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TITLE: An Alternative Approach in Reading the Urban Space: Izmir-Historic City Center

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PAGES: 0-0

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/92484>

## AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN READING THE URBAN SPACE: İZMİR-HISTORIC CITY CENTER

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### Abstract

This study aims to provide an approach to practices of reading the urban space from a different perspective, as those abilities are of great importance in terms of understanding and developing the ability of making accurate future projections. In this article, we discuss the first contact of freshman students of Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of City and Regional Planning with the city as an empirical study and aim to examine the assumptions and the findings that were developed through conceptual or physical interpretations so far using case studies. We open the project studies together with the content, process and end product qualifications to discussion as a model, which indicate the nature of “language” that would be used in spatializing the existing physical formation and the meaning behind it through abstraction and obtaining solid implications as well as the existing possibilities in this field.

**Keywords:** Reading urban space, environmental perception, abstraction, İzmir.

## KENTSEL MEKANİ OKUMADA ALTERNATİF BİR YAKLAŞIM: İZMİR-TARİHİ KENT MERKEZİ

### Özet

Bu çalışma, kentsel mekânı anlama ve onun üzerinden geleceğe yönelik sağlıklı kestirimler yapabilme becerisini geliştirmesi açısından büyük öneme sahip, kentsel mekânı okuma pratiklerine farklı bir perspektiften yaklaşım sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Mimarlık Fakültesi, Şehir ve Bölge Planlama bölümü birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin, kentle ilk temaslarının deneysel bir çalışma olarak ele alındığı yazıda, bugüne dek mekâna ilişkin kavramsal ya da fiziksel değerlendirmeler yoluyla geliştirilmiş yaklaşım biçimlerinden ilham alınarak hazırlanmış çalışma kurgusu ve bulgular, örnek çalışmalar aracılığıyla ele alınmaktadır. Var olan fiziksel biçimleniş ve gerisindeki anlamlar dünyasını soyutlamalar yoluyla mekânsallaştırma ve bu yolla somut çıkarımlar elde etme sürecinde kullanılabilecek “dil”in niteliğine vurgu yapan proje kurgusu, süreç ve sonuç ürünleriyle bir model olarak tartışmaya açılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kentsel mekânı okuma, çevresel algı, soyutlama, İzmir.

### 1. Introduction

It is possible to examine the built environment that shapes our individual and social life as a set of images. This set of images moves into living spaces through perception. However, the presence of such an interactive platform indicates a world of meanings beyond apparent physical configuration in terms of

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Makale metni 23.08.2013 tarihinde dergiye ulaştırılmış, 10.09.2013 tarihinde basım kararı alınmıştır.

architectural and urban spaces. The multidimensional and complex content of this “world of meanings” has been an area on which new thoughts have developed since Descartes. Different behaviors and approaches emerged during this idea-creation process regarding the need that space should be explained not only as a three dimensional physical body, but also through multi dimensional variables.

During the process, these space conceptualizations were fed through approaches that were either built upon each other or through many opposite approaches. The concept of space found a place among many scientific fields and philosophical subjects and its susceptibility to changes in the scientific world continuously carried it to a new phase and thus, of course, the methods to understand and analyze the space were inevitably affected by such changes.

The fields of Architecture and Urban Planning followed a route that was parallel to developments in philosophy of science. Scholastic methods that were developed in these disciplines where studies regarding the perception and analyzing of space were under focus were also affected similarly by the course of approaching the space. While the complex characteristics of urban space and expanding the space concept range from three-dimensional to (n) dimensional, customized the selections of variables that were used to explain the space and events and also continuously reconfigured the components of information production and learning.

The presence of bidirectional hierarchical relationship in the mentioned structuring draws attention. The first of those relationships emerges in the context of scope expansion between the physical reality that surrounds us and “space” conceptualizations. This is because the environment covers the events that only affects the surrounded, but the space results in a content expansion due to factors that are outside of the geographic space dimension (Tekeli, 2010:28-30). The second relationship arises from the hierarchy between the study scales, and as the course navigates from generalizations down into details depending on the required detail level of spatial studies, the sensorial characteristic changes as well. As a matter of fact, stimuli such as smell, sound and contents are used as much as visual perceptions such as color, shape and motion in configuring and defining the environment (Lynch, 1960:3). It is possible to interpret these two different relationship platforms as conceptual and physical contact areas and mention that there is a stratification that displays some differentiation within itself. However, it is impossible to stay only within one of these areas in studies concerning reshaping the space through urban design or planning.

From this point on, this article attempts to make a contribution in order to provide the understanding of spatial entirety with all elements that shape it in the field of urban planning through an approach that is based on both existing analysis methods and abstraction studies and that sets a relationship between the conceptual and physical projections. Accordingly, we will focus on “reading the urban space” themed project studies that are designed to facilitate the investigation between the physical reality and the underlying abstract concepts. This occurs in a stage where students start to come in contact with urban space during their first year in planning education. We will discuss a framework inspired by Lefebvre’s space conceptualizations and Lynch’s imaginative analyses and a design language that we are trying to develop in that direction.

