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Changes in the built environment and in vernacular architecture through globalisation: The case of Battalgazi in Turkey

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Abstract

Housing and its architectural characteristics undergo physical changes with changes in culture, social demographics, behaviour and environmental structures. Contemporary life-styles and behaviours influence these physical changes to housing and the environment. Cultural identity that has been developed over a long period of time can be rapidly lost. Cultural changes include migration; migration from rural areas to urban areas causes variations in traditions and architectural spaces. Thus, elements of the cultural environment, such as religion, belief systems, ecology, economics, family structures, and cultural interaction, affect the evolution of a culture. Vernacular architecture is a physical representation of culture.

Malatya-Battalgazi, which is among the oldest inhabited areas in Turkey, is losing its cultural identity due to globalisation. The civil architecture in the town has suffered, but the religious architecture has been preserved with religious beliefs. The history of Battalgazi, which was known as old Malatya until 1988, dates to ancient times. The first inhabited area of Malatya was on the artificial hill called Aslantepe, on the boundary of the village Bahcebasi. Strabon, the ancient geographer, called Malatya "Melitene". However, the modern town does not reveal this identity. A lack of preservation consciousness, cultural changes and the search for a comfortable contemporary lifestyle comfort has caused deterioration in the built environment. Cultural identity is disappearing in the face of globalisation.

Keywords: *Globalisation, culture, vernacular architecture, sustainability.*

1. Introduction

The historical environment is subject to rapid changes in scientific, aesthetic and architectural values because the world is increasingly connected economically and culturally. Clifford (Clifford, 1988) argued that by the turn of the century, the word *culture* began to be used in the plural, suggesting a world of separate, distinctive and equally meaningful ways of life. The cultural process influences housing settlements and environments, which can be considered metamorphosis.

The cultural environment comprises a variety of elements, each of which affects the evolution of the culture. These components include religion, belief systems, ecology, economy and social aspects, such as family structures and gender roles. Vernacular architecture is a manifestation and a physical representation of the culture of a people. It comprises dwellings and all other buildings. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs and to accommodate values and economies (Lim, 2007). In this discussion, authenticity gains importance. Authenticity indicates integrity between materials, structure, methods of production and form. Technological developments through communication, transportation and construction have made it difficult to achieve integrity. Changes in materials and construction create fakeness (Handa, 1999). Today, little attention is paid to the integrity of traditional artefacts in the new built environment, which results in a loss of significance and culture (Saleh, 1998). By definition sustainability is “to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987).

This study presents the effects of cultural changes on traditional housing systems and their environments. The organisation of a house is influenced by the culture to which it belongs, including religious beliefs, family structure, everyday activities and social relationships. Changes in socio-cultural factors cause many owners to leave their houses. These houses were designed for patriarchal family types and for close neighbourhood relations. This paper aims to evaluate and develop an understanding of cultural change and its effects on traditional houses through the example of Battalgazi, Turkey.

The history of Battalgazi, which was called old Malatya until 1988, dates to ancient times. The first inhabited area of Malatya was the artificial hill called Aslantepe on the

boundary of the village Bahçebaşı. During the time of the Roman emperor Titus, the city was transferred to a site 4km to the north. This area is famous for being the intersection of the caravan travels in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries B.C. Malatya-Battalgazi Strabon, the ancient geographer, called Malatya “Melitene”(Battalgazi Kültür Envanteri,2006). However, the current town does not reveal this identity. Among the causes of this problem are the lack of a preservation consciousness and the search for a comfortable contemporary lifestyle in the new built environment. The contradictions between the modernisation of the town and its cultural identity have caused the town’s regional identity to disappear in the face of globalisation.

