

Conservation status of intangible cultural heritage after restoration: Case study of Mardin Spice Bazaar

Lale Karataş*¹ 

¹Mardin Artuklu University, Mardin Vocational School, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Mardin, Türkiye

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Abstract

When the bazaars lose their traditional functions, characters, and identities through urban development, they also lose their importance as the element of intangible cultural heritage defining the behaviors and life styles of the local people traditionally, and as the channel of human interaction. Within this context, this article aims to research what the sustainable architectural elements of historical bazaars are after restoration and their relationship with the social and cultural components critically by addressing the historical Mardin Spice Bazaar as a case study. Qualitative research method was used in the study. The primary data was collected through the observations in Mardin Bazaar and in-depth interviews with the shop owners and customers. In the results of the study, it is seen that the restoration applications carried out in Mardin Spice Bazaar were intended for improving only the physical conditions of the bazaar, and has focused on the spatial statuses and have not considered the human activities. The study is significant for investigating the pros and cons of the restoration projects, which were applied to make the traditional bazaars more attractive as the touristic attraction centers, over the intangible cultural heritage values.

1. Introduction

It is necessary to consider the sustainability also within the context of increasing the life quality and developing the social sustainability, considering it not only in the concepts such as energy, environment, ecology, and recycling, but also paying attention to human behaviors and body interaction, in order to develop a sustainable city. In a sustainable city, the sense of belonging to that place must be established and increased (Sobouti & Alavi, 2016). Within this context, the bazaars, particularly in Islamic countries, are efficient in the generation of the sense of belonging in a venue, due to their characteristics of being a life style and a symbol of the life itself (Jayyusi et. al, 2008). Today, such kind of a sense of belonging does not exist in modern passages (Samadi et. al, 2020). These areas had an important place in the collective memory of the cities also in terms of cultural heritage and social life (Arslan, 2015), as well as their commercial importance (Soltanzadeh, 1987). When the tourists visit a traditional bazaar in a country, they can also experience the cultural characteristics, social and behavioral interactions completely, in addition to the

odours, tastes, voices, and images, due to the cultural activity and social behavior (Zandieh & Seifpour, 2019).

The bazaars are the places, where the human behaviours and body interactions are the most intense in a city, the details such as the rhythmic sound of the hammer used by the coppersmith, the odour of spice, the combination of the bodies of the craftsmen and the rhythm of light creates an admirable symphony of various senses, which cannot be compared with the modern passages, and recall the life in these places (Samadi et. al, 2020). The traditional bazaars are the windows opening to the life culture of the populations and places and the permanent exhibitions of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of a community (Pirnia, 2007; Edgu et. al, 2012). A traditional bazaar may have many values as a part of the intangible assets of a region, even without the historical buildings, because the daily lives of the inhabitants of a region are depicted there lively (Lai et. al, 2013; Zandieh & Seifpour, 2019). Since the conservation of the cultural heritage requires sustaining the intangible values as well as the tangible values, it is necessary to ensure also the sustainability of

* Corresponding Author

^{*}(lalekaratas@artuklu.edu.tr) ORCID ID 0000-0001-8582-4612

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the values such as the intangible human behaviors, within the context of transmitting the bazaars to the future generations (Pereira Roders & Van Oers, 2011; Timothy, 2011). Therefore, the bazaars must be conserved also as a value of intangible heritage, as well as their social and economic importance (Assari et. al, 2011; Arslan, 2015; Sobouti & Alavi, 2016).

Within the context of conservation of the traditional bazaars, since the traditional bazaars function as the “museums” of touristic attraction elements, human interaction, and cultural expressions, it is the duty of the conservators and government to pay attention particularly to any physical change that may affect the social behavior intended for the bazaars (Taheri & Khatibi, 2016). When the bazaars lose their traditional functions, characters, and identities within the scope of various renewal projects, they also lose their importance as the element of intangible cultural heritage, which defines the behaviors and life styles of the local people traditionally, and as the channel of human interaction, and one of the primary touristic attraction centers of the city shall disappear (George et. al, 2009). Therefore, the behavioral regulations of the local people, particularly those working in the traditional bazaars, and the links between the behavioral regulations of the local people and the value of the bazaar are important (Zandieh & Seifpour, 2019).

