

Tourism and Consumption of Space: Thoughts on Safranbolu¹

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Abstract

Historical city centers, which are the main core of traditional life, have also become tourism attraction. In these centers of human scale, pedestrian mobility is fairly dense due to the connected streets, diversity of focal points, and mixed use. It is thought that the traditional life in this center is dynamic and constantly associated with this mobility and the preserved traditional practices in the city. However, since the practices of tourists and local users do not overlap, these centers are far from being representative of traditional urban life. The main point of this work is the interaction with the tourist practices of traditional life practices in the historic city center of Safranbolu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The historical structures in Safranbolu are mainly utilized based on their economic functions. Tourists visiting the city follow similar routes which include the ottoman bazaar (arasta), the mosque, the bazaar and the food&beverage places. These places are located on interconnected streets and on an axis. Although the spatial ratio of the places which have a commercial function is considerably low compared to the area of historical site, the tourist population is confined within this small zone where these kinds of activities exist. The tourist density decreases significantly out of this commercial axis. Based on this observation, it can be said that the tourists are mostly interested in traditional life/landscape practices rather than everyday life/landscape practices. Therefore, the traditional landscape in the old city center of Safranbolu guides and limits the tourist and the pedestrian movement. From this point of view, as the relationship and the interaction between the spatial practices of tourists and local people provides a basis for urban spatial pattern, the spatial texture and the spatial consumption come into prominence.

Keywords: Spatial Consumption, Pedestrian Mobility, Historic City, Safranbolu, Turkey.

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Turizm ve Mekânın Tüketimi: Safranbolu Üzerine Düşünmek

Özet

Geleneksel yaşamın ana çekirdeği olan tarihi kent merkezleri aynı zamanda turizmin de merkezi olmuşlardır. İnsan ölçeğindeki bu merkezlerde birbirine bağlı sokaklar, odak noktalarının çeşitliliği ve karma kullanım nedeniyle yaya hareketliliği önemli oranda yoğundur. Söz konusu hareketlilikle birlikte bu merkezdeki geleneksel yaşamın devingen ve sürekli olduğu ve bunun kentteki geleneksel pratikleri koruduğu ve düşünülmektedir. Ancak turistler ile yerel kullanıcıların pratikleri örtüşmediği için bu merkezler geleneksel kentsel yaşamın temsil yeri olmaktan uzaklaşmaktadır. UNESCO Dünya Miras alanı olan Safranbolu tarihi kent merkezinde geleneksel yaşam pratiklerinin turist pratikleri ile etkileşimi bu çalışmanın temel konusudur. Kentteki tarihi yapılar ticari fonksiyonlar yüklenerek kullanılmaktadır. Safranbolu'ya gelen turistler arasta, cami, çarşı ve yeme-içme mekânları arasında benzer izler takip etmektedirler. Bu mekânlar birbirine bağlı sokaklarda ve bir aks üzerinde yer almaktadır. Ticaret fonksiyonuna sahip mekânların tarihi kentin bütününe alansal oranı düşük olmasına rağmen turist kalabalığı bu fonksiyonun olduğu mekânlarla sınırlı kalmaktadır. Ticari aksın dışına çıkıldığında turist yoğunluğunun önemli ölçüde azaldığı görülmektedir. Bu gözleme dayanarak turistlerin gündelik yaşam/peyzaj pratiklerinden çok geleneksel yaşam/peyzaj pratikleri ile ilgilendiği söylenebilir. Dolayısıyla Safranbolu tarihi kent merkezinde geleneksel peyzaj, turist ve yaya hareketini yönlendirmekte ve sınırlandırmaktadır. Bu noktadan hareketle, tarihi kentlerde turistlerin mekânsal deneyimleri ile yerel kullanıcıların mekân kullanım deneyimleri arasındaki ilişki ve etkileşim yaya hareketliliğinin temelini oluştururken kentin mekânsal dokusu ve mekânsal tüketimi ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mekân Tüketimi, Yaya Hareketliliği, Tarihi Kent, Safranbolu, Türkiye

Introduction

“The city is and has always been throughout the ages at the root of our culture, history, arts and traditions. It has been the birth-place of a society in constant evolution” (Cravatte 1977). The culture, arts and traditions mediated by the city gain a meaning through the perception of users, residents and visitors, and also the physical environment plays a significant role in creating this content. Since perception is a cultural interpretation of physical environment, in historical cities there arises a tension between past and present culture based on “familiarity” and “progression-development” (Orbaşlı, 2000). The ground of tension between the concepts is deemed indicators and priorities. De Kadt (1990), by addressing this fact, states that the concept of “development” is matched only with economical quantitative indications, the social indicators are barely considered and the cultural indicators are not regarded at all.

