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THE FORMATION OF SPACE AND PLACE: SCHEMATIC READING AND MODEL PROPOSAL

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Abstract

This study aims to reconsider the relationship between the concepts of space and place in the discipline of landscape architecture through a theoretical and schematic approach. While space is generally defined through physical components, formal arrangements, and functional relationships, the concept of place is associated with more complex dimensions such as experience, meaning, identity, sense of belonging, cultural memory, and time. Therefore, the transformation of space into place is too complex to be explained solely by physical organization processes. It is a multidimensional process that requires the integrated consideration of sensory, perceptual, psychological, social, and temporal layers. In this study, the space–place relationship is reinterpreted schematically through the lenses of Genius Loci, Lefebvre, Norberg-Schulz, Relph, Massey, and the concept of time. The originality of the study lies not merely in presenting these theoretical approaches at a textual level, but in interpreting each perspective schematically and, through these schematic readings, developing a holistic framework that explains the transformation process from space to place. As a result, the study reveals that place-making in landscape architecture should be addressed beyond the production of physical space, incorporating meaning, experience, environment–self relations, and the connections established through time.

Keywords: Space, place, the transformation of space to place, place-making, landscape architecture

MEKÂN VE YERİN OLUŞUMU: ŞEMATİK OKUMA VE MODEL ÖNERİSİ

Özet

Bu çalışma, peyzaj mimarlığı disiplininde mekân ve yer kavramları arasındaki ilişkiyi kuramsal ve şematik bir yaklaşımla yeniden ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Mekân çoğunlukla fiziksel bileşenler, biçimsel düzenlemeler ve işlevsel ilişkiler üzerinden tanımlanırken, yer kavramı deneyim, anlam, kimlik, aidiyet, kültürel bellek ve zaman gibi daha karmaşık bileşenlerle ilişkilidir. Bu nedenle mekânın yere dönüşümü yalnızca fiziksel düzenleme süreçleriyle açıklanamayacak kadar karmaşıktır. Duyusal, algısal, psikolojik, toplumsal ve zamansal katmanların birlikte değerlendirilmesini gerektiren çok boyutlu bir süreçtir. Çalışmada Genius Loci, Lefebvre, Norberg-Schulz, Relph, Massey ve zaman kavramı üzerinden mekân–yer ilişkisi şematik olarak yeniden okunmuştur. Çalışmanın özgün değeri, söz konusu kuramsal yaklaşımların yalnızca metinsel düzeyde aktarılması değil, her bir düşüncenin şematik olarak yorumlanması ve bu şematik okumalar üzerinden mekândan yere dönüşüm sürecini açıklayan bütüncül bir yaklaşım önerisinin geliştirilmesidir. Sonuç olarak, çalışma peyzaj mimarlığında yer tasarımının fiziksel mekân üretiminin ötesinde, anlam, deneyim, çevre-öz ilişkisi ve zamanla kurulan bağlar üzerinden ele alınması gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Mekân, yer, mekânın yere dönüşümü, yer üretimi, peyzaj mimarlığı*

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1. Introduction

The concepts of space and place constitute one of the fundamental fields of discussion in landscape architecture, architecture, urban design, and environmental behavior studies. While space is generally explained through physical components, boundaries, orientations, formal organizations, and functional relationships, the concept of place possesses a deeper conceptual content shaped by meaning, experience, belonging, identity, and social relationships beyond this physical structure. In this context, although every place has a spatial foundation, not every space necessarily acquires the quality of place. For space to transform into place, the physical environment must gain meaning over time through user experience, perception, cultural memory, and social relationships (Uzunali, 2023).

This distinction is particularly important in terms of landscape architecture. This is because landscape architecture is concerned not only with the physical organization of open spaces, but also with the sensory, psychological, cultural, and social relationships established between users and these spaces. A park, coastal area, campus, square, or residential environment may be physically designed; however, the adoption, remembrance, production of belonging, and acquisition of identity by users transform such spaces into places. Therefore, place-making in landscape architecture is a multilayered process that extends beyond physical design (Uzunali, 2023; Uzunali and Yiğit Uzunali, 2025).