## **2. Evaluation of Space Perception Through Conceptual and Physical Projections and Abstraction**

Urban spaces are regenerated under the impact of many components and through the images that they carry. The images that play a central role in urban life have gained more importance with modernity, and the importance and representation powers of urban spaces have increasingly scaled up. As Goffman (1959), Sennett (1976), Lefebvre (1991, 1998), Bocock and Thompson (1992) stated: modern cities include institutions that were shaped in accordance with certain historicity and geography, social relations that are based on production and reproduction, administrative practices, different forms of communication and spatiality generated through the interaction amongst the media. The environmental images that differ due to individual perceptions may carry good or bad, positive or negative, or attractive or repulsive characteristics. The spatial images, symbols, indicators and images are also called “*urban image area*”. This mentioned image area has started to dismantle while also maintaining its importance in the postmodern period. Thus, while today's ever-changing perception and experiences are still based on symbols and connotations, they also have been

restructured with a content that has multi-piece and collage characteristics determined by the consumption practices that shape the daily life and space.

Urban researchers are in a struggle to understand and explain how physical and social aspects of cities are formed or transformed by looking at imaginary areas as much as objective processes (Demir, 2002:110). According to Lefebvre, the code of space, which has been established using complex symbols and meanings must be deciphered. It is necessary to consider the space with what it states as a discursive thing, deciphering its code in regards to its relation with its language, and abstracting the physical space through language. It is not possible to mention one single integrated approach regarding the language that would be used to isolate the space perception, even with its apparent formation or the entire world of meaning behind it. The environment in question here is one that contains relatively more experimental approaches and different fictional interpretations. Moreover, the language that is used for expression in planning sphere today is in a rather controversial position and lacks the development of new methods and recommendations.

It is inevitable to take the characteristics of perception into consideration during the transition towards a new form of approach. Space perception is not as simple as it would be to explain using intelligence or information that is directly collected from the environment. On the other hand, it is also obvious that perception has been taking place in a spectrum that is far outside of the modern world's visual-based perception paradigm. This detail alone, apart from visual stimuli, makes the perception activity more critical as an area of experience that starts with hearing, touching and similar sensorial contacts that develop in a similar manner. The studies that emphasize that individual perception is an exploration process in relationship with the space also reveal that perception does not take place by itself. That is to say: the perception develops from birth through the world of objects and sensorial stimuli, and the learned information ingrains in mind. Our perception of the world takes place based on the information that shapes this accumulation. The individual classifies this accumulation in an analytical way, and converts it into a database that is based on partial or integral judgments (Erzen, 2006). Within this context, it is obvious that perception is taking place on a spectrum that widens from instinct areas towards an intellectual study. The back and forth traffic between these two areas affect the perception's objectivity to a great extent. In the end, the built environment starts to mean different things for the individuals in parallel to their judgments. The fact that the built environment is perceived differently by individuals inspired many researches and the efforts that were exhausted by human scientists and sociologists increasingly expanded towards design areas. Perception studies started to be utilized more to interpret the conditions that are related to living environment as a capability to reach better environment designs. Generally, this scope was covered under the activity area of environmental psychology, and has started to increasingly relate the individual's awareness of his/her environment and his/her understanding to the area of architecture and planning.

Environmental cognition is the environmental comprehension process of human being. This process involves several sub-processes such as the perception of the environment by individual, collecting the information in brain, encoding, classifying and generating meanings, and making choices (Türksoy, 1986:14). Converting the information that was read from the environment into cognitive information happens through schemes. The content of schemes is personal, and it is a product of an individual's experience. These schemes emerge as a result of personal or non-personal factors such as lifestyle, experience, sex, socioeconomic status, living and work spaces, and the type of transportation used. All factors such as preferences, travel routes and social connections - as well as the natural structure of the environment, sensorial clues, meaning, value, culture, symbolism and activities - are influential in the creation of cognitive maps (Tayyare, 2007).

Cognitive mapping was initially put forward as an idea by Tolman, who had significant studies about behavioral psychology (Tolman, 1948). It is the process where a series of psychological transformations come together, in which the relative positions and factual attributes were adopted, stored and remembered from the spatial environment as a place of the individual's daily life (Downs and Stea, 1973). Many researchers have developed similarities with the perception process in defining the relationship with location and cognitive maps as an indicative map and described them as a series of psychological transformations that individuals had gained, encoded, stored, recalled and deciphered (Rapoport, 1977; Evans, 1980). On the other hand, Golledge (1987), who had defined the cognitive map as the representation of spatial data in memory, thought that these maps could be considered as the recordings/storing of approaches about environments that were attributed a real value or significance by the individual.

