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City, Space and Publicness: Perceptions and Experiences in The Case of Isparta

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Abstract. Cities has been the bedrocks of state as an organized form of societies in the process of development of civilizations. The German saying “urban air makes individuals free-stadt luft macht frei” emphasizes the importance of cities in the lives of societies and the social lives of humans. Streets, squares, parks, urban open spaces are the areas of personal and group freedom and relations or conflict and collaboration where urban dwellers come together, meet and get closer, express themselves individually or together with others, breed, enhance and experience urban culture. Urban space and the meaning and functions attributed to it are the basic determinants of societal and personal relations and communication. Space is the constructed environment surrounding humans and, to some degree isolating them from their environment, but enable them to maintain their actions and lives. Thus, urban space is a three dimensional representation of gap, distance, relations and communication of humans with other humans and their environment and the positioning of urban form in urban space. Cities are constructed social spaces with their urban forms, buildings, work places, streets, roads, sidewalks, parks and gardens, squares, lightings, urban furniture, opens paces etc. Urban space involves open and empty space as well as constructed space. The main characteristic of urban space is that it houses social life and texture. This social life could be private or public, personal or in group, and individual or institutional. It provides a public arena for humans to maintain their lives, get socialized, communicate with others, and help build an urban identity encompassing the whole city. Urban space could be divided as “public” and “private”. Public space is the common arenas used for social and public purposes open to all public whereas private space is the areas that belong to individuals for their own personal or familial use. In recent years, the meaning of public space has become blurred. Public service areas and structures owned or / and operated by private entrepreneurs such as malls, entertainment centers, airports, parking areas, GSM transmitter/receiver stations, among others, as well as socioeconomic and technological transformations has increased the complexity of the distinction of public and private space. In this study, after the concepts and phenomena of city and space are defined conceptually, and their theoretical foundations are provided, they are evaluated on the base of perspectives and perceptions of the urban dwellers. The field research of the phenomena questioned is conducted in the city of Isparta, and data is collected by questionnaires, visuals and observation in all the neighborhoods of the city. According to the data collected through the field research, the phenomena of city and public and private urban space are evaluated. Besides, how the Ispartans perceive and experience city, urban space, private and public space and differences are explored. Moreover, on the base of the findings, the importance of the city’s “public spaces and places” in the lives of the Ispartans are discussed in terms of publicness.



1. Concept of Public Sphere / Space

Area is understood as a relatively large space which is indeed a geographical segment. Space on the other hand is a place necessary to exist. Generally as it is in the subject of an architectural field, it is also handled in various disciplines. Space can be defined as “the most appropriate place for some suitable purpose”, [1].

When we mention space, an abstract and empty place is understood: “A limitless magnitude that encompass all limited quantities” [2] However Aristoteles whom we find the roots of this concept has mentioned that space is not an empty space but enfoldment of space with some another thing, its surroundment” [3] With this condition, space could be perceived as a limited place in which various entities are found. Lefébvre sees space as places which are handled by human touch earned by mutual relationships through real entities-existence. “The public” enlisted in the conception “public sphere” means open to “everybody”, “totality” overlaps with its historical definition. Therefore, public sphere or space can be expressed as “an open place belonging to everybody open to use of all citizens”. It is first time used in “The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere” by Jurgen Habermas [4] which was originally published in German in 1962 but republished several times since then in English:

“Public sphere, in modern societal theories is a life space where tools, process and spaces are defined as a conception that refers to a space thoughts, discourses and actions are produced and developed in order to determine a societal common good, followed by people reason about a common issue that concern themselves, discuss a rational argumentation and as a result of this argumentation constitute a common opinion, public opinion.”