Urban legacy is formed through a historical interpretation of wide crowds. Along with that, it differs from other kind of legacies not just because of historical attributes of the formed texture and spatial properties of the urban landscape, but also its reciprocal effect within the contemporary society. In the second half of the twentieth century, growing interest on historical urban settlements allowed to recognize them as a “legacy” and to develop an approach to conservation. The cultural heritage is now considered as an important linkage between urban life and development/growth process thanks to the contributions of diverse international organizations such as UNESCO,

ICOMOS and the Council of Europe (Orbaşlı, 2000). In historical cities, conservation is not just an architectural issue, rather a concern that has both economic and social facets (Malik, 1993). Protecting the architectural structures to preserve the culture is an option. However, it would be difficult to assert that the sustainability of culture can be achieved by only protecting buildings. Rogers (1982) mentions that maintaining the 'structure' means preserving desirability or sustainability of a culture and it actually protects the culture, not the buildings.

The basic theme of this study is the interaction between traditional life practices and visitors'/tourists' activities within the historical city center of Safranbolu, a UNESCO World Heritage site. In order to locate spaces and objects attracting the interest of visitors, the photos shared on Internet and the coordinates in which they were taken were determined. The traces of the visitors in space were defined by uploading shooting points of the photos to ArcMap software. Both physical traces and cultural heritage perceptions of the visitors were discussed based on these photos.

The Material and the Method of the Study

Located in the Western Black Sea Region and belonged to Karabük Province, Safranbolu is a UNESCO world heritage city under the "Outstanding Universal Value" category since 1994 due to its intact traditional urban texture. The reason of recognizing the city as a cultural heritage is as below; Criterion (i): Because of its key role in caravan trade over centuries; Criterion (ii): Since the caravan trade was the main commercial activity between the Orient and Europe for centuries, along its route distinctive towns were established; Criterion (iii): Safranbolu is a typical Ottoman city which performs an interesting interaction between its topography and historical settlement.

Safranbolu is a symbolic city which reflects whole characteristics of traditional Turkish social life and protects its cultural heritage accumulated through its long-standing past within its environmental texture. It has been thought that Safranbolu was probably established during Late Roman and early Byzantium period. Evident shows that Safranbolu dates back to at least 1500 years. The written history of Safranbolu has begun in the period of Byzantium. The city was named as "Dadybra" during that period. In the period of Seljuks, namely in 1196, the city called as "Zalifre". After then, it changed to "Borglu" or "Borlu" in the period of Principalities and in the earlier times of the Ottoman Empire. As of the last quarter of Nineteenth Century, it turned into "Zağfiranbolu" and later "Zafranbolu" and "Safranbolu" respectively (Safran [Saffron] is the name of a plant cultivated in the region) (Safranbolu Municipality, 2015; Şendil, 2017). The city center is settled on an interesting geological structure in which 3 different canyons unite (Safranbolu Municipality, 2017; Kıyıcı 2010; Koçan 2012).

The city was officially recognized as a natural site according to the National Conservation Law No 2863. The administration of historical areas in Safranbolu is under the responsibility of Safranbolu Municipality, and in order to make construction work and functional changes in these historical buildings and sites, a prior written permission must be obtained from the Regional Conservation Council.