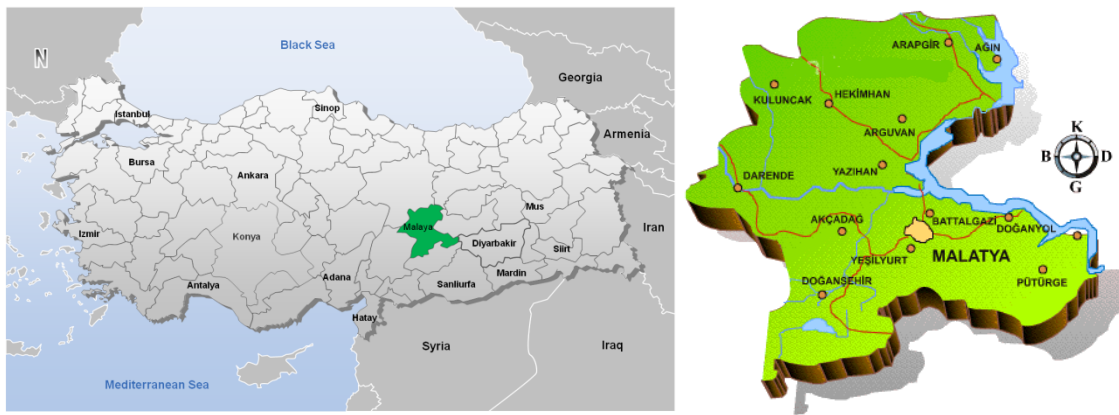


Figure 1. The location of Malatya-Battalgazi

With modernity, a fundamental transformation in the structural and constructional elements dominated in the new built environment. Battalgazi, which created a spontaneous architecture from its climatic and environmental conditions, had difficulties with the transition from its cultural heritage to the future. The vernacular architecture cannot compete with the productions of contemporary architecture and its contradictions between regional dynamics and globalisation. This vernacular architecture, which contrasts with organic and spatial solutions, is threatened with disappearance due to harmful internal and external effects.

2. The Physical Structure of Battalgazi

The downtown reflects a combination of economic, social and cultural issues (Özdeş, 1985). These sites show a variety of cultural and social structures. The wall that determines the structure of the town existed until the 1930’s. It was constructed during the time of the Roman Emperor Trajanus (A.D. 98-117) and lasted until Ottoman times. As the wall lost

importance, it was left to strong winter conditions, which hastened its deterioration. Now, only small pieces of it exist, and these are in poor condition. Only the foundations of the wall can be seen.



Figure 2. The wall in the 1900's (Gertrude Bell)



Figure 3. The wall today

The other monumental cultural heritage of the town is the caravanserai, called the Mustafa Pasha Caravanserai, which has great importance because it is among the few examples of Seljuk architecture. The structure is composed of a courtyard with recesses around it. The courtyard is larger than the closed part of the caravanserai. Inside, there is space for travellers and their horses. The wall of the courtyard of the caravanserai has disappeared, and the shops facing the outside of the courtyard have fallen. Its cultural heritage and identity have been lost through time. The structure has a restoration after.



Figure 4. The caravanserai before restoration Figure 5. The caravanserai after restoration

The recent restoration of the Great Mosque and the Madrasah give hope for the future. The structure's wall is built of stone, and the vaulting is from brick. In 1224, the building was constructed with a plan of a courtyard with a pool inside. The façade of the courtyard is covered with mosaics and blue ceramics. The vault of the recess (eyvan) is built from bricks,

with forms of the kufi writing style. The semi-dome in front of the mihrap has tromps for the transition to the walls. The entrance portal has borders with stalactites. The planimetric style of the mosque is created from four recesses (eyvan) around a courtyard. Brick material was predominantly used, and in later times, stone was used. Currently, the structure has a rectangular plan, with one recess and a dome in front of the nef of the mihrap.

The structure has deteriorated significantly due to the decomposition of the mortar from rainwater. Due to capillarity, and inconvenient and resized construction materials, the structure has lost its identity. With its recent restoration, however, the structure has regained its identity.



Figure 6 The Great Mosque (Gertrude Bell)



Figure.7 The Great Mosque



Figure 8. The Madrasah in the Great Mosque



Figure 9. The dome of the Great Mosque

In the town, there are cupolas from the era of the Seljuk Sultanate. One of them is called the bloody Cupola because this is where guilty people were hanged. It is constructed

from arrows of stone and three rows of brick. The bloody Cupola, which had deteriorated due to rain-water, has recently been restored. The Nefise Hatun Cupola is near the bloody Cupola and was created with pendants. The Siddi Zeynep Cupola is near the Karahan Mosque and was constructed with well-hewn stones. It has a polygonal plan and a pyramidal dome. The structure, which has the Seljuk style, is believed to be the tomb of the mother or wife of Battal Gazi. Adjacent to the Siddi Zeynep Cupola, another structure has been built that conceals its identity. There are cracks in its wall due to the ground settling.