As what attracts the tourists to a place is the identity and uniqueness of that place, the great challenge before and after the restoration process of the bazaars is the loss of the identity during the urban renewal and urban planning. If the urban modernization occurs only according to the modern aesthetic criteria, the tourists visiting the traditional bazaars may be surprised or disappointed for how the locality is different from the imagine. They may see a modern and “beatified” bazaar instead of a unique traditional bazaar that represents the local cultural customs (Zandieh & Seifpour, 2019). Since the bazaar has an enormous potential in the study subject as an important element for increasing the sense of belonging and tourism development, an integrative approach is needed, which respects to the local communities, contributes into its welfare, and undertakes a socially responsible future (Kalan & Oliveira, 2016).

As stated before, the spatial characteristic of a place also affects the feelings of the individuals about a place and their evaluations on that place, and the loss of the place identity causes the loss of sense of belonging and loyalty to a place (Michelson, 1976). Within this context, the studies in the literature explain that studies determining which spatial elements are considered by the members of the society as the parts forming the identity of place are needed, and emphasize that more favorable urban venues may be established by realizing and strengthening these elements (Salah Ouf, 2001). Within this context, the study is based on the suggestion regarding the determination of the spatial elements forming the sense of place of the bazaars, which is overemphasized by Zandieh & Seifpour (2019) and Salah (2001) in their study results to investigate in future studies.

Within this context, this article aims to research what the sustainable architectural elements of historical bazaars are and their relationship with the social and cultural components critically, by addressing the historical Mardin Spice Bazaar as a case study. The study is significant for investigating the pros and cons of the restoration projects, which were applied to make the traditional bazaars more attractive as the touristic attraction centers, over the intangible cultural heritage values.

The question of how the behaviors of humans at a place may change with the need of conservation projects due to various factors and making changes and how these changes shall affect the intangible cultural heritage emerges (Zandieh & Seifpour, 2019). The behaviors of a seller in a bazaar are specific to the place and formed by the venue. The behaviours reflected by the seller are imprinted into the memory of the visitors within that area, and form the collective memory specific to that place. Any spatial and physical change, which shall cause the behaviors of the sellers within the bazaar to change via the urban renewal projects, shall affect the behaviors of the Merchant using that environment, and may cause them to be unable to behave traditionally (Lang, 1987). In summary, the sustainability of the historical bazaars becomes meaningful, only if it can reflect the busyness of the daily life on their physical structures. The fact that how the renewal process affects the daily life of the community is also very important. However, in many cases, the urban planners have made spatial changes in order to improve the functionality of the bazaars, and this has caused the current behavioral regulations to be changed or eliminated. When the workplaces of the sellers are removed or changed significantly, also the working methods, physical presences of the sellers, and the sounds and smells they produce within the bazaar change. All of them are the parts of the bazaar environment, which creates the individual memories and collective identity of a place (Connell & Gibson, 2003).

Many studies in the literature state that the architectural order, which forms the behaviors within the venue, provides opportunity for traditional behaviors (Soleimani et. al, 2017; Barati & Kakavand, 2013; Lotfi & Zamani, 2015; Samadi et. al, 2020; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). However, the studies, which investigate the effect of the urban changes and restorations on the bazaars, are limited in the literature. In the research conducted by Kermani and Luiten (2009) on the historical bazaar of Kerman City, Iran, which is a significant example, it is stated that the urban changes have weakened the main transportation connections from the entrance gates of the city to the historical bazaar and this caused the bazaars to lose their privileged socio-economic roles (Aminzadeh & Afshar, 2004). Shamsuddin and Ujang (2008) explain in their study, which they have investigated the traditional bazaars in Kuala Lumpur, that creating a sense of place develops the loyalty of the inhabitants to that place and thus increases the desirability of that place, and emphasize that the importance of creating a sense of place in the urban renewal projects within the historical sites of the cities must be considered.

2. Study Area

Mardin Spice Bazaar is located on the north side in Şar district and on the South side in Ulucami district within the urban archaeological site of Mardin Province, Artuklu County (Figure 1).