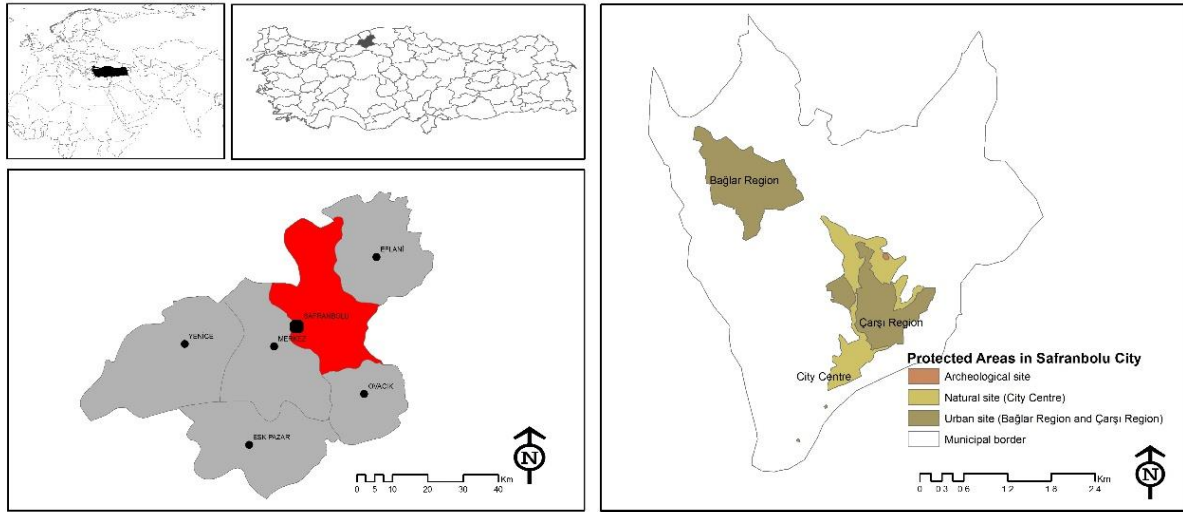


Figure 1. Location of the city Safranbolu and its preserved areas

Safranbolu consists of three distinct historical districts; the bazaar area of the inner city, known as Çukur, the area of Kıranköy, and Bağlar (the Vineyards). Çukur extends along the lower part of the town and has a triangular shape confined by two rivers. Surrounded by houses and workshops, the bazaar locates in the center. The segmentation of the city center is very typical for an Anatolian city. With a socio-architectural pattern similar to contemporary European towns, Kıranköy was previously a non-Muslim district. In contrast to wooden houses in Çukur, the houses of the area were built of stone. Indeed, this also reveals the distinctive characteristics of Muslim and non-Muslim quarters during the Ottoman Period which were influenced by the communities' traditions (URL-2, 2017) The economy of the city was bloomed especially during the Ottoman Era in the scope of various area of professions such as “silk weaving”, “tannery”, “copper working”, “saddle crafting”, “saddlery”, “head scarf making” (Şendil, 2017). The spatial linkage of the aforementioned areas can be still seen through the bazaar pattern and the names of streets. In historical Safranbolu, mainly old people live. Also, significant part of them is not from “Old Safranbolu”. Migrating from villages to this city, these people earn their living mainly from agriculture and garden cultivation (Şendil, 2017).

In order to find an answer to the problematic of the study, two basic stages were applied; defining the spatial mobility of visitors in the historical city center in Safranbolu, and evaluating tourism potentials and protection levels regarding this area.

To locate the areas in which the spatial traces of the visitors accumulate, photos on Internet were searched and a field study were performed. The photos taken by visitors in Safranbolu and shared with geographical location on photo-sharing websites were determined. 145 amateur photos were got via flickr.com (URL-1, 2017) website. By uploading the coordinates and the shooting properties (details, building, street and landscape) to ArcMapInfo software and mapping the shooting points and photos, the spatial traces of the tourists are obtained.

A field work was conducted in the urban site area and the interaction site area of Safranbolu. GPS traces, observations and photos from the area through the field work were used in interpreting the

spatial traces of the tourists. The coordinates of shooting points are recorded via GPS. During the fields work 300 photos were taken.

The interaction between tourism and protecting in the city were scrutinized within the scope of UNESCO reports. In addition, other academic studies on the area were taken into consideration as well.

