

The impact of street rehabilitation on collective memory and belonging: Samsun-İstiklal (Çiftlik) Street¹

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ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanization driven by city growth has brought about irregular urban formation, dense construction, and a lack of open spaces where residents can breathe. This pattern is particularly evident in city centers. In recent years, under the influence of globalization and increasing competition, local governments have sought to transform cities into so-called "brand cities". This trend has been one of the driving forces behind urban renewal projects. While interventions such as rehabilitation, restoration, and urban planning have targeted both decayed urban areas and dense, visually chaotic city centers, the unique character of cities is often insufficiently preserved. Façade interventions that lack contextual sensitivity have led to the emergence of similar urban textures, despite positive improvements such as landscaping, pedestrianization, and the addition of urban amenities. Such changes undermine urban memory and weaken residents' sense of belonging, however, the significance of this impact is often overlooked. This study focuses on a case study of Çiftlik Street, one of the busiest streets in the city center of Samsun. The street underwent rehabilitation to facilitate pedestrian circulation and reduce visual clutter caused by signage and advertisements. However, interventions on building façades also removed visual cues that aided memory recall. The study aims to evaluate the effects of a street rehabilitation in which the function remains unchanged but visually memorable elements have been eliminated, on urban memory. In this context, it investigates whether the changes on the street caused problems in the memory retrieval process (memory loss), whether a new layer of memory (meaning/image) emerged, and whether residents living along the street experienced a decrease in their sense of place attachment. The study, designed as a qualitative study, employed in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method and used semi-structured interview forms as data collection tools. The findings indicate that, due to the inability of street users to continue their former spatial practices, the street lost both its previous significance and the potential to form a new memory layer. Façade rehabilitations led to the disappearance of spatial images and past experiences, causing disruptions in collective memory. Overall, the results demonstrate that physical interventions in city centers affect not only the spatial environment but also social memory and residents' sense of belonging.

KEYWORDS

Memory, collective memory, rehabilitation, belonging, Çiftlik Street.

Bir cadde rehabilitasyonunun kolektif bellek ve aidiyet üzerindeki etkisi: Samsun-İstiklal (Çiftlik) Caddesi

ÖZET

Kentleşmenin etkisiyle oluşan hızlı yapılaşma beraberinde çarpık kentsel biçimleniş, yoğun yapılaşmayı ve kentlinin nefes alacağı boşlukların oluşmadığı bir düzeni getirmiştir. Kent merkezlerine bakıldığında bu kesitin

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daha net okunabildiği görülmektedir. Son yıllarda küreselleşmenin etkisiyle artan rekabet ortamında yerel yönetimler tarafından kentleri özellikle 'marka kent' haline getirme düşüncesi, kentsel dönüşüm projelerinin gündeme gelme nedenleri arasında olmuştur. Kentsel çöküntü alanlarının yanı sıra yoğunluğun ve görüntü karmaşasının bulunduğu kent merkezleri ise ıslah, rehabilite, düzenleme gibi çeşitli müdahalelerin olduğu yerler arasında yer almıştır. Ancak söz konusu müdahalelerle sağlanan peyzaj, yayalaştırma, kentsel donatı ekleme gibi olumlu düzenlemelere rağmen, kentlerin özgün karakteri yeterince korunamamakta; kimliksiz cephe müdahaleleriyle benzer kentsel dokular oluşmaktadır. Bu değişim, kent belleğini tahrip ederek aidiyet duygusunu zayıflatmakta, ancak bu etkinin önemi yeterince dikkate alınmamaktadır. Yapılan çalışma, bir vaka çalışması olarak Samsun kent merkezinin en işlek caddelerden biri olan Çiftlik Caddesi'ni ele almaktadır. Çiftlik Caddesi gerek yaya dolaşımını rahatlatmak gerekse de tabela ve reklamların neden olduğu görüntü kirliliğini temizlemek amacıyla rehabilitasyona uğramıştır. Ancak bina cephelerine müdahale yapılırken bellekte anımsamaya yardımcı olan görsel izler de yok edilmiştir. Yapılan çalışma, işlevi değişmeyen ancak görsel hatırlatıcı imgelerin ortadan kaldırıldığı bir sokak rehabilitasyonunun, kentli belleği üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda caddedeki değişimin bellekteki ara-bul-geri getir aşamasında sorunlara yol açıp açmadığı (bellek yıkımı), kentlide yeni bir bellek katmanı (anlam/ imge) oluşup oluşmadığı ve cadde üzerinde ikamet eden sakinlerin yere olan aidiyetlerinde kayıplar yaşayıp yaşamadıkları araştırmaya değer görülmüştür. Nitel desende kurgulanan çalışmada derinlemesine görüşme tekniği kullanılmış, veri toplama aracı olarak da yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formundan yararlanılmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda, caddeyi kullananların eski mekânsal eylemlerini sürdürememesi nedeniyle cadde hem eski önemini kaybetmiş hem de bu alan için yeni bir bellek katmanı oluşmamıştır. Cephe rehabilitasyonları, mekânsal imgelerin ve geçmiş yaşanmışlıkların kaybolmasına yol açmış, kolektif bellekte kırılmalara neden olmuştur. Bulgular, kent merkezlerinde yapılan fiziksel müdahalelerin yalnızca mekânsal değil, toplumsal belleği ve aidiyet duygusunu da etkilediğini göstermektedir.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Bellek, kolektif bellek, cadde rehabilitasyonu, aidiyet, Çiftlik Caddesi.

Introduction

Places serve as a link between the past and the future through the memories, experiences, and meanings they embody, and are therefore important building blocks for transmitting these meanings to future generations. Any extraordinary intervention in places damages the bond that forms collective memory. In this sense, collective memory necessitates the sustainability of spaces and highlights the need to protect them. Based on this, the study aims to investigate the impact of the transformation or change of urban spaces on urban memory, and thus on collective memory, directly through urban experience. The study focuses on Çiftlik Street, one of the oldest and busiest streets in the city centre of Samsun, which underwent rehabilitation in 2014 with the aim of acquiring a new identity.

Rehabilitation, as defined by Göksu (1989: 81-86), is the improvement of the usable features of existing buildings or the environment through certain interventions, without disrupting the social structure, in order to achieve better living standards when the entire city or a specific part of it is physically worn out or fails to meet requirements. At its meeting dated 13 June 2014, Samsun Metropolitan Municipality discussed the issue of removing signs and renovating building façades that create visual pollution on Çiftlik Street, in accordance with Article 73 of the Municipal Law No. 5393. The aim was to remove vehicle traffic from the street and renovate the infrastructure and building façades (Samsun Metropolitan Municipality Archive). Çiftlik Street underwent rehabilitation under the supervision of the Samsun Metropolitan Municipality Technical Works Department, both to facilitate pedestrian circulation and to reduce visual pollution caused by signage. As part of the street rehabilitation project, it was closed to vehicular traffic in 2014 and pedestrianised, and the façades of the buildings on the street were renovated (Samsun Metropolitan Municipality Technical Works Department Archive).

However, while intervening in the building façades, visual traces that aided memory recall were also erased. This study aims to evaluate the impact on urban memory of a street rehabilitation project that did not change the function of the buildings but removed visual reminders. In this context, it investigates whether the change on the street causes problems in the search-find-retrieve stage of memory (memory destruction), whether it creates a new layer of memory

(meaning/image) for city dwellers, and whether there are losses in the sense of belonging to the place among users residing on this street. A review of scientific studies on street rehabilitation reveals that research has largely focused on urban resident/user satisfaction. Therefore, this research differs from other studies in that it aims to learn directly from the residents themselves about the impact of street rehabilitation works on collective memory and how it affects their sense of belonging to the place. It is also considered valuable for the theoretical contribution it will make to the scientific literature based on the data obtained.

