Assessment of Selânik Street/Ankara as a Living Urban Space

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Abstract. Urban spaces create their physical existence through streets and the spaces left between the buildings. However, the user activities within the city avail a produced area consisting of streets and buildings to become a living space. According to Jacobs, the more the urban spaces are used, the livelier and more vivacious spaces are going to be provided. The use of space by individuals is in close connection with some characteristics of the space. Among these, the multi-functionality of the space, the regularity in its night and day utility patterns, and the availability of conditions of comfort and aesthetics, its adaptability depending on the requirements of time could be mentioned. In order to scrutinise the relationship between the spatial characteristics of a built-up space and its utility Selânik Street/Ankara was selected as our field of study. Firstly, the characteristics of living spaces have been defined within the study. Then the use of units and the structural analysis of Selânik Street was undertaken; and the area was studied in terms of the use of open spaces and conditions of comfort. The use of space by the users was revealed through observation. As a result of the assessments, the spatial deficiencies of the field of study was identified. Proposals were made for transforming Selânik Street into a living urban space, such as the organisation of its utility patterns, the addition of activities that draw the users to the area, providing conditions of comfort and increasing aesthetic values.

1. Introduction
City where people walk, meet in front of or inside its units and get in touch with each other is defined as a place where unpredictable situations occur [1]. Although the urban spaces are made up of units such as streets, avenues, parks and walking trails which are used in equal measure by the all the individuals of the society; urban spaces are not possible to think without the individual experience. Besides the physical spaces that the city contains, it flourishes with the relations of the users with each other and their relations with the built of environment.

The use of the city depends on the spatial features of the space that one is in. In other words, each and every urban form encourages the users to exhibit different behaviours [2]. Therefore, long as the urban space contains different uses and formations availing the users’ behaviours to diversify, it will be a preferred and vital space.

The interaction between the spatial features of the city and the users have been the subject of many studies since the past. One of the pioneers of these studies is Jane Jacobs. In this study, the spatial and social relations of the Selânik Street/Ankara example have been analysed using the criteria defined by
Jacobs for vitality. The spatial analyses and usage observations of the street was performed within the study considering that spatial features affect the usage of space. At the end of the study, the manners of use of Selânik Street/Ankara was revealed and issues such as how to make the space livelier and full of vitality was discussed.

2. The Characteristics of Lively Urban Spaces
Vitality means enthusiastic physical or mental power, the capacity to survive, the continuity of existence for a purpose and power to live or grow [3]. In ‘The Dictionary of Urbanism’, vitality is defined as the continuity of life, ensuring the continuity of the desired life [4].

City with its physical spaces such as streets and avenues is a place where the individuals live, grow and continue their existence. What makes the city alive and animate is the relationships that have been established between these physical spaces and the user. The relationships that have been established and the manners of usage affect the shaping of the space by making demands, and the spaces affect the relationships that have been established and the behaviours of the user by providing opportunities. Accordingly, it could be claimed that space and the user are two components affecting each other mutually.

Since 1960s environmental psychology studies have focused on the relationship between the design of urban spaces and the individual using those spaces [4]. Jane Jacobs is one of the researchers working on this subject narrates her observations on vitality using the relationships between people out on the streets. Jacobs defines vitality with the involvement of different functions, the intensity of usage of that space and the placement of these functions to different hours on a time schedule. According to her, the spaces that possess these spatial characteristics become vital spaces that are used intensely and frequently by the users [5]. Besides Jacobs, Gehl and Cook also argue that urban spaces depend mostly on street life [6].

2.1. Multi-Functionality
Activity is a product of two different however related concepts: vitality and diversity [6]. Supporting different activities and providing active usage in the area are some of the features of urban spaces, which make spaces lively. Spaces having different functions, encourage users to come and use that space for a longer time by creating reasons [7].

2.2. Crowds - Vitality
According to Jacobs, the more people are on a street, the livelier space becomes [5]. The creation of a lively city is possible through meeting the requirements of the inhabitants of the city and thus the intense usage of that space. In addition, the positioning of a specific usage or activity on the street, cause that space to become important from point of view of the users [8] and render that activity to become the ‘social glue’ attracting the users to itself [9].

2.3. Continuous Use
The length of time of usage of urban spaces is an important indicator in the evaluation whether that area is a lively space or not. The spaces that have both a day and a night life are the areas that do not create security issues contrary to deserted places. It could be possible to increase the use of the space by the inhabitants by using that space continuously and thereby creating a safe zone.