Findings

The spatial traces of the visitors: Among the photos (145 photos) taken by the visitors in the historical city center, 28.9% is about architectural structures, 26.9% is about landscape, 24.8% is about street and 19.3% is about details (Figure 2: Figure 3). The photos concentrate around the Bazaar Area. Since the spatial trace of the visitors/tourists is intense in the vicinity of the bazaar area, a touristic space that covers only places related with these areas has emerged. Therefore, in Safranbolu the axis related with shopping and architectural texture are the main factors in forming a touristic spatial system. It can be said that the street activities in this touristic axis (marbling art, instruments, etc.) are effective in leading the mobility/liveliness.

Although the reasons which affect the space usage of the tourists are different, a specific touristic mobility axis occurred in the city reveals that the visitor/tourist mobility is not canalized.

Concentration of the photos taken by different visitors within the same area and focus on similar details, streets, architectural structures and landscape show that there are a controlled visitor perception and mobility (Figure 3). Also, unobtrusive traces of daily life in the photos can be construed in two different ways: the traces of daily life may not be visible or the architectural properties are dominant within the context of touristic perception.

Indeed, main themes and figures of the survey which were conducted by Yalı (2016) in order to learn travelling choices of domestic tourists that visit cultural tourism destinations in Safranbolu almost support these interpretations. The weighted ratings of domestic tourists regarding visiting purposes are respectively as following: Learning (21.893), adventure (20.149), relaxing (19.726) and interaction (14.293). The sub-elements of the interaction category include traditional food choice, desire to learn local culture, and desire to experience traditional life. Among the sub-elements in question, the most attractive option was traditional food, desire to experience traditional life ranked relatively low. This low rating corroborates the photos. The argument of Kevin Lynch “If I can be seen, then I exist” may explain this case. It’s impossible to demand the invisible. If anything is not visible, it may not be possible to know and demand it.