When theoretical approaches explaining the concepts of space and place are examined, it becomes evident that different thinkers address this relationship from different dimensions. While the concept of Genius Loci emphasizes the spirit and essence of place, Norberg-Schulz centers the existential quality of place and the environment–human relationship (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Kjerrgren, 2015). Lefebvre evaluates space as a phenomenon produced through physical, mental, and social dimensions and explains its relationship with processes of social production (Avar, 2009; Lefebvre, 2014; Ghulyan, 2017). Relph approaches the concept of place through the experiential relationship established between the individual and the environment and seeks the meaning of place within the connections among human, environment, and experience (Relph, 1976; Cresswell, 2004; Relph, 2009). Massey, on the other hand, defines space not as a fixed and closed surface, but as a dynamic structure continuously reconstructed through relationships, mobilities, differences, and stories (Massey, 1994; Massey, 2005; Kjerrgren, 2015; Uzunali, 2023).

Rather than summarizing these approaches separately, this study aims to reinterpret them through a schematic reading. The main hypothesis of the study is that, by evaluating the perspectives of significant studies that provide insight into the transformation process from space to place, the physical, sensory, perceptual, social, and temporal components contained within these approaches can be conveyed through a holistic schematic framework.

In this regard, the original contributions of the study are evaluated in two stages. The first is the evaluation and schematization of different definitions of space and place found in the literature. The second is the evaluation of the layers involved in the process of place formation, followed by the development and schematization of a new approach model in which the necessary components for a holistic understanding of place formation are brought together.

2. Material and Methods

This study is theoretical and conceptual in nature. As the material of the study, the concepts/theorists of space and place production widely recognized in the literature Genius Loci, Lefebvre, Norberg-Schulz, Relph, Massey, and the concept of time were examined. A theoretical analysis was conducted through

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these concepts/theorists. Each approach was first explained textually and subsequently interpreted schematically. In this context, the schematics included in the study were evaluated not merely as visual support elements, but as components of the theoretical analysis itself. In other words, the schematics are not simple summaries of the theories, but conceptual tools used to make the relationships among theories visible and to establish a new approach proposal.