As understood from the definition above public sphere is situated in between civil and political sphere. Societal and political sphere that is the difference between family and public sphere is first seen in Aristoteles. His work “Politics” uses the conception of civil society for the first time in “koinonia politike- societas civilis”. The conception “koinonia” in Ancient Greece reminds values such as co-existence, solidarity, commonness and sharing, and it could also be also used to refer to each kind of human society. For Aristoteles, every citizen belongs to two different orders of existence: one his or hers (idion) and other public (koinon). And to Aristoteles, city consists of equal and similar people come together with a common interest and with this aspect city space is public sphere. [5] Public sphere could be defined as “a common ground that connects people, a space where people realize functional or festival activities in their normal daily routines or periodical festivities” [6] In other words, public space is a place that encompasses public activity which feeds and steers social experience. People could come together, become a part of social life as well as give meaning to it. In the ancient period, we could see social life in all aspects of its livelihood in several outer spaces.

Called as public space these places we see in Greek culture –in the period that descends from Roman Empire up till today- transform in time and socialness in these places intertwines with inner spaces or closed spaces. Public spaces are divided into two as outer and inner spaces. Open spaces that are formed naturally in cities such as streets, squares, parks, places of sightseeing, bazaars and plazas are examples of outer space. Public outer spaces are spaces open to every body’s limited use which are most commonly formed naturally in the historical process or created by the public authorities. The use of public inner spaces on the other hand runs across the period of industrial revolution. [7]) Public sphere could then be classified as below through their forms [6].

Open Public Spaces: All unbuilt spaces that directly provides environmental, social and economic benefits to the city or carries the potential to do so in the limited field of a city or a space.

a. Green Space: Spaces that inhere in planted water or geographical properties as a sub title of open spaces that are founded in city areas;

- Parks and gardens
- Comforted green areas
- Child game plays
- Sports facilities
- Planted passages

- Natural or half natural green areas
- Other functional green areas can be gathered under this heading.

b. Open Access Public Spaces: As a subtitle to open spaces, spheres that serve to public such as city squares, bazaars and streets.

- Squares
- Bazaars
- Sidewalks
- Spaces of resort and areas of coastal strip can be mentioned under this title.

Several media mediums that emerged in the 20th century such as television has affected communicative aspect of the public sphere considerably. Internet and social media that developed later and eminently became the most common public sphere of today while they handmade a global change on this dimension. From this point onwards, the meaning of public sphere closed to the conception of space in meaning has changed historically. The difference made in between usages of the conceptions public sphere and public space is not to mention that these conceptions significantly depart from each other; but rather to show that they each have their own scope since there's double interaction between public sphere and space. All actions in the public sphere have an ideational background in public sphere, actions made in the public space affect discourse and ideologies in the public sphere. [8]

2. Isparta Field Study

The field study was carried out in 43 neighborhoods of the city of Isparta. All neighborhoods included in the universe were subjected to sampling, and a sample was choosen by dividing the city into six regions. In the field study, the perceptions of the city dwellers, urban public and private space and its awareness of urban public space/sphere and its usage has been determined. Lastly there exists an evaluation of the city of Isparta and its city space in the framework of publicness.

2.1 About Isparta

In the historical process, one of the significant centres of population of the Pisidia district, Isparta had been established during the period Lydians. However, the real development of the city happened during the Roman period. In this period, it is known that Isparta was an important centre of episcopacy, and of trade exporting salt and wine. The city, entering into the dominion of the Ottoman domination after the middle of the 15th century, became one of the important bazaars in southwestern Anatolia in the 16th century. Towards the 15th century on the other hand, carpetry gained importance in outer markets. [9]

It is mentioned that the first settlement of the city was the Sülübey Neighborhood around Belönü streamlet. Housing areas were limited to Kutlubey Neighborhood in the 17th and 18th centuries but this sphere expanded in the direction of Sermet, Iskender and Turan neighborhoods in the 19th century. Then in the Republican period the city progressed in the direction of Station Street. Trade structures in the first period developing in the stems of Kaymakkapı Square and Thread Chooser Bedesten and Kutlubey Mosque, in the second period directed towards Wheat Bazaars, new street that connects to Pavyonlar Street and and the old Public Bazaar. In the Republican period the city moved towards Wheat Street ending with Mimar Sinan and city garage. The city stopped growing in the 16th and 17th centuries but become an increasingly important trade city because of the bedesten and bazaars that stayed around in the 18th century. With the Tanzimat Period (the years between 1839 and 1876 in Ottoman history), the rule of the 19th century Ottoman cities were changed and towards the end of the 19th century in Anatolian cities public structures such as Government Offices, Town Hall, Hospital, School, Court House, Police Station were built.

