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The Shaping of Vernacular Architecture through Cultural Influences and Conservation Strategies in the Context of Urban Image Theory

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Summary

This study aims to understand how urban identity is shaped by reading the urban structure and traditional civil architecture examples of Sandıklı district of Afyonkarahisar within the framework of Kevin Lynch's "Urban Image" theory. The theoretical framework suggests that a city is not just a physical settlement, but a spatial system that gains meaning through the perceptions and experiences of its users. According to Lynch, the city; It becomes readable through road, border, region, node and sign elements. The spatial organization of Sandıklı, which has developed a multi-layered character with its role in transportation networks, agricultural production and thermal tourism, is shaped around Hisar Hill. In the research carried out with the qualitative method, the floor plans, spatial setups, building materials and current usage situations of traditional wooden houses were examined; the district was analyzed through these five elements. According to the findings, the stream and topographic changes can be read as borders, the surroundings of Hisar Hill and the Hill City as zones, the village garage and the bazaar surroundings as nodes, and the clock tower and Hisar Mound as signs. These structures are not only shelters, but also cultural elements that bear the traces of local culture and lifestyle, take their place in people's mental maps, and make Sandıklı a readable city for

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its users. The study emphasizes that these structures are not individually but together with the historical environment in which they are located; It emphasizes that it should be protected in line with the principles of the Venice Statute (ICOMOS, 1964) of minimum intervention, reversibility and protection of originality. When this conservation effort is considered with a holistic view that is not limited to the city center but also includes the surrounding rural architectural heritage, it is thought that it will contribute to the transfer of urban memory and cultural continuity to future generations.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sandıklı, Traditional Civil Architecture, Urban Identity, Urban Image, Kevin Lynch, Conservation.

INTRODUCTION

Cities; social, cultural, artistic and economic values developed by societies throughout history appear as spatial reflections; it is not only formed by the combination of physical structures. Each of them plays an important role in the formation of urban identity and the emergence of rural architecture. While this architecture is being formed, the buildings not only carry the lifestyles, social relations, production methods and cultural texture of the periods in which they were built to the present day, but each of them also plays an important function for the formation of cultural memory.Cultural conservation is the whole of scientific, legal and social studies (KÜMAD) that aim to transfer tangible and intangible heritage to future generations without deterioration. It includes many responsibilities to protect cultural heritage members, to strengthen our bond with the past and to transfer this bond to future societies. Historical buildings cannot be repaired randomly. Because there is a memory in those buildings where tradition and connection are intertwined. For this reason, it should be worked meticulously and every stage should be checked by experts. However, in addition to the precautions of the institutions in the protection of cultural heritage, the public should also be conscious. Especially the people living in rural architecture know the memory of the areas they are in better and can help the experts and institutions working to transfer it to future generations. Although rurality as a concept varies from region to region and over time (Lane, 1994), in general; settlements where the economy is mainly based on agriculture, with a small population, with a wide natural environment, with distinctive cultural values and local architectural elements as well as natural, human and economic geographical values are considered rural areas (Çubuk, 1985; Keleş, 1998; Yılmaz and Atik, 2004; Çeken et al., 2007; Kayıkcı, 2009; Kavruk et al., 2012; Akci, 2015; Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2018; Kiper, T., et al., 2011). Rural areas (Aran, 2000), where the unique codes of societies are formed as a result of the mutual interactions of nature and humans, are within the scope of cultural heritage areas where multi-layered values specific to the place and the unique character of the place can be read (Scazzosi, 2018). Rural architectural heritage; It includes many traditional areas such as agricultural buildings, settlements, village houses. And these structures are usually built from local raw materials such as stone, wood, adobe and soil as materials. There are more than one institution in the protection of this heritage. For example; ICOMOS, UNESCO etc. These institutions have very strong traces, especially in the context of the protection, revitalization and survival of these areas.

As in many cities in Turkey, traditional architectural examples in the Sandıklı district of Afyonkarahisar have an important place in the formation of local identity and rural architectural heritage. These architectural structures, in which wood and stone are used together, appear as important building areas that reflect the cultural heritage of the region. The urbanization stages that have emerged today lose their value due to the differentiation of the functions of the buildings, the inadequate and careless use of the damages caused by the inadequate and careless use, and the building is at risk of losing its characteristics. In this context, when these buildings are associated with Lynch's urban image theory, they appear as the most basic "cornerstones" and "region" elements that make up the integrity of "identity", "structure" and "meaning" of a city. According to him, in order for a city to be memorable, a strong urban image must be created in the minds of the people living in it. These traditional buildings in Sandıklı are not just objects. They are also visual points where the people living there belong. As a result of uncontrolled urbanization, the architectural heritage there leaves negative traces in the identity and memory of the city. In this research, which was created based on this, the role of traditional rural architecture in building materials and urban identity construction is examined.