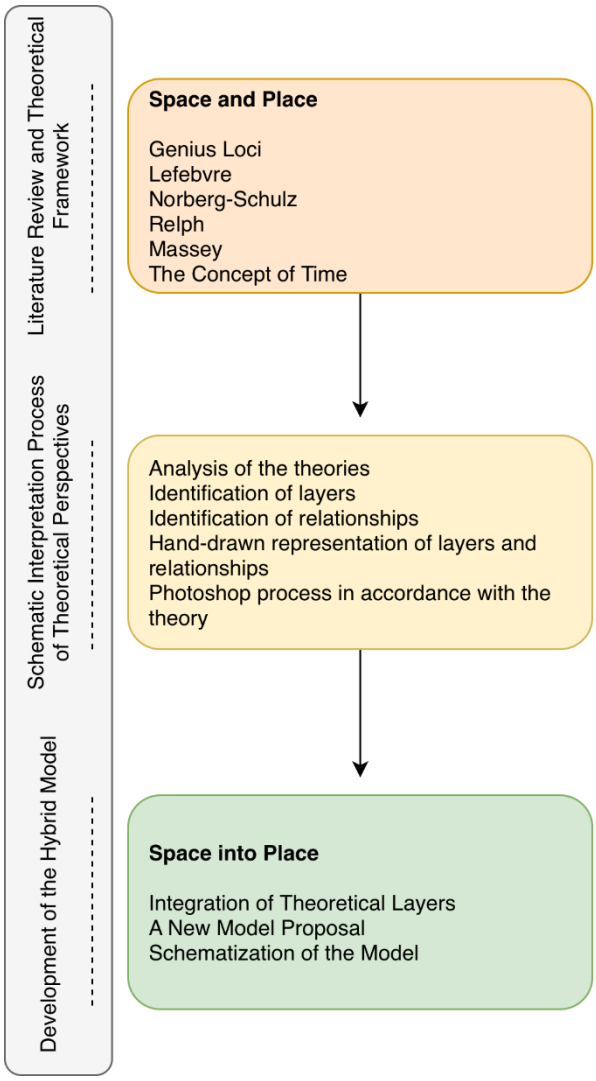

Figure 1. Methodological Flowchart

The methodology of the study consists of interconnected layers. The methodological flowchart is presented in Figure 1. First, a literature review was conducted on the concepts of space and place, and different accepted perspectives were identified. At this stage, component analyses were carried out, and the physical, emotional, and perceptual components and relationships proposed by the concepts/theorists were classified. Second, these classifications were schematized in a way that would make the theories of space and place understandable and relationally interpretable. The schematization process was carried out entirely through hand drawings and Photoshop, based on the theoretical outputs of the literature. In the third stage, a hybrid and original new model was developed from the processes proposed by the examined concepts/theorists. The new model was then explained and schematized.

3. Findings

3.1. Theoretical Result

3.1.1. Components Forming Space and Place

The transformation process from space to place demonstrates a multilayered structure that begins with physical components but is not limited to them.

Physical components constitute the tangible and designable structure of space. Roads, pedestrian paths, bicycle paths, stairs, ramps, plants, topographic elements, structures, boundaries, entrances, urban furniture, water elements, parking areas, and signage elements are evaluated within this scope. These components determine the form, orientation, accessibility, boundaries, and functional organization of space (Merrifield, 1993; Özdemir, 1994; Gür, 1996; Kalın, 2004; Nijhuis, 2011).

Sensory and sensorial components constitute the intermediate layer that enables the perception of physical space by the user. Elements such as lighting, climatic conditions, sunny and shaded areas, wind corridors, stagnant or flowing water surfaces, smell, sound, sense of security, quality, and experience are included within this layer. These components enable space not only to be seen, but also to be

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felt and experienced (Tanalp, 1976; Pallasmaa, 2011).

Perceptual components play a determining role in the transformation of space into place. Social relationships, cultural background, structural relations, religious beliefs, ethnic differences, security, belonging, spirit of place, place identity, place attachment, and place dependence are evaluated within this scope. These components make it possible for space to gain meaning within user memory and to produce identity (Kaymaz Koca and Hale, 2017; Ayna, 2018; Şentürk, 2018; Uzunali, 2023).

This classification demonstrates that the transformation of space into place is not a linear process. The physical environment is experienced through sensory and perceptual processes, and when this experience combines with social, cultural, and temporal relationships, it acquires the quality of place. This process occurs not in a single direction, but in a variable and continuous manner.

3.1.2. The Role of Sense, Sensation, and Perception in Place Formation

Senses constitute a fundamental starting point in the transformation of space into place. The sense of sight enables the perception of the environment in terms of depth, distance, and form through light, color, and shape. The sense of hearing contributes to establishing a relationship with the environment through the direction, intensity, and rhythm of sound. The sense of touch enables the bodily perception of the environment through characteristics such as pressure, temperature, hardness, and texture. The sense of smell may strengthen the memorability of space and orientation relationships. The sense of taste contributes to the perceptual relationship established with the environment, particularly in situations where landscape experience is directly associated with bodily and environmental contact (Tanalp, 1976). In this context, space is not merely an element perceived visually. It is a multisensory field of experience. Especially open spaces gain meaning not only through their formal organizations, but also through multisensory relationships established with light, shadow, wind, sound, smell, texture, and movement. Therefore, sensory experience may be considered a critical intermediate layer providing the transition between physical and perceptual components in the transformation of space into place (Uzunali, 2023).

