



# Generational Differences in Urban Identity: Eskişehir<sup>1</sup>

## Kentsel Aidiyette Jenerasyon Farkları: Eskişehir Örneği

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### ABSTRACT

Cities are regarded as spaces of co-production of the social sphere, leaving diverse imprints on the memory and discourse of individuals within society. This study investigates these differences by categorizing them according to generations, focusing on the components of urban identity as perceived, lived, transformed, and interacted with by different generations within the city. The aim is to uncover the type of identity the city offers to various generations and the generation-oriented breakpoints in the production of collective memory. This research is intertwined with themes of urban politics, urban memory, and urban-public space, providing an opportunity to not only observe the generation gap but also to discern the distinct dynamics of the city. It underscores the importance of considering the generation gap in the city's collective accumulation and urban politics. The study draws on data from in-depth interviews with 12 participants, comprising three individuals from each of the X, Y, Z, and Baby Boomer generations, all of whom were born, raised, and currently reside in Eskişehir. Through an examination of factors such as age, upbringing, and life experiences, the research delves into how these elements shape individuals' senses of identity and attachment to the urban environment. Additionally, it explores how generational perspectives influence attitudes towards urban development, cultural identity, and community engagement in Eskişehir. By delving into these aspects, the study aims to provide deeper insights into how generational differences manifest within the context of urban identity in this specific city.

**Key Words:** Urban Culture, Urban Identity, Eskişehir, City, Culture.

### Öz

Kentler, toplumsal alanın birlikte üretildiği mekanlar olarak kabul edilir ve toplum içindeki bireylerin belleği ve söylemi üzerinde çeşitli izler bırakır. Bu çalışma, bu farklılıkları nesillere göre kategorize eder. Kent içinde farklı nesiller tarafından algılanan, yaşanan, dönüşen ve etkileşim halinde olunan kent kimliğini bileşenlerine odaklanarak inceler. Amaç, şehrin farklı nesillere sunduğu kimlik türünü ve kolektif belleğin üretiminde nesil odaklı kırılma noktalarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu araştırma, kentsel politika, kentsel bellek ve kentsel-kamusal alan temalarıyla iç içe geçmiştir. Jenerasyon farklılıklarını sadece gözlemlemekle kalmayıp aynı zamanda kentin farklı dinamiklerini de ayırt etme fırsatı sunar. Kentin kolektif birikimi ve kentsel politikada jenerasyon farkının dikkate alınmasının önemini vurgular. Çalışma, Eskişehir'de doğmuş, büyümüş ve şu anda yaşayan X, Y, Z ve Bebek Patlaması nesillerinden üçer kişinin yer aldığı, toplamda 12 katılımcıyla derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen verilere dayanmaktadır. Yaş, büyüme tarzı ve yaşam deneyimleri gibi faktörlerin incelenmesiyle, araştırma bu unsurların bireylerin kentsel çevreye aidiyet duygularını ve bağlılıklarını nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair derinlemesine bir bakış sunar. Ayrıca, jenerasyonların bakış açılarının Eskişehir'deki kentsel gelişim, kültürel kimlik ve sosyal katılıma olan etkilerini de keşfetmektedir. Bu yönlerin incelenmesiyle, çalışma, kentsel kimlik bağlamında jenerasyon farklarının nasıl ortaya çıktığına dair daha derinlemesine bir anlayış sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kent Kültürü, Kentsel Aidiyet, Eskişehir, Şehir, Kültür

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## INTRODUCTION

What is the most important variable that helps define the city? And how is this variable determined? The claim of this research is that the most important thing that defines a city is its culture. Culture includes relationships, symbols, memories, experiences, and so on. The culture can build all of these. Additionally, we underline “city” here. In short, no matter which country we are in, the place where world systems affect and position us is the same or very close to each other (Sezgin and Canbulut, 2021), and what differentiates us is culture. Beyond being relational with world systems, cities create their own socio-cultural networks and are unique.

In this study, the urban culture of Eskişehir, one of Turkey's prominent cities, is discussed in the context of the urban identity of participants from different generations. The aim of the study is to discover what kind of identity the city offers to different generations (baby boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z) and generation-oriented breaking points in the production of collective memory. To specify, this study aims to investigate the role of urban culture in defining the identity of Eskişehir across different generations and its implications on collective memory production. The study explores how culture shapes Eskişehir's urban identity across generations and delves into the perception and interaction of different generations with the city, focusing on urban identity. Additionally, it contextualizes urban culture within broader themes and categorizes generational differences to uncover breakpoints in collective memory production, emphasizing the significance of understanding socio-cultural networks and the city's social dynamics in shaping its identity. Engaging in qualitative examinations on experiences in urban identity is associated with seeing the city and the individual as intertwined and interactive. The urban shapes the individual and is influenced by them. There is a mutual social construction at play. Presenting experiences with representatives from different generations allows for observing the dynamics related to age and accumulation in urban identity. This study is significant in terms of being a foundational study.

The study is related to points such as urban politics, urban memory, urban-public space. In other words, it is possible not only to observe the generation gap, but also to observe the different dynamics of the city. In this study, cities are considered as joint production spaces of the social sphere. Cities, which are social spaces, leave different traces in the memory and discourse of each individual that makes up the society. Within the scope of the study, these differences were examined by categorizing them according to generations. The focus is on the components of urban identity in the context of the ways different generations see, live, transform and transform with the city.

We designed this discussion to see the effects of the difference between generations on urban culture, specifically in Eskişehir, which is one of the important cities of Türkiye for various reasons. Eskişehir has held provincial status since the proclamation of the Republic and gained metropolitan status in 1993. Its current population is around 1 million, comprising diverse cultures in terms of ethnicity (Bulgarian, Circassian, Yoruk...) and lifestyle (university student, soldier, farmer...). Eskişehir, characterized by intense industrialization, exhibits a high density of working-class residents. Additionally, the presense of three significant universities in the city plays a vital role in shaping its identity. Moreover, the city's military aviation activities, which commenced in 1912, significantly contribute to its identity. Furthermore, Eskişehir held the title of Cultural Capital of the Turkish World and UNESCO Capital of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013 (<https://eskisehir.ktb.gov.tr/TR-150008/eskisehir-2013-unesco-somut-olmayan-kulturel-miras-bask-.html>).

### 1. Urban and Urban Identity

While defining urban society, Lefebvre (2015) states that the city has a structure that brings together and transforms what it brings together. He sees the city as areas where traditions replace traditions and where tradition comes to the fore in the use of urban objects. Urban thought aims for people to reclaim the conditions within time-space and objects. Within the scope of this research, which tries to discuss urban culture by making comparisons between generations, we attach importance to

Lefebvre's definition of the city as the place of expression of conflicts. The city has a culture that includes the experiences of each generation specific to their period. We find Lefebvre right; The city is not a place where silence reigns and expressions are lost. On the contrary, we see the city as a place where views harmonize and conflict with life practices, creating a culture.

