

A Study on the Positive and Negative Effects of the Pedestrianization of Zafer Square in Konya on Trades people and Users

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to examine the pedestrianization of Konya-Zafer Square in terms of landscape architecture. Primarily, the necessity and the importance of pedestrianization for cities and city centers were emphasized and general principles of urban design and pedestrianization were determined. Then, the problems encountered at the implementation stage were discussed and the factors that should be considered in the design of a pedestrian area and square were examined. Moreover, in this study, two types of surveys were separately applied to the pedestrians and shop owners in relation to the pedestrianization of Zafer Square in different months, days and random hours during the year. It was identified as a result of the survey study and observations conducted in the field that the most basic problems of Zafer Square of which project was carried out by the municipality were the lack of parking area, environmental pollution, the lack of urban furniture and insufficient green areas.

Key Words: *Pedestrianization, Urban Green Areas, Square Landscape Design, Konya/Turkey,*

INTRODUCTION

City is living organism, which, in any time section, should be characterized by historical and contemporary elements. How to, on the basis of landscape planning and design, treat historical culture and conduct inheritance and innovation for regional historical culture is very significant (Wenting et al. 2013).

Urban space is the parts of the city defined by buildings, but remaining outside the buildings. The city has the characteristics of three-dimensional arrangements regarding the opportunities of illumination, ventilation, micro-climate, sound system, protection and shelter including the actions of people. Urban space is directly related to the architectural space. Although urban space and architectural space are the areas in the same sense due to the continuity between them in the traditional urban order, the architectural space was structurally and perceptually isolated together with modernism and it adopted the characteristics of the buildings independent of each other. For many years, squares have been defined as a space limited by the constantly closed environment. However, since the end of the 19th century, they have changed their meaning with the openings created between the buildings, have become active with these openings and have been associated with open areas in the environment (Özdemir 2001).

Squares appeared when the housing units were grouped around an open area. This arrangement not only made it considerably possible to control the area inside but also made it easier to protect it against external factors. Squares extended from the central court identified by the rooms around it to arcaded mosques and monastery courts or to agora and forum examples on a larger scale (Önder and Aklanoğlu 2002).

The main objective of the design projects conducted for a square should be to increase the quality of the settlement in the environment. It is observed that the areas created meaninglessly and called “square” complicate the urban life. It is known that such areas cannot integrate with their environment and do not meet the social and recreative needs of the citizens. These spaces should obtain different meanings beyond being just a space serving the building in front of them (Kuntay 1994).

The fact that commercial activities such as shopping centers gain importance in the areas organized for pedestrians also enables the economic potential to develop in that region. Moreover, since it is not necessary to expand the roads for traffic, the roadside structures do not require demolition and construction costs and they can be used for many years. Pedestrians need quiet environments free of vehicles to perform various activities such as relaxing and walking around safely and comfortably (Kuntay 1994).

The most effective elements that develop the identity of cities and in which citizens identify themselves with the city are historical environments. Historical environments that should be protected and kept alive due to their cultural, social, economic, archaeological and aesthetic values increase the perceptibility of cities by transmitting the feelings, thoughts, social life and accumulations in the eras they were established to the present day (Ter 2002).

Nowadays, the problems such as the demolition of the planning decisions without the concern of rapid urbanization, population growth and protection and renewal as high-rise buildings, transforming into collapse areas, increase in transportation facilities, lack of parking areas and abandonment due to the increasing use of central business areas in the historical city centers have caused damage in the historical texture (Ter 2002).

Cambridge dictionary defines Pedestrianization as “to make an area into one where vehicles are not allowed to go”. Hence, Pedestrianization is to convert (a street) into an area for the use of pedestrians only, by excluding all motor vehicles. “Car-free” space or city is another popular term. An area cannot be pedestrianized in isolation. It is always coupled with improvement and creation of effective and sufficient public-transportation facilities, pedestrian infrastructure and non-motorized transportation (e.g. bicycle) infrastructure (Soni and Soni 2016).