3.1.3. Perception Theories and the Transition from Space to Place

Perception theories provide an important background for explaining the transformation process from space to place. While the structuralist approach emphasizes that perception is based on sensory data, the neuropsychological approach evaluates perception as the joint activity of the brain and mind. In the constructivist approach, past experiences and schemas stored in memory play a determining role in perception. Gestalt psychology argues that perception occurs in a more holistic structure than the mere sum of parts. The ecological approach, on the other hand, considers perception as the active collection and interpretation of environmental information (Kayapa, 2010; Yılmaz Yıldırım, Sağsöz and Uzunali, 2016).

This theoretical background demonstrates that place formation does not depend solely on physical stimuli. The same physical space may be perceived differently by different users. Users' past experiences, cultural codes, memories, expectations, and social relationships are influential in the process of attributing meaning to space. Therefore, place is not the direct result of the physical environment, but rather the product of the relationship among environment, body, memory, and experience (Kayapa, 2010; Kaymaz Koca and Hale, 2017; Mulla, 2021).

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3.2. Schematic Reading of Space and Place Theories

3.2.1. Genius Loci: Spirit of Place

Genius Loci constitutes an important starting point in the historical development of the concept of place. Based on Ancient Roman thought, Genius Loci is founded on the belief that every independent being or phenomenon possesses its own protective spirit, character, and essence. According to this understanding, the unique qualities of a place are associated with the spirits and characters of the entities forming that place. Establishing harmonious relationships with the spirit of the place in which people live was considered one of the fundamental conditions for a place to be meaningful and livable (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Kjerrgren, 2015).

Over time, the concept of Genius Loci has been interpreted in different ways within the fields of architecture, urban design, and landscape architecture. In urban environments, the atmosphere, identity, character, and uniqueness of place have often been associated with the concept of Genius Loci (Jivén and Larkham, 2003). Although the concept does not possess a single and definitive definition, it provides an important intellectual foundation for understanding the relationship between space and place and for considering the unique qualities of place within the design process.

In terms of landscape architecture, Genius Loci is generally interpreted as the “spirit of place” or “sense of place.” Beyond the physical and sensory characteristics of a place, it helps to comprehend its meaning based on experience. Pope’s consideration of consulting the spirit of place as a guiding principle for landscape designers may be regarded as one of the early examples of the idea of understanding the character of place in landscape design (Thompson, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Carmona et.al., 2010; Hamid, 2014; Kjerrgren, 2015; Uzunali, 2023).

When the concept of Genius Loci is examined, the relationships among humans, the elements within space, emotion, and space itself become observable. Within the scope of this study, the concept of Genius Loci was schematized in Figure 2 in a manner that makes visible the relationship between the physical characteristics of place and its semantic/spiritual dimension.

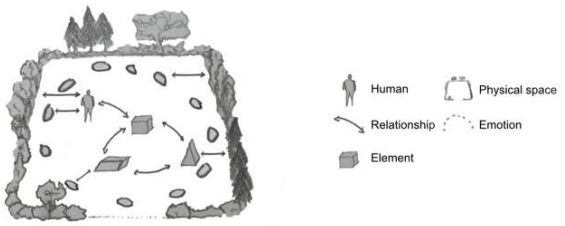

Figure 2: Schematization of the concept of Genius Loci

This schema demonstrates that place is not merely a physical environment. Place should be evaluated as a multilayered structure formed through relationships among character, spirit, identity, experience, and meaning. The schema also emphasizes that the physical environment does not directly produce the spirit of place but rather mediates its emergence. In other words, the physical environment operates together with the perceptual environment (Uzunali, 2023).

3.2.2. Lefebvre: The Social Production of Space

Lefebvre did not consider space merely as a physical surface or a geometric arrangement. He evaluated space as a socially produced phenomenon. According to Lefebvre, space should be defined through the coexistence of perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions. This triadic structure was reinterpreted through spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces (Avar, 2009; Lefebvre, 2014; Ghulyan, 2017).