The memory system and its relationship with space

Memory is defined as the faculty, power, and place where impressions from the external world and perceptions and information gained from introspection are stored and, when necessary, revived in consciousness (Bolay, 2004: 61; Akarsu, 1998: 27). The question of how memory functions at the individual level continues to attract interest, and experimental research specific to this field continues to be conducted. According to the findings, recall is a process involving search-retrieval operations, while memory is a function consisting of recording-storage-retrieval processes (Eysenck, 1990: 230-250). Another important finding shows that the recall process does not work like a storage system or a computer. At the moment of recall, the individual does not simply access information stored in the past; the location of the information in memory is reconstructed by blending it with the characteristics of the moment of recall (Rose, 2003: 88).

Individuals' short- or long-term experiences in the physical environment initiate spatial perception, enabling them to remember the space. Spatial perception is based on the process of mentally processing, recognising, and distinguishing information obtained through sensations. The perception of space consists of two processes: sensory and mental. The sensory process refers to the acquisition of information about the physical characteristics of the space during the initial and brief experience of the physical environment. The mental process describes the acquisition of information based on needs, expectations, and perspectives, whether consciously or unconsciously, from stimuli received from the environment. While the sensory process corresponds to generalisation for all individuals, the mental process expresses individuality (Göregenli, 2010: 20-21).

In the relationship between the mental process and spatial perception, the communication process between the space and the individual during perception can be defined as the long-term recording of past experiences related to the space. In perception, objects whose existence is understood through the senses are placed within specific systems of relations and thus given meaning. The stimuli that cause a space to be visually perceived to evoke associations related to past experiences and contexts are, in fact, the traces that spaces leave in memory (İnceoğlu, 2010: 2).

Spatial perception is a phenomenon that depends not only on the physical characteristics of the space but also on the context in which the space is evaluated. In this sense, individuals' perception of space encompasses not only the stimuli they acquire through visual means but also the meaning and characteristics of the stimuli they have received in the past and their experiences (Sayar Avcioğlu and Akin, 2017: 8). After spatial perception, data related to space are interpreted and then encoded in memory to be recalled when needed. During the encoding process in memory, the individual's life, achievements, activities, experiences and impressions in space, the visual and auditory images acquired about the space, and the physical characteristics of the space are recorded in memory (Subaşı, 1999: 27-36).

During the encoding phase, it is important that the incoming information is defined in memory as an image, a sign, or a code (Eggen and Kauchak, 1992: 313-314). At this stage, stimuli from the environment are selected, perceived, and transferred to memory. It is impossible to remember any stimulus that has not been stored in memory. The encoding process in memory is tightly intertwined into memory in parallel with the context of the space and the associations that the space will create in the individual. The perception of space, which becomes permanent

in memory to the extent of its context, combines with the use and nature of the space and the individual characteristics of the user to establish the individual-space-memory relationship (Öymen Özak, 2008: 162-168).

After information is processed and encoded in memory, it proceeds to the storage stage. Bartlett's (1932: 186-197) experiments demonstrated that the mind processes the presented material, transforms it into a form appropriate to its own needs, feelings, expectations, and attitudes, and then stores it. In the retrieval stage, stored information is searched for in memory and retrieved when it is desired to be remembered (Onan, 2012: 96-113). The criteria and method by which images stored in the mind are transferred to the outside world vary depending on the actions performed by the individual within the space, the environment surrounding the space itself, and the spatial characteristics. The retrieval of traces remaining in memory occurs when a similarity can be established between the context in which the information about the space was encoded in memory and the situation in which it is retrieved (Sayar Avcıoğlu and Akın, 2017: 22). For recall to occur, it is important that the desired information is stored in memory and that cues leading to the stored information are found (Onan, 2012: 96-113). In summary, the activity of recall takes place within a specific social framework, and the characteristics of this framework influence both the form of recall and the content of memories. Social change, that is, the change in the social frameworks of memory, changes the methods by which individuals reconstruct their memories, while also damaging the values and symbols that keep memory alive. Therefore, memory necessitates the continuity of places and reveals the need to preserve information about places at various levels.

Memory redefines and continues its system around stimuli and context in every recollection. If communication is interrupted, its framework changes, or disappears during this process, forgetting/destruction of memory occurs (Halbwachs, 2017: 170; Yalın, 2002: 157-214). When information embedded in collective memory is recalled, damage to or loss of the spatial elements that aid recall can cause damage and loss in memory. This loss and damage in memory can also weaken individuals' sense of belonging to their environment (Boyer, 1998: 129-203). This is because the loss of elements or parts of spaces that individuals are familiar with, that bear traces of their past, and that evoke their memories weakens the connection with the past and carries the risk of transforming the place where they live into just another neighbourhood of no value to them.

The passage of time does not merely describe the physical formation process of a space; it also indicates the gradual, cumulative formation of an image of that place or city in the mind of its user. As the user's interactions with this structure increase over time and their experiences transform, the image in the collective memory changes and takes shape in a unique way. The act of repetition is an important component in this shaping process, because actions that are not repeated cause the events or places in memory to fade and be forgotten. In this sense, the repetition, continuity, transmission over time, and reconstruction of place-related images through place legends keep the memory of that place alive (Nora 2006: 31-38; Yılmaz and İnceköse, 2017: 61-77). Keeping the memory of a place alive contributes to social and cultural sustainability as a guarantee of attachment and belonging to that place.

Ujang (2012: 49) emphasises that the emotional and functional bonds established with everyday living spaces play a decisive role in ensuring the continuity of urban place identity. Studies conducted in the context of urban transformation reveal the importance of the meaning attributed to place and the formation of identity in renewal processes. Research on traditional streets in Malaysia shows that place attachment strengthens the sense of belonging and increases the social value of urban spaces (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008: 407). In this context, it is argued that place attachment is not only an individual but also a social and cultural process, thus playing a critical role in terms of the continuity and identity of the space (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015: 168).

With the impact of digitalisation and technology, in today's era where everything is rapidly produced, consumed and experienced, the act of forgetting is accelerating further alongside changing fragments and stimuli. According to Connerton, the processes that separate individuals from locality and push them towards globalisation constitute the main source of social amnesia. In this process, the building blocks of the city—neighbourhoods, squares, and streets—change rapidly, cultural memory is destroyed, and cultural amnesia emerges (Connerton, 2014: 119-120):

"...Superhuman speed, mega-cities too large to learn, consumerism disconnected from the labour process, objects whose origin and producer are unknown, the short lifespan of urban architecture, temporary jobs, constant exposure to visual bombardment, the blurring of social relationships... It is not a matter of memory loss, but of being unable to form personal memories and habits..."

Method

The study investigates the impact of the street rehabilitation carried out on Çiftlik Street on collective memory. In the mechanism of memory, visual stimuli are stored as images to be retrieved later. When the elements that aid recall are removed, interruptions in memory may occur, as visual stimuli and the context axis can continue to exist in parallel (Nora, 2006: 31-38). In this sense, it is thought that the new street frontage created by the changes made to the façade of one of the city's oldest and busiest streets has caused damage to urban memory and, consequently, to the sense of belonging to the place.

Due to the content of the study, it is necessary to examine human behaviour and thought. One of the methods used to reveal behaviours, perceptions, perspectives, and events in a natural environment in a holistic manner is qualitative research. Qualitative research utilises various qualitative data collection tools, such as observation, document analysis, and interviews (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016: 41). Under the umbrella of qualitative methods, there are multiple research approaches, such as theory building, ethnography, narrative research, case studies, and phenomenology. This study utilised the phenomenological approach, which aims to understand human experience (van Manen, 2007: 12). In phenomenological research, it is important to obtain in-depth information from each interviewee (Giorgi, 1997: 245; Lester, 1999: 2). Therefore, the in-depth interview technique was used as a data collection tool in this study.

The in-depth interview technique is an interview technique that collects information about individuals' views, thoughts, and experiences in order to obtain more information than superficial information about the research topic. With this technique, the perceptions, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and definitions of individuals, who are the subjects of social reality, are learned about any topic, and data are provided for research. In this method, which attempts to understand and evaluate events from the perspective of individuals by entering their inner world, detailed information is sought by interviewing a small number of people (Türnüklü, 2000: 543-559; Kümbetoğlu, 2008: 71-75).