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to read how the traditional architectural examples that continue to exist in the Sandıklı district of Afyonkarahisar play a role in the formation of urban identity through Kevin Lynch's "Urban Image" theory. Within the framework of Lynch's road, border, region, focus and sign elements, how these structures shape the image of Sandıklı in people's minds is discussed. From this point of view, evaluations and suggestions regarding the protection of these structures are also presented. The focus of the research is on traditional wooden houses. The placement of these houses in the space, building materials and current usage functions are investigated. Not only their physical characteristics but also their social conditions are taken into consideration. Because these places bear the traces of local culture and lifestyles, and it is important to evaluate the spatial identity with these traces.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area consists of traditional architectural examples that have survived to the present day in the Sandıklı district of Afyonkarahisar. These structures; architectural features, floor plans, material use and functional setups are discussed in terms of their construction, and then interpreted in the light of urban studies and Kevin Lynch's theories. Qualitative method was adopted in the research. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on traditional Turkish residential architecture, urban identity, cultural heritage and Lynch's "Urban Image" theory, and the evaluation criteria of the study were determined in line with the theoretical accumulation obtained from this review. Afterwards, the area is within the framework of the Urban Image Theory; It is analyzed especially in the context of readability, identity, nodes, regions and landmarks (sign elements).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

From past to present, many researches have been carried out in the field of urban design and planning. The majority of these researches date back to the twentieth century. The main center of the studies has been on physical structures and how these structures are perceived by the public. In this context, Lynch, who conducts research on the image of the city, also has influential studies. According to him, roads, regions and symbolic structures that come to life in the minds of individuals are formed through the theory of the city-city image. The ability to read and perceive cities keeps the strong ties of the people living there with the place more vigorous and contributes to the formation of the urban identity.

The urban image theory has also been developed by many researchers and has started to be widely used. Carmona (2010) emphasizes that urban spaces are not only physical components; It should be evaluated from the perspective of user experience and spatial perception.

Another element that plays an important role in the formation of urban identity is traditional housing architecture. Traditional housing architecture not only meets the housing needs of the people but also reflects their culture, economic conditions and social relations. The works of Sedad Hakkı Eldem, who plays an important role in the reinterpretation of local identity, also have an important place in this respect. The most critical point in Eldem was to include their connection with family life while dealing with the units that make up the spaces. On the other hand, Kuban (1995) examines the regional variations in Anatolian residential architecture; he draws attention to the fact that traditional structures are shaped by climate, topography, materials and cultural factors.

An important part of cultural heritage research consists of studies aimed at preserving buildings and transferring them to future generations. In the field of restoration and conservation, Jokilehto (1999) argues that historical buildings are not only physical assets; but also as repositories of cultural and historical information. Jokilehto states that conservation initiatives should prioritize the preservation of the building's unique qualities and historical identity.

Feilden is one of the important architects in the preservation of historical heritage. He laid the foundation of restoration rules during his period. According to him, he states that conservation practices should not be evaluated over a single building, and that these practices play an important role in the formation of cultural continuity and memory. Conservation is an interdisciplinary job that brings together different specialties in a balanced way. In conservation projects, the architect plays a guiding role like an orchestra conductor (Feilden, 2003, Preface). Ahunbay (2017) emphasizes that it is important to protect historical buildings in order for the urban identity to be sustainable, and that conservation works should be carried out not only by physical intervention but also by protecting cultural values.

The Venice Statute (International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], 1964), one of the basic documents of the international conservation approach, especially emphasizes that original materials and construction systems should be respected in restoration practices. Behind this approach lies the idea that historical buildings gain meaning not only formally, but also when they are preserved together with their construction technique and material. For this reason, restoration works; It should be carried out in line with basic principles such as minimum intervention, reversibility and preservation of originality.

In this context, traditional wooden houses in Sandıklı district; Kevin Lynch's urban image theory was evaluated in the light of research on traditional Turkish housing architecture and basic conservation-restoration approaches. Thus, the role of these buildings in urban identity and the importance of preserving cultural heritage were revealed through the theoretical framework offered by the existing literature.