Two periods – original and current status – are seen on the building, from the traces from the building and characteristics of the similar period, based on the written and visual resources. The stores of the bazaar have been built from smooth cut and pitch-faced limestone, in single storey in the first period, in which it bears the original

texture, and the entrances, which are next to and face each other on the North and South wing of the bazaar, with lancet and half-round arch, have wood door wings. It has a plan structure with a rectangular plan and cross or cradle vault from inside and with a flat roof from outside, and it continued its function within this layout. The Spice Bazaar having the typical characteristic of Mardin Bazaar, which creates the starting point of a new bazaar following the end point of each bazaar, also opens to Smugglers Bazaar on the west end, and to the Clothing Sellers' Bazaar on the east end (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

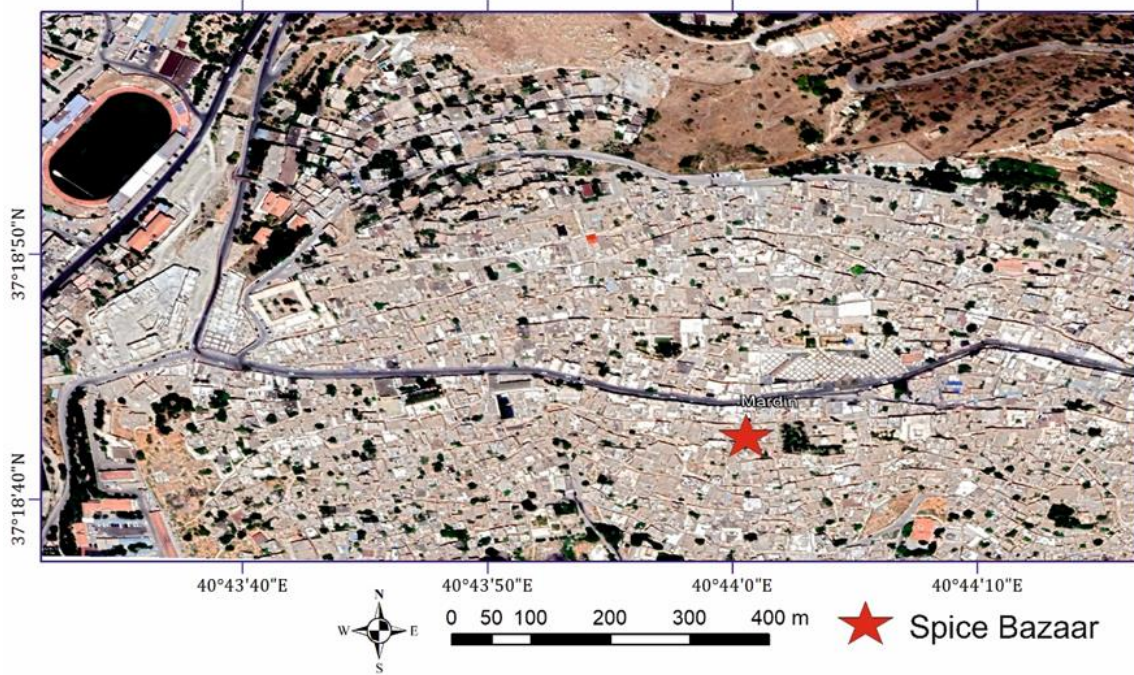


Figure 1. Location of the Spice Bazaar



Figure 2. The layout plan of the bazaar

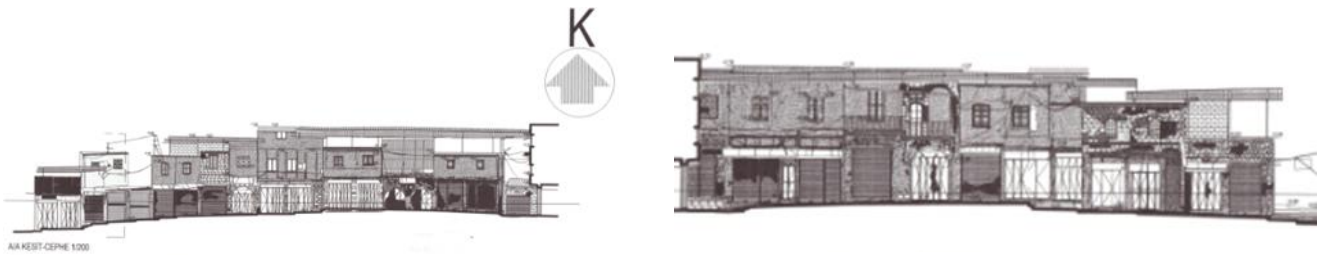


Figure 3. Sections regarding the bazaar

The Spice Bazaar has confronted with losing its original purpose in recent years. It is seen that the bazaar, in which the spices brought from outside and made within the city are sold, is rather replaced with the clothing stores today. However, the symbolic meaning of bazaar's original purpose always exists in the memory of the city population. Today, individuals from every section of the community prefer to visit the bazaar to purchase spices and in brief to breathe the historical features of the venue.

