

Public space as a palimpsest: Revitalising Yukari neighbourhood conservation area

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Abstract. The concept of palimpsest space in architecture is used to describe spaces where past and present meet and overlap, carrying traces of the past and entities of the present at the same time. Therefore, palimpsest spaces are valuable in creating a sense of belonging by preserving the memory of society. This study examines the Yukari Neighbourhood Women's Market, where traces of the past intersect with new uses of public space. Yukari Neighbourhood used to be the commercial centre of Akcakoca until the early 1900s, and there was a weekly street market where only women could participate. Over time, the town centre lost its importance and its inhabitants, and the neighbourhood became almost abandoned. In 1996, the Yukari Neighbourhood and its surroundings were declared a conservation area. However, as the number of dilapidated buildings increased, the area attracted tourists when a local women's organisation started a street market in the same area as before, in 2013. This study examined this local revitalisation process and its outcomes through literature, city maps, zoning plans, population records, photographs and interviews. It was found that the new market is a successful attempt to revitalise the area. The market is well accepted by the public and supported by the local authority. This suggests that local communities have a vital role in regeneration, and that the reuse of public spaces can contribute to a sustainable future for conservation areas.

1 Introduction

As it is defined in Public Space Charter [1], public spaces are generally publicly owned places that are accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. We can include streets, walkways, and other publicly owned spaces in the description of public space. From this general point of view, public spaces should be designed as “*multi- functional areas for social interaction, economic exchange, and cultural expression among a wide diversity of people*” [2]. Therefore, it can foster safety and a sense of identity and belonging. Public spaces are also places where individual and collective memory exist and support that feeling of belonging to a community.

Humans are sociable creatures who frequently interact with public areas while engaging in social activities. People who use public areas that contain remnants of society's collective life

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are reminded that they share a shared history and a purpose for coexisting. Places of remembrance are those locations that retain remnants of a shared past and give the character of their surroundings. These locations are those that enable the space to be defined and become a place, as well as those that maintain a connection between individuals and the community in which they reside [3]. In accordance with the shifting requirements of society, public space is always changing, and the effects of these changes build up over time. The palimpsest space is a term used in architectural literature to describe the public area that has been layered with an accumulation of historical traces. Writings are layered in palimpsests by being placed on top of one another. The notions of collective memory and palimpsest space are connected in the context of architecture. The common values and memories of the community are kept in layers in chronological order as in human memory in memory spaces that house the collective memory of the society. Palimpsest is related to collective memory in this way. [4]. Palimpsest spaces - those with remnants of the past and the way it was used in the past - are important because they hold clues to the past and serve as hubs for the fostering of a sense of belonging by preserving the collective memory of the community. This study's focus is on the local population's participatory reapplication of the use of a public space that has a place in their spatial memory.

Participation by civil society has the potential to empower communities, and also create a better living environment. Citizens should be involved in the creation, preservation, management, and enjoyment of public spaces to ensure that individual and diverse interests are converted into cooperative practices [5]. Since it is the local residents who know their own city and very neighbourhood better.

2 Methodology

This study explores the connections between social memory and the creation of palimpsest spaces. First, as part of the research methodology, a literature review on the ideas of memory, public space, and palimpsest was done. Yukarı Neighbourhood urban conservation area in Duzce's Akçakoca district, which is a unique place that has not been studied much before, was selected as a case study. The process of collectively revitalising previous uses of public space and the effects of the new uses on the urban space at the end of this process were examined in this area. Yukarı Neighbourhood is a historic city centre that has managed to preserve its local architectural features to a great extent. During the field study, urban history, social developments, historical and current maps, photographs and documents were analysed. The effects of the new use on the public space were then examined using photographs and in-depth interview techniques as part of documentation studies. Local government officers, residents, and local NGO members who revitalised the market were interviewed. Survey research is also being done to find out how the neighbourhood has changed socially and how that has affected people's awareness of urban conservation. In this context, surveys are conducted with visitors in the area and in different neighbourhoods of the city. Thus, it is aimed to determine the effects of the revitalisation of the marketplace by local actors through a participatory process, in this urban conservation area.