This approach demonstrates that space does not consist solely of physical forms, but is also produced through mental constructions, social relationships, symbols, power relations, and everyday life practices. Space is neither a concrete structure physically constructed nor

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merely an abstract phenomenon mentally conceived. Physical, mental, and social dimensions intertwine in the production of space (Lefebvre, 2014).

Lefebvre's understanding of space provides an important perspective for landscape architecture. This is because landscape design is not merely a physical arrangement. One of the most important components of landscape design is that it constitutes a process involving social forms of use, representational relations, everyday life practices, and the production of meaning. A public open space acquires its spatial quality not only through its physical form, but also through the relationships, activities, encounters, and social meanings established by users within that space. Figure 3 schematizes Lefebvre's perspective on space through the relationships among social space, mental space, observation, and experience.

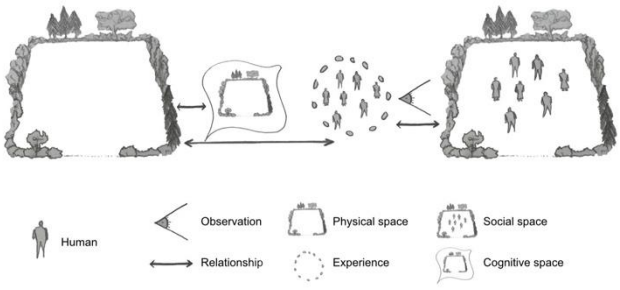

Figure 3: Schematization of Henri Lefebvre's approach to the production of space.

This schema demonstrates that the physical, mental, and social dimensions of space cannot be considered independently from one another. Perceived space is associated with physical practices, conceived space with mental and representational constructions, and lived space with everyday life, experience, and social relationships. It reveals that space is not static, but rather a structure continuously produced and reinterpreted. Continuous physical and mental variability symbolizes the changing nature of representation between space and place (Uzunali, 2023).

3.2.3. Norberg-Schulz: The Environment Relationship

Norberg-Schulz developed a phenomenological approach in architecture and environmental design by emphasizing the importance of environment–human relationships. Influenced by Husserl and Heidegger, this approach considers architecture not merely as a formal or functional production, but as an existential field of experience related to the way humans interpret their environment (Norberg-Schulz, 1971; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Kjerrgren, 2015).

According to Norberg-Schulz, individuals acquire the ability to recognize and identify with their environment during childhood. Perceptual and orientation schemas formed in childhood influence the relationships individuals establish with spaces throughout their lives. Individual identity is shaped through one's understanding of space and the relationships established with spaces. The tendency of people to state where they are from when introducing themselves, or to wonder where others are from, constitutes one of the clear indicators of the relationship between place and identity in everyday life (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Habib ve Sahhaf, 2012; Kjerrgren, 2015).

Norberg-Schulz's theory of place is also associated with a critique of modern architecture and standardized design approaches. The meaning and essence of place exist within the world itself. Space should concretize this meaning, make it visible, and reveal the spirit of place. Therefore, place design should go beyond general formal organizations and consider the environmental, cultural, and semantic characteristics specific to its location. Landscape architecture is a leading discipline capable of responding to Norberg-Schulz's perspective by utilizing environmental and cultural characteristics and constructing relationships with living elements. Figure 4 schematizes the relationships among environment, experience,

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observation, and human beings embedded within this perspective.

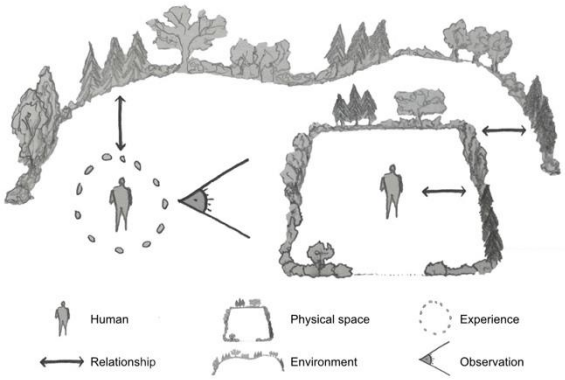

Figure 4: Schematization of Norberg-Schulz's approach to place and identity.