Cultural values are affected by the opportunities offered by the urban environment. There are forces in the urban system that create cultural heterogeneity and regional differentiation (Harvey, 2016). In this case, it is important to mention who the owner of the city is. In cities, services that cannot meet the demands and needs of citizens and are planned only by the administrator's design are not functional (Aslan, 2019). Every social group in the city is concerned about finding a place for itself in the city, protecting it and developing it as much as possible. In this case, the city is not homogeneous, but an area where differences are in struggle, albeit implicitly. Differences are built within the relationships that create them; they do not exist on their own. Although spatial differentiation occurs as a differentiation based on settlement in the city, the reason for the differentiation is the organization of inequalities in social areas (Alpman, 2019). Just as Lefebvre (2022) stated, we find it important to discuss who, what and how the city contains and shows.

According to Lynch (2022), the city is described as a variable structure that serves many purposes. The city combines many functions. It develops at speeds that vary from person to person. Ultimate unity is both impossible and undesirable, as the urban form should remain uncertain and malleable to align with the aims and perceptions of its citizens. In the city, there is always more than what the eye can see, or the ear can hear, a decor or landscape waiting to be discovered. Nothing is experienced spontaneously. We are not just spectators of this view, we become a part of the show on stage with the other participants. It must always have ties with its environment, it can be perceived by the series of events that created it, by the memory of past experiences. Environmental images are a two-way process that operates between the observer and his environment. In this context, urban spaces or city images contain a flood of relationships for people. The mobile elements of a city, particularly the people living in it and their activities, are as important as the fixed physical parts. Our perception of the city is generally not holistic. Rather, it is a fragmented perception that also includes other concerns. Almost every sense is involved, and the image is the combination of all of them. Each individual creates and carries his or her own image, but there is also a consistent consensus among members of the same group. Each person's perception is unique, and this perception may have no connection with group images. Even in this case, it comes close to the public image.

It would be good to briefly review the literature on defining the urban and urban identity. Lefebvre (2015) considers the city as a mental and social form and evaluates it as a quality arising from quantities. Social and economic conditions aimed at eradicating the qualitative characteristics of urban life contribute to the degradation of the city and its perception. Here, the discussion shifts to the concept of the right to the city.

According to Höllerer and Leixnering (2022), socio-political values in the city affect the structure of the city. It is explained that certain cities have unique social and political values and that these values form the identity of the cities. This identity is shaped by the process of integration of cities with certain values, that is, "institutionalization". This concept, which was originally used for companies and public organizations, is also valid for cities, stating that the unique values of cities are shaped by various elements such as organizational structures and social networks. Cities, which are settlement units that hold local identity and culture elements together, integrate different identity and culture elements and blend them by melting them in a pot, are living spaces that correspond to administrative, social, cultural, and political emphases, diversify their meaning in the historical process, and stand out with their dynamic features. are organisms. Urban consciousness, which is a synthesis of different identities and a common life culture, is actually interpreted as the creation of a new identity. The identity considered to be related to the city is a phenomenon that, as a living organism, reflects the living spaces and reflects the lifestyles of the citizens, who are the real owners of the city (Akova, 2020).

Moreover, identity is not fixed; it is a dynamic formation that constantly evolves and is influenced by various structural dynamics. One of the important elements of these dynamics is space. People communicate and establish relationships with each other over shared space. Thanks to the common space, daily communication and encounters are established, class practices, cultural habits and norms are maintained or negotiated with each other (Amin, 2002). Urban identity is not fixed; It is a dynamic formation that is not static, constantly developing and changing, and capable of being renewed or destroyed. The existing identity of a city is distorted not by itself, but by external factors caused by humans. Therefore, urban identity has a close relationship with urban space and urban culture (Kaypak, 2010). Urban identity: These are all the features that distinguish a city from other places. Urban identities are multi-component and multi-dimensional (Kiper, 2016). Alpak et al. (2018) construct urban identity through urban spaces. Space is a means of adapting to the city. Urban identity is formed not only by recognizable and rememberable formal features, but also by the meaning individuals attach to the city. There is no doubt that the phenomenon of identification with a place, which requires a very long process, depends on the social environment and its components surrounding it, as well as the physical dimensions of the place (Oktay; 2011). When we mention the name of a city, the first image that comes to our mind is actually a reflection of the identity of that city. Urban identity is the profile of the city and the image of the city and is shaped over a long period of time. Those who give meaning to the city and identity, the "life" of the city, are urban spaces (<http://www.mimarlikdergisi.com/index.cfm?sayfa=mimarlik&DergiSayi=396&RecID=3625>). Preece (2020) argues that places fulfill a crucial function in consolidating people's lives and identities. Places fulfilled an important psychosocial function by stabilizing people's identities and creating a sense of identity.

The identity of a city is, first of all, the identity that people attribute to a city. Because the self/identity concept of a city can only be considered as a mental structure produced or carried by people related to this city (Sezik, 2016). Urban identity is the distinctive features that ensure the continuity of the city. Urban identity, which is shaped over a long period of time, is under the influence of multiple factors such as the geographical context of the city, its historical texture, cultural level, architecture, local traditions and the different lifestyles of urban residents. The differences in these factors distinguish each city from each other and give the city its unique identity (Güler et al., 2016). Each city possesses its unique characteristics, shaping its urban identity through physical, cultural, socioeconomic, historical, and formal factors. Urban identity, a historical phenomenon, evolves over time, albeit to varying extents. However, what is desired and should be; It means that the change takes place within the existing identity axis and without destroying the existing identity. Because even cities that never change and seem to remain the same to us are actually growing or changing, albeit slowly. What gives us this perception/feeling is; is the development of these cities in accordance with their own identities. It is possible to give the following example that explains the identity of the city: If they were to take you to a city and ask you to close your eyes; If you can tell where you are when you open your eyes again, that city has an identity (Oğurlu, 2014). Addressing the place of physical changes of urban space in urban identity, Vathi and Burrell (2021) argue that focusing on the physical (material) infrastructures of the area is particularly important for understanding how marginalized urban communities are affected by change and mobilized in response to change. The city is an element of discursive investment through what it offers in a spatial sense (Bronsvort and Uitermark, 2022) and in this context, it contributes to social capital.