3 Memory and space

Memory, which is defined in its neurological and physiological sense as the ability to store and recall the results of interactions with the environment in the brain, is also the subject of disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and sociology. In addition to its neurological meaning, the concept of memory has become a concept that is used to express situations such as collective memory creation that emerges through the interaction of groups with each other, and the fact that non-living objects keep the traces of history with the experiences they

accumulate and remind people of them. Individual perceptions are influential in the way the experiences of the individual take place in the memory and are recalled later through associations. Within the framework of the views mentioned in the individual memory approach, individual perceptions are effective in the memory of the experiences of the individual and then recalling them with associations. In order for the experiences to be recorded in the individual's memory, they must be sensed through the sense organs and have an emotional meaning for the individual [5].

By nature, human beings live in groups and interact with groups. For this reason, human emotions, thoughts, memories and therefore memory are affected by society. Research on the social aspect of memory formed by social interactions started with Halbwasch's studies in the 1920s. Halbwasch states that a common memory produced by society emerges when individual memories come together. Halbwasch's view of memory is considered collective memory [6]. Halbwasch associates collective memory with human, time and space elements by stating that a fact must be experienced in the form of a certain person, event or place for it to take place in the memory of a group [7].

Boyer also states that spaces, especially social spaces where social sharing takes place, carry traces of the culture, beliefs and past of the society and are effective in the structuring of collective memory by transferring these traces to the future [8]. In his work titled *Places of Memory*, Nora states that in order for memory to be formed and survive, the places where the common experiences of the society take place should be protected and emphasises the importance of social space [3]. From the views of Halbwasch, Boyer and Nora, it is understood that the places where social interactions take place play a role in the formation of collective memory.

In social daily life, people are constantly in contexts that define space such as home, school, work, cinema or café. Because as a prerequisite of our existence, we need to be somewhere physically. Therefore, regardless of what happens, all our experiences are realised depending on the place we are in. Since the subsequent recollection of the acquisitions acquired by human beings takes place through the data belonging to the physical space such as sound, smell, landscape, colour, and remarkable objects, memories depend on space [9].

Since the concept of remembrance is performed mostly through public spaces, in the context of social life, it bears traces of the common values and memory of the society that is its user. For this reason, public spaces that continue to be used by bearing traces of the culture, past, values and habits of the society ensure both the formation and survival of collective memory. Halbwasch explains the importance of places where habits and lifestyles of the past are preserved in terms of the continuity of memory with the example of Paris. According to Halbwasch, in order to remember the Paris of the 1860s, it will not be enough to read the stories about that period or to look for the signs that monumentalise the houses where famous people who lived in that period lived. However, experiencing the Paris of the old period, the small towns where the descriptions of people, clothes and speech patterns that we encounter in Balzac's novels continue to live, will remind us of the old Paris. In these places where traces of the past continue to exist, social memory will also continue to exist [7].

Since public spaces with memory value have a constantly changing user group from past to present, the use of public space also changes over time. Traces of the past accumulate in the memory of the space and come to the present day. The layering of the collective memory in the public space with the accumulation of traces from the past is likened in the architectural literature to the palimpsest, which occurs when the existing writing on the paper used in the past due to paper scarcity is scraped or erased and rewritten [10]. Palimpsest is defined as 'a parchment or writing material whose original form has been erased or scratched, thus making room for a second one; a manuscript in which the writing written on it erases the previous

writing'. The interesting aspect of palimpsests is that although the old writing on the parchment seems to have been erased, its ghostly traces can be preserved and read [11].

The concept of palimpsest in the architectural context is a concept used to express the multi-layered state of the place. If a scene where layering can be read in architecture is selected, one is faced with the reality of reading layer by layer, as in a palimpsest. For example, Istanbul is considered as a multi-layered city because it has hosted many different civilisations until today. Eyüce (2012) in his speech titled 'Architecture of a Multi-layered City: Istanbul', while explaining the multi-layers of Istanbul, he states that each of the many buildings belonging to different centuries and different civilisations is a layer expressing its own period; however, when they come together, they can all be experienced together. Eyüce (2012) establishes a relationship between this layered structure and spatial memory of Istanbul and the layered structure of palimpsests.