3. Method

Qualitative research method was used in the study. The primary data was collected through the observations in Mardin Bazaar and in-depth interviews with the shop owners and customers. In-depth interviews were used to collect information regarding the perception of those who interacts with the bazaar daily. The selection of the participants started with the convenience sampling process (Neuman, 2011) and continued as snowball sampling. Interviews and observations were carried out by the author in July 2022 at the Spice Bazaar.

3.1. Architecture of the bazaar and its social and cultural components

The historical Mardin Spice Bazaar is located on the point, where various architectural building groups (mosque, church, monkery, delubrum, public bath) are present within the urban archaeological site. Furthermore, primary public services such as the banks, government agencies, post office and other institutions and activities are within this scope. Various activities around the bazaar and the hordes of tourists make these points busier. Within the scope of the accessibility of the bazaars, pedestrian access is available. It is important to

specify that the perfect accessibility and the opportunity to access the bazaar by using the public service vehicles are among the main reasons for the users in choosing the bazaar for shopping. The architectural elements such as the “abbaras (a kind of passage specific to Mardin)”, “elevation differences” surrounding the bazaar contribute into the sustainability of the bazaar by creating an appropriate social and economic interaction. The religious buildings and their green elements of them and fountains surrounding it create a social area in order to increase the welfare of the society and create an ambience and spirit.

Also, the memories recalled by the bazaar are among the primary reasons of why the visitors visit here many times. The bazaar brings the memories from past to present like childhood memories such as going to school and play games in the backyard of the mosques and medreses. These memories are also important for the shop owners, as well as the visitors, and develop the sense of place within Mardin bazaars.

3.2. Faults seen in the restoration

When the status of Spice Bazaar after the restoration is reviewed, it is seen that many applications, which damage the historical spirit, have been made. It is seen that the shutters that are specific to the modern passages and sunshades to protect the spices from the sun were placed on the facades. Furthermore, doors made of wooden-like PVC-based material have been placed as the entrance doors that are exactly the same of each other to all stores within the bazaar. The gold-colored signboards on the facades of the stores, which are the exact copies of each other, damage the historical appearance of the bazaar (Figure 4). In addition, air conditioners have been placed on the facades to keep the stores cool (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Stores before and after the restoration in spice bazaar



Figure 5. Shutters specific to the modern passages on the facades of the bazaar, air conditioners placed on the facades, and sun shades placed in order to protect the spices from the sun



copy of its equivalents in other geographies and thus damaged the place concept and sense of belonging of a bazaar.

3.3. Opinions of the shop owners and satisfaction assessment

The results of the interviews show that 30% of the shop owners is satisfied with the bazaar restorations, and 70% of them is not satisfied. Within this scope, the most important point that the shop owners are uncomfortable with is the incompatibility between the microclimatic features and the function of the monuments. It is seen that spotlights and air conditioners had to be used in the stores located in the Spice Bazaar. This is related with the facts that the building is about to lose its primary function currently and shop windows are being placed to the stores to exhibit some other functions. However, some architectural details such as the facts that the building has preserved its original height, stone has been used as the construction material, and wall thickness, are the elements that are sufficient to protect the spices easily without using air conditioners.

3.4. Opinions of the tourists and satisfaction assessment

When the status of the bazaars after the restoration is reviewed, it is seen that the facades of the stores made exactly same of each other. Restoration applications have been carried out only according to the modern aesthetic criteria, and the tourists visiting the traditional bazaars emphasized that the locality is different from the imagine and they are surprised. They stated that they have seen a modern and “beatified” bazaar, instead of a unique traditional bazaar representing the local cultural customs. For instance, a European tourist has stated that he/she had a mental image regarding the traditional bazaars of Middle East, which are pretty different from the concept in Europe; however, he/she could not see that here. The facts that the facades and signboards are exactly the same, music and the intense light reflected from the store windows and the use of air conditioners give the tourists the sense of being in modern passages (Figure 6).