The possible adverse effects on the environment include the fact that pedestrianization tends to worsen accessibility to car users, and often generates an increase in the traffic flow in the surrounding areas, which represents increased travel time and fuel consumption for travelers. In the economic and social aspect, access to pedestrianized zones is a subject of utmost importance. If pedestrian streets are not easily accessible to a large segment of the local population their activity levels will steadily diminish. Furthermore, pedestrianization can discourage car users to travel to the traffic-free area and induce changes to other more accessible destinations, usually situated out-of town. (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2016).

Our study is based on the examination of the relationship between social life and space in the formation and transformation of urban public spaces and on the investigation of the publicity of these spaces. In the transformation and formation of urban public spaces, Zafer Square was examined as an example to analyze the social-spatial relations.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The main material of our study consists of theses, books, magazines and other publications related to the square and pedestrian areas. Observations were made and photographs were taken in Zafer Square and the pedestrian zone, which constituted the study area, in different seasons and hours during the year. The study area was defined, its structural characteristics were examined and the negative and positive aspects of pedestrianization for this area were analyzed. The needs and deficiencies of the area were identified. While determining the reasons for preferring the area for the residents, shop owners in the area and users coming outside the area, the surveys were separately applied to the users and shop owners to identify their opinions related to the pedestrianization of the study area and they were included in the synthesis of this study. Eventually, suggestions for the area were identified and included in accordance with the aim and objectives determined.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Zafer Square connects the districts of Karatay and Meram in Konya. There is Alaaddin Hill in the east of Zafer Square, the Mevlana Mausoleum around it, the Ince Minaret Madrasa, fairground and the old Court House in the north, the Urban Cinema in the west and Monumental Square in the south. Zafer Square is one of the significant meeting centers for Konya. Thus, it is easy to access with public transportation vehicles such as minibuses, trams, and buses. The location of Zafer Square is indicated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The location of Zafer Square from Google Map.

The corridors extending from Alaaddin Hill to the west, east and south now constitute the most used transportation lines in the city. According to the planning decisions made in the 1966 Construction Plan, the direction of development in the city is north. Nowadays, Ankara Street in the north and New Istanbul Street reaching the campus in the north-west are the most significant corridors in the city (Önder and Aklanoğlu 2002).

The aspects of success and deficiencies of the applied pedestrian area

The determination of the requests and characteristics of the current tradespeople in Zafer Square

After twenty years of testing in many cities, pedestrianization has emerged as an effective method for controlling and managing the urban traffic, revitalizing slummed city centers, taking historical regions under protection, enhancing the environmental quality and characteristics of the area, and creating social opportunities to respond to a wide range of needs.

Zafer Square has the characteristics of a pedestrian zone in the city center rather than the identity of a square because the stops of public transport vehicles that provide access to the various settlement areas of the city are located here and the circulation is conveniently provided as an area with a high potential for pedestrians (Sözeri 2009).



Figure 2. Zafer square (Anonymous 2016)

Zafer Square is easy to access due to its location and environment. There are tram, bus and minibus stops in or near the area.

The circle trips provided by trams and minibuses are one of the reasons for its preference by the users coming from outside. Although two large parking areas have been opened in recent years, one of them being multi-storey and another one being underground, it has partially lost its characteristic of being preferred since the users who come with a private car experience parking problems, especially at the weekend. This situation emerged in the surveys applied to the users.

It was also attempted to make Zafer Square attractive for its users to walk around with elements such as ponds, fountains, seating groups, plant crates, sculptures, and square clocks.

However, it was seen as a result of the surveys conducted and the observations of the users' behaviors (sitting on the flower crates due to the lack of seating elements, etc.) in the area that these works were insufficient.

The results of the surveys indicated that the pedestrianization of Zafer Square was positive in terms of urban aesthetics. Although the square did not lose its income and popularity as a result of the pedestrianization (closing to vehicle traffic), 70% of the tradespeople reported that they lost their regular customers. While the clothing stores, shoe stores, home textile stores, opticians, pharmacies, etc. were negatively affected by this situation, businesses such as internet cafes, cafeterias and restaurants were positively affected.

The pedestrianization of Zafer Square increased the use of public transports, but for those who do not prefer public transport, it, unfortunately, lost its characteristic of being a frequent destination.

Special events such as music and theater activities in the streets, games, various activities, competitions and award ceremonies are periodically organized in European cities to attract people to city centers. Various activities attract users of different types. Moreover, the activities selected and programmed carefully encourage the use of pedestrian areas in the evening.