Therefore, spatial experiences formed by new uses from past lived experiences, re-using or attempts to reconstruct the past cause the space to gain a palimpsest-like quality. Preserving the palimpsest structure in cities is important in terms of expressing the past and development of the society and in terms of planning a healthy future.

4 The relationship between Yukari neighbourhood women's market and palimpsest space

Akçakoca is the largest and only seaside district of Düzce province. Although the date of the first settlement in Akçakoca is not known for certain, it is thought that the Thracians and Phrygians first came to the region in 1200 BC in line with the information obtained from the artefacts found in the excavations in the region. The region then came under the rule of the Roman Empire. Akçakoca became an important port and trade centre called Diapolis during this period. Although Diapolis fell into the hands of the Genoese for a while in the 13th century, the Byzantines regained control of the region in 1261. During the Turkish raids to Anatolia, in 1319, the region was annexed to the Ottoman Empire and became known as Akçaşehir. During the Republican period, in 1934, the name of the district was changed to Akçakoca in honour of Akçakoca Bey, the conqueror of the region.

The first settlement centre in Akçakoca during the Ottoman period consisted of the neighbourhoods of Aşağı, Yukari, Hacı Yusuf and Kapkırılı. The settlement formed by these four neighbourhoods was known as Keramet Divan. Sources indicate that the establishment of Kapkırılı and Yukari Neighbourhoods dates back to an earlier date [12]. This oldest settlement centre of Akçakoca is located in the west of the district, high above the sea and inland. The need to get away from the intense mosquitoes at the seaside and the fact that the region was milder, airy and wooded were effective in the choice of location. Yukari Neighbourhood and its surroundings maintained its central character until the end of the 19th century. In the tax records kept during this period, it is understood that the highest rates were paid by the residents of Yukari Neighbourhood [12].

According to 19th-century sources, the Yukari Neighbourhood has a large number of shops catering to various business lines. In the past, the Yukari Neighbourhood had a high number of people with professions, which was reflected in the architectural texture of the neighbourhood. Some of the houses in the neighbourhood have shops on the ground floor. Yukari Neighbourhood was a prominent settlement in terms of professions and its residents in the past, so there was also a women's market from the Ottoman period to the mid-1950s [13]. There were only women selling their products in the Women's Market and no men were allowed to shop in the market, it is related to the locals. In the same way, as in most of the Anatolian cities in the Ottoman period, the Women's Market was close to the main mosque square [14].

The Yukari Neighbourhood was the centre of Akçakoca for a long time and the Women's Market continued its existence. However, at the end of the 19th century, intense migration from the East due to the Ottoman-Russian War led to the establishment of new settlements in the city. With the arrival of immigrants to the region, Osmaniye Quarter was established in an area close to the coast, away from the Yukari Neighbourhood region, and Çuhalı market, which developed rapidly with the effect of the harbour, became the new centre of Akçakoca [15]. In 1925, more than sixty houses were burnt down in a big fire in the Yukari Neighbourhood. The buildings were reconstructed in the following years with a new plan, preserving the traditional construction system and architectural features. They were, however, separated from one another, and the new road layout was designed in the form of a grid system to reduce the risk of a fire. [16]. The houses in and around Akçakoca Yukari Neighbourhood are wooden framed and brick-filled buildings on stone foundations. The 19th-century buildings that have survived to the present day have wooden cladding, while those built after the fire in the 20th century were left plastered or uncoated. The plan types conform to the typology of a typical Turkish house with a central room, called 'sofa'. The presence of one or two shops on the ground floor of the buildings, which are generally located on the street, is another feature of the Yukari Neighbourhood. In the neighbourhood, which was once a commercial centre, there are usually shops on the ground floors and a small barn open to the garden for the family's needs, and it is assumed that large families live on the upper floors.