Because of the new public structures, the understanding that took Kaymakkapi Square as the centre of the city became dominant and the city centre defined, from the 19th century onwards, the Government building and its surrounding. [10] During the Republican era and its aftermath, the first plan of Isparta was made by Kemal Ahmet Aru in consultancy of German city planner Prof. Oelsner. Station building, a symbolic structure of the period, provided a new centre of attention in the city by tying to the city centre with a street. Built on the same plane Girl Institute, Ülkü Elementary School and Governor's House and modern houses developed in the ideals of the Republic apart from historical city centre and the traditional texture. [10]

In the recent era of the city history, with the establishment of the university, in the stemline that ties the city to Burdur in 1992 the campus region provided acceleration to the understanding of the centre of the city. From 1992 up till today with its increasing student potential, the city has become a student city. The development of the campus has carried new spaces of attraction and region of houses into this axis. Especially today on this axis in a space closer to the university campus, the building of a new city bus terminal, through trade and entertainment areas situated after this construction and continuing housing construction in the area lead one to think that this region is a strong candidate to become the new attraction centre.

2.2 Method

In the research, the city of Isparta with a total of 43 neighborhoods was divided into six neighborhood groups including Isparta Bazaar 1 and 2, North, South, East and West. The study was carried out during October and November of 2017. 517 participants were interviewed. In the research, a questionnaire of multiple choice questions was used. The questionnaire was designed to measure the way that the city dwellers understand the city as well as urban, public and private space as well as the awareness of the residents of Isparta about urban public sphere/space.

Table 1: The Regional Distribution of Participants in the City

Isparta Regions	Frequency	Valid %
Bazaar1	53	10.3
Bazaar2	71	13.7
Isparta north	183	35.4
Isparta east	56	10.8
Isparta south	51	9.9
Isparta west	103	19.9
Total	517	100.0

2.3 Findings

517 participants took part in the study. In terms of age, there was a proportional distribution as seen in Table 2. 55 percent of the participants were male while 45 percent were women. 56.5 of the participants were married whereas 43.5 were single. Students made up the largest group of the participants with a proportion of 25.9.

When the participants were asked what they understand from the conception of public sphere, 61.37 of them referred to “public buildings”. The content of publicness was revealed through its relation to the state and its institutions. The other group with the second highest proportion defined public sphere as “the spaces open to public”. The conception of public sphere in this study has been perceived as a space in relation to the state and openness to the public.

In the city it is asked that whether existing structure, street and avenues have been perceived as public space by participants and findings have been given below.

It is dominant that participants perceive spaces in city as related to state. 93 percent of participants defines governmental areas of the city as public space. Besides, they perceive publicness as quality of spheres that everybody could have access as open spaces, such as avenues, streets, roads, bus stops, squares by defining them as public sphere-space. Again another third criterion is seen as whether these places are free of charge or not. Also the fact that places such as stadium and mosque get higher proportions pushes us to think this way. As a result, public space in its meaning arises as a conception related to state-administration, openness to everybody, open access, and being free of charge.