The past has an impact on the present subjectivity of individuals. When urban areas are planned considering the past and its effects, it should be known that not only the desired memories of the past but also the unwanted and avoided memories will come (Adams and Larkham, 2016). In this context, there is a difference between how old we talk about a city and how new it is. For this reason, generation becomes important. Comparative analysis is a critical tool in understanding the dynamics and diversity of cities (Robinson, 2022). Verloo (2018), who deals with diversity as a principle of governance in urban space imaginations and experiences in his work, conveys how the urban space can turn into a place of conflict or compromise.

## 2. Generation Studies

Generations are categorized in seven different ways as Lost Generation, Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z and Alpa (Işıklar et al, 2022: 112). Those included in this research are Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z generations.

Baby boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964. They live in times when telephone and television are the technological leaders. They are optimists, motivated about vision and mission, and strict rules in business life. Gen X is those born between 1965-1980. They witnessed crises, the fall of communism, and the birth of individualism. They are known as the libertarian generation, the generation that introduced the use of personal space. Gen Y are those born between 1981-1994. They are different from their predecessors because they witnessed the birth of the Internet and coincided with the beginning of technological change. They witnessed many economic, ecological, political, sociological and technological changes. He is open to communication, has a fanatic level of social media use and has a high level of education. Gen Z is the generation born between 1995 and 2010, also known as the internet generation. In fact, they are the first generation most exposed to technology and globally connected to the world. His difference from the previous generation is that his communication with the outside world is different. They are also skilled at producing visual content (Rahardyan et al, 2023; Erden-Ayhün, 2013; <https://joelclark.org/dossiers/GenerationX.pdf>, access: 2024).

### 1. Methodology

#### 1.1. Study Design

The research was designed with a phenomenological qualitative method focusing on human experiences. Drawing on the literature that determines the conditions that make qualitative study necessary and possible (Punch, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Schütz, 2018; Berg and Lune, 2019; Kümbetoğlu, 2020), this study focuses on the urban experiences of individuals from 4 different generations living in Eskişehir. With the phenomenological design, city affiliations were discussed comparatively, taking into account the differences between generations, through experiences.

#### 1.2. Data Collection Process

##### 1.2.1. Determination of Participants

Baş and Akturan (2017) say that research begins with the acceptance that the researcher may have different realities for different groups. Therefore, they add that the characteristics of the research participants are at least as important as the subject. In this research, the sample was determined for the purpose of the research. Creswell and Creswell (2021) say that the idea of saturation comes from the grounded (embedded) pattern. They refer to the fact that each new data collected does not say anything different from the previous ones as “satisfaction” and interpret this as “sufficiency of the sample”. In this context, the research was completed with a total of 12 interviews, taking into account equal representation of generations.

**Inclusion criteria:** One of the inclusion criteria of this study is generation. The 12 individuals interviewed were randomly included in the study, three from each of four different generations (X, Y, Z, Baby Boomer). In addition to their age, another criterion in determining the participants is that they have no experience of living anywhere other than Eskişehir and that they were born and have lived in Eskişehir. Also, not being a university student or graduate, and being a maximum high school graduate are inclusion criteria. This study is foundational research aiming to reach basic data to see generational differences in urban identity with an expanded project. Therefore, the number of participants was fixed at the point where they began to repeat each other most closely. In terms of generational equality, having three participants from each generation was deemed sufficient. Participants were randomly selected in the two centers of the city where data was collected. No specific strategy was followed, and those who agreed to the interview and did not hesitate to allocate time voluntarily to

the research were interviewed. This situation brought two limitations to the research: First, it is related to the fact that women are often not present in public spaces during daylight hours when interviews were conducted. The absence of women without any reasons prevented an increase in the number of female participants in the research. Second, such randomness resulted in not encountering participants in their thirties. This age group could not be included in the research as well.

### 1.2.2. Data Collection

Research data was collected between December 2023 and January 2024. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were held with 3 participants from four different generations. The average duration of the interviews is approximately 40 minutes. The research reached saturation with 12 participants. Participants were informed about the audio recording and their consent to participate in the research was obtained. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the interview, the right to stop the interview, and the right to turn off the audio recording for a short time. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, a social worker who completed his master's degree and currently works as a Family Counselor. The researcher lives in Eskişehir and is familiar with the issues stated by the participants about the city.

The interviews were transcribed by another researcher. The fact that the person conducting the interviews and transcribing them was different gave the opportunity to catch any gaps that may arise in the interviews. The researcher who conducted the interviews for the identified gaps was able to re-establish contact with the participants.

## 1.3. Measures

### 1.3.1. Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool was created by the research team. In creating questions, care was taken to consider which participants would be included in the research, to ensure that the questions made sense to the participant, to be appropriate to the participants' experiences and conditions, to be sensitive to the participants' needs and rights, and to create a natural interaction environment with the participants (Kümbetoğlu, 2020; Miles and Huberman, 2021).

### 1.3.2. Data analysis

The collected audio recordings were transcribed and then the texts were analyzed in the MaxQda (2022) Analysis Program. Data analysis was done by a sociologist who conducts qualitative research using the MaxQda program. The program is a computer-aided program that is mainly used for qualitative studies but provides analysis of studies conducted with mixed methods. Kümbetoğlu (2020: 99) lists the functions of computer programs as shortening analysis time, reducing unnecessary loads, making the sequence of operations more systematic and clearer, ensuring completeness and sophistication in analysis, and allowing flexibility and change in analysis processes. MaxQda also enables research data to be compiled and recorded within a program. Thanks to the program, it was possible to get rid of the data recording system, which Kümbetoğlu (2020) calls a data graveyard.

Two-stage coding was performed in the analysis of the texts. First of all, the narratives were studied in detail with free coding so that there were no open points, and then the free codes were categorized thematically in line with the literature. This form of coding is an inductive system. The final version of the categories is organized with 5 headings and 23 subheadings. The analyzes used within the scope of the program are hierarchy chart of themes and subcodes, code matrix browser, graphics and word cloud.

## 1.4. Ethical Principles

The study, which was approved by the Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, was also planned in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Consent forms

were taken from the participants of the study. Berg and Lune (2019) state that the informed consent form is used to protect participants from potential risks. It should be added that this form also protects the researcher through the consent of the participant who agrees to participate in the research. Any manipulation or traumatizing process for the interviewer or research participants was avoided. Any hierarchical relationships or domination that would make the young people interviewed feel uncomfortable was not allowed. There was no manipulation or traumatizing process in data collection. Thus, it was possible for the participants to express themselves easily and not act with any reservations. The background here is relational ethical theory. There was no imposition during the field study, and the researcher and the participants were positioned with equal status. In addition, the private lives of the participants were respected, and care was taken to anonymize the data on the basis of confidentiality.