Sea tourism started to take off in Akçakoca in the 1960s, and the coastal regions were transformed into the city's new centre of population density. During this time, the Yukari Neighbourhood's population significantly declined, and its distinctive commercial centre was lost [17]. The Yukari Neighbourhood's Women's Market was also affected by this process and closed down in the mid-1950s. Due to the changing socio-economic conditions and the attractiveness of the new city centre, the shops in the neighbourhood were closed, many of the buildings became redundant and the streets lost their commercial centre characteristic.

As a result of the shift of the city centre to another area, the physical texture of the neighbourhood remained untouched and did not undergo a major change. Due to these characteristics, the buildings in and around the Yukari Neighbourhood were listed in 1995 and the settlement has been declared an Urban Conservation Area in 1996, taking into account the original texture and historical features of the historical city centre. In the 2000s, collapse and damage started to occur in some buildings due to lack of maintenance. Before the restoration works, in 2013, a project was initiated by women entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood to re-establish the old marketplace on weekends. Their main purpose was to promote the historical neighbourhood and create a local economy by making use of local women's labour. In April 2015, the Yukari Neighbourhood Historic Market was launched with the participation of local people. The transformation that started with the market continued with the restoration of two buildings donated to the local government. The two demolished buildings were reconstructed by the Union of Provinces as accommodation facilities under the name Vilayetler Evi Bey Konakları. In 2018, the building, which was transferred to Düzce University and restored, was planned as a research centre. Other buildings in the neighbourhood continue to be used as residences, and the shops on the ground floor of some buildings were opened during the bazaar on weekends and started to be used for cafes and souvenir sales. Today, local people sell local products, handicrafts and the food they prepare at home in the market (Fig. 1 and 2).



Fig. 1. A view from Cumhuriyet Street in the Yukari Neighbourhood Historic Women's Market.



Fig. 2. Weekend use of the ground floor shops.

It is of great importance that memory places are remembered by the society. Based on the effect of the physical environment in the act of remembering, the place should not have undergone major changes in order to stay in memory. For this reason, in order to understand how much the traces of the physical environment are preserved, the extent of the change over time has been expressed by giving place to the conservation zoning plans of Yukari Neighbourhood in the past and today. In addition to zoning plans from 1966 and 2010, a map that was incorporated in 1981 by the General Command of the Air Force and that was obtained from the Akçakoca Municipality's archives is believed to have been created before 1960. The physical state of the area where the Yukari Neighbourhood Women's Bazaar was founded prior to 1960 is depicted in Fig. 3. The axis on which the Women's Market was founded is displayed in grey colour.

This zoning plan has not undergone a major change after 1966. Although there is no major change in the building islands, it is seen that they are divided by some side roads. Compared to the 1966 zoning plan, it is observed that the construction has increased; however, not all of the old houses that existed in the 1966 zoning plan have been taken under protection. Cumhuriyet Street maintains its characteristic of being the main road and is defined as a road with commercial function.

When these three zoning plans are analysed, it is seen that the area which was reconstructed after the fire has been preserved until today without major changes. The fact that Cumhuriyet Street is defined as a commercial axis in the conservation zoning plan is an indication that the commercial function is prominent in the region and that this function and memory are tried to be preserved. The regeneration of the Upper Neighbourhood Women's Market in the same place as a palimpsest space is in parallel with the commercial function of the region in the past and has an important potential for memory transfer. Fig. 5. is taken from the Conservation Zoning Plan approved in 2010, showing the area where the new Yukari Neighbourhood Historical Women's Market is held.

During the interviews conducted with the locals, the interviewees stated that the local market attracted the attention of the visitors coming to the neighbourhood, that with the revitalisation of the marketplace, more people had information about the neighbourhood and the mobility in the neighbourhood increased.