The pedestrianization of Zafer Square made the usages such as marching of the Ottoman Military Band on historical days, music and dance activities among the youngsters and gathering of sports fans under the flag of Konyaspor in the square on the days of Konyaspor matches possible. Therefore, it enabled people to participate in social activities.

According to the results of the surveys, the majority of the people using the square consist of university students. Therefore, inner/outer city tram/bus ticket offices located in the square provide advantages for the users.

Sanitary units, charging stations for mobile phones and ATMs placed at certain intervals are significant in terms of the utility of the square.

The youngest among the tradespeople surveyed is 19, the oldest is 67 years old and the average age of the individuals is 36 years. 8% of the individuals studied are female. While conducting the survey, various types of tradespeople were considered (jeweler, pharmacy, shoe-seller, restaurant owner, cafeteria managers, photographers, ready-to-wear store owners, dowry stores, optician, exchange bureau, cosmetics, stationery, perfumery, etc.)

Among the tradespeople surveyed in Zafer Square, the tradesperson working the longest time has worked for 33 years and the one working for the shortest time has worked for 1 year. This is because the type of usage has changed over time; the tradespeople had to turn to different working areas and gave their places to fast-food-musical entertainment places, internet cafes.

64% of the tradespeople were high school graduate, 19% were university graduates.

Negative characteristics of Zafer Square

66,7% experienced parking problems,
32,4% stated that it stopped being a safe place during the day and night,
65% stated that customer potential decreased,
22,2% stated that plantal areas are insufficient,

8,3% stated that it is a noisy area,
2,7% stated that it is a crowded area.

The biggest complaint of shop owners in the square is that the user profile has changed in general terms. Tradespeople have stated that they have lost their customers due to the fact that a lot of people without a job/aimless spend time here, disturb people and cause frequent scenes of disturbance.

While 77,8% of the tradespeople stated that the pedestrianization of the square had negative results, 22,2% stated that the pedestrianization had positive results. People who are satisfied with the pedestrianization of the street are 100% cafeteria/restaurant and internet cafe managers.

The thought that Zafer Square lost its popularity with the pedestrianization was revealed to have the highest rate. 53,6% stated that the number of customers with money and cars decreased considerably, 61,4% reported that more aimless (without customer potential) people come to the square when compared to the past.

68% of the tradespeople complain that the municipality does not work enough and there is a garbage problem.

The determination of the requests and characteristics of the users coming to Zafer Square from outside

The youngest among the people surveyed is 17, the oldest is 55 years old and the average age of the individuals is 34,5 years. 56,6% of the individuals surveyed are female. The vast majority (63%) of the people who came to the square from outside and were surveyed had a university education. (14% Master Degree/Doctorate 49% University graduate)

Zafer Square is located in an easily accessible central place in terms of transportation and it can be reached by public transport almost from everywhere.

64,8% of the users reach the square by means of public transport. 85,7% of the people of 36,7% coming to the square by private cars stated that they experienced parking problems. 13,4% of the users come to the square to walk, 11,5% to rest, 74,8% to go shopping, 45,7% to eat, and 11,5% to musical entertainment centers. The time intervals when the users come to Zafer Square at most were identified to be weekends by 52% and night on weekdays by 35%. (Same situation it has been explained in (Dönmez et al. 2016) the main problem which the visitors are forced to suffer, is the inadequacy of parking lots. Particularly on weekends and holidays, serious difficulties are experienced for finding parking lot within the Safranbolu Çarşı zone)

While 63,5% of the users find the sidewalks sufficient to walk around in Zafer Square, 36,5% find them insufficient. 34,6% of the users find the reinforcement elements sufficient. It was identified there are enough cafeterias to sit. 65,4% of the users found the reinforcement elements insufficient and stated that they wanted to rest in shaded areas in the open air after shopping but the shaded benches were insufficient.

30,7% of the users coming from outside consider that the street has lost its popularity because of its pedestrianization. 77,6% stated that after the pedestrianization more pedestrians come to the street since it is a place which mostly provides service to pedestrians and vehicles cause problems for pedestrians, 19,4% stated that the number of cafeterias, restaurants and

musical entertainment centers and internet cafes increased and 5,1% stated that the Square did not lose its popularity since it was already a known place.