Table 2: Demographics

Age		Frequency	Valid %
	18-25	159	30.8
	26-35	98	19.0
	36-45	103	19.9
	46-55	65	12.6
	56-+	92	17.8
	Total	517	100.0
Gender		Frequency	Valid %
	Female	231	44.7
	Male	286	55.3
	Total	517	100.0
Marital Status		Frequency	Valid %
	Married	292	56.5
	Single	225	43.5
	Total	517	100.0
Occupation		Frequency	Valid %
	Officer	48	9.3
	Worker	33	6.4
	Artisan	78	15.1
	Student	134	25.9
	Housewife	78	15.1
	Freelance	52	10.1
	Retired	58	11.2
	Engineer	5	1.0
	Banker	2	.4
	Chief	4	.8
	Farmer	3	.6
	Private sector	18	3.5
	Unemployed	4	.8
	Total	517	100.0
The Reason of Being in Isparta		Frequency	Valid %
	Its hometown	228	44.1
	For job	119	23.0
	Education	112	21.7
	Marriage	44	8.5
	It is a city to live	4	.8
	Because of familial presence	9	1.7
	Visit	1	.2
	Total	517	100.0

The most important reason for participants to be in Isparta is that they were born and raised in this city with a proportion of 44.1. Besides, 23 percent indicated that they were in Isparta because of job opportunities and 21.7 percent, due to education.

In the tables below, the views and perceptions of the dwellers of Isparta on public space and publicness are presented.

Table 3: The Content of the Conception of Public Sphere

What is a public sphere	Frequency	Valid %
Places open to public	144	27,9
Public buildings	317	61,37
Communal area	29	5,6
Shopping centres-Office blocks	7	1,4
Neighborhood	2	,4
Special institutions of education	1	,2
Trade associations	3	,6
Nothing	10	1,9
Place that Money is spent	4	,8
Total	517	100,0

Table 4: The Perception of Public Space

Location	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
Bazaar	357	69,1	160	30,9
Station	399	77,2	118	22,8
Airport	398	77	119	23
Shopping centre	247	47,8	270	52,2
Terminal	419	81	98	19
Avenue- Street- Pavement	427	82,6	90	17,4
Bicycle Way	378	73,1	139	26,9
Square (Kaymakkapı)	427	82,6	90	17,4
Mosque	416	80,5	101	19,5
Turkish bath	225	43,5	292	56,5
Car park	258	49,9	259	50,1
Stadium	413	79,9	104	20,1
Governorship- Municipal Buildings	481	93	36	7
Grocery store	85	16,4	431	83,4
Private hospital	200	38,7	317	61,3

As means of defining urban public spaces and using them, participants were asked which places they visit in the city and expected to evaluate their stay. Accordingly table is as follows:

Table 5: The Usage of Urban Spaces

Place	Everyday		Once or twice in a week		None	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Kaymakkapı Square	107	20,7	215	41,6	155	30
Station	46	8,9	187	36,2	258	49,9
Industry	41	7,9	120	23,2	324	62,7
Ayazmana	27	5,2	194	37,5	148 2	8,6
Public Buildings	18	3,5	77	14,9	240	46,4
Coffee houses	59	11,4	200	38,6	229	44,3
Cafes vb	57	11	161	31,1	284	54,9
Shopping centres	124	24	331	64	35	6,8
Museum, theatre vb	3	0,6	53	10,2	359	69,4

The density of the city is seen in the usage of closed and open spaces such as shopping centres, coffeehouses and parks. When asked to what extent these places were used, the participants answered they preferred these places on the weekends or in the early hours, and spent several hours in the shopping centre and in the coffeehouses usually in the evening time. The shopping places, seen in modern cities, which are preferred by town-dwellers are also regarded in this city as significant. In this interest and usage, all age groups as well as the young use these places. The least preferred spaces on the other hand are museum and theatre.

Participants when asked where they saw as the city centre, it was observed that the perception of city has changed with the enlargement of the urban space. Especially participants which are middle aged point towards the first-oldest city centre, while participants lower than middle age show new attraction centres. Bazaar 1 and 2 show the oldest city centre, Around Iyas (including shopping centre and entertainment-coffee shops) signal the new centre. Participants recognized the older centre with 61.9 percent, whereas 28.1 defined the new attraction centre as the city centre.