Considering the intensity and diversity of use on the street, the research was conducted with three different user groups. A total of 30 people formed the sample group for the study: 10 participants (K1-K10) from the residents of Çiftlik Street, 10 participants (K11-K20) from the shopkeepers, and 10 participants (K21-K30) from the users/visitors. As the study area began to be rehabilitated in 2014, the individuals interviewed were required to be from Samsun and to have lived in Samsun for at least 15 years, excluding short-term/seasonal departures. Participants are coded as "K" in the text, and user opinions are included through direct quotations where deemed necessary.

The in-depth interview form consists of four sections: the first section covers demographic characteristics; the second section covers the encoding stage of memory; the third section covers the storage stage of memory; and the final section consists of questions designed to

reveal the retrieval stage of memory. The current state of collective memory was assessed by examining image-context, memory layer (memory retention), memory loss, and sense of belonging through these stages of memory (Table 1).

Table 1 Interview sections and objectives

Section	Objective	Scope	Desired Attributes and Relationships
1. Section	Demographic Characteristics	- Age - Educational Status - Occupation - Place of Residence - Duration of Residence in Samsun	-
2. Section	The Encoding Stage of Memory	Image-Context	City- and Space-Specific Mental Elements/Images
3. Section	The Storage Stage of Memory	Memory Layer (Inscription in Memory)	Current Status and Usage Characteristics of the Street
4. Section	The Search-Find-Retrieve Stage of Memory	- Memory Loss - Sense of Belonging	- Meaning of the Street for Individuals and the City - The Street's History and Associated Memories

In these interviews, which were conducted on a voluntary basis, the interviewer informed the participants that permission had been obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Date/Decision No: 31.01.2025 / 2025-40). The interviews were recorded using audio equipment and transcribed after the interviews, forming the database for the analysis. These collected data were analysed in document form. These raw data, converted into document form, were filtered according to the purpose of the questions; the sought essence was attempted to be captured; other parts were excluded from the process. Following this document analysis, the stages of reaching findings and discussions were followed. All interviews conducted with the participants were evaluated, but responses that were considered to provide more data to the study and the relevant question were specifically included in the text.

Samsun- Çiftlik Street

The city of Samsun has served caravan trade for centuries due to its location on the routes connecting the Black Sea to Mesopotamia from ancient times to the present day. On the other hand, as a port city, it has also been an important hub directing trade flows across the country by serving as a transfer point between sea, rail, and road transport (Yılmaz, 2011: 361-378). Today, the central district of İlkadım (https://www.nufusu.com/ilce/ilkadim_samsun-nufusu), with a population of 330,290 is home to İstiklal and Mecidiye Streets, the city's busiest streets in terms of trade intensity. İstiklal Street, one of the city's important public spaces, is also in a highly accessible location in terms of pedestrian traffic. İstiklal Street intersects perpendicularly with Osmaniye Street and Lise Street, and the section between these two streets is known as Çiftlik Street. Çiftlik Street, which forms the study area, is approximately 700 metres long (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 Location of Çiftlik Street within the city (processed by the authors using Yandex maps)

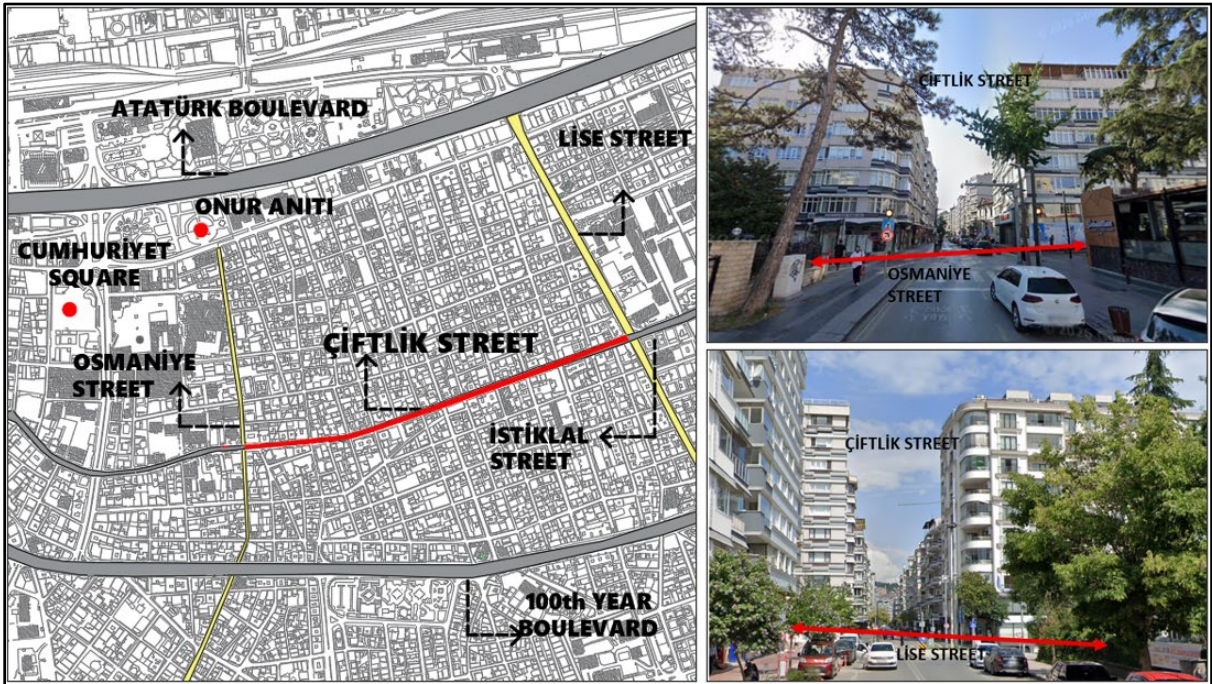


Figure 2 The immediate vicinity of Çiftlik Street and the entrances from Osmaniye and Lise Street (processed by the authors using the Samsun Metropolitan Municipality's current map; photograph: documented by the authors)

The street has become an influential part of the daily life of city dwellers; it also holds value as a place of memory, bearing witness to the changes in the physical development of the city (from individual houses with farms to a street with 7-8-storey blocks of flats). Çiftlik Street, with its primary functions being residential and commercial, offers opportunities for shopping, strolling,

dining, and relaxation through its shops and restaurants. It is also one of the city's busiest streets, serving as a route for those commuting to school or work. Before the pedestrianisation works carried out as part of the improvement project, Çiftlik Street was known as a street with heavy vehicle traffic as well as pedestrian traffic.

Çiftlik Street takes its name from Sami Kefeli's farm, which was located where the DSI (State Hydraulic Works) building stands today. In the early 1900s, the street was named 'farm road, farm, road to the farm' by the locals because it connected to the Sami Kefeli Farm at the end of the road. Until the 1930s, the street was an area with wooden houses and farms, but later became a place with two/three-storey houses with gardens (Kayıkçı, 2000: 65; Yılmaz, 2011: 361-378). From the street's old fabric, the only remaining structure today is a residence known as Elmas Hanım Mansion, which has been converted into a commercial establishment serving as a dining venue (Samsun Cultural Heritage Inventory) (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Sami Kefeli's Farm

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1414568911909002/search/?q=%C3%87iftlik%20Cadde>); Çiftlik Street in the 1940s

(<https://www.facebook.com/samsunbiziz/photos/a.967086736699683/2116595805082098/?paipv=0&eav=AfZqvEdLypFeRIBnSQZVTguMrqjVsKQOjsud9hIdqPxbDzc2h0kk7OPbPhftXc2Vfkc>) and today's Elmas Hanım Mansion (photo: documented by the authors)

After 1945, under the influence of economic developments, the city's commercial centre shifted towards what is now Çiftlik Street and its surroundings. Consequently, the building density of this street began to increase; multi-storey apartment buildings began to replace 2-3 storey detached houses with gardens (Samsun Provincial Yearbook, 1973) (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Çiftlik Street in the 1960s

(<https://www.facebook.com/samsunbiziz/photos/a.967086736699683/2116595805082098/?paipv=0&eav=AfZqvEdLypFeRIBnSQZVTguMrqjVsKQOjsud9hIdqPxbDzc2h0kk7OPbPhftXc2Vfkc>) and its current state (photograph: documented by the authors)

Çiftlik Street is a bustling shopping thoroughfare that the city's residents use constantly throughout the day, always busy and crowded. There are a total of 80 buildings on both sides of the street, formed by blocks of buildings. With the exception of Elmas Hanım Mansion, located at the corner where Çiftlik Street intersects with Alp Gündem Street, the buildings are

constructed in a contiguous layout. The number of storeys in the buildings varies between 2 and 10, and the façade designs, building heights, and solid-void ratios differed between the buildings prior to the street improvement (Figure 5).