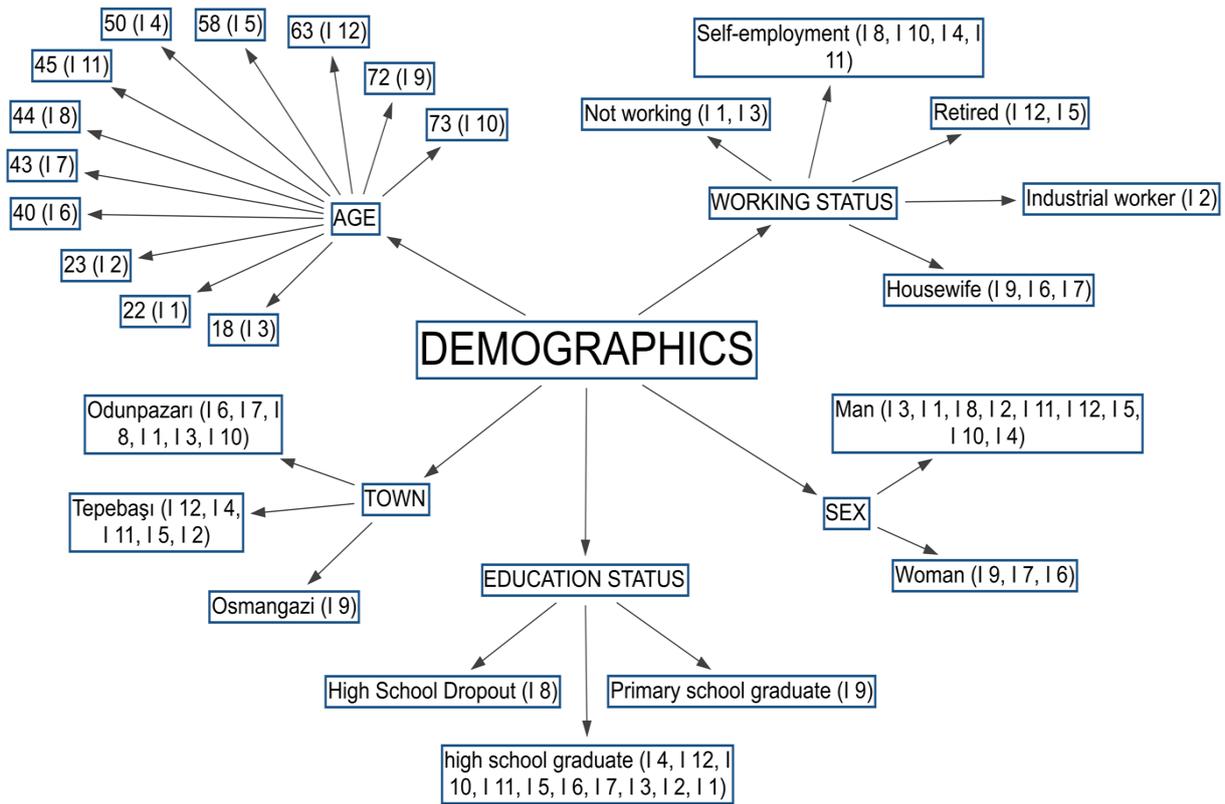
In qualitative research, reliability and validity are considered as trustworthiness. For reliability, it was taken into consideration that there is no need for other criteria other than measurement in qualitative research. Since the social world examined is based on epistemology, the impossibility of stopping the environment/freezing those who influence it and the meaninglessness of waiting in the data again were taken into account. Internal validity was based on the consensus of the research team.

## 2. Findings

### 2.1. Descriptive Findings

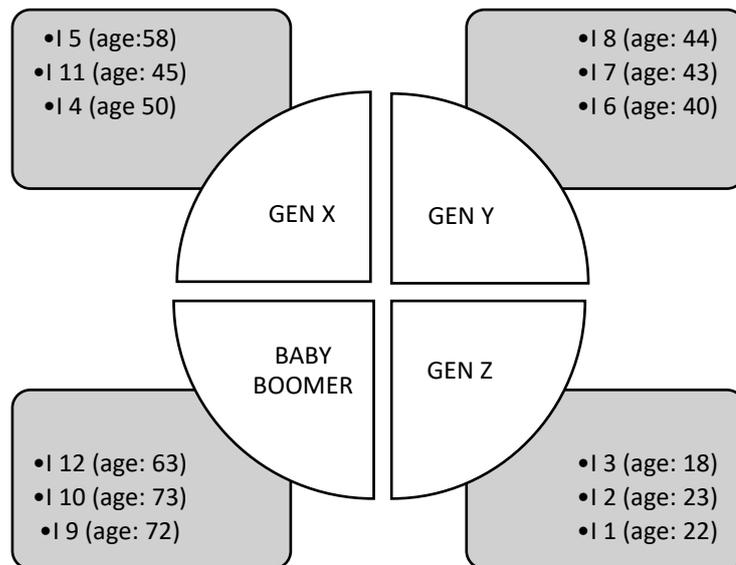
Figure 1 includes the demographic characteristics of the participants. Age, gender, town, job status and education status are included in the visual.

- *Age:* Age diversity is important in terms of generation representation. Participants of different ages from all generations were interviewed. There are no participants of the same age.
- *Gender:* There is a male density in gender distribution. It can also be observed from the employment status that each of the participating women is a housewife. It is also possible that they are Gen Y and baby boomers.
- *Working Status:* Five different sub-themes emerged in the working status. There are those who are not working, self-employment, retired, industrial worker and housewives.
- *Town:* The town is mostly concentrated in two districts (Tepebaşı and Odunpazarı). These two districts are in the center of Eskişehir and are bordered by the railway.
- *Education Status:* In the case of education, three sub-themes emerged. The majority of participants are high school graduates.



**Figure 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

A total of 12 people from 4 different generations participated in the research. Figure 2 describes the participants by age and generation.