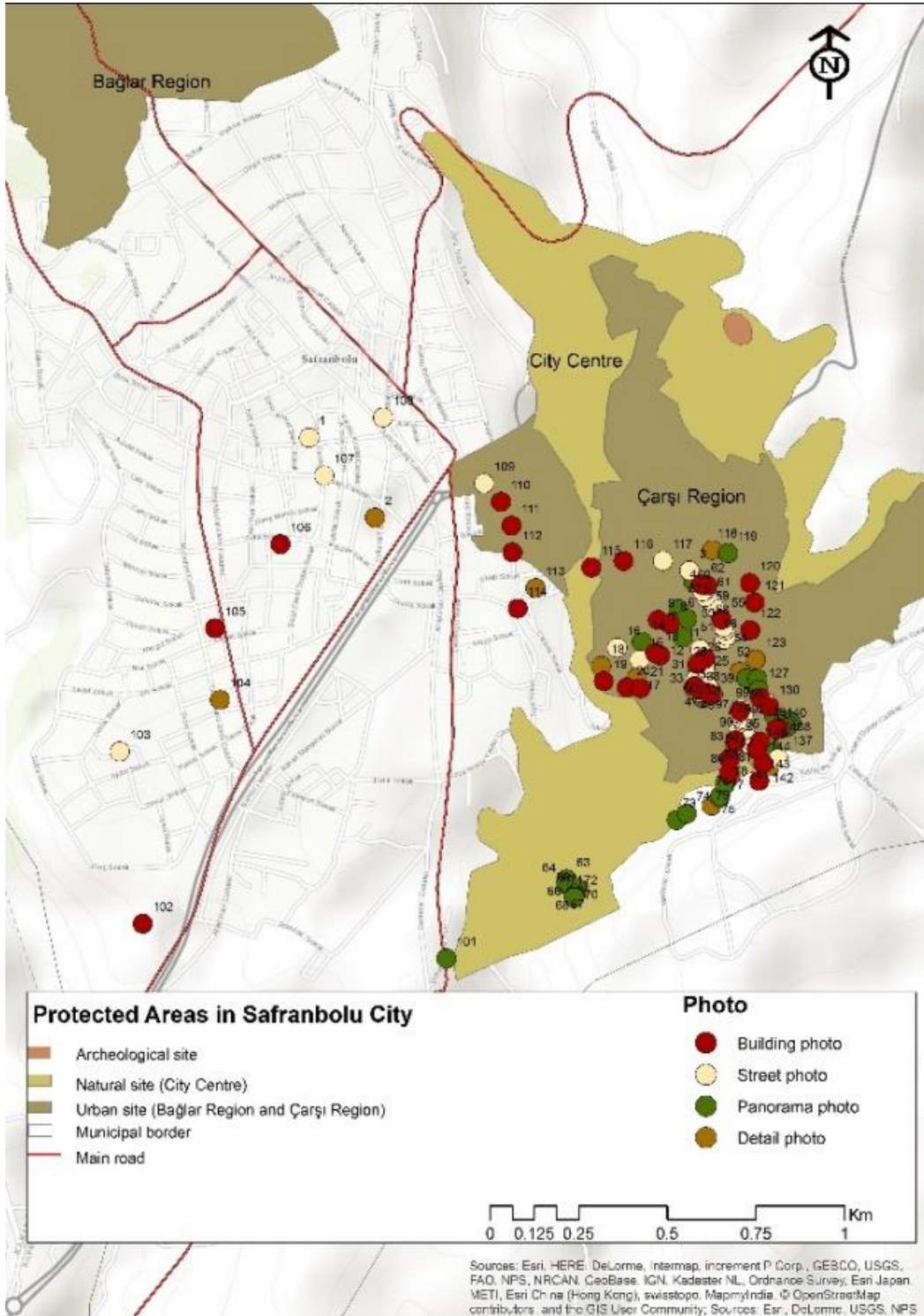


Figure 2. The traces of the visitors' photos

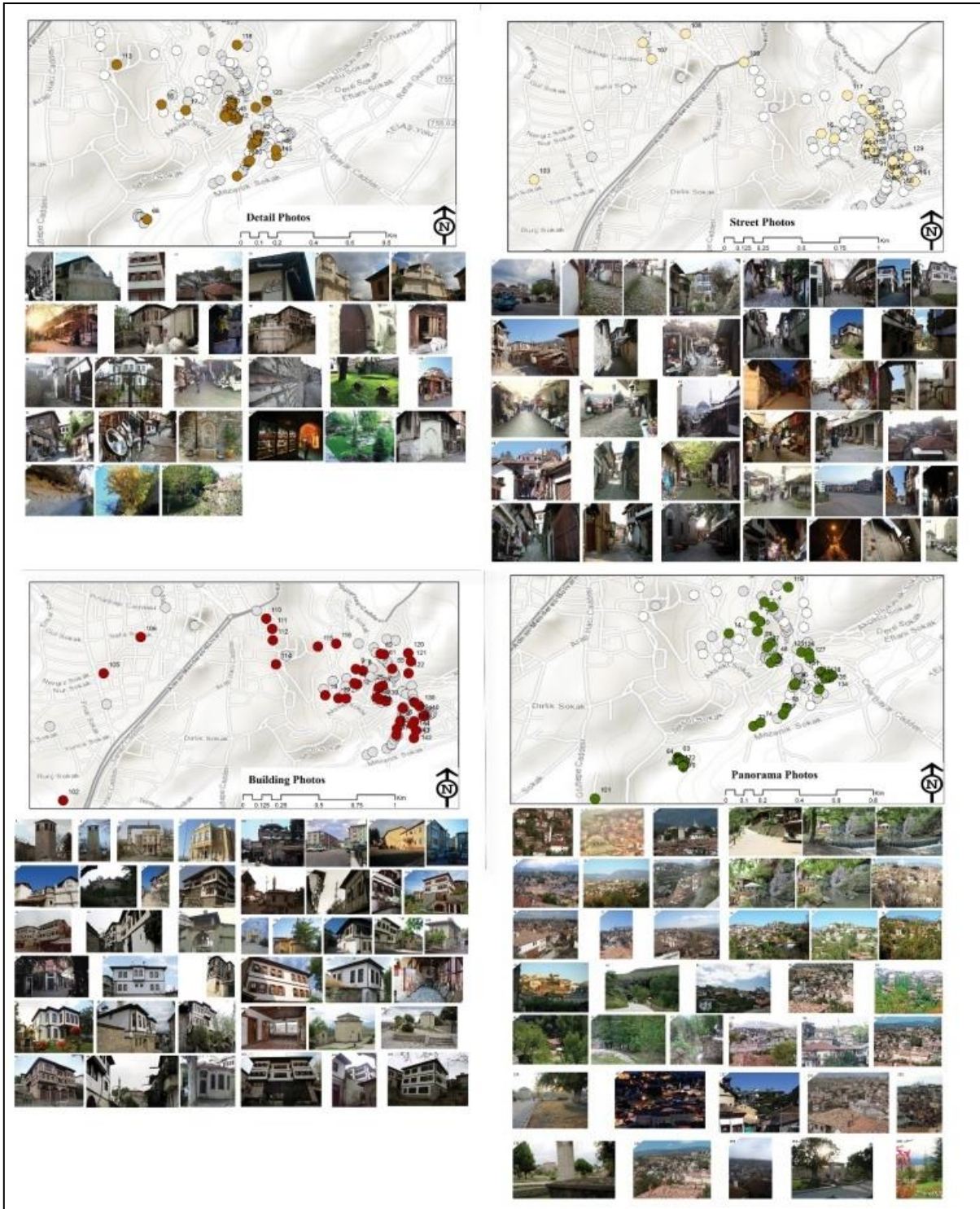


Figure 3. The photos of the visitors

Risks and threats

In its informative text on Safranbolu (URL-2, 2017), UNESCO mostly comments and focuses on architectural characteristics in Integrity section.

“The architectural structures and streets still maintain its original characteristics, and the city is listed under Outstanding Universal Value. Also, the expanse of the area is sufficient to provide integrated info regarding the site. Since its foundation, there have been no critical changes on the integrity of the town. However due to its vulnerability, more efforts should be exercises to protect this cultural heritage.”

In “Authenticity” section, where it mentions the changes on buildings for touristic concerns, a need for monitoring and proper management is highlighted. In the Threats and Risks to site section of the 2006 Monitoring Report, various issues such as development pressure, visitor/tourism pressure, lack of infrastructure and trend to renovate houses for tourist accommodation, heavy traffic and parking problems are referred. As a solution offer, preparing a management plan is addressed. In the 2014 Monitoring Report, UNESCO determines the factors related with Safranbolu town according to impact and origin. In this report, the sub-factors listed under social/cultural use and their impacts are as Table 1.

Table 1. Social/cultural uses of heritage in Safranbolu (URL-2, 2017)

Social/cultural uses of heritage	impact	Origin
Society's valuing of heritage	+, -, ■, □	▼ ◀
Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge system	-, ■, □	▼ ◀
Identity, social cohesion, changes in local population and community	-, ■, □	▼ ◀
Impacts of tourism / visitor / recreation	+ ■, □	◀
+: positive, -: negative, ■: current, □: potential, ▼: inside, ◀: outside		