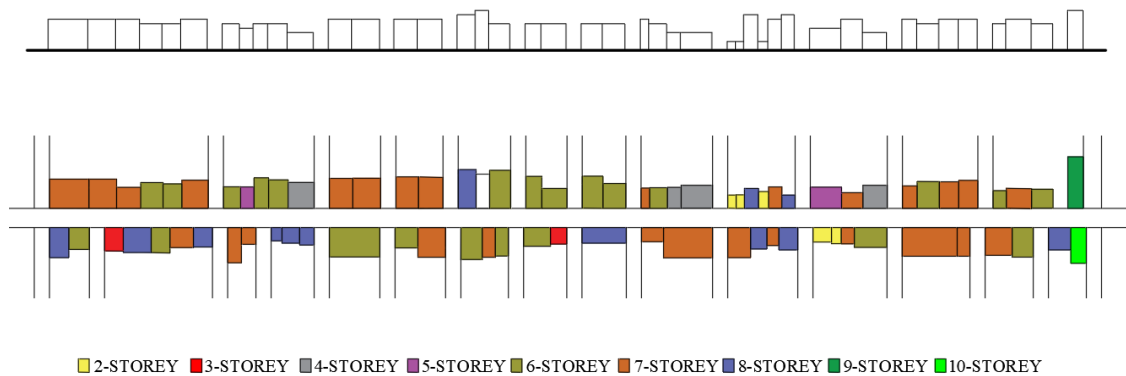


Figure 5 Analysis of the number of storeys in buildings on Çiftlik Street and the street silhouette (produced by the authors)

The upper floors of buildings are mostly used for residential purposes, while the ground floors operate as shops. These shops comprise a total of 191 units, including stores, bank branches, beauty salons, eating and drinking establishments, and offices belonging to public institutions and organisations (Kızılay, police station, tuberculosis dispensary, etc.) that can meet all the needs of the city's residents. Although a single ground floor may contain multiple shops, retail stores and shops for shopping purposes predominate (Figure 6).

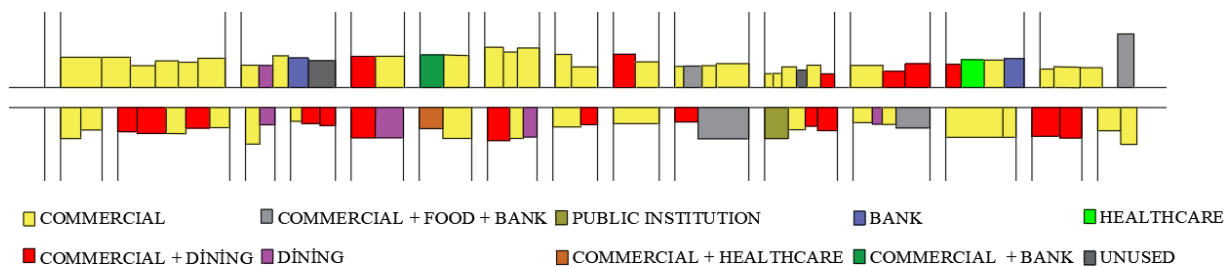


Figure 6 Ground floor functional distribution of buildings on Çiftlik Street (generated by the authors)

Improvements made on Çiftlik Street as part of the improvement project

At the meeting held on 13 June 2014, the Samsun Metropolitan Municipal Council decided that sign cleaning and façade renovation works should commence on building façades causing visual pollution in the area, including Çiftlik Street. It was stated that 75% of the costs incurred in this context would be covered by the building and business owners, and 25% by the Municipality. In addition to the renovation of the building façades, the pedestrianisation of the street and the revision of the infrastructure were also targeted (Samsun Metropolitan Municipality Archive).

The two-way vehicle traffic on the street, which was open in the 1970s, was reduced to one-way in the 1980s with the widening of the pavements in both directions (Figure 7). As part of the improvement project, the street was completely closed to traffic and pedestrianised in 2014 (Figure 8a). However, following the rehabilitation works, the street was reopened to one-way vehicle traffic in 2020 at the request of local businesses, and one side of the road was allocated for parking along the axis (Figure 8b).



Figure 7 The two-way traffic of Çiftlik Street in 1975

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10160026915481938&set=gm.7667085669990597&id=orvanity=1414568911909002>); 2011 periods when the road was open to one-way vehicle traffic (<https://www.tatilana.com/ciftlik-caddesi-samsun>)



Figure 8 a. Pedestrianisation of the street (<https://yurtsever.org.tr/2020/samsunda-25-milyon-harcanarak-kapatilan-cadde-arac-trafigine-acilacak-327663/>); b. Current situation following the reopening of the street to one-way traffic in 2020 (photograph: documented by the authors)

As part of the improvement project, following the pedestrianisation works, the façades have now been renovated. Due to the number of floors and functional diversity of the buildings, which are primarily residential and commercial, it was deemed necessary to rehabilitate the façade designs, density-void ratios, colours, door and window arrangements, and signage arrangements, primarily due to visual pollution and building heights. Following the implementation of the project, the same materials and colours were used on the façades of the buildings. Thermal insulation and grey painting were applied to the building façade surfaces, excluding the ground floor entrances and shop windows. A dark grey colour was chosen for the ground floors to make the shops more visible. Signage was cleaned, awnings were added to the entrances, and shop names were written on them. No signage was applied to the building façades beyond this application. This was done to prevent clutter on the façade surfaces and to create a common language on the ground floors.

The upper floors of the buildings facing the street were standardised with the same form, material, texture and colour. The EPS blocks used on the façade surfaces provide thermal insulation while also creating a new façade form and texture. Applied to create a linear horizontal texture on the façades, the EPS blocks are used in different widths and lengths and in different colours, including white, grey, and black. Due to the different heights of the buildings, the texture is interrupted in the transitions between buildings, but the horizontal linearity of the texture creates a sense of continuity between the façades. Thermal insulation has also been applied to

the side surfaces of the windows using EPS panels, and grey exterior paint has been applied to them (Figure 9).



Figure 9 Street frontage after improvement; awnings added to building and shop entrances (photo: documented by the authors)

Before pedestrianisation, the street only had litter bins as street furniture; afterwards, seating elements for pedestrians were added along the street. In addition, lighting elements, information boards and, where appropriate, planting and tree planting were carried out (Figure 10).



Figure 10 Post-rehabilitation planting, lighting and seating elements (photo: documented by the authors)

Evaluation

The study examines the image of Çiftlik Street in collective memory, whether it has secured a place in collective memory, whether the street's renovation has resulted in losses in memory, and the role of the changes made in the sense of belonging and group identity. To this end, data obtained from in-depth interviews were analysed and interpreted under the headings of the encoding stage of memory, the storage stage of memory, and the retrieval stage of memory.