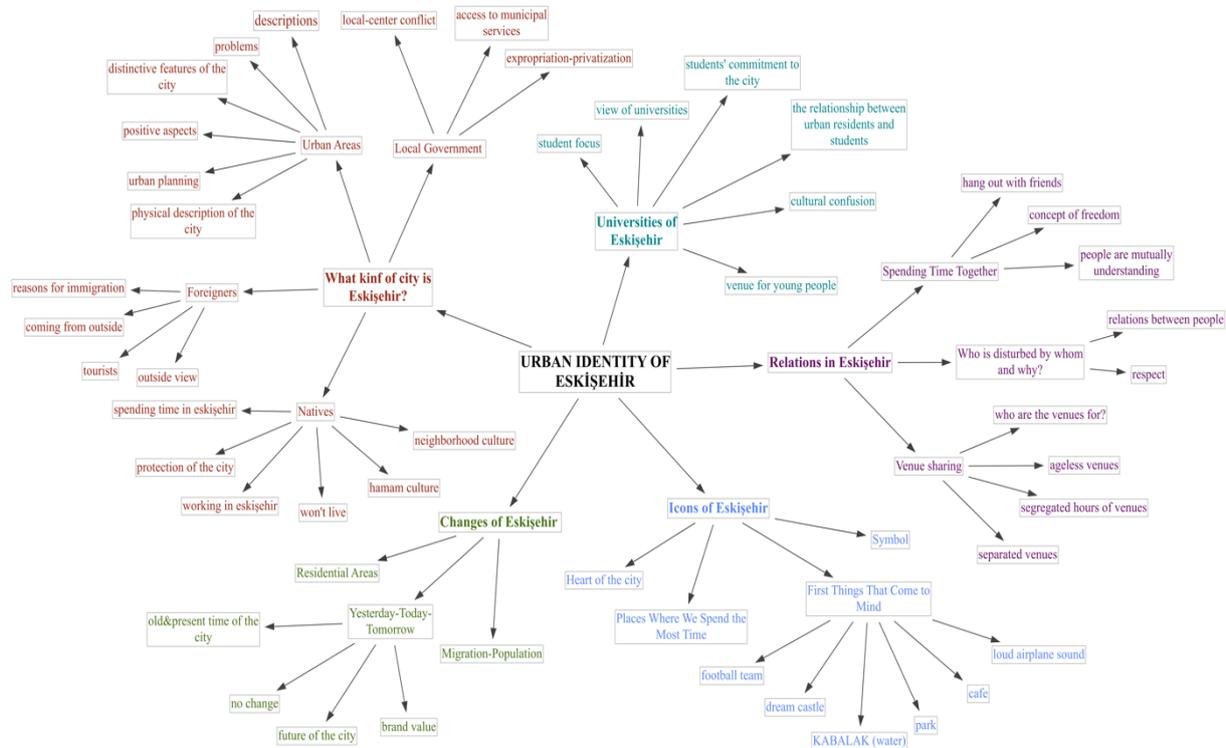


**Figure 2.** Age and Generation Descriptions of Participants

## 2.2. Qualitative Analysis

The research findings were collected under five main themes based on the experiences and statements of 12 participants from different generations living in Eskişehir. As seen in Figure 3, the main themes

are What kind of city is Eskişehir (local government, urban areas, foreigners, natives), Changes of Eskişehir (residential areas, yesterday-today-tomorrow, migration-population), Icons of Eskişehir (heart of the city, places where we spend the most time, first things that come to mind, symbol), relations in Eskişehir (venue sharing, who is disturbed by whom and why?, spending time together), universities of Eskişehir (venue for young people, cultural confusion, the relationship between urban residents and students, students' commitment to the city, view of universities, student focus), universities of Eskişehir (venue for young people, cultural confusion, the relationship between urban residents and students, students' commitment to the city, view of universities, student focus).



**Figure 3.** Hierarchy chart of themes and subcodes

The combination of words in a context has a social meaning. Thus, an insinuation, a message and/or a narrative is formed. On the other hand, the density of independent words in a text also has implications for the whole narrative. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the first 61 words that participants frequently repeat when expressing their opinions. Codes shown in large font indicate words that participants repeat more frequently, while codes shown in small font indicate words that participants use less frequently. Accordingly, in the research, participants frequently use the words Eskişehir, nice, comfortable, student, distinctive, university and crowded, park, tram.



the level of main themes and holistically in the matrix. The theme on which participants from almost every generation intensely expressed their opinions was about *what kind of city is Eskişehir*. The themes which includes less intense narratives are about the *changes and icons of Eskişehir*. Narratives on the themes of *relations in Eskişehir* and *universities of Eskişehir* are infrequent. (Figure 6)

When examined in detail: Under the title of *what kind of city is Eskişehir?*, it is seen that the density of narratives from each generation is concentrated in *urban areas*, the narratives about *foreigners* and *local government* are seen in baby boomers, and there is no GEN Y narrative about local government. Under the title *Relations in Eskişehir*, it can be seen that there is no GEN X and Gen Y narrative for *venue sharing*, and there is no Gen Y narrative in *who is disturbed by whom and why?*. Under the title *Changes of Eskişehir*, it can be seen that there is no baby boomer and Gen Z narrative for *residential areas*, and there is no Gen Z narrative in *migration a-population*. Under the title *Icons of Eskişehir*, it can be seen that there is no baby boomer and Gen Y narrative for *first things that come to mind*. Under the title *Universities of Eskişehir*, it can be seen that the narratives are generally not dense, and the narratives of Baby Boomer and Gen Y are more common than others. While university is one of the most frequently repeated words, the scarcity of narratives about the city's universities reveals that university gains meaning in context, not as a word.

Code System	BABY BOOMER	GEN Z	GEN Y	GEN X
URBAN IDENTITY OF ESKİŞEHİR	■	■	■	■
What kind of city is Eskişehir?	■	■	■	■
Urban Areas	■	■	■	■
Natives	■	■	■	■
Foreigners	■	■	■	■
Local Government	■	■	■	■
Relations in Eskişehir	■	■	■	■
Venue sharing	■	■	■	■
Who is disturbed by whom and why?	■	■	■	■
Spending Time Together	■	■	■	■
Changes of Eskişehir	■	■	■	■
Residential Areas	■	■	■	■
Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow	■	■	■	■
Migration-Population	■	■	■	■
Icons of Eskişehir	■	■	■	■
Symbol	■	■	■	■
First Things That Come to Mind	■	■	■	■
Heart of the city	■	■	■	■
Places Where We Spend the Most Time	■	■	■	■
Universities of Eskişehir	■	■	■	■
cultural confusion	■	■	■	■
students' commitment to the city	■	■	■	■
the relationship between urban residents and students	■	■	■	■
student focus	■	■	■	■
venue for young people	■	■	■	■
view of universities	■	■	■	■

Figure 6. Code Matrix Browser

A co-occurrence frequency model was established among the main themes that emerged in the study. A strong relationship was identified especially between the main themes of changes, icons and descriptions. On the other hand, a weak relationship was identified between the main themes of relations and universities. Moreover, the theme of universities has a low co-occurrence frequency with other themes. It can be said that, the university and the contexts related to universities are distinct from or hardly related to other themes. (Figure 7).