This schema demonstrates the relationships among environment, self, orientation, perception, identity, and belonging. According to the schema, place transforms into a structure that produces identity and belonging through the interaction between the physical environment and human perceptual and orientation schemas. This perspective reveals that place design in landscape architecture is not merely a process of physical organization, but also a process of making the environment–self relationship visible (Uzunali, 2023).

3.2.4. Relph: Experiential Place

Relph's theory of place is based on the direct experiential relationship established between the individual and the environment. Adopting a phenomenological perspective, Relph explains the concept of place not through the search for an abstract essence, but through what it means to a person or a group. According to this perspective, place is an area possessing physical characteristics; however, it gains its actual meaning through the experiential relationships humans establish with the environment (Relph, 1976).

According to Relph, place is a phenomenon nourished by real objects, meanings, and ongoing activities. It emerges through the interaction and integration of humans and the natural order. Places are focal points of human actions and constitute the primary context through which humans establish relationships with the world (Relph, 1976).

This approach emphasizes that the same physical space may be experienced differently by different individuals or groups. This is because the meaning of place depends not only on its physical characteristics, but also on the user's identity, past experiences, memory, social relationships, and feelings of familiarity or alienation associated with that place. Therefore, a place may generate as many different meanings and perceptions as the number of its users (Relph, 1976; Seamon and Sowers, 2008).

Relph's approach provides an important theoretical foundation for landscape architecture by placing user experience at the center. For a designed open space to acquire the quality of place, users must be able to establish relationships with it, experience it, attribute meaning to it, and develop attachment to it over time. Figure 5 schematizes the relationships among natural order, environment, space, and human beings that contribute to the formation of these differences.

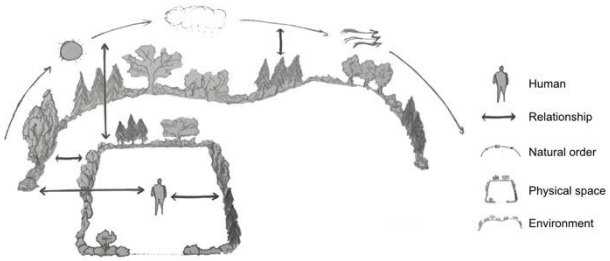

Figure 5: Schematization of Edward Relph's approach to place experience.

This schema demonstrates that place is formed through the relationships among the physical environment, experience, meaning, activity, and user identity. Within the schema, place is interpreted not as a fixed and singular phenomenon, but as a multilayered structure continuously reconstructed through user experiences (Uzunali, 2023).

3.2.5. Massey: Relational Space

Massey approaches the concepts of space and place from a more relational and dynamic perspective. According to her, space is not a fixed whole formed by essences, but an open and continuously changing structure constituted through relationships. Space is not a structural area upon which movement occurs. Rather, it is a multilayered phenomenon composed of social relationships operating at different scales and the totality of these relationships (Massey, 1994; Massey, 2005).

Massey's approach also considers the concept of place not as a static and closed identity, but as a formation in which different stories, relationships, and mobilities intersect. In this context, places are collections of stories accumulated over time and experienced differently by various user groups (Massey, 2005; Kjerrgren, 2015).

Massey additionally emphasizes that class, gender, race, and social differences are important in the conceptualization of place. Place is not merely a positive phenomenon producing belonging and identity. It is also associated with processes such as exclusion, segregation, mobility, gentrification, and placelessness (Massey, 1994; Dovey, 2010). When these processes are examined through the concept of belonging, they may also generate different outcomes.

This approach demonstrates that public open spaces in landscape architecture should be evaluated not only through physical organization or aesthetic values, but also through the experiences, forms of access, mobilities, and social relationships of different user groups. Figure 6 schematizes Massey's perspective through the relationships among different groups and between these groups and space.