Of the 30 participants interviewed for the study, 50% were women and 50% were men. All participants had resided in Samsun for at least 20 years or more; 60% were in the older age group (50 years and above), and 40% were in the middle age group (30-50 years). Most of the participants have resided in Samsun since birth; 46% have a university education, while 54% have a high school education or below. The occupational groups of the participants were determined as civil servants, tradespeople, workers, housewives, or retirees.

The encoding stage of memory

The elements to be encoded during the encoding phase of memory are stored in memory by creating an image and context. Therefore, elements, images and concepts that evoke associations have been identified in order to determine the meaning of the city of Samsun and Çiftlik Street in the urban memory. Lynch (2010: 3-6) mentions that city images are effective in the community's adoption of the city, in establishing a context for the city, and in individuals'

faster recall of the environment. In this context, it was first examined whether Çiftlik Street, specifically in Samsun, had a place in the collective memory. Regarding city images, participants shared statements such as: “*Samsun pide, Turkish bagel, Çiftlik Street, Gazi Street*” (K10); “*Atatürk, 19 May, Çiftlik, Atakum*” (K14); “*Old Fair, Atatürk, Seaside, Sea, Çiftlik Street, Samsun pide, Turkish bagel*” (K17), referring to Samsun's natural beauty, historical themes, gastronomy, and spatial elements based on their experiences with the environment. Çiftlik Street, which is among the recurring spaces/spatial elements, stands out as one of the city's memory spaces, commonly used by its residents (Table 2).

Table 2 Prominent themes and concepts related to city images

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Natural Beauties	Seaside Sea	K7, K5, K12, K15, K22, K23, K27, K29, K8, K11, K14, K15, K17, K19, K21, K23, K24, K26
Historical Themes	Atatürk 19 May	K1, K3, K10, K11, K14, K16, K20, K22, K23, K30 K1, K8, K9, K14, K24
Gastronomy	Samsun pide Turkish bagel	K4, K8, K10, K11, K12, K13, K15, K17, K18, K21, K22, K23, K26, K28 K4, K10, K13, K15, K16, K18, K23
Space	Çiftlik Street	K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K9, K10, K14, K16, K19, K20, K21, K23, K25, K28
	Mecidiye Street	K6, K16, K28
	Gazi Street	K10
	Old Fair	K6, K15, K23, K25, K30
	Atakum	K2, K4, K9, K14, K24, K25

Çiftlik Street has earned a place in the city's collective memory with expressions such as “*Shopping, Strolling, Central Location, Istanbul's Beyoğlu, My Youth*” (K8); “*Commercial Centre, Döner Kebap Restaurants, Heart of Samsun*” (K18). In line with the shared elements, it has been observed that the street has established itself in the collective memory with its commercial, gastronomic, social interaction, and societal dimensions, and that its commercial aspect stands out, particularly due to its important place in the city's commercial flow. The street occupies an important place in the collective memory, particularly with its döner kebab restaurants: “*Shops, Döner Kebab Restaurants, Ice Cream, My High School Years*” (K29). In this context, it becomes clear that the street carries a gastronomic meaning belonging to the city's food culture. On the other hand, city residents living on the street stand out from other user groups with posts such as “*Shop, Döner Kebab Restaurants, Famous Street, My Home, My Family*” (K7) and “*Traffic Crowds, My Childhood, My Home*” (K5). Unlike other groups, this group has associated Çiftlik Street with the concept of “family” because it is home to the living spaces where their daily lives and family bonds are formed (Table 3).

Table 3 Prominent themes and concepts related to images of Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Commercial	Brand	K3, K6, K10, K14, K15, K17
	Store	K3, K4, K8, K22, K24, K28, K30
	Shopping	K3, K8, K16, K18, K21, K22, K23, K26, K28, K29, K30
Gastronomy	Döner kebab restaurants	K4, K12, K13, K18, K20, K29
	Ice cream	K25, K27, K29 K30
Social Relationship	My home	K4, K5, K7, K8
	My childhood / My youth	K5, K8, K29, K30
	My family	K8
	Friendship	K4, K6, K8, K10, K20, K29 K27, K21, K29, K30
Societal Dimension	Famous street	K1, K2, K4, K18, K21, K26
	Crowds / Busy	K2, K5, K9, K19, K23, K24
	Traffic	K5, K24
	Strolling / Sightseeing	K8, K12, K20, K21, K25, K27, K30
	Meeting / Gathering	K12

The storage stage of memory

The storage of spatial elements in memory occurs through the understanding, categorisation, and learning of information acquired through the senses. Therefore, spatial perception arises from the unity of the connection between humans and their environment (Rapoport, 1981: 6-35). Following spatial perception, during the encoding process in memory, the individual's life, achievements, activities, experiences, and impressions of the space, and the physical characteristics of the space are stored in memory to be recalled (Subaşı, 1999: 27-36). In this context, the aim was to determine the current state and usage of Çiftlik Street within the memory layer of city dwellers.

Participants mostly made statements about the spatial and physical characteristics of the street's past: *"My friend's father was an architect, he designed a building in Çiftlik. The balconies were cone-shaped, extending downwards, and there was a lamp where they extended. There was also a delicatessen called Madenci. We remember it because of its window display; there was a 25-30 cm figurine-like miner statue in the middle of the window, which is why it stuck in our minds. We would pass by and look at it; he had a torch in his hand and a helmet on his head, which is why it caught our attention."* (K29); *"There was a hamburger shop, it had a large glass front, it was different, it was bright, you could see the whole inside from the outside, you could even watch how the hamburgers were prepared from the outside, it was different from the others, the others were ordinary, a classic building and a door entrance"* (K27). The Elmas Hanım Mansion, the only registered historical building on this street that has been preserved from the past to the present, is the most memorable building. Its historical value and its distinctive architectural form and façade details set it apart from other buildings: *"The Elmas Hanım Mansion catches my attention with its imposing presence. Elmas Hanım Mansion is different, it has the atmosphere of a mansion, and it comes to mind first because it is a symbol from our childhood"* (K5); *"Elmas Hanım Mansion, when I look at it today, is a striking and distinctive building compared to others because it is historic, two-storeyed, and has a unique façade"* (K26). These statements show that spatial differences, diversity, and formal elements can remain in the memory. Participants stated that they could not recall any particular building in their minds because Çiftlik Street currently hosts building façades that are formally identical, similar in size, and clad with the same type of materials: *"There aren't any left; everything has become apartment buildings. There is Elmas Hanım Mansion, but there is no building that catches my attention right now. The buildings here are all the same anyway, there are no buildings with any special features."* (K16); *"Elmas Hanım Mansion, our building was like that too, we gave it to the contractor and it was turned into an apartment building, it was beautiful, it was rustic. Because the others all became identical"* (K2). In this context, it is understood that form, which is among the physical environmental stimuli, is important at the stage where sensations are received, encoded, and stored in memory (Table 4).

Table 4 Prominent themes and concepts related to premises on Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Places	Döner kebab	K1, K3, K7, K8, K9, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20, K26, K21, K22, K23, K29, K30
	Banks	K24
	Tea houses	K21
	Bakery	K26
	Hamburger shop	K27
	Elmas Hanım Mansion	K2, K4, K5, K6, K11, K10, K12, K13, K14, K15, K25, K26, K27, K28
Physical Features	Large	K5
	Majestic / Imposing	K5
	House with garden	K2, K4
	Number of floors	K26
	Historical façade	K26
	Glass	K29, K30
	Cone-shaped	K29
	Glassed-in space	K27

Lighted	K27
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When examining the most frequently used spaces and the preferences for using these spaces before and after the improvements, it was observed that the street underwent a transformation in terms of spatial practices in the minds of city dwellers and, consequently, in their memory layers. Participants stated that, in relation to their daily activities on the street, they used to go to döner kebab restaurants, eat ice cream, go for walks with friends or family, and shop, referring to the old days: 'It used to be a place where we went for walks in the evenings as a family, ate ice cream; it was important to us' (K28). "When guests came, we would always take them to Çiftlik, feed them ice cream, and go shopping and walking together" (K5). However, in the present day, it is understood that, apart from the döner kebab restaurants, the other spatial practices specific to the street are no longer maintained: "People used to meet at Çiftlik, but social life is over now" (K12); 'It used to be a high-quality street frequented by elite families, but now it's a dull route to walk along, just an ordinary street' (K13). It is understood that even though the most frequently repeated actions/practices on this street do not continue today, they have become embedded in the spatial memory (Table 5). In this context, it is seen that during the stage when perceptions are encoded into memory, not only the physical characteristics of the space but also the act of repetition, as noted by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968: 2), increases the likelihood of information being retained in memory.