In summary, it is seen that even a few basic changes to be made on the buildings and environments of the bazaar in order to improve the performance of the bazaars and modernize them, change the characteristic and personality of the bazaar radically; this has made it a



Figure 6. Placing shop windows and spotlights to exhibit the spices

4. Discussion

This study aims to research what the sustainable architectural elements of historical bazaars are after restoration and their relationship with the social and cultural components critically, by addressing the historical Mardin Spice Bazaar as a case study. Within this context, the findings of the study match up with the findings of the previous studies (Soleimani et al., 2017; Barati & Kakavand, 2013; Lotfi & Zamani, 2015; Samadi et. al., 2020, Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). The common point of these findings is that the architectural layout forming the behaviors within a venue is efficient directly on the perception of the bazaars and provides opportunity for the traditional behaviors. It is seen that the restoration applications carried out in Mardin Spice Bazaar were intended to improve the physical conditions of the bazaars, focused only on the spatial situations, and did not consider the human activities. Yet, the studies in the literature emphasizes that the importance of creating a

sense of place must be considered in the urban renewal projects in the historical sites of the cities (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008).

Another finding that has to be emphasized is that paying attention only to the visual value, instead of the "Place" concept in the renewals carried out in the Spice Bazaar caused the bazaars to lose place identity fact. The renewals carried out in the bazaars have changed the sellers' exhibition and protection methods of spice, which they have exhibited and protected through the traditional methods. It is seen that the spices are being exhibited through the shop windows under the spotlights today instead of the traditional methods and they are tried to be protected from spoiling by using air conditioners instead of natural ventilation methods. These results obtained from the study support the finding of "any spatial and physical change, which may cause the sellers of the bazaar to change their behaviors with the urban renewal projects, shall affect the behaviors of the merchant using that environment and cause them not to behave traditionally", which is emphasized in the literature (Lang, 1987; Connell & Gibson, 2003).

Creating a three-dimensional model of the building before starting the restoration work will be of great benefit (Karataş et al. 2022). Unmanned aerial vehicles and laser scanners, which are remote sensing techniques, have been frequently used in the modeling of historical buildings in recent years (Alptekin et al.2019; Alptekin & Yakar 2021; Kanun et al.2021; Mirdan & Yakar 2017). The most important advantage of remote sensing technology is to model the historical artifact without touching it (Yılmaz et al.2000; Doğan Yakar 2018; Korumaz et al. 2011; Yakar & Doğan 2017).

5. Conclusion

It was investigated that how the applications made on the bazaars for conservation and renewal may affect the habitants and visitors. It is seen that the bazaar has failed to preserve its original design and general architectural characteristics until today. Yet, the cultural and social sustainability of the bazaars must be considered with the restoration projects. Attention must be paid not to change the original structure and features and not to change the external facade extremely during the modification / repair works of the bazaars. The original structural system of the building must be preserved intact in order the bazaars reflect the characteristics of the period, in which they have been built. Therefore, it is expected that the repairs be in conformity with the original structure and form of the buildings and the buildings preserve their original functions as far as possible. The sense of place and collective memory can be strengthened only by conserving the heritage of the places that assist to create the social identity of a community. Therefore, any planned changes must remain in compliance with the conservation of the connection of the local identity with the place. Furthermore, including the local habitants into the decision-making process shall assist to protect the sense of local place and identity.

The physical planning must reflect the basic behavioral principles to decide on the way of change within the context of traditional value of a bazaar in order to conserve its intangible cultural heritage. The activities having significant effects on the identity of the bazaar must be recognized by assessing the long-term field studies and their effects on the place identity. The most important step for the correct development is to research and discover new strategies for urban planning interventions within the urban environments and to analyze how modernization shall affect them. The plans intended for the importance and value of the bazaar in daily life and the sustainability of the bazaar must be prepared in this direction. Transformation of Mardin Bazaars into ordinary shopping venue may only be prevented through a management emphasizing that it is the oldest and unique bazaar of Mardin.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Statement of Research and Publication Ethics

Research and publication ethics were complied with in the study.

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