2.4. Comfort
In urban spaces, it is necessary to add to the design resting spots where the users can sit and rest for a while for the continuation of the activities, where they can observe their surroundings and where they can interact with each other with certain protective units to insulate them from climatic conditions [10].
2.5. Adaptability
It is possible that in time the needs of users change. For this reason, for the continuation of the vitality of space, it is important that the uses in the space should also be able to transform and reproduce from each other. In case the function of the space is no longer that important, it is possible to use it for another purpose after adapting it accordingly [11].

2.6. Aesthetics
Urban aesthetics can be handle in two ways as a formal and symbolic aesthetics. While symbolic aesthetics is defined over the emotional reactions of individuals over forms; formal aesthetics is defined over criteria of association such as the relations between form, proportion, rhythm, scale, colour, order, hierarchy and space [12].

According to Norberg-Schulz a building is perceived on its own when seen for the first time; however, when its relationship with the other buildings is noticed, the similarities and differences become apparent [12]. Cities are created through the coming together of pieces that have been planned with human hands in certain periods [13]. Aesthetics in an urban scale is defined as the compatibility of units that have been put together in different periods with their characteristics such as form, proportion, rhythm, scale, colour, order and hierarchy. It should be considered that the new buildings that are added to the built up surrounding and the alterations to the existing buildings have an effect on the quality of the street view [12].

3. The Assessment of Selânik Street / Ankara as a Living Space
For the purposes of assessing the manners of use and the behaviours of the users, Selânik Street / Ankara was selected as the field of study. Selânik Street is located at the heart of Ankara in Kızılay Region. The street is surrounded by two way commercial areas in the direction of Ziya Gökalp Street and Tuna Street. Between the commercial units, in the direction of the walking path, there are commercial units that have been built using temporary structures. These temporary structure commercial units are located in the middle of the street and cause interruptions on the commercial area. The commercial area is also divided in two in the east and west direction with Sakarya Street (Figure 1). There are two sculptures on the streets’ intersection with Sakarya Street and on its intersection with Tuna Street which constitutes its northern border.

Selânik Street has been considered for the assessment by limiting it with the main arteries such as Ziya Gökalp Street and Tuna Street. Within the scope of the study, the land use and open-space analyses of its existing condition were performed. The additions of different times to the buildings and open spaces on the street were detected and their manners of usage had been ascertained.

Figure 1. Selânik Street accesses and connections
The vitality of Selânik Street was analysed within the study in terms of the following criteria:

- multi-functionality,
- crowds - vitality - continuous use,
- comfort,
- adaptability,
- aesthetics.

3.1. Multi-Functionality
The functions of the buildings located on Selânik Street are examined. In the land use analysis that has been performed, it has been observed that the ground floor levels mostly contained product sales units such as spices, telephones, clothing, and stationary items and gastronomic units and the higher floor levels contained services purchasing units such as hairdressers, dental surgeries, translation agencies, and photographer’s shops along with training based units such as university preparation courses, vocational courses, driving and English language classes.

3.2. Crowds - Vitality - Continuous Use
If people are spending time in the area at different times of the day, it is a sign of the vitality of urban spaces. Although Selânik Street is used intensely during the day, during the night with the closure of the existing commercial units, the intensity of usage decreases significantly.

|         | Summer | Winter |
|---------|--------|--------|
| Day-time| ![Image](image1.jpg) | ![Image](image2.jpg) |
| Night-time| ![Image](image3.jpg) | ![Image](image4.jpg) |

**Figure 2.** Selânik Street land use analysis

**Figure 3.** The intensity of usage of Selânik Street
3.3. Comfort
The comfort of the urban space is an important factor that avails the users to spend time in that area. In order to assess the comfort aspects of Selânik Street, the open space analysis of the area had been performed. The pedestrianised spaces, seating locations, planting and the art works addressing the visual senses of the users had been ascertained.

Figure 4. Selânik Street open space analysis

There are two public art works on the street. These art works have been marked as A and B on the open analysis (Figure 4). The A coded artwork is placed on the intersection of Tuna Street and Selânik Street as a visual element. The B coded artwork is placed on the intersection of Sakarya Street and Selânik Street. The B coded artwork provides a stage for street performances besides being used as a secondary seating location.