Table 5 Prominent themes and concepts related to spatial practices on Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Food & Drink	Döner kebab restaurants	K3, K27, K29, K30
	Ice cream shops	K5, K28, K30
Shopping	Stationery	K27, K28, K29, K30
	Shops / Stores	K2, K11, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20, K27
Leisure	Spending time	K1, K4, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K21, K22, K23

According to Gieryn (2000: 493-496), what makes a place is not only its physical existence but also its lived experience and perception. Furthermore, a place exists alongside memory and the meanings attributed to it. Spaces become places through social meanings, belonging, values assigned to them, actions that bring individuals together, and the help of collective memory. In this context, the question of what the post-improvement situation of Çiftlik Street, which has become a place in memory with its gastronomy, commercial, and social relations and social dimensions, is becoming important. Participants referred to physical characteristics and shared their views on the building façades, which are the meeting interfaces of Çiftlik Street; it was seen that the street was coded in collective memory as neglected and in need of repair before the improvement: "*Çiftlik Street is one of the oldest streets in Samsun, so the outside of the buildings was also old and in need of renovation*" (K30); "*Everything was terrible, no one was painting, the old one was terrible, there was an unpleasant visual*" (K6). In addition, participants who were homeowners and shopkeepers found the façade rehabilitation work successful because it reduced visual pollution and created a clean, tidy appearance: "*I liked the façades, I am satisfied, it turned out well like this*" (K17); "*There were houses that were renovated thanks to this, I think the outside of some buildings was bad, it turned out very well, there was the possibility of payment by instalments for low-income people*" (K2). Although the urban residents evaluate the rehabilitation work positively in terms of cleanliness and order, it is understood that the change has led to the disappearance of the street's unique texture and sense of "place": "*The old Çiftlik we used to go to is not the same as the new one. We used to go to that street with enthusiasm, but now our enthusiasm has waned. Now it's like walking into any street*" (K27); "*I haven't really got used to the changes, I don't know which shop is where, what's left. You can only see it when you get close to the signs. It was older but more beautiful; now it has really lost its identity, its spirit, this isn't the old Çiftlik anymore. At first it seemed nice, but over time I realised our buildings had lost their own identity, their own texture. Some were plain painted, some plain plastered, some covered in mosaic—they were all different*" (K29) (Table 6).

Table 6 Key Themes and concepts related to the Façade change on Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Semantic Associations	Beautiful	K1, K2, K3, K5, K6, K7, K17, K19, K22, K24, K25, K26
	Nice	K8, K20
	Luxurious	K1, K9, K17, K19
	Clean	K2, K10, K11, K13, K18
	Aesthetic	K5, K6, K11, K17, K23
	Organized	K11, K13, K18, K27
	Modern	K5, K11
	Dark	K3, K21
	Soulless	K11, K12, K14, K15, K16, K21, K28 K29, K30
	Monotonous	K4, K15, K18, K21, K22, K27

Among the various physical characteristics of a space, form is of primary importance in perception and, consequently, in the retention of the space in memory (Keskin, 2022: 63). The uniform façade texture along the entire street makes it difficult to perceive the street, orient oneself, locate oneself, or easily find the desired location (home, workplace, café, restaurant, shop, etc.). It has also been determined that this situation makes it difficult for a place, a location, or a site to be retained in collective memory: *"We enter the wrong building, we get confused"* (K14); *"We can't find it because of the same branding on the exterior façade, it's not aesthetically pleasing, the buildings and shops all look the same"* (K23). Although the street's daily visitors experience difficulties in finding places and directions and believe that there has been a loss in the formation of a sense of place, users who reside and work as shopkeepers in the area have a different opinion; they state that they do not experience any problems: *"Of course I can find it, we can find everything easily. I can count all the shops one by one with my eyes closed. But we heard that they mixed up 1-2 when it was first built"* (K2); *"I can find it, but people can't, they get confused even though they know it. They get extremely confused, they can't fully remember the points they know well, for example, Hacı Restaurant, they even get confused about a place they know well, they say, 'did we pass it?', they used to find those buildings because of their different colours. I used to be able to describe the location as 'under that green building', but now I can't describe it as a building, I can only say 'at that corner'"* (K15). These two groups constitute the permanent user base of the street in question. Therefore, even though the visual traces on Çiftlik Street have disappeared and the buildings have become indistinguishable, the street vendors and residents do not experience any difficulty in finding places, directions, or spaces due to the repetition supported by frequent use; the spaces continue to exist in their memories (Table 7).

Table 7 Prominent themes and concepts related to finding place, direction, and space on Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Perception	Confusion	K1, K8, K14, K16, K23
	Forgetfulness	K15, K18, K21, K22, K23, K28, K29, K30
	Memory triggered by habit	K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13, K15, K17, K19, K20, K24, K25, K26, K27

The search-find-retrieve stage of memory

In addition to concrete objects and places, various sensory stimuli associated with a place also serve as elements that aid in recollection (Yılmaz et al., 2015: 11). Senses such as hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch, as well as emotions like fear, excitement, love, happiness, and anxiety, are also effective in the memory retrieval phase. In this context, the focus was on the street's past and its evocations. When participants were asked what they remembered and felt about their daily lives and memories when considering the street's past and present, it became clear that spending time on the street in the past was a necessity rather than a choice, but that they had enjoyable times and were happy about it: *"Life was here, our youth was here. There was nowhere else in Samsun, you had to come here"* (K16); *"This was my childhood, there was nowhere else but Çiftlik, we even came here to eat ice cream"* (K21). Participants frequently shared

recurring expressions about the street's old days, such as eating ice cream, lovers meeting, friends going on outings, and guests being taken there: *"It was traditional to go to Çiftlik to eat ice cream after wedding celebrations; lovers would walk here, guests would be brought here and shown around"* (K21); *"As high school students, we would gather there and spend time; it was a place that used to symbolize friendship"* (K28). In addition, it is understood that the street is encoded in memory by referring to different stages of its life cycle in line with past memories and feelings of happiness. In this context, it is understood that memories and feelings are effective in recalling a place (Table 8).

Table 8 Prominent themes and concepts related to everyday life on Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Emotion	Happiness	K3, K14, K16, K18, K21, K25, K27, K28, K29, K30
	Love	K4, K5, K13, K22
	Longing	K6, K11, K12, K15, K17, K20, K22, K23, K26
Life Cycle	My youth	K13, K14, K16, K18, K21, K24, K25, K28, K29, K30
	My family	K4, K5, K7, K8, K9, K10
	Memory	K1, K4, K5, K14, K18, K21, K25, K28, K29, K30
	Past	K2, K4, K5, K14, K16, K18, K19, K21, K27, K28, K29, K30