The most well-known conceptual mapping study is the cognitive typologies of Lynch. Lynch examined that the perception regarding urban spaces was shaped through images that emerged in the human brain. While basing his research on individual image perceptions of a group of urban dwellers in American cities, he concluded that the maps which were created by urban images had created a different sense of belonging beyond providing a sense of direction or creating a sense of security (Lynch, 1960). Appleyard (1976), on the other hand, drew attention in his research to the point that the analytical methods and tools that were required for urban planning were selected subjectively. He argued the fact that the planners' conceptualization methods for an objective city is subjective, this had created the paradox of increasing the conceptual distances of dwellers to their own cities. In fact, all the researchers emphasize that the scheme that was created through the abstraction of information indicated the presence of an outer world in conjunction with individuals.

### 2.1. An Abstraction-Based Alternative Approach in Reading the Urban Space

The significance of methods of contacting with space within an educational scheme that focuses on space is obvious. Analyzing the self-meaning of "location" is a necessary action to make future predictions in order to extract messages that are continuously directed to us through a world of created images. It is not possible to make any determinations regarding one component of the city without analyzing the relationship between many different ones (Cil, 2006). At the same time, such an experience enables us to understand the life very explicitly, and improves our skill to interpret the surrounding reality accurately. Within this context we can describe the established relationship with the space as a vital experience indeed and the significance of such an experience in the area of design is indisputable. The assumption that the area of design and creativity is a journey to an individual's inner world inevitably gives a special attribute to spatial experiences. Attributing a meaning to something through intelligence that was perceived through emotions and reshaping it in the mind within time constitutes the fictional content of design studies. In this sense, the skill to interpret the information regarding the external reality becomes a basic prerequisite in terms of disciplines that are especially focused on the design education and the design of the space.

Giving students the ability to develop different data collection methods and to make sensorial interpretations (starting from the visual perception within an educational scheme that is related to designing the space) carries a great significance. Educational methods have been conducting research on possibilities to travel into a very rich information world to evaluate the apparent physical characteristics. Thus, we aimed to provide the following to undergraduate freshmen students of Dokuz Eylul University, Department of City and Regional Planning while they worked in the Space and Design studio:

- To enable them to view the city as a text and conduct a detailed reading on it,
- To create a language that is oriented towards dissolving individual prejudices and deciphering codes in perception and that will become a tool to convert the students' knowledge and experience into defined information,
- To assist them in realizing the difference between looking and seeing,
- To facilitate the experience of perception that is based on sensing rather than a visual perception,
- To provide separate definitions for physical and conceptual characteristics while filtering the evaluation criteria altogether,
- To provide them the ability to develop and use original visual presentation techniques.

The reality surrounding the individual contacts with him/her through many stimuli as a set of complex relations. The variety and complexity of information here can turn into an obstacle for reading the script in the background. Therefore, reaching essential information through simplifications is necessary. It is an abstraction of an existing reality and thus an intellectual effort is in question here. Abstraction is conducted as an information method in mind, as is commonly known to all. At this point, the process of cognitively analyzing the functioning of the inner relationships of actually materialized and concrete formation, in fact,

takes place as a simplification strategy. The individual here establishes a relationship between the area of intuitions and the storage of information.

If abstraction is to take place in terms of a spatial integrity, the information of the space becomes critical. Considering the fact that information reaches the individual in two different formats - conceptual and physical - the need to relate to both information categories and to conduct simplifications emerge. The first category of these two is the knowledge category (covering subjects such as cognition, research and historical background, etc.), and it relies on research findings, information accumulation, and experience. In the second category, all physical and social elements that shape the urban space and their relations among them stand out (this information is concluded by the individual through field studies as well as mutual interviews). The shape, color, smell, sound and texture that we can perceive with our senses are the expression language of this world.

The urban space that creates both the conceptual and physical connotations is formed by three basic physical components such as structural elements, the transition areas that connect these elements to each other and gaps. It is necessary to be in relationship with the three elements while interpreting the urban space. It is obvious that the arteries and gaps outside of buildings possess a special position as the primary component of public life and urban life culture in that sense. Besides, these pieces are circulatory channels on which people can move, and they enable the establishment of relations of individuals with spatial integrities as much as with other individuals within the city. In this sense, it is possible to say that the urban reading takes place in a narrowing spectrum from public to private, starting from the contact points with space as well as streets and open spaces as collective experience areas.

The pattern of streets and open spaces within traditional settlements and hence their relational schemes are rather different from those of modern cities. The complexity of characteristics that shape the space in such settlements, their detail levels and their varieties affect the readability of traditional patterns. Also, a differentiation is required in the language that would be used in interpreting the multi-layered settlements, whose spatial structure have been shaped through many historical periods. That is because the analyses in readings that would be conducted on traces that emerged as a result of stratifications require more parameters.