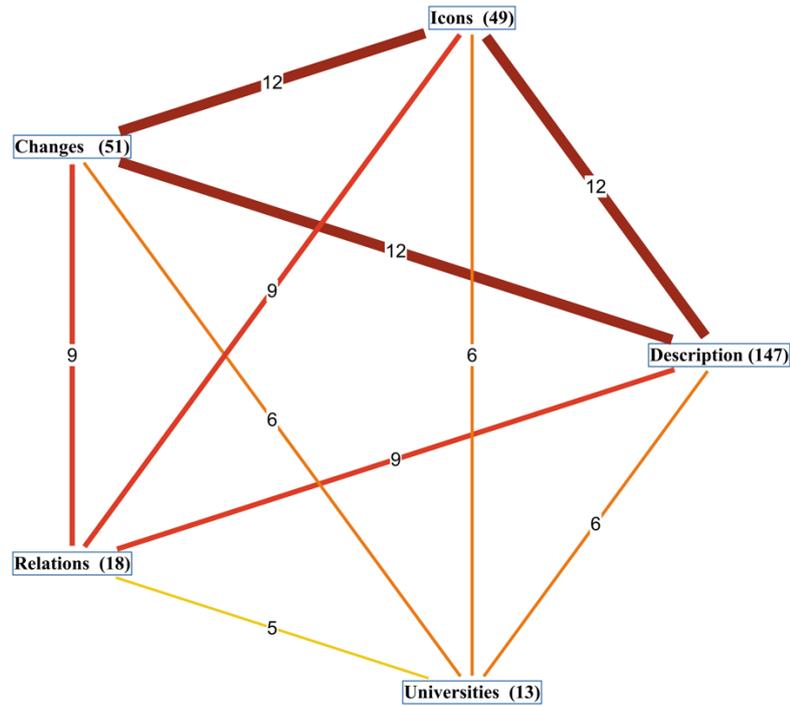


Figure 7. Co-occurrence frequency model.

### 2.3. Qualitative Findings and Discussion

Here, the narratives obtained from the interviews conducted within the scope of the research are included, and the equivalents of these narratives in the literature are mentioned. Literature knowledge about the generations included in the research will be helpful when interpreting the narratives of the participants.

The participants described the city by encompassing all the components that bring together the city and its people. Similar to Lefebvre's (2015) approach of considering the city as a sum of qualities, the participants attributed qualities to the city based on their experiences, mental, and social forms. The expressions used when describing the city are related to the city being a city that makes one feel easy, free, has no negative aspects, is easily accessible, calm, noiseless, climate resistant, modern, economically comfortable, self-confident and comfortable. (Table 1). Describing the city with qualities also demonstrates the multifaceted construction of urban identity (Kiper, 2016; Güler et al., 2016).

Table 1. Describing Eskişehir

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"I define Eskişehir as a city where people can live comfortably, that is, live freely. Eskişehir is a very beautiful city where people live freely, and all segments of society mix with each other... All together, that is, without conflict or resentment".
	"Well, I think Eskişehir has become a very livable city. I don't see any negative aspects".
GEN X	"Since it is a local city, it is easy to reach. You can easily visit the city center on foot, or by bicycle or any other vehicle. And I love Eskişehir because it is small... you can reach everywhere without spending much time or you spend little time. I wouldn't want to live in big cities, I can't imagine people living in big cities, I feel sorry for them".
	"There is not much noise, for example, when it is autumn, you can feel autumn in Eskişehir, there is a lot of green space, the leaves of the trees are turning yellow or green, you can feel spring or autumn very easily, you can feel the seasons comfortably. There is not much noise, it is a quiet city, so you can feel nature very comfortably".

GEN Y	"It is an easy city; you do not need a lot of money or financial means to live in Eskişehir. So, like Istanbul, the salary you get in Istanbul may not be enough. But with the salary you get here, you can make ends meet and do something. It's a bit more reasonable and not a very expensive city. Because it is the city where the students live, and they are trying to keep up with the students".
	"Eskişehir is a flat city. You can visit and see the city very easily. If you are not in a hurry, you can visit the entire city in 2 and a half hours. The bazaar, the center and the shopping mall are all gathered in one place".
	"Everyone has accumulated good memories in Eskişehir".
	"It is a nice city to live in, it is not a very expensive city. It is not a city that tires people out, it is a fun city. It is a city with a young population".
	"Eskişehir is a city that has a reputation, whether on social media or outside, it is a well-remembered city. That's why I'm happy".
	"There is nothing negative. I live in such a beautiful city that I can't think of anything negative".
	"It gives you a feeling of security, that's why you feel more comfortable this way. You know, when you want to go somewhere alone, you don't have any problems. It helped me grow up with confidence because there was nothing that could shake me about my self-confidence".
	"Positive. I think no harm will come to me in Eskişehir. For example, I am afraid when I go to Istanbul, I am afraid that I will not be able to move around there comfortably. For example, going out at night may make me nervous in Istanbul".
GEN Z	"I think it makes me feel confident and happy".
	"So the positive side is more, the negative side is not in my mind right now. On the positive side, there are more activities, events and so on".
	"Transportation, which has a positive impact, is a very important thing, for example, it is available everywhere... When I want to travel, I can travel around Eskişehir completely because I can go anywhere easily".
	"I feel free".

Icons of the urban area represent a situation, trend and problematic (Keyman and Koyuncu-Lorasdağı, 2020). We can observe the generation gap in the narratives about the icons of the city in Table 2. In the symbol narrative, a transfer about the physical history of the city came only from the Baby Boomer generation, with the emphasis on the Turkish Bath. While the city's own brand of water and the loud plane noise caused by the city's military airfield are symbols that Gen X and Z are focused. Eskişehirspor and çibörek are the only symbols where the generation gap is almost invisible. All symbols are shaped through the identities attributed to the city by people (Sezik, 2016), and the urban space can turn into a conflict or compromise area through symbols (Verloo, 2018). In urban identity, there is an element of the space being related to the past (Adams and Larkham, 2016), which corresponds to the narrative about the Turkish bath. Traditional spaces hold significant importance in urban identity for the Baby Boomer generation. On the other hand, for Gen Z, spatial investment in urban identity through space is noteworthy (Bronsvort and Uitermark, 2022).

**Table 2.** Icons of Eskişehir

ICON	GENERATION	STATEMENT
HAMAM	BABY BOOMER	"The locals would not live without a bath. And hot waters with healing waters, healing places".
CAFE, MUSEUM	GEN Z	"The places are generally cafe-style places".
		"In my opinion, what makes Eskişehir Eskişehir is generally museums, for example the Eti Archeology Museum".
(KALABAK) WATER	GEN X	"KALABAK water, definitely. These are things identified with Eskişehir. Because you cannot find it anywhere else, that is, you cannot find KALABAK water."
	GEN Z	"There are definitely two sounds in every Eskişehir resident's mind: Kalabak water and the sound of airplane jets".