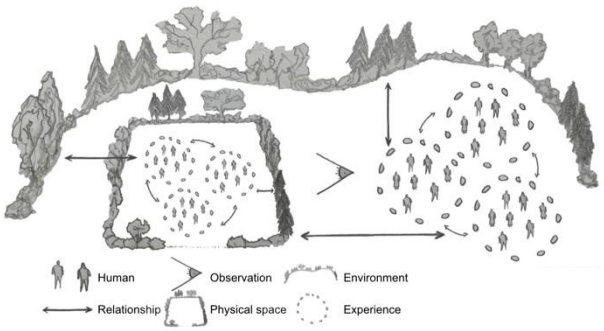

Figure 6: Schematization of Doreen Massey's relational space approach.

This schema demonstrates that space is not a fixed object, but a dynamic structure continuously reconstructed through relationships, mobilities, differences, and stories. The schema also emphasizes that place is formed not as a singular and closed identity, but through the intersection of multiple relationships and experiences (Uzunali, 2023).

3.2.6. The Time Factor: Continuity and Change

Time is a fundamental component in the formation of the concept of place. Time affects both the transformation of the physical environment and the transformation of accumulated meanings. The physical components of place may deteriorate, change, or disappear over time. In contrast, the semantic components of place may be preserved, weakened, strengthened, or completely disappear. Therefore, time is a determining factor in both the continuity and transformation of place (Uzunali, 2023).

Relph considers time not as the inseparable essence of place, but as a dimension influencing experiences. While time causes physical, functional, and semantic changes, it may also strengthen the perception of place through repeated experiences (Relph, 1976). Norberg-Schulz, on the other hand, evaluates time through sequential processes such as changing hours, seasons, and weather conditions. According to him, the preservation of Genius Loci is possible through the continual re-concretization of the meaning of place within

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every historical process (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Kjerrgren, 2015). The concept of time does not merely contain process itself; it simultaneously contains presence and/or absence within this process.

Time is particularly important in terms of landscape architecture. This is because landscape is a field of design continuously transformed through living materials, seasonal changes, growth, aging, usage habits, and accumulated memory. Therefore, place design should consider not only the moment when the design is completed, but also the experiences and accumulation of meaning that will emerge over time. Figure 7 schematizes the concept of the time factor.

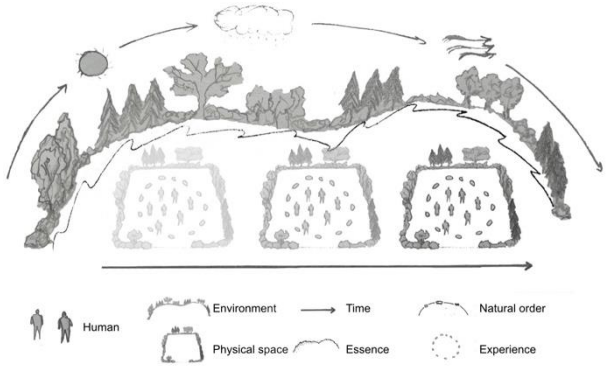

Figure 7: Schematization of the concept of the time factor.

This schema demonstrates that time is a transformative, preservative, and in some cases weakening factor in place formation. Processes such as physical change, accumulation of experience, continuity of memory, and loss of meaning redefine the quality of place through time (Uzunali, 2023).

3.3. Place Formation: A Multi-layered Model Proposal

When the theoretical approaches and component analyses evaluated within the scope of the study are considered together, it becomes clear that the transformation from space to place is a multilayered process. Physical space consists of tangible components such as roads, plants, topography, structures, boundaries, urban furniture, and water elements. However, this physical structure alone is not sufficient to produce place. For space to transform into place, the physical environment must be experienced sensorially, interpreted perceptually, nourished through social relationships, and accumulate memory over time (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Massey, 1994; Gür, 1996; Lefebvre, 2014; Kjerrgren, 2015; Kaymaz Koca and Hale, 2017; Uzunali, 2023).