While developments regarding urban preservation and expansion of tourism in parallel with this development were encouraged, the negative effects of “cultural tourism” were overlooked. Today, tourism has become an economic sector and an important industry. Considering tourism in the historical cities, there can be seen an interaction between economic development and “preservation”. Preservation of urban legacy due to tourism may not mean preservation of culture at the same time. A preservation approach which focuses on front, street and urban accessories leads to similarities between the historical cities. Also, since these spaces and accessories are designed independently from daily life practices, with aesthetic concerns appealed to tourists, this detract the preservation approach. This means alienation of space to inherent features (things related with the history of space) and inclusion of extrinsic elements (things not related with the history of space) to space. Therefore, whereas for local people it’s not possible to interiorize the extrinsic elements, the similarities between the historical cities in terms of extrinsic structures bring along the risk of decrease in tourist interest in future.

Conclusion and Proposal

The historical structures in Safranbolu are mainly utilized based on their economic functions. Tourists visiting the city follow similar routes which include the ottoman bazaar (arasta), the mosque, the bazaar and the food&beverage places. These places are located on interconnected streets and on an axis. Although the spatial ratio of the places which have a commercial function is considerably low compared to the area of historical site, the tourist population is confined within this small zone where these kinds of activities exist. The tourist density decreases significantly out of this commercial axis. Based on this observation, it can be said that the tourists are mostly interested in traditional life/landscape practices rather than everyday life/landscape practices. Therefore, the traditional landscape in the old city center of Safranbolu guides and limits the tourist and the pedestrian movement. From this point of view, as the relationship and the interaction between the spatial practices of tourists and local people provides a basis for urban spatial pattern, the spatial texture and the spatial consumption come into prominence.