Table 6: Perception of City Centre

	Frequency	Valid %
Bazaar centre 1	285	55,1
Bazaar centre 2	35	6,8
New centre around Iyaş shopping-centre	77	14,9
Gökçay	32	6,2
Ayazmana	11	2,1
Coffee street	68	13,2
Suleyman Demirel University	4	,8
Evim	3	,6
Eğirdir	1	,2
Gökkubbe	1	,2
Total	517	100,0

When looked at it with a cross test between age groups 18-25, 54.1 of the participants receive the centre of attention as the city centre. (Around Iyas Shopping Centre and Cafes Street)

In addition to the city centre participants were asked with what Isparta city can be defined. Participants regard two concepts as the symbol of Isparta, roses with 65 percent and 20.3 percent Suleyman Demirel Statue. In the city growing roses can be seen as the source of the image of “city of roses” for Isparta then the city still continues this image. Additional to Roses the existence of a leader grew up in this city and sit in Turkish presidency has been mentioned by the city-dwellers. Suleyman Demirel and his statue in the city centre.

**Picture 1:** Statue of Süleyman Demirel**Picture 2:** Isparta Rose

The participants were asked whether “open public spaces” has been in the quality of serving to old people, handicapped, women and young and were expected to evaluate. The table below shows the findings on this issue:

Table 7: Is the Isparta city centre with its street, square, avenue, park and pavements that is to say “open public spheres” in the quality to serve old people, handicapped, woman and youth that is all public?

Answer	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	196	37,9	37,9
No	315	60,9	98,8
Tolerable	6	1,2	100,0
Total	517	100,0	

Participants with a percentage of 60.9 evaluated open public spaces of the city as insufficient. The reasons are enumerated as:

1. There are deficiencies must be developed 158 (30.6%)
2. Roads are irregular and narrow 88 (17%)

There are unnecessary regulations (3.5%), it is not suitable to handicapped pavement (5%), not safe (2.9%) ve citizens have been misusing (3.3%) are also reasons mentioned by the participants even though it is secondary.

Lastly participants were asked to give points related to the public spheres/spaces of the city. Between 0-10 evaluations made by the participants form the public sphere point table.

Table 8: Scoring of City's Urban/Public Spaces

Evaluation Criteria	Point	#	%
Cleanliness- Care- Tidiness	7	115	22,2
Easy access	10	136	26,3
Secure at every hour of the day	10	147	28,4
Suitableness for Handicapped	5	102	19,7
Suitableness for Aged	5	105	20,3
Suitableness for Child	5	101	19,5

The students in the city are the most important quality and aspect of the city of Isparta. For this reason, the city regarded as crowded by the youth between ages 18-25 as the driving force (those who prefer here for education) of the city do continuous works. New places, new terminal, bicycle road and similar. With these aspects it is not wrong to say the city is in continuous motion. The highest criteria of points taken by the city habitants with this quality (security and access) remind us that the city is in a very good place in the alignment of "sustainable city". From the other side some unplanned regulations that are seen in many example cities compel some groups such as the old, handicapped and children.

3. Results

Findings obtained in this study can be enumerated as this:

- The content of publicness has been stated with regard to its relations with the state and its institutions. The conception of public sphere in this study has been understood in relation to state and spaces open to public.
- The public space in its meaning opposes us as being related to state-administration, open to everybody, open to access as well as being free of charge.
- In the city density in the utilization of existing closed and open spaces; the use of the coffeeshouses, shopping centres and open park spaces is commonplace.
- It is seen that the perception of "city centre" seems to have changed with the enlargement of the city. Especially participants over middle age point us the first-oldest centre, lower than middle age define the city centre as the attraction centres happened as a result of the enlargement of the city.
- As the rose-breeding is the source of the image of "city of roses" in Isparta, the city still continues this image. In addition to roses, the existence of a leader who grew up and sat on the chair of Presidency is mentioned to have a significant contribution to the development of the city.
- In the Isparta city centre it is with the 60.9 percent shared that street, avenue, boulevard and similar places because they count as "open public spheres" but do not count as spaces that serve old, handicapped, women and young people namely the public.
- Lastly it is mentioned that the city has a good point in terms of cleanliness, access and security (from 7 to 10) but when it comes to handicapped, child and aged, it is in average.

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