### **3. Reading The Urban Space in the Historical City Center of Izmir**

We conducted the reading study of the urban space in the central district of Izmir, one of the important port cities of Turkey. The study area is located within the city centre which is in the form of a node where several transportation modes intersect and which covers traditional shopping units called Kemeralti as well as modern consumption spaces, governmental institutions and cultural spaces. The area has continuously changed its shape due to filling of the sea with land, and it maintained its status of being a commercial, administrative, and social focus point from past to present. Konak Square, an open public space located in an area where the land meets the sea -and the clock tower is in the middle- stands as one of the city's significant symbols.



**Figure 1.** Izmir located on the west coast of Turkey. (Adapted by the authors)



**Figure 2.** The study area: Konak Square and historical Kemeraltı Bazaar.  
(Adapted by the authors, Source: Google Earth, 2011)

We set the boundaries of the study area in a way that it covers Anafartalar Avenue as the main arterial road and the most important historical track of Kemeraltı Bazaar, and Konak Square as its ending point where the square reaches the sea. In this urban reading study we have conducted on streets, urban spaces and structures, we studied the blocks that are located on both sides of Anafartalar Avenue. “Kemeraltı Bazaar, where the 17<sup>th</sup> century traditional shopping activity took place based on long-distance trades with exchanging and bargaining, transformed into a bazaar within the course of history where retail and wholesale trade take place applying the rules of price policies determined within the context of free market economy” (Karatosun et.al., 2006:11). It is possible to view this transformation within the richness that arises from the togetherness of commercial buildings that were added over the course of time. As a matter of fact, we can also see the use of passages and markets that were added to the city’s commercial structure during the 20th century in addition to the important historical building stock such as inn, covered bazaar, Turkish bath, mosque, church, synagogue and fountain. Moreover, there are streets in the bazaar where single-product stores such as bridal dress shops, spice stores and jewelers are located together. Kemeraltı is a vibrant shopping area that attracts many consumers, not just from Izmir but also from a greater region, by offering a great deal of products. Having emerged as a historical mark as a result of landfilling the inner harbor during the 16th

century, Anafartalar Avenue serves as a backbone for Kemeralti shopping area. This mark has increasingly turned into a historical center while developing towards the sea with its commercial functions and inns, and has survived to this day by maintaining its significance even though it has experienced a number of physical interferences in accordance with the city's ever-changing dynamics and demands.



**Figure 3.** Konak Square and the historical Kemeralti Bazaar (Source: Erdin & Zengin Archieve, 2011)

### 3.1. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to read the urban space with its founding elements at the heart of Izmir's historical city center and is based on;

- Evaluating the visible **physical reality** on the basis of visual, audial, tactile and other elements that are open to perception and,
- Analyzing the **relational pattern** conceptually while understanding different factors that led to the appearance of present reality.

Within this framework, the students examined the physical formation that determines the urban environment in terms of form, space, color, texture, light, sound and similar criteria individually. They also attempted to spatialize the decisive economic, social, historical or cultural characteristics for physical structuring by evaluating the analyses they carried out on the field together with the researches concerning the region. As a result, this study aimed to enable every student group to create authentic cognitive maps through abstraction, and to visualize their research by using creative techniques.

The study was structured in a content that;

- puts abstract thought development into focus,
- aims to give questioning and investigating practice,
- does not limit the perception studies with shape or form, but is open to developing them using a broader perspective,
- persuades the creation of problems by the student him/herself,
- provides awareness
- students can see the possibilities,
- is based on research,
- necessitates the share of information,
- supports cooperation and creation of collective ideas,
- turns the techniques into a tool rather than a purpose,



- has flexibility of using technological resources in building abstract thinking and better presenting them,
- is liberating in terms of project ideas and presentation,
- provides the ability to include design principles and elements as a whole in one project,
- is based on a phased study process in the form of research, experience, abstraction or visualization in two or three dimensions.

### 3.2. Methodology of the Study

The fact that the project was scheduled within the second semester's Space and Design studio that followed Basic Design studio that was offered during the first semester of freshman class in the Department of City and Regional Planning undergraduate program primarily requires the examining of the subject within basic design principles and elements. From this point on, we created a setting that features the visual perception characteristics of space, and includes both physical and conceptual abstractions as well. Lynch's five basic concepts (paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks) constituted the main structuring of this study in support of additional concepts and definitions. The students were requested to make an evaluation in two scopes that were related to **physical** and **vital** characteristics in the study that included a track and a square where no fixed borders were provided in order to test the border perception of students.

