ✓ Spatial analysis of its physical plan,
- ✓ Improve social and technical infrastructure,
- ✓ Plan for social services,
- ✓ Illuminate the side streets well,
- ✓ Revitalize the center through urban transformation,
- ✓ Reduce building density.

The quality of life in Amasya can be improved through these actions. However, if these measures are not taken and the physical plan only serves to generate increased rentals, the problems experienced in the Amasya city center will considerably increase with every population increase beyond 100,000. The results of this research show that space planning should be done by setting standards for social infrastructure and equipment that are based on the planning data in the urban development plans to increase the standards of quality of life in cities in Turkey. In this context, in the planning phase of cities, the criteria for reducing the crime rates in the living spaces hosting social services should be used as data for creating safe urban spaces and managing urban population growth.

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