4. AFYONKARAHİSAR-SANDIKLI

Sandıklı is a district located in the Western Anatolia region of Turkey, within the borders of Afyonkarahisar province. Located on the Antalya-Denizli highway and the Izmir-Ankara-Istanbul railway line, the district has historically had a strategic importance in terms of transportation and trade. Archaeological findings show that the settlement dates back to 5000 BC; the region, which was under the rule of the Phrygians, Lydians, Persians, Romans and Byzantines throughout ancient times, maintains its importance during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. This historical continuity forms a fundamental element in shaping the spatial character and urban identity of Sandıklı (Zeybek, 2025).

Sandıklı district is considered as a multi-layered place where geographical, historical and economic elements intersect. The texture of the district, access to thermal resources, transportation axes and connections with the surrounding rural architecture play an important role in perceiving the space for the people living there.

For example; thermal activities, open-air markets, and agricultural activities stand out as important reference points in the city's mind map (Zeybek, 2025). This situation can be explained in a similar way to Lynch's approach to urban imagery.

5. LYNCH YAKLAŞIMI

Urban identity can be defined as the whole of the physical, cultural and social features that distinguish a city from others. The most visible carriers of this identity in Sandıklı are common areas such as wooden houses, narrow street texture and bazaar surroundings. This traditional architecture there does not only reflect the construction method and material preferences of a period, but also reflects the local culture and lifestyle of the society that lived in that period. In this context, a theoretical framework is needed to understand how the local identity is perceived and how the Sandıklı district is revived as an image in the mind of the society. In this research, the city is not only handled physically, but Kevin Lynch's approach, which helps to be read as an image in the minds of the society, has been determined. In this way, the effect of traditional architectural examples on urban identity can be evaluated in the context of readability and imagination.

Kevin Lynch (1960/2010), in his work "The Urban Image", argues that people construct the city through five basic elements in their minds. The first of these, roads, are the routes on which individuals move in the city and constitute the main backbone of the image as the city is mostly perceived while moving. Borders are linear elements that are not used as roads, but separate or connect two regions; coasts, walls, topographic breaks or texture transitions fall into this group. Regions are medium-sized urban parts that have a common character and that the observer feels entered. Nodes are areas of concentration where roads intersect, users change direction or gather. Sign elements are singular structures or objects that are perceived from a distance, separated from their surroundings and help to find direction. According to Lynch, these elements do not work independently of each other; the image of the city is formed by the combination of these elements in the mind of the user (Lynch, 1960/2010).