Figure10. The Bloody Dome (Battalgazi Envanter) Figure 11. The Bloody Dome

2.1. Spatial Orientation in Vernacular Houses of Battalgazi

Place identity and visual image in a settlement are linked to socio-cultural influences and spatial organisation (Saleh, 1998). The traditional houses in Battalgazi maintain a visual identity as artefacts. A house is an institution created for a complex set of purposes (Rapoport, 1977). In Battalgazi, due to the impact of the new built environment, the people want to live a “contemporary life-style” in new structures and have abandoned the vernacular houses. There is only a few examples in the downtown of a vernacular house, like Poyrazlar House. The house contains two storeys due to the size of the patriarchal family. The foundation of the house is constructed from stone, and the wall is from mud brick. The flooring is created from wood sticks, and the covering is from old tile. The upper floor includes the recess, living room and bedroom, and the ground floor includes the kitchen, toilet and stable. The recess is used to connect the rooms on the upper floor. The ornamented elevation looks out to the courtyard with a bay to the street. Vernacular houses are threatened with abandonment due to unemployment and conflicts with the new built environment.



Figure 12. Poyrazlar House



Figure 13. The courtyard of Poyrazlar House



Figure 14. An ancient street



Figure 15. The street today in Battalgazi

Craftsmanship has disappeared due to the lack of employment. The deterioration of vernacular houses has caused them to disappear quickly. The people prefer to live in the new built environment.

3. The identity of the region and changes in the built environment

Traditional settlements are faced with a conflict between old and new trends in planning and design (Saleh, 1998). The cities are undergoing a development process on structural and urban scales. It is related to the culture and shapes the environment. Globalisation affects the traditions and socio-cultural lives of second and third world countries in the direction of the decisions made by developed countries. Through this process, spaces and urban identities are affected without resistance. This process creates a unique culture all over the country. After 1970, regionalism, traditions and conservation were considered in terms of the urban identity. The concept and symbols of urban identity that are the products of architecture include natural, geographic, and cultural products as well as social

norms. Urban identity is created over a long time period with different components (Ulu, Karakoç, 2004). The common values that create a cultural identity are not maintained by new generations. To reflect their socio-cultural values into cities, developed countries organise projects related to regionalism and conservation, such as cultural heritage tourism. The identity of the cities in Anatolia has been created over a period of 5 thousand years through a synthesis of multiple rich cultures of the Ottoman Empire.

The most important factor that affects the identity of the city is migration, which significantly changes cultural structure and urban space. This process moves the village life style to urban areas through the use of city spaces. Immigrants use these spaces as they do in the country-side. The renovation of the city changed the vernacular architecture, resulting in a loss of identity. This transformation in a town that lacks an underground structure increases the complexity of social life. In the information era, globalisation destroys different cultures and creates a unique cultural structure. The identity of the town has been created over a long period of time. Its cultural values have been destroyed as modernity has been attained. The districts have lost their identity and have become similar to those seen in most cities. This transformation has caused changes in the socio-cultural and demographic identity of the city, and the districts have become both “modern” and foreign (Ulu, Karakoç, 2004, s.63). The motorised ways that destroy the narrow streets have contributed to this loss of identity.

An architectural product can be designed with physical properties that support significance. An authentic object in a homogenous society has integrity in itself and in its materials, structure and production. It is important to perceive urban areas as a type of sustainability from the past to the future. Perceiving the environment involves a process of preferring or making decisions by sensing the environment with the sense organs. The task of architects, planners and municipal administrators is to preserve the integrity of the built environment but not to produce an open museum for external visitors. The elements of the traditional built environment must be upgraded to comply with the standards of modern life (Saleh, 1988).

Conclusions

This paper researched the vernacular architecture of Battalgazi in terms of the deteriorating effect of regionalism and “modernisation”. Once this situation is understood, it will be easy to find solutions to recover the town’s identity for sustainable architecture. Globalisation has created a unique lifestyle that affects social and economic and space. The cultural values that are the bridges to the past have been destroyed through regionalism (Ulu, Karakoç, 2004). Globalisation is both a growing force and a subject of rapidly intensifying debate, and regionalism stands in opposition to it (Scott,1995). The United Nations’ assessment of future population trends indicates that growth can be expected to continue for at least the next few decades (United Nations,1995). With the development of communication technologies, in the means of communication, it is difficult to achieve the integrity of an object. Conventional forms create fakeness due to discrepancies between the material and construction techniques of a product. The product may visually resemble the original, but it is quite different from the original in its construction. In this case, the conservation of cultural heritage gains importance to avoid constructing buildings that are like the original. The new built areas will be created from historical sites, and bridges to the past will not be broken.

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