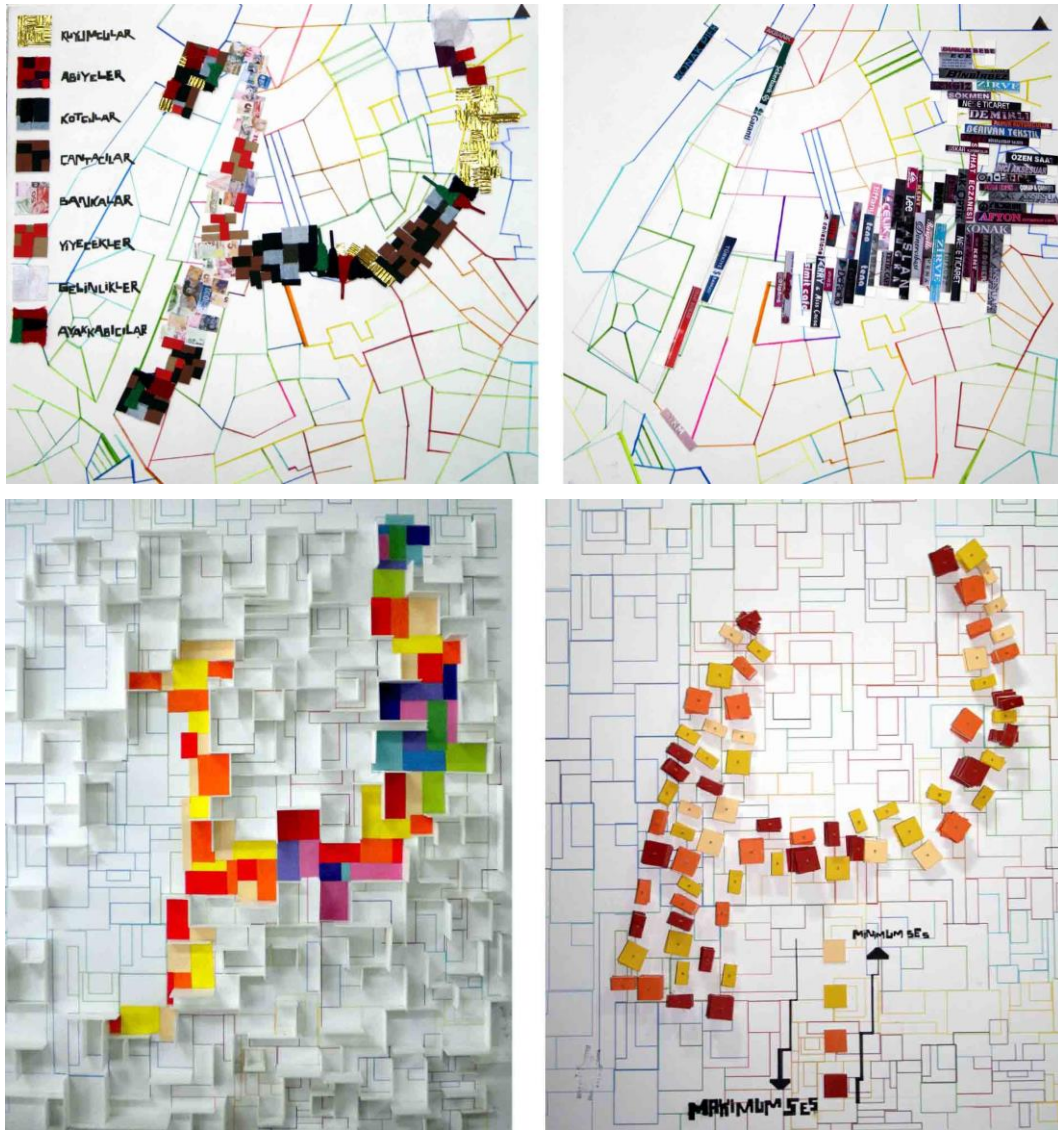
Groups consisting of four students conducted free observations and evaluations in the area and decided on a theme during the first phase of the three-week study period. The groups extracted the elements that became distinct in their perceptions regarding the area and determined thirteen different themes such as *the Look, the Transformation, the Disintegration, the Mosaic, the Rhythm, the Chaos, the (Lack of) Repetition, the Variety, the Contrast, the Trace, the Contact, the Sound and Tension, and Security*. Then the students conducted observations and examination in the research area and near vicinity within the context of their themes. Following that, they visualized them using their detailed evaluations that they concluded regarding the characteristics of the space and the life that continues within, and the cognitive maps that they developed by the help of Lynch's five basic parameters through rich, creative, abstract expression and presentation formats. The end products were released as open for improvement in a form to include sufficient number of maps whose scale was not limited and to cover more detailed expressions. The groups also prepared a presentation of 5 minutes that would include the music of their choice, which would fit their enriched products and themes that were prepared using technical elements such as photographs, camera recordings and sound records.

### 3.3. Findings of the Study

The group studies highlighted the 13 different features of the region through 13 different themes. The defined characteristics point out several variables that will be generally observed in all historical urban areas, especially characteristic changes that become apparent due to transformations that took place in physical and socioeconomic conditions during the process. We have discussed seven of the aforementioned themes in detail in this article that presented impressive findings.