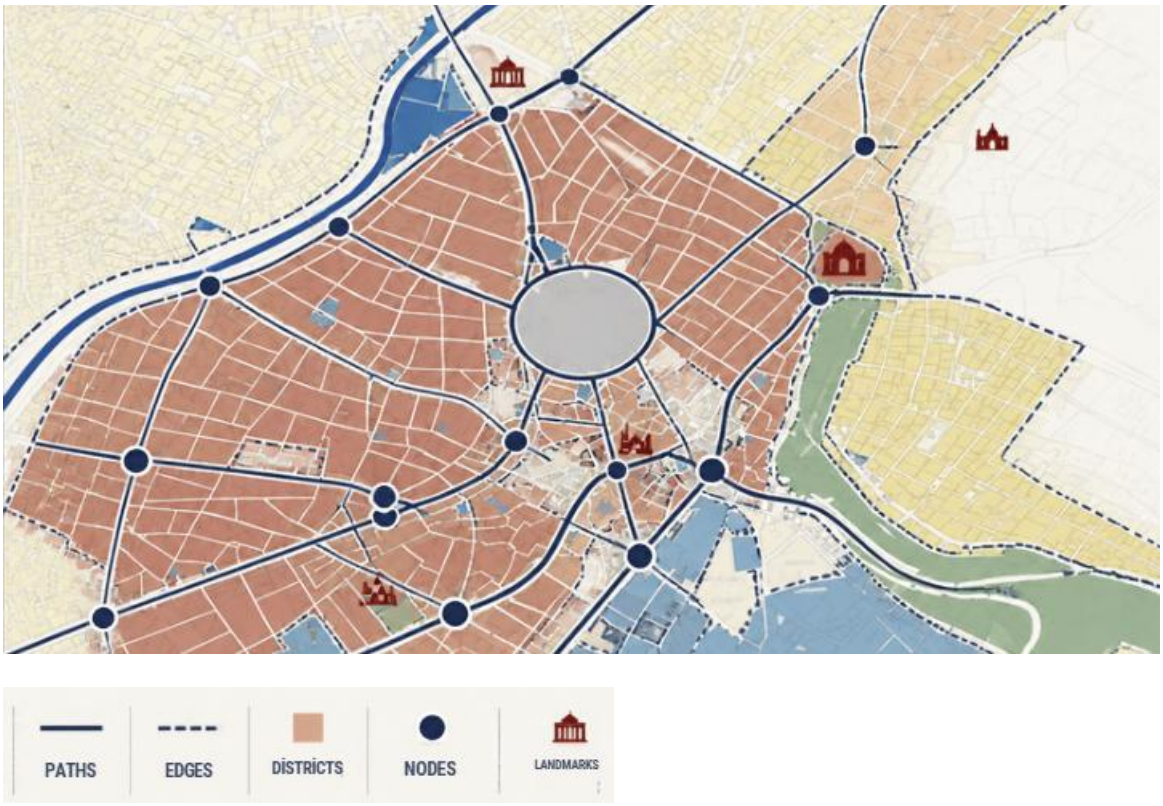


Figure 1: Afyonkarahisar-Sandıklı Lynch Urban Image Analysis

Paths

Sandıklı district stands out with two main routes when examined from an "urban readability" perspective with a scale of 1:15,000, centered on Hisar Hill and covering an area of four km². These routes are a point used by the local people, who are also considered the center of the district, when describing the place and direction to anyone, and they also merge with the old municipality square, which is a common meeting place. The first of these routes is the station street and the second is Dinar street, and these two routes serve as the main access point for entering and exiting the district. These roads, which are used extensively at the point of transportation network within the district, are also important for travels from village to district and because they are the route of city bus lines. These routes can be shown as examples in the context of urban readability expressed by lynching. (Figure 1)

Edges

Sandıklı, which holds the Hisar hill as the center and is located on an area of approximately four km², appears as a settlement that has its own differences and carries

the mind of the city in the society when viewed in the context of urban analysis. The differences in the city are surrounded by invisible ties over time, not only physically, but also with habits, economic contexts and planning configurations. Sandıklı is one of the places where these invisible ties are found.

The stream, which originates around Keçiören Street and flows along Sazak Street, is an element that can be read as an edge in the real sense with Lynch's definition of the city image. The stream divides the district into two and the transition is shown by softening towards detached and single-storey buildings. This transition is not only seen in the road network or housing type, but also in the place where trade and economic differences take place. The visitor wandering around the city feels this even if he is not aware of it (Figure 1).

Districts

When a place is started to be read, the definitions made by the local people for that place among themselves are also encountered. This situation does not occur with any planning. This situation is shaped according to why the people there go to that area, how often they are there, spreads with oral expression and turns into a definition that everyone knows over time. In Sandıklı (Figure 1), Hisar Hill, marked with a gray circle, stands out in this sense. The municipal social facility is located here. This area, which stands out with its narrow streets and cobblestones, is the historical core of the district. This place, which is also seen as the first settlement, differs from the general housing texture. However, the reason why this area is described as a region is that the roads of the surrounding villages and towns end here. This place serves as a transfer center. Especially since many of the people are frequently seen in this place and it is a frequent destination for visitors from villages and surrounding districts, the importance of this place is increasing. For visitors, this area is where the day begins and ends. Another region is the Hill City, which is shown in blue on the map. This place stands out as a separate unit with its altitude difference, distance from the city center and its own residential architecture. Thus, the stream in Sandıklı is Lynch's "border" element; The surroundings of Hisar Hill and Tepe Kent constitute concrete responses to the "region" element.

Nodes

When perceiving a city, people lean not only on densely populated areas, but also on

distinct and fixed locations. These special places, which are frequently used when describing directions or describing a destination, can be read under two headings in the context of urban readability: nodes, which are concentration points where people gather and change direction, and landmarks, which are individual structures that are perceived from a distance and separated from their surroundings.

In Sandıklı (Figure 1), which is centered on Hisar Hill, one of the most prominent places is the village garage, where transportation to the surrounding villages and towns is provided. Ziraat Bank is seen as the de facto center of the district with its lively structure where access to basic services is concentrated. The old Public Library and the new library directly opposite, Cumhuriyet Secondary School, indoor sports complex and the new municipal service building complex are also places where people come together on a daily basis and are known as meeting points. The old Health Vocational High School, which was converted into a primary education institution after losing its main function, is one of these concentration points.