The landscape design was found to be insufficient by the majority of approximately 62%. 57,7% stated that they wanted more plants, 51,9% wanted more seating groups, 51,8% wanted shaded seating elements such as an arbor, 21,1% wanted playgrounds, 7,6% wanted sculptures and 72,1% wanted water shows.

Citizen and business participation is essential to obtain commitment for the proposed changes and vision. Citizens' needs and convenience are tightly linked to public acceptability, calling for more public participation in the planning and policy-making process, which needs to become more transparent to those affected first-hand. Public acceptability and citizens' movements are core to successful implementation and radical change (Nieuwenhuijsen and Khreis 2016).

Anti-pedestrianization groups find their justification in these possible negative effects. The first of these groups worth highlighting is drivers due to limitations on car access to these areas; secondly, some residents in the area find access to their homes by vehicle impeded or public transport stops moved further away; thirdly, workers in the area experience a possible increase in the amount of time that it takes them to reach their places of work and finally, retailers and their associations due to the possible fall in sales that would be brought about by making pedestrian access difficult on account of the lack of parking space and public transport (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2016).

CONCLUSION

Suggestions

Dynamism is gained with the activities in squares and shopping centers around them. The width of pedestrian areas should be determined according to the density of pedestrians. The minimum width should be 1.5 m. Sidewalks can be afforested at the distance of 2.50 m from the structure. There is urban furniture such as illumination elements and traffic signs, sitting benches, dustbins, and mailboxes, phone boxes on the sidewalks. The height of the sidewalk should be 12 cm to provide comfortable walking. This height can be reduced in front of the parcels with vehicle access.

Trees in pedestrian areas are used for the following purposes:

- a) Directing the pedestrians,
- b) Providing shade,
- c) Creating an aesthetic and natural texture along the way.

The points to consider while afforesting pedestrian areas:

- a) Trees can be placed on the right, left or in the middle of the sidewalk according to other variables in the environment.
- b) Since there is a need for shade in areas which require waiting such as bus stops and phone boxes, afforestation should be carried out.

- c) Tree species should be selected considering the width of the sidewalk, road direction and the need for shade.
- d) As trees and other plants can be fixedly grouped in certain areas, they can also be used in pots (Özkal 1990).

Trade-weighted arteries are created to provide special benefits to urban centers which are most affected by traffic noise and air pollution and in which open spaces are insufficient, but where the examples of the urban historic heritage are generally located. In some cases, these centers can be improved by renewal to be able to compete with shopping centers outside the city. Thus, it is aimed to attract the attention of investors and increase the retail sales. The pedestrianization of trade-weighted arteries is also conducted to improve the shopping opportunity, socialization, business, and entertainment by attracting more people to city centers. The objectives of the designs of pedestrianized trade-weighted arteries vary by conditions. However, the underlying problems are connected to each other and design approaches are similar to each other (Bayraktar 1998).

Trade routes are the shops in trade areas that run along the traffic route. These areas were preferred both by sellers and buyers especially during the periods when automobiles were developing. Trade routes are streets with sidewalks with single or double-sided shopping activity. The shops on these trade routes usually provide their delivery service from the street in the middle. However, there are trade routes which take delivery from the back street (Yalçinkaya, 2007).

Zafer Square is the trade route surrounded by shops. Zafer Square, which is a chaos of pedestrians and vehicles, has acquired the characteristics of a pedestrian trade route with its new regulation, and the problem has been resolved. Pedestrians can comfortably walk around in safety in this area without any obstructions and can look at the display windows of the shops on the ground floor.

Alternative activity areas for pedestrians are created according to the width of the sidewalk, trade capacity and the density of pedestrians. Stopover areas (on-the-road cafeterias, restaurants, buffets, fast-food, etc.), recreation areas (open air seating elements and seating groups, etc.) bring activity diversity and variety to the space. However, open air seating groups are considered as insufficient by the users, more benches, dustbins and shade elements such as arbors are requested.