LOUD AIRPLANE SOUND	GEN X	"For example, individually, I am in love with airplanes, I am in love with the sound of airplanes. So, when it passes, I never look up, I know what it is because it gives me tremendous pleasure when it passes".
	GEN Z	"So, every day planes fly and we experience a communication problem on the phone like we just had, as the planes pass".
ESKİŞEHİRSPOR (football team of the city)	GEN X	"The first symbol for me is football, there are many more symbols, but the first thing that comes to my mind is the ball, football... Football, I am in love, yes, we had a football club that showed the color of this city."
		"It is Eskişehirspor. "So, we never had another team in our hearts".
		"Of course, Eskişehir sports... (Laughs)... Yes, I am a fanatic... Thank God".
	GEN Z	"The first symbol comes to Eskişehir Sports when Eskişehir is mentioned".
	BABY BOOMER	"The symbol of Eskişehir for me is definitely Eskişehirspor. Because I went to many of their matches and away games, there were fights when I was young, we were beaten there, we watched very good matches. Eskişehirspor was a rare blessing. Today, wherever you go in Turkey, when you say you are from Eskişehir, they say Eskişehirspor, this thing is established, and we are the people who pioneered it... In fact, Eskişehirspor is a symbol in the formation of Eskişehir's urban identity".
CHIBOREK	GEN X	"There are places that make pastry. Chiborek is something that the Tatars brought to Eskişehir, it is their unique taste".
	GEN Z	"Chiborek is definitely edible, so a tourist who comes here will not leave without eating chiborek."
	BABY BOOMER	"There is a pastry unique to Eskişehir, which we call chiborek."

While discussing the statements of experiences about making a space feel free, one can look at Stravrides (2019), who emphasizes the importance of creating images that will make you feel free. The place not only makes one feel free, but it also instills hope with the image of freedom and establishes the construction of togetherness and commonality. Thus, it has a function of shaping expectations. As seen in Table 3, Eskişehir's offer of feeling safe is actually the construction of a common urban culture. Narratives about the city being a safe city are narratives that participants agree with. Feeling safe was also evaluated as one of the factors of their identity to the city. Preece (2020) also states that urban spaces undertake a psychosocial function, and the city becomes a feeling in individuals. The sense of security can be evaluated in this context.

**Table 3.** Safe City

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"It is quiet. Eskişehir is the most uneventful place in Turkey, according to police reports".
	"It is a safe city. A woman has the right to go out at nine to ten, come and go, that is, she has no fear, because there is no excess, no one disturbs anyone. Therefore, it is a civilized city".
GEN X	"There are detached houses and houses with gardens, neighbors know each other, children know each other, so I think it is reliable".
	"It's very safe. "It was 100% safe".
GEN Y	"So Eskişehir is a beautiful city. "It is a city where there are not many incidents of public order, there is nothing that has a bad impact".
	"I see Eskişehir as a little more developed... I mean, we hear the news, but I haven't experienced anything like purse snatching. "I have never been harassed by anyone, I have never experienced anything like that in my childhood or youth, for example, I don't remember anything bad".
	"I think it's safe. Or it may be because I have never encountered or heard of such an incident in my neighborhood. But for some reason, I think my daughter can come home easily at dusk. Because we were raised that way. When we were little, they said you

	can't go out in the dark, something bad will happen to you. But now, having my child outside in the dark doesn't worry me that much. That's why I think it's safe, I hope I'm not wrong".
GEN Z	"When I want to travel, I can visit Eskişehir because I can go anywhere easily".

Universities in Eskişehir are effective in defining the city as a student city. The emphasis on being a student city when defining a city is an indication that the universities in the city are quite active there. As a matter of fact, the current mayor of the city worked as a rector at one of the universities before his presidency. In other words, it moved from university administration to city administration. Sezgin and Canbulut (2021) draw attention to the intertwinedness of rulers and managers in creating a culture of sincere relations in cities. Here too, the identity of the ruler, from the rectorate to the mayor, is intertwined with the governed. The importance of the university for the city is very important. The university is included as a space in the study, and the impact of its cultural context on the participants is postponed for further evaluation in subsequent studies. In the context of the effects of space on urban identity, university narratives overlap with the literature (Alpak et al., 2018; Amin, 2002). This issue was reflected in the interviews in the form of defining the city as a student city as follows in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Students' City

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"Now it is known as a student city... Students also came and Eskişehir became even more revitalized".
GEN X	"Eskişehir is definitely a student city. "As there are many students, the number of faculty members is also high".
GEN Y	"Eskişehir is a student city. A city where students are very comfortable and where there are a large number of students is a city that appeals to students". "This is a student city... We have a president who loves students very much. As the Mayor, he gives high priority to students. I think students prefer this place because Eskişehir is culturally developed and, as I said, it is more affordable, there are more things for students, there is more living space and it is given more importance".
GEN Z	"Well, first of all, the people of the city are very nice, especially since it is a student city, it is also very nice". "There are things that are accessible, first of all, since it is a student city, so food and drinks are a little cheaper than other cities, there are places where you can have a lot of fun with your friends".

It is normal for values to have differences between generations, but if these changes turn into not understanding each other and therefore judging each other, there is something wrong (Karamivand, 2022). Addressing the participants' views on people from different backgrounds and generations living together in the city is important in terms of seeing the identities that can be built together (Robinson, 2022). Diversity is a crucial aspect in maintaining cohesion and presenting a cohesive identity, and the city plays a significant role in this regard (Lynch, 2022; Höllerer and Leixnering, 2022). Baby boomers and Y generations have wide limits when it comes to spending time together. Gen X is disturbed by the sense of freedom and border violations of Gen Z, which they describe as young people. Gen Z, on the other hand, prefers their own generation to spend time with and does not want to spend time with others (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Different Generations Living Together

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"Of course, he is comfortable in that aspect. For example, I came here, we met, his opinions are none of my business. We never asked each other, but I love it as a character, I love it as a character, I love it as a human being. There are things that differentiate people, even down to the sect of".