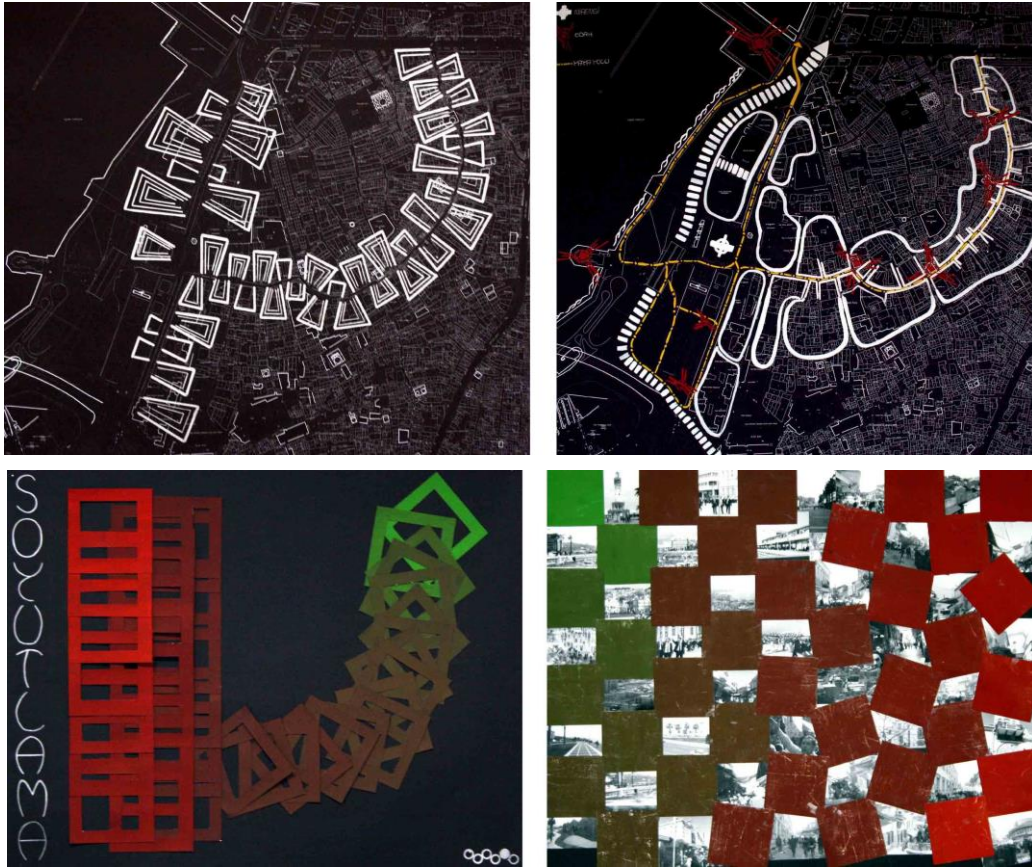
The first of the studies defined Anafartalar Avenue, the backbone of Kemeralti Bazaar, as a “**Mosaic**” considering that it is hosting different land use types and different user groups, and it progressed by shaping itself around this theme. The students, who worked within this framework, turned façade characteristics, wall patterns and colors, windows, doors, shop windows display characteristics, signs, and names into graphic presentations in a way that would reflect the physical sophistication of the region. Aside from physical characteristics, the group interpreted the region as a mosaic in terms of social perspective as well and conducted some analyses that would focus on the characteristics of user groups. In analyses that focused on birth-places of storekeepers that have been conducting business in the region, it was concluded that, although the local differentiation of birth-places was high, it had not turned into any separation in space and in contrast; an intertwined mosaic setting was dominant. In the study where different faces and voices were

under focus, the mosaic structure that was created by businesses selling similar products such as jewelers, bride stores, bag/purse sellers and shoe stores was examined as a spatial grouping denominator



**Figure 4-5.** Selected drawings from the Mosaic theme (Source: Authors)

It can be observed that the square has a distinct rhythm that sets itself apart from other regions, all while still maintaining its status of being an attraction place as Izmir's historical urban center in terms of significant historical roots, as well as the abundance and the variety of activities. The characteristic of the region's authentic rhythm as a special feature of the area inspired one of the studies and subsequently the group attempted to read the study area based on the variables that create a “**Rhythm**” feeling. The study was shaped with the motto “Listen to the Rhythm of Life,” and the students performed several abstractions by taking repetitive characteristics based on sound, motion, color, pattern and form.



**Figure 6-7.** Selected drawings from the Rhythm theme (Source: Authors)

The studies that have been conducted in this area also concluded that there have been non-repetitive elements as much as repetitive variables in terms of presenting the existence of an authentic rhythm. One of the studies aimed to extract single and particular elements while examining the area within the framework of “**(Lack of) Repetition**” theme. In this context, the group identified the most prestigious, economically the most saturated, image-wise most wanted, the most degenerated, the newest and the most frequently used spots etc. and attempted to spatialize them.