The Hisar region is especially rich with places that have both features together. The historical Hisar Castle and the covered bazaar are signs as structures that are noticed from different points of the city and separated from their surroundings. Barbaros Secondary School, Teacher's House, Trade Vocational High School, training center for mentally and physically disabled individuals, newly built National Garden and market place are among the nodes where people gather and change their direction. Sandıklı State Hospital and Sandıklı Industrial Vocational High School also show the quality of knots and signs together, as they are frequently visited and are the main reference in directions.

These places are among the most frequented places in the district. Since they are easily distinguished and constantly encountered in daily life, they gain a permanent place in people's mental maps. Thus, these points constitute concrete examples of the knots and sign elements defined by Lynch from Sandıklı.

Landmarks

Some buildings in Sandıklı (Figure 1) stand out from the surrounding texture and direct the image of the city in the minds. In Lynch's definition, these are landmarks. The clock tower in the city square and the Hisar Mound are the most prominent examples of this group. Their size, age or unique function distinguishes them from residences and daily

buildings; therefore, they are easily recognizable and often referred to as references in directions. The new library and social facility opposite the old library and the new municipality building have a dual character. They are not only the concentration points (nodes) where people come together in daily life, but also structures that can be noticed from afar with their prominent volumes compared to their surroundings. These qualities can also be effective in transforming their functions over time. Thus, these buildings in Sandıklı constitute concrete examples of the sign elements in Lynch's urban image theory.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

According to Lynch, the urban image consists of three elements. These are; identity, structure and meaning. At the point where a space differs from other spaces, it becomes readable as long as it interacts with the units around it and to the extent that it means something to those who use the space. In this context, Sandıklı district gains meaning when it is read with this understanding, and becomes a place of shelter and a place that is in relationship with the units around it.

Urban identity emerges with how society perceives the environment and how they visualize places in their memories. Historical buildings in Sandıklı are reference points that play an important role in the formation of the cultural identity of the district. From this point of view, seeing a familiar façade while passing through a narrow street around Hisar Hill or standing in the doorway that has been remembered from childhood is the equivalent of this identity in daily life.

The feeling of the interior setup in the space goes far beyond shelter. Cultural and social values such as experiences, family structures, neighborly relations and guests are seen concretely. This reflection is also seen quite clearly in the historical buildings in Sandıklı.

The traditional historical buildings examined in the context of the study are important milestones in the development of Sandıklı's historical and cultural identity. When we look at the plans, materials, layouts and the connection they establish with their surroundings, it is seen how the traditional life culture is reflected in the architectural texture. The arrangement of the interior, the family structure; It shows how common areas such as courtyards and sofas are lived within the framework of neighborhood and

hospitality. The materials used in the building describe the possibilities of that climate and geography.

In the context of the urban image, it is seen that the buildings meet all kinds of expressed concepts. These structures, which have become cultural elements that affect and shape the formation of a collective urban consciousness, serve as mapped memories in the memory of the society. Someone who knows Sandıklı mentions its narrow streets, wooden facades and texture visible from the top while describing the city; these memories are intertwined with the elements that make up the image of the city. For this reason, it is of great importance to consider traditional houses not one by one, but together with the historical environment they are in, in terms of preserving the urban identity.

It is not correct to express urban identity only through the buildings in the city center. Especially in the villages and towns around Sandıklı, there are many elements of architectural heritage that are elements of the same culture. Barns, fountains, village houses and common areas are also areas of use that are related to the city. The interactivity of these areas occurs when people come to the city from villages and towns. For this reason, Sandıklı should not only strive to protect its own identity; it should be handled with a holistic view that includes rural architectural heritage. Thus, the common memory of the city can be carried to future generations more easily.

In conclusion, traditional wooden civil architecture examples are essential components of Sandıklı's cultural heritage and urban identity. The preservation of these structures does not only mean preserving the architectural heritage; it also means keeping the urban memory and cultural continuity alive. The principles of minimal intervention, reversibility, and preservation of authenticity emphasized by the Venice Statute (ICOMOS, 1964) should guide the preservation of these houses for future generations.

In this context, the traditional buildings in Sandıklı are examples of urban architecture that carry cultural values, ensure continuity in the urban image and make the local identity visible. The preservation of the traditional spatial order and the maintenance of its legibility also keeps the place of these buildings in the collective memory of the district and their power to represent cultural continuity alive.

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