The aim of the urban preservation should be to develop the environment, to “create an individuality within space” in the middle of life, infinitive space and insecure times, and to maintain the sustainability for linking the city with a culture (Maguire 1982). The preservation is not just about architecture, it’s an economic and social issue as well. “Paying attention to the living places of human can not be separated from the thoughts of the living society itself” (Malik, 1993). Culture is an indispensable part of human and urban life, a dynamic and evolving element of the community, and a continuous linkage from past to present towards future. As Rogers (1982) addressed; “we have to understand that sustaining the structure means maintaining desirability or sustainability of culture- we actually protect not the buildings but culture.” While a historical perspective exalts the role of architecture for tourism, the architecture itself adds value to the tourism activity as a contribution which allows expanding tourism within the city.

As Urry (2002) and Metro-Roland (2012) specify; in parallel with development of urban preservation its effects has usually ignored, and in the historical towns the “cultural” tourism has flourished consistently. Tourism has turned into a development industry around worldwide and when it comes to the historical cities, the economic contributions sometimes play an important role in preservation and economic renewal. It can be admitted to say that the urban legacy is protected thanks to its linkage with tourism, but it has been also destroyed in a significant extend as a result of this. Apart from discussing whether it is proper to show tourists around in a competitive and driven manner, non-existence of the linkage (similar to the one between tourism and architecture) between tourism and daily life practices is not questioned yet.

How can be a circulating system in urban planning, urban design and urban landscape planning created? In addition to the traditional architectural texture, is it possible to create a planning and design strategy regarding perception and experience of daily life practices? Even though it’s not easy to reply that question, is it sufficient to exhibit the objects of daily life in touristic places and to offer a daily life representation in this manner? On top of that, isn’t the transformation of daily life tools into an exhibition-object lead to an alienation to its context? Also, don’t we increase the distance to our daily practices by offering them as a bulk in an urban place? Instead of reifying these tools and including them to the show, is it possible to offer through experiences by preserving their role in daily life? Thus, it will allow us to sustain the representative tools which depict our relationship with the nature and are successor of our ecological knowledge.

As a UNESCO world site, Safranbolu is in need of a stable planning approach which balances two aspects of the issue, namely preservation of historical urban landscape protection and its marketing. Due to this historical legacy, it becomes a more attractive space for tourism. This value has a potential feature for tourism, but at the same time it can pose a threat to this texture, or tourism-oriented limited spaces can cause ignorance of the city center. Indeed, probably there will be differences between the tourists and local users in terms of practices, demands and expectations. Perhaps, the control on tourism should be established based on balancing these awarenesses. Creating a touristic mobility can contribute to preserve the value of the cultural/historical heritage sites.

Although the linkage between planning and tourism has advanced by getting stronger since 1980s, an urban planning based on the indicators for tourists' demands, their destination choices and accommodation options cannot be developed. Furthermore, the infrastructural and ecological problems created due to overcapacity have not taken into consideration because of this. The reason for this ignorance, of course, is to desire developing and fostering the economy in a short-term. How can we plan a sustainable touristic-historical urban, should it be both attractive and inhabitable environment at the same time, or which principle should we pick? How can the professions' branches related with urban planning govern the space consumption of tourism in the historical cities for a better sustainable tourism system? In touristic historical cities, what is the role of urban planning as a tool for tourism planning? The architectural structures and urban space always attract the visitors, therefore in recent years the urban planners have been more intensely interested in encouraging tourism while planning. However, in this kind of areas it should be regarded that the desired urban tourism is fed by urban culture and urban design. The daily life practices and knowledge on them (like ecological knowledge and experience) should not be ignored while bringing an attractive silhouette to the cities for arousing touristic interest. Otherwise, rather a cultural sustainability in the historical cities, the discussions regarding the persistence of touristic space consumption will never end up.

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