**Figure 8.** Selected drawings from the (Lack of) Repetition theme (Source: Authors)



The “**Chaos**” that has been observed at historical city centers has been one of the most significant characteristics of the area as well, and therefore became one of the study topics. The chaos theme in the region attempts to draw the attention to the presence of sophisticated and complex relations and to the particular language of structuring in the area. Study emphasizes the richness, which was created as an authentic value as a result of the color and variety sophistication that arose from the disorganization of the area's way of use. The group used basic geometric forms in their hard and soft dilemmas, using them as a reference point in their group presentations and emphasized the basic trace that shapes the pattern by simplifying it. The group used a plain and effective expression language in their abstractions in terms of color and form unity and also tried to explain the chaos theme in terms of the picture and noise as well as the user and activity variety.

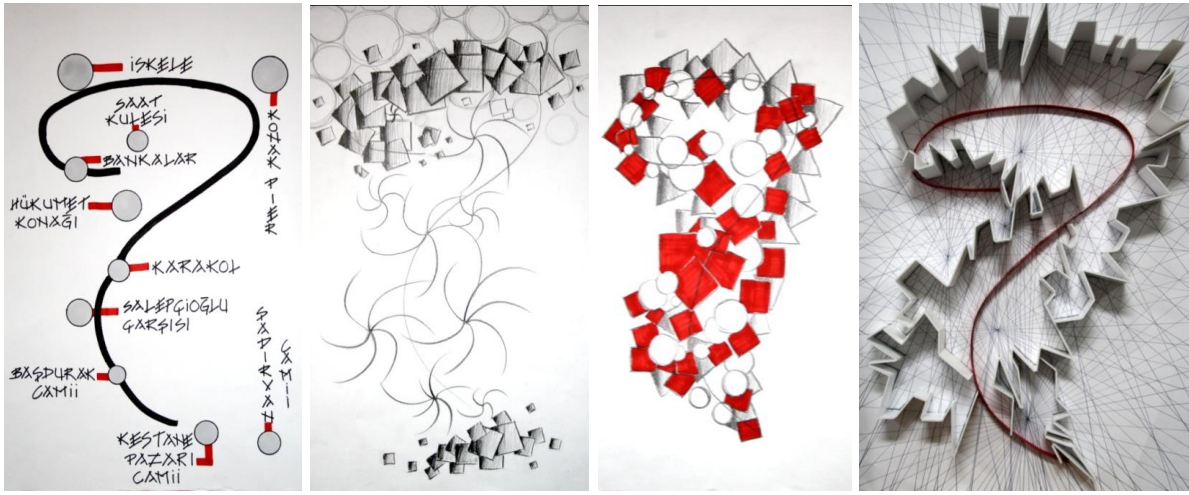


Figure 9. Selected drawings from the Chaos theme (Source: Authors)

Kemeraltı bazaar is also attracting many different social groups with its authentic pattern as a commercial area that has been used intensively all year round. One of the studies set off from this characteristic of the area and investigated the possibilities of conducting an urban reading from everyone's perspective using “**Look**” theme. While the area carried a different meaning for everyone, and it had been mostly used by adults, the group members first asked children visiting the area with their parents to draw something that would illustrate the space around them in order to analyze the meaning of the region for a child. Those drawings indicated that the study area was associated with concepts such as chaos, color, and entertainment from a child's perspective. Second, the group members evaluated the area from the perspective of a visually impaired person's perception. One of the students tied her eyes and walk through the entire area accompanied by her other friends and provided interpretations based on sound, smell and tactile identification. Therefore this study has gained more importance because it did not only provide interpretations of urban perceptions while developing empathy with a visually impaired person, but it also provided a feeling experience of the environment without seeing it in more details.