Figure 5. Public art on Selânik Street

Selânik Street is an area that is open to vehicle traffic only on certain hours of the day and otherwise it is a pedestrianised zone. It had been observed in the analysis that was carried out that the seating units had been positioned back to back in a linear form and the green plants is placed on the perimeter of the street (Figure 4).

Figure 6. The primary seating units on the street
3.4. Adaptability
With the needs of the users changing in time, a requirement for space suitable for new usages arises. In this context, the forms of change and transformation on the ground floor level of Selânik Street were observed and it was found that temporary structures had been formed in order to add new units to the area and to increase the capacities of the existing spaces (Figure 8).

It has been observed that temporary and permanent units had been added in order to widen the relation of the existing buildings on the street with the ground floor level. Using these, the open space requirements of the gastronomic units and the closed space requirements of the commercial units have been met. Besides the said use, new commercial units have been added to the area using temporary structures (Figure 9).

3.5. Aesthetics
Diversity in space is a desired aspect; however, under circumstances where this get together does not create a common language, it leads to disarray [14]. The form, proportion, rhythm, scale, colour and order of the units such as the temporary structures and the signboards that have been added to Selânik Street are not found to be compatible with each other (Figure 10). This manner of coming together creates a complicated view on the street.
Figure 10. The view of the temporary structures and signboard on Selânik Street from a higher level

4. Results and Discussions
Selânik Street is an important pedestrian zone of downtown Ankara with its location and with the functions it contains. The existence of commercial units where product sales and services provider is undertaken and the gastronomic and educational units is an indication that different requirements could be met in this area. The street is intensely used during the day time hours with its variety of functions and turns into a desolate place during the night time with the closure of commercial units. This fact does not allow the street to be used as an attractive route for the later hours.

Selânik Street is a pedestrian zone closed for vehicle traffic during day time. The seating arrangements that have been placed throughout the main circulation axis provide resting spot for the pedestrians. However, the back-to-back positioning of the seating arrangements does not allow for visual and oral contact between the people using them. There is a requirement for comfortable resting spots in order to prolong the usage times of the street by the inhabitants of the city. These areas should have the benefit of a view and should be protected against the disturbing effects of climatic conditions. However, there are no covering systems over the seating units on the street to protect the individuals from climatic conditions. In addition, it has been observed that Selânik Street had been unable to absorb green landscaping as a linear walking line and that the point of view of the street is limited to the buildings located across.

The temporary structure components on the street had been built in order to increase the volumes of the existing commercial units or to add new commercial units. This fact shows that the space is capable of changing in accordance with the requirements of the day; however, such unstudied settlements only create disconnected and visually polluted units.

5. Conclusions
Urban spaces are places where individuals learn to live together and acquire the awareness of being a society. For this reason, it is important that cities have vitality. In urban spaces, as the user activity increases the vitality will provide life for the city and ensure the power required for the continuation and development of the city.

The example of Selânik Street/Ankara, had been studied in terms of multi-functionality, crowds and continuous use out of Jacob’s criteria for vitality; and in terms of comfort, adaptability and aesthetics in addition. In this study, the positive and negative aspects of being a vital part of the city had been defined in the example of Selânik Street.

- For the vitality of the space, the existence of night time utilised units is as important as the day time utilised units. The functional diversity of the day time units should be reflected on the night time units of Selânik Street.

- The potential of the presence of surprising, startling and unexpected activities in the space could render the place attractive. The design of figure and ground spaces that could be transformed into various functions could be added. It is important that the spaces are also designed to make opportunities for different functions.
It could be possible to make the inhabitants spend more time on Selânik Street with the addition of comfortable urban furniture that would provide the opportunity to rest, wait and watch. The existing urban furniture is insufficient in providing said comfort.

The existence of artwork and artistic performances on the street attract the attention of the users. The space could be made more attractive by increasing such opportunities.

It is yet another aspect to render the space attractive when the temporary or permanent units existing in the space are compatible with each other in terms of colour, size and material.

It has been observed that the realisation of the said suggestions is going to provide a contribution to the vitality of the space. As Lynch underlined, as user oriented analyses are adopted for spaces with different scales and functions, the opportunity to compare the information obtained is comparable [8]. The spatial analyses and the criticisms that have been put forward resting on usage observations in the example of Selânik Street could be adopted for the assessment of other spaces with different scales and functions. Thus, by undertaking improvement and re-arrangement studies devoted to the determined deficiencies, it could be possible to increase the vitality of the city and the comfort of the users.

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