



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN IN CITY SQUARES "YALOVA CUMHURİYET SQUARE IN TURKEY"

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ABSTRACT

In terms of the settlement character of Yalova, there are significant population differences between summer and winter due to the intensive use by people from Istanbul and Bursa metropolises, and its population considerably increases during summer. Transportation to these important metropolises in the immediate vicinity is achieved rapidly by sea buses. It is subject to the use of potential population on a daily basis due to transportation facilities and recreational opportunities. By the new zoning plan, no changes were made to the building density, however, decisions are taken about the traffic scheme, parking lots and stop usage, and the area to be used as the city center, which form a basis for the urban design works. The project area includes Yalova province, Yalova square, and its surroundings. The subject of this project, Cumhuriyet Square, was formerly used as a parking lot. With the new coastline landscape planning implemented in Yalova, the need for parking space in Yalova has been partially met. It is decided to re-design this area as a city square, therefore, this project has been prepared and submitted to the executing institution.

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INTRODUCTION

The word square is used for wide, plain, and open areas. These kinds of areas are usually caused by different reasons in cities. Since ancient times, squares are the urban spots where people get together. Unlike other shopping centers in the city, these areas have a democratic structure (Semerci 2008). Besides, squares host activities that bring people together in urban life as the most important means of communication and social interaction (Alexander, 1977, Semerci 2008). Urban planning and design are significant tools for building livable urban environments. Urban squares are at the top of the important places in urban design. City squares are important due to the facilities they offer in limited spaces and their ability to provide different designs. Squares have an important role in the continuity and development of social life. People living in cities need squares for social, cultural, political, and commercial purposes. For this reason, squares serve as an identity that reflects the manner of cities and their inhabitants. Squares are the first of the common spaces where people who share a common life in the city come together. In this respect, the squares survive with the city and are protected by the citizens. Therefore, they have both historical memories and historical artifacts. As an urban space, the square is a part of the city in terms of physical, social, cultural, and historical context.

For this reason, unique symbols of the city are seen in the areas used as squares (Demirel, 2008). These unique symbols can either be the religious buildings of the citizens or the architectural works which are reminiscent of important events in history. In general, open green areas exist in the immediate vicinity of these architectural works or historical objects. These areas are important for people in terms of relaxation, entertainment, and getting together.

General settlement characteristics of yalova and description of the project area

Yalova is located in the northwest of Turkey and the southeast of Marmara Region. Yalova lies between 39-40° North latitude and 29-61° East longitude, and its height from the sea is 2 meters, whereas its highest point is 926 meters. It covers an area of 839 square kilometers and 0.11% of the country's surface area. Yalova is the smallest province of Turkey in terms of surface area, however, it is one of the touristic cities with the longest coastline (105 km). 82% of the total surface area of Yalova (847.000 ha) consists of agricultural land (221.730 ha), forest area (468.090 ha), and meadow-pasture land (7.944 ha). Scrub bush and forests constitute the vegetation of the city (Figure 1). In terms of the settlement character of Yalova, there are significant population differences between summer and winter due to the intensive use by people from Istanbul and Bursa metropolises, and its population considerably increases during summer.

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Figure 1. Location of Yalova in Turkey

Furthermore, rapid transportation is achieved between these important metropolises and Yalova by means of sea buses. It is subject to potential one-day use of a large population due to these transport facilities and recreational opportunities. The project area covers Yalova province, Yalova square, and its surroundings. By the new zoning plan, no changes were made to the building density, however, decisions are taken about the traffic scheme, parking lots and stop usage, and the area to be used as the city center, which form a basis for the urban design works.

Environmental design of the cumhuriyet square

Basically, squares, as open space recreation areas, should be accessible, attractive, and service providing. Being accessible is an important feature of squares, which are the most important gathering areas of the city. Accessibility is provided by walkways or public transportation lanes. Besides, the fact that the squares are capable to meet various social needs also demonstrates their functionality. Refreshment, shopping, and entertainment are the among most important facilities. Such places give spirit to the squares and extend the useful life of them over the year. The squares are places where you feel the heartbeat and pulse of the community. Therefore, the characteristic features of the squares are not only physical features such as size, shape, and occupancy but also historical traces and memories. Thus, the square of a city reflects its culture, history, religious structure and consequently its identity. It can also give information about the social and economic conditions of the people living in that city (Semerci, 2008). In addition to physical characteristics such as architecture and aesthetics, social, cultural, economic, and political aspects should also be considered in the analysis of city squares. The squares contribute to the quality of urban life as long as they qualitatively meet the physical, social, and economic expectations of users (Dostoğlu, 2007). The Cumhuriyet Square was formerly used as a parking lot. With the new coastline landscape planning implemented in Yalova, the need for parking space in Yalova has been partially met and it is decided to re-design this area as a city square. In the square design project prepared for this purpose (figure 2), the following points stated by Oktay (2007) have been taken into consideration.

- The Cumhuriyet Square is physically defined in order to create an identity and a sense of space.
- It has been supported by social, cultural, and aesthetic characteristics in terms of historical connections for urban sustainability.
- Power and dynamism have been brought to the square through the sustainability of the social spaces.