Individuals spending time in a place, whether for a short or long period, constitutes the first stage of spatial perception for remembering that place. Therefore, questioning whether city dwellers spend time on Çiftlik Street or where they spend their time is an important parameter in understanding the formation of a new image or layer in the memory for this place. It has been determined that Çiftlik Street, which has undergone change, is not used as much as before by the people of Samsun other than the group of homeowners and shopkeepers, and that those who do use it do so once or a few times a month or year. It has been determined that the street, which offers opportunities for shopping, eating, drinking and walking, is mostly used for walking and that with no strong preference for specific spots: *"If I shop, it's very rare, I usually go to the shoe shop"* (K22); *"Walking, shopping, meeting friends. I mostly use cafes and restaurants"* (K27). Participants who are shopkeepers and homeowners actively incorporate the street into their daily routines every day. The street's changes extend beyond physical transformation. The increase in the number and demand for shopping centres has led to more options for city dwellers to shop. In addition, the revitalization of Atakum's coastal district, which offers opportunities for dining and sightseeing, has led to a decrease in the intensity of use of this street, and participants shared their views in this regard: *"Now everyone prefers shopping centres"* (K28); *"We generally use shopping centres now, or we spend time in Atakum"* (K27). The opening of shopping centres and the withdrawal of major brands/stores from the street has led to a decline in quality here and, consequently, a reduced usage: *"This street represents Samsun, but the quality of the street is gone. If quality establishments came, the quality of customers would also increase, and as it increases, the prosperity of this place would also increase"* (K6); *"The most famous brands and shops used to be here. Now they have left, they have moved to shopping centres, and the quality of this place has declined"* (K23). In addition, the greater amount of old buildings in the central area and the associated low rents have led to an increase in the number of migrants here. It is understood that this situation experienced by city dwellers on the street and in the immediate vicinity has negatively affected their sense of security and belonging, decreasing usage frequency: *"My frequency of going there has changed; I used to go more often before, but it's crowded and congested, and there's a big refugee problem"* (K26); *"I think people's perception of the street changed when refugees came to the street above and below it"* (K28).

Çiftlik Street has become a place where the city's residents no longer spend as much time as they used to in terms of activity. Consequently, the absence of recurring, similar expressions in its current usage also indicates that this place has failed to create a new image and meaning

for the city's residents. This street, which has been the scene of many stories, representations, spatial formations and social dynamics that individuals remember or have forgotten, has lost its importance and meaning for city dwellers today. Although Çiftlik Street continues to be used for the functions it serves, the semantic shift related to the street has also led to a rupture in the collective memory: *"Right now, for me, it's like a road that connects one place to another, a connection point"* (K22); *"If Istanbul has Istiklal and Samsun has Çiftlik Street, then Samsun also had Çiftlik Street. The original name of this street was actually Istiklal Street, but now it has lost its former importance"* (K29). Although Çiftlik Street continues to exist commercially, reasons such as the increase in alternative places to visit and shop in the city and the socio-demographic change here causing a negative impact on the sense of trust have led to the disappearance of the sense of belonging felt towards the neighbourhood: *"That street was my youth, it was the street I walked down to school, but now it has no meaning for me. It used to be a place where people from outside the city wanted to come and see, but now it has lost its importance"* (K24); *"It used to be important, the Çiftlik Street was the only thing for us, we would take our guests there"* (K28). This development indicates a problem with the sustainability of one of the city's important memory spaces in the collective memory.

In line with the spatial practices experienced, the "moments" spent with spatial elements are stored in memory. When information stored in memory is attempted to be retrieved, damage to the spatial elements that aid retrieval can cause losses in collective memory (Sayar Avcioğlu and Akin, 2017, pp. 423-450). However, interviews revealed that, due to its physical similarity to other apartment buildings before renovation, Çiftlik Street did not leave a mark in the collective memory as a spatial element: *"The previous buildings were all the same, box-like buildings, with different colours, so they didn't really catch my attention because they were standardised. Now it has been standardised, but it has been made uniform, clean and orderly"* (K27); it is understood that it has found a place in the participants' memories due to their experiences. Today, the disappearance of both spatial practices and spatial elements has led to damage in the collective memory: *"The image was bad, I honestly forgot the old one"* (K23) (Table 9).

Table 9 Key themes and concepts regarding the use of Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Frequency of Use	Every day	K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20,
	A few times a week	K21, K22, K25, K27
	A few times a month	K30
	A few times a year	K23, K24, K26, K28, K29
Reasons for Decreased Use	Atakum	K21, K24, K27, K29, K30
	Shopping malls	K23, K24, K27, K28, K29, K30
	Feeling unsafe	K5, K26, K27, K28, K29, K30
Purpose of Use	Food & drink	K21, K22, K23, K24, K27, K28, K29, K30
	Shopping	K21, K27, K28, K29, K30

When examining participants' views on the significance and meaning of Çiftlik Street, it was observed that the resident user group expressed generally positive evaluations: *"It is important; it is the most famous street in Samsun. When someone from outside hears it, they say 'Oh, do you live there?' Everyone likes it; to me it feels normal. This street still maintains its importance"* (K1); *"Memories, my family—this place means that to me"* (K4).

Since this group has been residing here with their families, it was observed that their sense of belonging to the place has also continued. For residents, Çiftlik Street retains significance and meaning, having hosted on this street for many years and it has hosted their daily life routines. In addition, the fact that this street constitutes the only public space for people living in the district center and its immediate surroundings appears to encourage the continuity of its use among these participants: *"Çiftlik Street is a street of necessity for those who live in the center. It*

is a street where people can spend time, somewhat away from the chaos and the home environment" (K24).

Although positive statements were expressed by all user groups, the street has not maintained its former contextual significance for the city's residents: *"It used to be the most famous street in Samsun. People coming from outside would say there was İzmir's Kordon and Samsun's Çiftlik. I think it has now lost its importance"* (K25); *"It used to be more crowded, and people dressed more carefully. Going to Çiftlik meant something; it was like going out to Beyoğlu"* (K2) (Table 10).

Table 10 Key themes and concepts related to the significance and meaning of Çiftlik Street

Theme	Sub-Concepts	Participants
Importance and Meaning	Famous street	K1, K12, K13, K21, K24, K25, K26, K27, K29 K1, K3, K5, K12, K15, K16, K17, K29
	The heart of Samsun Commercial center	K6, K11, K12, K14, K17, K18, K19, K20, K22, K23, K24, K26, K28, K30
Context	My family	K4, K5, K7, K8, K9, K10

Discussion and conclusion

The study aims to evaluate the impact of rehabilitation interventions conducted in urban open spaces—spaces that have gained significance by contributing meaning and value to the city's past through their constitutive identities and by transforming into sites of memory—on urban collective memory, with a particular focus on Çiftlik Street. Revealing these impacts requires examining street rehabilitation practices, which are frequently implemented in contemporary cities, from a broader perspective and at a higher urban scale.

This study demonstrates that such interventions do not only produce physical changes but may also have constructive or destructive effects on the collective memory that connects the past and the future of cities. In the rehabilitation project implemented on Çiftlik Street, the function of the street did not change; visual clutter was removed, landscaping was introduced, and urban furniture was added. However, in the attempt to establish a certain order, the interventions applied to building façades impaired the visual traces that facilitate remembrance in collective memory, thereby eliminating mnemonic images that once acted as reminders of the past.

The effects of this transformation on collective memory were examined under four sub-headings:

Image–Context: Images produced through social interactions and everyday life practices, and carrying spatial traces, gradually become an integral component of urban memory; in this sense, they directly influence how individuals perceive and remember the city (Lynch, 2010: 8–9). Within this framework, Çiftlik Street has secured a place in the collective memory of Samsun not merely as a transportation or commercial axis, but as a meeting point where public use is highly concentrated and where different social groups come together.

By contributing to the city's commercial vitality, the street has developed its own urban code through shopping and commerce; at the same time, it has become associated with memories and social experiences through local gastronomic elements (such as Samsun pide, Turkish bagel, and ice cream). Participants' accounts concretize these imaginal values attributed to the street. For instance, statements such as *"It used to be a place where families would stroll in the evenings and eat ice cream together; it was important for us"* (K28), and *"Whenever guests came, we would definitely take them to Çiftlik Street, treat them to ice cream, shop together, and walk around"* (K5), clearly reveal the street's social and cultural use.