The majority of the businesses in Zafer Square occupy place by covering the route that pedestrians pass with sunshades and by placing tables on the grounds that there are not enough enclosed areas, by taking advantages of the pedestrianization of the square. The municipality should apply serious sanctions in this respect.

Because of Zafer Square's characteristic of being a shopping center, the needs of pedestrians such as resting, being protected from sun/rain should be met and the lack of urban furniture should be eliminated. Moreover, this deficiency comes out as a request of the users by examining the results of the surveys.

Although there are pools that will be affected by the sound effects of water shows in the square, they are not welcomed by the users since the required maintenance is not carried out and upon their requests, the users should be enabled to spend time in the square by relaxing

with the use of water elements such as aquarium that can be watched. It was concluded from the survey study conducted that the users wanted the water show elements such as moving water surfaces and aquarium to be established in the area.

The stifling and boring image created by the existing structure frequency in the square can be softened by the plantal material to be used intensively. It is especially important to pay attention to the use of flowers and bushes that attract attention and comfort with their odor. It was concluded as a result of the survey study conducted that the users find the plantal material insufficient and they want more trees and bushes to be used.

Various illumination elements used in the square improve the visual area at night and also they are aesthetically attractive elements and bring a different dimension to the area.

In the pedestrian areas arranged by closing the motor vehicle traffic completely, entrances should be emphasized with different flooring and border elements which prevent vehicle entry should be used. Areas, where individuals can rest and move freely by moving away from the dense and noisy urban environment under pressure, can be created (Yalçınkaya, 2007).

The municipality should pay attention to the maintenance and cleaning of the square because damages to the reinforcement elements such as fountains, obstacles, square clocks and hard soil floorings in the square may cause significant danger for pedestrians in the future.

In the survey study conducted, the users stated that the municipality did not carry out the required maintenance.

The Whirling Dervish Monument, Maverâünnehir Monument, and fountains to which a historical appearance was provided, which were used in the square, remained insufficient in creating integrity with the historical buildings around the square. If it is required to emphasize the historical buildings around the square while designing it, the design that will be carried out should be related to the whole of the city.

The schoolyard next to the square is used as a parking area. However, streets crossing the square are also used as parking areas due to the lack of parking areas. Therefore, vehicles using the street have difficulties while passing it.

There is the Retired Police Club in the square. While the police walking around the club and in the square provide security in the daytime, it was identified in the surveys conducted that the square was not safe in the evening and at night. Therefore, it will be an appropriate decision to have security units continuously patrolling the square.

Moreover, people stated in the survey study conducted that the safety of the square was not provided sufficiently, people were hesitant to use it at evening hours, they did not pass the square unless they had to, and usually the thinner-addicted and side-cutters came to the square at evening hours.

Since other users are uncomfortable with the activities conducted under the flag of Konyaspor in the square during matches, a security unit should be established in the square.

The businesses complain that they cannot provide delivery service sufficiently after the pedestrianization. While a part of the square is opened to the traffic during certain hours for the material procurement of the businesses, the other parts complain that they cannot benefit from this service.

The functionality of the square can be increased by placing information plates and billboards in the square for the users and physically handicapped people.

After the pedestrianization, problems started to arise due to the fact that the soil survey and its control were not carried out sufficiently during the implementation in the square after the area's opening for use. To prevent these problems, it is necessary to carry out required maintenance on the hard floor covering.

Tree bottom loopholes used to protect the roots of trees on the hard floor were placed carelessly. Therefore, they have neither functionality nor an aesthetic appearance. Moreover, they pose danger for physically handicapped users. It is required to eliminate this kind of damages in the area.

Flower parterres and flower pots in the sitting units under trees are used as dustbins since there are not enough dustbins in the square. Furthermore, the flower crates in the walkway are used as seating elements due to the lack of seating units. With more urban furniture to be used in the square, the need of people can be met. Moreover, it is clear in the surveys conducted that people want more seating units.

Since there is not a parking area for the users of bikes and motorcycles in the square, the fact that vehicles are randomly parked in the square constitutes a problem. In order to solve this problem, more parking areas should be established for these kinds of vehicles.

It was determined as a result of the survey and evaluation conducted that while the pedestrianization of Zafer Square was not considered as positive by the tradespeople, it was seen as positive by the users.

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