	"So now, for example, I would not go to Bağlar and rent a house with my family, because why, young people live there. "There is more fast-paced life, there is more noise".
GEN Y	"It's a modern city, no one interferes with anyone else here. Nobody tires anyone. He does not criticize anyone. Everyone is at their own pace; everyone is doing their job. Everyone is respectful to each other. It is very rare. It is a beautiful city".
GEN X	"Everyone is free, but everyone must respect each other. But no one is trespassing on anyone else's freedom, but unfortunately today's young people are entering too much of their freedom, they need to fix this".
	"There is a lot of corruption, a lot of corruption, a lot of corruption".
	"After all, it is said that Eskişehir is a university city, the literacy rate is high, there are many modern people, but if you ask me, it is not like that. After all, this creates a representation. If you ask me, that lifestyle at the university affects Eskişehir in a bad way".
GEN Z	"The neighborhood culture still exists, but I cannot say the same for the life of the city. Because university life, university students represent a completely different face of the city. I think it's not safe there at all, I think the university makes the young population of Eskişehir unsafe and poses a threat".
	"My friends. (Do you spend time with your family?) I don't spend much time, and I don't".
	"It used to happen to young people, but now that the young population has increased, they no longer look at it as strange in Eskişehir, that is, they do not look at it from a different perspective".

Within the scope of the research data, not wanting to leave the city was considered an indicator of identity. While the participants' statements about not leaving the city were similar across three generations, it was noteworthy that Gen Z did not express an opinion on this issue (Table 6). Developing an identity with the city is a process that requires a long time, and in the process of identity formation, the city transforms into a living organism (Akova, 2020). In this context, it is understandable that Gen Z may have a neutral attitude towards attachment to the city compared to previous generations. Ultimately, urban identity is not something static, fixed, or rigid (Kaypak, 2010), and "sufficient" time is crucial in forming urban identity.

**Table 6.** Leaving Eskişehir

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"In Eskişehir, I mean, we are happy in Eskişehir... I live with love, so even if they told me to go somewhere else, I wouldn't leave Eskişehir"
GEN X	"Eskişehir is completely different, for example, I have one older brother, they are abroad and I cannot go. I will not leave Eskişehir and go, I mean, thank God, I will not go"
GEN Y	"You know, if you ask me whether I want to to another city or not, I don't want it"

The physical conditions of the city are an important factor in interaction with the city for almost everyone (Vathi and Burrell, 2021; Oktay, 2011). Narratives about the city's problems are centered on traffic congestion and the need to widen the roads (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Eskişehir's Problems

GENERATION	STATEMENT
BABY BOOMER	"It would be better to widen our streets a little so that vehicles can travel more easily."
GEN X	"We have traffic complexity. They narrowed down all our roads. Let's say what these municipalities did, the municipalities should fix this as soon as possible"
GEN Y	"If I were to criticize, I would criticize the traffic"
GEN Z	"The roads and sidewalks on which vehicles pass are very short. They can be lengthened a little more for both people and cars"

Xiangming and colleagues (2020) emphasize that when analyzing the social identity of rural-urban immigrants, it is very important to consider the role of generation and the attitudes of rural-urban immigrants towards the background society. In studies dealing with how Indigenous people, as a

unique cultural unit, create their urban identities in order to maintain their cultural existence in the urban area (Brablec, 2021; Renée et al., 2020), it is claimed that the dazzle of culture in the urban area should be erased. When cultural identity becomes more dominant than urban identity, the urban identity development process is negatively affected, and in a sense, social exclusion occurs. It is a remarkable situation in the literature that the city receives mostly domestic immigration (Dalaylı, 2023). Şahbaz (2020), who defines Eskişehir as an immigrant city, states that the city both offers job opportunities and is a cultural attraction. Immigrants contribute to the revitalization of the city's cultural and social life (Şahin, 2011). In this research, Eskişehir is seen as a city that receives immigration. In addition to the mention of immigrants who constitute the cultural diversity of the city, what is noteworthy in this research is the mention of vulnerable groups in the reasons for immigration. Eskişehir's disability-friendliness has also found its place in the literature (Timur and Oğuz, 2019). A participant's statement regarding the city's inclusion of vulnerable groups is as follows:

"For example, I think the fact that there is a school for the hearing impaired here has caused families to move here, because I know it from my sister. "My sister is hearing impaired. There is a school at her university for hearing impaired people" (GEN Y).

## CONCLUSION

In this research, which centered on in-depth interviews with three representatives from four distinct generations residing in Eskişehir, various facets of urban identity were explored, encompassing the city's description, its social relations, evolutionary changes, symbolic representations, and the role of universities. The absence of participants of the same age within the research cohort provided a diverse spectrum of generational perspectives, enriching the study's depth. However, the exclusion of participants in their 30s posed a limitation, warranting future research to include this demographic segment for comprehensive analysis.

Notably, the predominance of male participants and the absence of employed female participants, with the participating women being predominantly Millennials and Baby Boomers, underscored gender and employment imbalances within the research sample. The residential concentration of participants primarily in two pivotal city centers enhanced the study's perception aspect, offering insights into the dynamics of urban identity formation.

A deliberate choice to limit participants' education level to high school graduates aimed to streamline the focus on urban identity, eliminating the need for separate evaluation of university influence. However, this decision foreclosed exploration into the interplay between higher education and urban identity, signaling a potential avenue for future research.

Urban areas emerged as the predominant theme of discussion, followed by the temporal narrative of yesterday-today-tomorrow, with Icons of Eskişehir being the most intensely debated topic. Conversely, discourse density was notably low in themes related to relations and universities, attributable to participants' lack of university experiences.

Intergenerational consensus prevailed on urban problems, traffic congestion, inadequacies in infrastructure, and safety concerns, indicating shared societal priorities transcending generational divides. Notably, discussions on Eskişehirspor and Çibörek showcased the unifying power of sports and culinary culture, bridging intergenerational gaps.

The emphasis on Eskişehir's identity as a student city garnered attention, rooted in the managerial background of the city's former university rector turned mayor. However, tensions between generations, particularly between Gen X and Gen Z, underscored divergent perspectives on urban life and cultural norms. Despite these differences, Eskişehir exemplifies a strong urban identity characterized by a pervasive sense of identity among its citizens. Nonetheless, variations exist between

generations in cultivating a shared urban culture, spatial utilization, and iconic perceptions, necessitating nuanced approaches to urban planning and community engagement.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the complex interplay of generational dynamics in shaping urban identity in Eskişehir, offering insights into shared concerns, cultural nuances, and potential areas for collaborative urban development initiatives.

### **Etik Standart ile Uyumluluk**

**Çıkar Çatışması:** Yazar zarlar, diğer üçüncü kişi ve kurumlarla çıkar çatışmasının olmadığını veya varsa bu çıkar çatışmasının nasıl oluştuğuna ve çözüleceğine ilişkin beyanlar ile yazar katkısı beyan formları makale süreç dosyalarına ıslak imzalı olarak eklenmiştir.

**Etik Kurul İzni:** Bu çalışma için etik kurul iznine gerek yoktur, buna ilişkin ıslak imzalı etik kurul kararı gerekmediğine ilişkin onam formu sistem üzerindeki makale süreci dosyalarına eklenmiştir.

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