Over time, the transformation of these functions has also led to a shift in the social meanings attributed to the street. Thus, everyday experiences appear to play a significant role in the formation of the images associated with the street. In this respect, Çiftlik Street can be

considered not only through its physical characteristics but also as a site of memory where social relations are organized, shared experiences are produced, and a sense of urban belonging is reinforced. The social, cultural, and gastronomic values that the street has carried from the past to the present generate strong images in urban memory, and these images ultimately transform the street into an important symbol within the city's collective memory.

Memory Layer (Inscription in Memory): Following the façade rehabilitation interventions carried out on Çiftlik Street, it has become more difficult for the street's physical elements to be encoded and retained in memory. One of the most fundamental factors enabling a place to be embedded in urban memory is the presence of distinctive formal characteristics specific to that place. However, during the rehabilitation process, the covering of building façades with similar materials, the disappearance of formal diversity, and the loss of colors, textures, and surface elements that once emphasized differences have weakened the relationship between memory and space in terms of urban orientation and the formation of spatial references.

As expressed by the participants, statements such as *"People enter the wrong building; they get confused"* (K14) or *"Because of the identical awnings on the façades, we cannot find the places; it did not even become aesthetic—buildings and shops all look the same"* (K23) reveal how the reduction of visual diversity creates problems for memory. This situation has made it more difficult for formal information to be retained in memory in the form of images. According to Jon Lang (1987: 54–60), in the process of spatial perception and coding, the stage in which stimuli from the environment are selected and recorded in memory is critically influenced by the form, color, texture, and surface characteristics of space. However, the reduction of this physical diversity has weakened the street's position as a distinctive urban image within collective memory.

Nevertheless, the situation differs to some extent for the street's regular users—residents, shopkeepers, and visitors. Through their continuous contact with the place and repeated everyday practices, these groups are able to maintain the street's presence in memory even when physical diversity has diminished.

While explaining the relationship between space and place, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980: 5–11) emphasizes that the three-dimensional organization of the elements forming a place defines space, while its character determines the atmosphere of that place. Whereas the concept of space can be defined according to its general physical characteristics, the concept of place refers to something unique, particular, and meaningful—something that belongs specifically to that location. In this context, although the orderly and clean appearance created through façade rehabilitation on Çiftlik Street has been evaluated positively by users, the homogenization of buildings and the erasure of identity differences have weakened the street's distinctive quality as a "place."

Participants' remarks such as *"This is not the old Çiftlik anymore"* (K29) or *"You feel as if you are entering any ordinary street"* (K27) clearly reveal the rupture this transformation has created in collective memory. Consequently, the continuity of memory layers carried from the past to the present has not been preserved, and the street has largely lost its characteristic as a "site of memory."

Memory Loss: Although no functional transformation was implemented on the street during the façade rehabilitation process, the increasing similarity among buildings and the disappearance of characteristic spatial elements have led to the erosion of visual memories and spatial symbols specific to the street. This situation indicates that the collective memory layers accumulated in the past have been significantly weakened, resulting in a form of memory loss associated with the street. The loss of physical characteristics of space (such as form, color, texture, and surface) has made it increasingly difficult to recall the street and sustain spatial memory.

Participants noted that the homogenization of buildings and the disappearance of façade details specific to the street have made it difficult to describe places or navigate within the area. As one participant stated, *"People enter the wrong building; they get confused"* (K14), while another explained, *"I used to describe a place by saying 'under that green building,' but now I cannot describe it through the building anymore"* (K15).

Therefore, the street has largely lost its role in collective memory due to the disappearance of physical symbols and the standardization of its spatial fabric. In this context, preserving spatial elements and supporting the relationships that users establish with places are of critical importance for maintaining the continuity of collective memory.

Sense of Belonging: The accumulation of traces of lived experiences over time not only constructs the memory of a place but also enables individuals and communities to identify with and appropriate that place. In this way, space becomes a carrier of collective memory and contributes to the development of a sense of belonging (Maurice Halbwachs, 2017: 140–141). Through their interactions with the street, the residents of Samsun developed a sense of ownership toward the place, and individuals came to feel a strong sense of belonging to the street and to the social relations formed there. As expressed by the participants, *"It used to be important; for us there was only Çiftlik Street, and whenever guests came we would take them there"* (K28), and *"It used to be more crowded; people dressed more carefully. Going to Çiftlik meant something"* (K2).

However, the increasing number of shopping venues in the city and the opening of shopping malls led many major brands to close their stores on the street, which in turn reduced the quality of retail activity. This process decreased the frequency of street use and hindered the reinforcement of the sense of belonging. Moreover, the relatively lower rents associated with the older building stock in the city center increased the concentration of migrants and refugees in the area, which negatively affected feelings of security and belonging on the street. While in the past the dense gatherings and strolls with family or friends along the street had been embedded in memory as meaningful codes specific to the place, the current lack of such lived experiences, spatial elements, and recurring mental images prevents the formation of a new layer of memory related to the street within collective memory.

Nevertheless, residents who regularly use the street or live there still maintain a personal sense of belonging and perceive the street as an extension of their homes and families. In this sense, the degree of belonging appears to vary according to the strength of the relationship established with the place. This situation demonstrates that the sense of belonging is shaped not only by the physical existence of space but also by the continuity of the relationships that users establish with it. Therefore, belonging emerges as a fundamental factor determining the sustainability of a place within collective memory and the emotional bonds individuals develop with it.

In conclusion, amid today's increasingly homogenized urban fabric, the street has not only lost its former significance but has also failed to generate a new layer of meaning or memory, as it can no longer sustain the spatial practices and experiences that once defined it or produce new spatial practices as symbolic images for urban dwellers. Yet the past provides a reservoir of memory extending from individual experiences into the present and the future. The decline in lived experiences and the reduction of physical diversity on the street have hindered the production of strong symbolic values, thereby weakening both the sense of collective identity ("we") and the public function of belonging within collective memory.

In today's fast-paced and consumption-oriented urban life, economic, political, and social developments shape the use of all types of spaces and, consequently, their memory. In this context, administrative decisions, interventions in urban spaces, and planning processes should not be limited solely to physical arrangements; they should also support user behaviors, social interactions, contemporary and evolving everyday life practices, and cultural activities. Not only

in the case of Çiftlik Street but also in all street improvement projects, it is important to complement façade rehabilitation with public space improvements, opportunities for short- and long-term use, arrangements that encourage social encounters, and the preservation of symbolic spatial elements specific to the place or the creation of new ones that can carry meaning and value.

Furthermore, strengthening visual and spatial cues that recall past memories of the place and designing planning processes based on user behaviors and social interactions will constitute important steps toward sustaining the continuity of collective memory. Ensuring the direct participation of urban residents in the planning process and considering the experiences and lived realities of those who live or work in the area will increase the potential of the street to become a space that is both physically and socially appropriated and lived. In this regard, it is recommended to develop strategies aimed at preserving the meaning and memory specific to the street while ensuring the continuity of the relationships users establish with the place.

Ultimately, this study reveals the effects of physical and social transformations on collective memory and the sense of belonging through the experiences of local users. The findings indicate that urban rehabilitation and similar interventions should not be limited to spatial arrangements alone; rather, they should be supported by participatory planning approaches that incorporate the experiences, expectations, and accumulated memories of local actors into the process. Preserving the meaning of place, maintaining diversity of use, protecting or reproducing spatial symbols, and integrating values inherited from the past into planning decisions can only be achieved through such interactive processes. The case of Çiftlik Street demonstrates that urban interventions can produce more sustainable and inclusive outcomes when strengthened by participatory strategies that address social memory, belonging, and user experiences in a holistic manner. In this respect, the study contributes to urban design and planning approaches that place local participation and social interaction at their core.

Conflict of interest declaration

Conflict of interest

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Author contributions (CRediT)

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (31 January 2025, Decision No: 2025-40).

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools

AI-assisted tools were used in this article only for language editing and stylistic improvement. AI tools were not used to generate or modify empirical data, produce analytical results, or shape the study's core findings and conclusions. All AI-generated outputs were reviewed and verified

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