In the approach proposed by this study, place formation is evaluated in five stages. The first stage consists of physical space. This stage includes the designable and organizable components of landscape architecture. In the second stage, sensory and sensorial experience come into play. The user sees, hears, smells, touches, feels, and experiences space through the body. In the third stage, perceptual and psychological interpretation occurs. The user attributes meaning to space through past experiences, memory, cultural codes, and social relationships. In the fourth stage, social and cultural relationships strengthen place formation. Space moves beyond individual experience and transforms into a structure associated with collective meaning, cultural memory, and social forms of use. In the fifth stage, time determines the continuity and transformation of this process. Over time, the meaning of space may strengthen, transform, weaken, or become placeless.

At the end of this process, space acquires the quality of place through identity, belonging, sense of place, place attachment, cultural meaning, and continuity of memory. Therefore, place is not a simple layer of meaning added onto physical space, but a dynamic whole formed through the intersection of physical, sensory, perceptual, social, and temporal relationships. Continuous transformation can only occur through this interaction. Figure 8 schematizes the holistic approach capable of integrating all these layers.

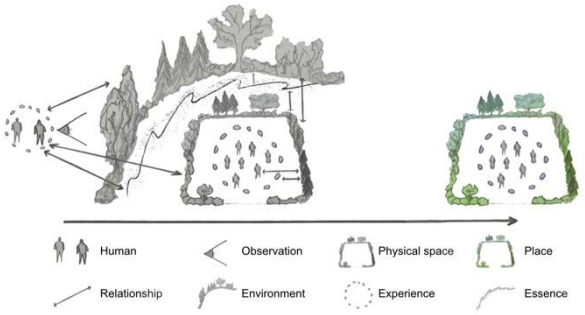

Figure 8: Schema of place formation proposed by the study.

This schema represents the original approach of the study. Within the schema, the transformation from space to place is explained through the relationships among physical environment, cognitive accumulation, environment–self relationship, experience, time, and the production of meaning. Place is interpreted as a dynamic concept formed through the interaction of these components, capable of strengthening, transforming, preserving its meaning, or becoming placeless. In addition to these components, landscape also contains other components of nature, namely fauna and flora (Uzunali, 2023).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study demonstrates, through the schematization of the ideas proposed by different concepts/theorists, that the relationship between the concepts of space and place should not be explained solely through physical components. The transformation of space into place occurs through the interaction of physical components with sensory experiences, perceptual processes, social relationships, and time. Place is not merely the concrete output of design, but also a social, cultural, experiential, and continuous process.

The concepts/theorists discussed define space and place from different perspectives. While Genius Loci emphasizes the spirit and essence of place, Lefebvre explains space through mental and social production, Relph through the relationships established between individuals and the environment, and Massey through multiple relationships and social awareness (Relph, 1976; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Massey, 1994; Cresswell, 2004; Massey, 2005; Avar, 2009; Lefebvre, 2014; Kjerrgren, 2015; Ghulyan, 2017; Uzunali, 2023). When these approaches are evaluated together, it becomes evident that the acquisition of place quality by space occurs beyond the physical environment through connections established with experience, memory, culture, social relationships, and time.

The multilayered evaluation of the concepts of space and place makes it possible to develop an integrated approach. This integrated approach enables the incomplete aspects of different theories to complement one another. The use of the schematization method contributes to making theoretical relationships more understandable, readable, and applicable. This approach is particularly important in multidisciplinary fields such as landscape architecture, which simultaneously involve cultural, social, ecological, and experiential relationships, in terms of preventing the production of spaces that are disconnected from context and generated solely through formal decisions.

The schematic approach developed within the scope of this study brings together different theoretical explanations within a single holistic structure. The originality of the study lies not merely in transferring theories, but in reinterpreting them schematically and presenting the transformation from space to place as a conceptual model through these schematics. In this respect, the study provides a visual and analytical contribution to theoretical discussions on place design in landscape architecture.

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Natural and Applied Sciences, Karadeniz Technical University.

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