**Figure 10.** Selected drawings from the Look theme (Source: Authors)

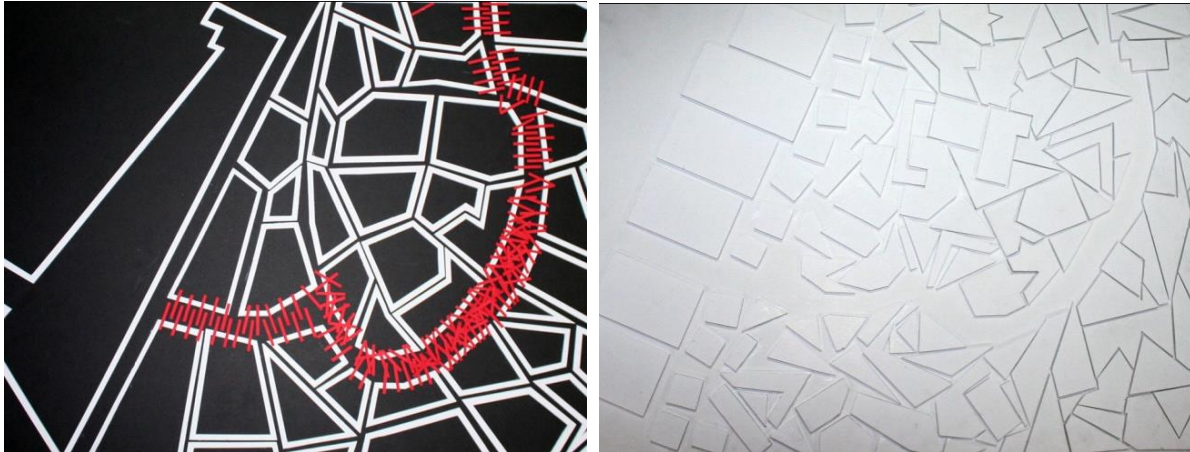
Konak and Kemeralti is an area through which the historical transformation can be easily grasped. Another group used the motto “History Does Not Disappear, It Gets Destroyed” in analyzing the historical urban texture that has been under serious threats from this perspective. The group chose “**Transformation**” as the theme and put together a study that examined spatial characteristic changes and transformations based on the type of use and the representation scheme that has taken place in the area over the course of time. The group used a spiral form in order to emphasize the continuity of transformation in question and preferred round and black and white expressions in expressing the history's tracks and angled and colored expressions in expressing the structuring of the recent period. In detailed analyses, they grouped all structures in the study area based on the dates when they were constructed, and identified the spots where the transformation took place the most and the structures that still maintain or lost their functionality and finally illustrated them through graphic presentations.



**Figure 11.** Selected drawings from the Transformation theme (Source: Authors)

The last study examined the degeneration that transformation caused in space and the changing physical and social formation that differ from traditional center to the modern center through landfill using the motto “Disintegrating Network, Changing Pattern.” The students who examined “**Disintegration**” on two different levels in this study performed abstractions that first were based on the disintegration that was taking place in terms of commercial relations in the area. The second abstraction was based on physical disintegrations that were arising from buildings. The students, in analyses that they developed regarding the old and new commercial units, identified that the commercial relations had displayed a disintegration that was parallel to social and spatial characteristic changes. According to that, they graphically illustrated how the solidarity and unity spirit between the shop owners dominating the old section on Anafartalar Avenue had disintegrated

and was replaced with a competitive environment towards Konak Square. Within this context, they expressed the solidarity structure and harmony, whose tracks were still visible, using intertwined and mutually complementary polygons, while - at the same time - illustrating the competition and individuality in the newly developing pattern using shapes with pointy edges and geometrically inharmonious forms that would not constitute any unity.



**Figure 12.** Selected drawings from the Disintegration theme (Source: Authors)

#### 4. Conclusion

A study to read urban space is the first step of design and planning training, and they present a great significance for urban planners that will plan and design the future living environments. Having been conducted in Izmir's historical city center, this study has provided crucial inputs for sequential planning studios and design studies that would be conducted professionally. Depending on the information and experience that were obtained during the course of study, the appearance of mentioned inputs based on a process focused program is vital. The students established a contact with spatial integrity by incorporating their life-long experience to their basic design training knowledge, developing many assessment criteria that would not be limited to only visual perception. At this point, they tried to connect with social, economic, cultural and historical elements, and the content integrity that develops with such elements in a manner that they would not be limited to only apparent physical reality.

The students attempted to obtain answers by questioning a piece of space many times, depending on their knowledge and experience of sensitivity and awareness. In addition, the fact that the study area was not presented with a definite border enabled the appearance of authentic border descriptions that were compatible with selected themes. While this type of study turned into a tool that would enable the students to construct the problem by themselves, it also served them to conduct much more detailed observations and examinations on the spatial integrity. Furthermore, the fact that the study was conducted in groups supported generating joint ideas which enriched the study by the presence of the synergy. In this study setting that complicated the ability to conduct a research, the students experienced working within a broad scope of parameters that would not be limited in perception to only shape or form. In a historical urban area where Lynch's basic parameters to analyze the urban space fell insufficient, they opened a great many additional concepts to discussion. The groups sometimes made assessments using technical measures and developed different analyses based on senses at other times.

How the obtained information and experience would be converted into concrete outputs, and what kind of language would be used to express them, are some of basic problems that are encountered in all design studies. At this point, preferring a liberal approach in terms of the project idea and the presentation provided the outcome of a creative and an authentic expression language. The products consisting of a logo, a poster, two-dimensional drawings, a model and a short video with alternative presentation styles that use the design

principles and elements, that are based on abstraction and that transform the technique into a tool provide an alternative type of approach for basic design and subsequent planning studios.

## 5. Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to our dear colleagues Assoc.Prof.Dr. Mert Cubukcu, Assist.Prof.Dr. Burcu Silaydin Aydin, Rsrch.Asst. Ibrahim Akgul and all of our students for their diligence, creative conclusions and excitements throughout the study.

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