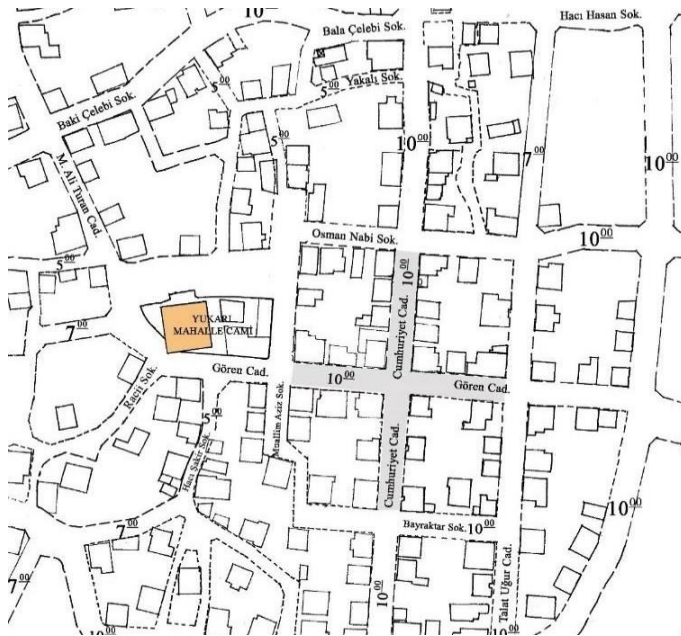


Fig. 5. The Conservation Zoning Plan was approved in 2010, showing the surroundings of the Yukari Neighbourhood Historic Women's Market.

5 Conclusion

Yukari Neighbourhood Historic Women's Market is a successful example of public space revitalisation. It revitalised the collective memory and played a big role in promoting historical neighbourhood and also gave support to the local development. With its existence, the neighbourhood started to revive on weekends.

The women's market has created a formation that connects the past and present of the neighbourhood. The association established by local people on their own initiative later became a cooperative formation and increased local solidarity. Thus, the efforts for economic development and the conservation of cultural heritage have found their counterpart locally and the marketplace has been integrated with the neighbourhood. The fact that the marketplace forms a whole with the original architectural environment in the urban conservation area also contributes to the spread of conservation awareness. Visitors are interested in the local marketplace and at the same time, they enjoy the architectural feature formed by the historical images and create a genuine interaction. For the locals, this interest has also developed an awareness of the phenomenon of conservation, and while the transformation of the neighbourhood into a conservation area was not supported at first due to economic concerns, it is now seen that residents have started to develop cooperation with local governments for the protection of their buildings and the urban environment.

The physical texture of the marketplace, which is integrated with the neighbourhood in the same streets with simple stalls and existing shops, creates a sincere and genuine use of public space. The fact that the sellers are the local people who know the neighbourhood the best, contributes to the neighbourhood and the building up of conservation awareness through communication with the visitors. The Upper Neighbourhood increases its recognition day by day through the visitors to the marketplace.

With the increasing number of visitors, the interest of the local government in the neighbourhood is also increasing. Street rehabilitation works, road pavement cladding and uplifting facades are ongoing works in the neighbourhood. In this framework, it should be aimed to ensure that the materials and urban furniture used in this framework sustain the original authentic texture in a way that will not allow the area to turn into a uniform touristic traditional settlement. All the research carried out in the region reveals the contribution of local formations and local organisations, which are in the memory and essence of the place, to the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In this context, in order to ensure sustainable development and the protection of cultural heritage, it is important to support the local people living in the region and to include them as decision-makers in the activities carried out by local and central governments. Akçakoca Historical Neighbourhood Women with Copper Pots Initiative Production and Management Cooperative), which was formed spontaneously in the area and which takes the initiative in the Yukari Neighbourhood in terms of protecting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage together and ensuring economic sustainability, constitutes a unique example. The Yukari Neighbourhood Women's Market is a successful example of the revitalisation of public space use that is embedded in social memory by supporting local development. Although the market was established on different days and for different purposes, due to its place in the spatial memory, it was adopted by the local administration and the public and led to a participatory revitalisation in the conservation area. The adaptation of the local products market to the place as a palimpsest space and the establishment of a belonging relationship with the local people play an important role in establishing the connection between the past and the present for the visitors.

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