- The Cumhuriyet Square has been designed to stay alive day and night and its functional diversity has been supported. In this framework, opportunities for all age and interest groups are considered.
- The buildings in the vicinity of Cumhuriyet Square were designed by considering their harmony with the public space and the front facades of the buildings have been tailored to ensure integration with the outer space.
- Visual adaptation has created harmony and contrasts and the attraction of the square has been enhanced by designing the art objects in the square as a part of the space.



Figure 2. The environmental design project of Cumhuriyet Square in Yalova, Turkey

Yalova is a center of attraction for people living in Yalova and nearby cities with its coastline and natural beauties. The presence of sea transportation between Yalova and a metropolitan city like Istanbul, makes for its use as a resting place, especially on weekends. The fact that Yalova is also tempting to live permanently due to these attributes and that Cumhuriyet Square plays an important role in this aspect has also become the principles that guided this design. Yalova square is an important socializing and meeting place for Yalova province, which is a holiday spot. In order to be able to use this potential of Yalova Square, a structuring that promotes social and cultural activities in the area has been enabled. In this context, the area is designed on two axes, taking pedestrian and vehicle usage into consideration. The axis running parallel to the sea is planned to arrange the pedestrian traffic and revitalize social life, whereas the axis extending perpendicularly to the sea is planned to serve as a means of vehicle transportation at certain hours. A lounge for sea buses was also proposed on this axis. The axis running parallel to the sea is re-planned to encourage the use of pedestrians (figure 3). There are three facts about this planning. These are; set up of commercial units that will support the social utilization of the square, use of urban furnishings and landscape items, and development of collapsed platforms to support social activities. Seats are included in the plan as the city square will be used actively by people for gathering. Parallel to the modern appearance of the square, furnishings are also modern. Structural objects are the focal point for urban identity. The urban furnishings have been modernized and recycled (figure 4).



Figure 3. Pedestrian movement and meeting center in the project design



Figure 4. Different urban furnishings designed in the project.

Yalova has a high rate of bike use, which is supported by local authorities through rental bikes. Therefore, a bike stand was included in the square plan. This square, which is the intersection of land and sea transportation, contributes the city in terms of ecology besides improving the identity of the city. In our project planned with ecological concept, attention has been paid to the preservation of the existing green areas. For this purpose, the trees in the project area are preserved, which are adjacent to the ancient plane trees along the coast (figure 5).



Figure 5. Green areas and ecological corridor in the project design

The axes determined to help people comfortably access all functions plays a key role in the collocation of the area. Transition to the Barış Manço Amphitheater, which hosts many festivals, concerts, and private ceremonies in Yalova, has been provided. The road is continued to the amphitheater and to Ido Yenikapı sea bus terminal without interruption and in the scope of planning, and this circulation area is made available for people as a walkway along the waterside. The arcades at the entrance of the area provide a strong sense of place and usefulness for the users, while creating a colorful and vivid border for the square. The Ataturk statue dominates the square and its significance is emphasized by the habitual flower display underneath. Furthermore, mobility has been added to prevent the stability of the surrounding water. The city museum in the square is preserved and the square became more aesthetic through landscaping. Grass hills and grass pits were used to break the monotony in the square and to enliven the square. Eco-shades, which can produce their own energy with photovoltaic panels, are designed for the area (figure 6). These are covered with grass and are designed slantingly to be used as a flower display area. Each bearing post of the shades will be used as a flag pole. These poles will have the flags of the cities and important institutions that have cultural agreements with the province of Yalova. In addition, one of the shadows provides access to the Barış Manço Park while the other shades will have cafes and restaurants designed as ferry boats underneath. Decorative flower exhibitions are designed, which may attract people's attention with their diverse aesthetic and functional features.



Figure 6. Photovoltaic panels and eco-shades

The flowering cycle, which will bring vitality to the area all the time in terms of color, form, texture, and lineally, is processed by month (figure 7). These areas will be used as the exhibition area of the local flower producers. Yalova marina has been modernized and redesigned to be used as a boutique style marina rather than a fishing port. The "Sailing Club Training and Sales" department in this area will serve the visitors of Yalova ECO Marina. A marina cafe that sailors can use is also planned in this area.



Figure 7. Annual calendar of seasonal, perennial and aromatic plants

Conclusion

In the design phase of this project, participation of the users is encouraged and they are allowed to reveal their perceptions and thoughts about the environment they live in, thus, design models enabling the creation of livable modern urban spaces have been developed. Yalova Cumhuriyet Square urban design project offers solutions to the inertness and undefined nature of the area arising from its use as a parking area. The circulation is arranged with the pedestrian and vehicle axes defined on the area. Regulations have been made on the axis running parallel to the sea to encourage the use of pedestrians. Thus, commercial units were created to support the social use of the square. The green areas are preserved in the project which is planned according to the ecological concept. Eco-shades that can generate their own energy by photovoltaic panels are designed. A passage axis to the Barış Manço Amphitheater in the immediate vicinity was established. Additionally, without interrupting the circulation along the coastline and within the scope of planning, the road network is continued to the amphitheater and to İdo Yenikapı sea bus terminal, enabling people to use this circulation area as a walkway along the waterside.

The city museum in the square is preserved, and the Yalova marina has been modernized and redesigned in boutique style rather than a fishing port.

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