TRANSFORMATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE CASE OF MERSİN AMUSEMENT PARK

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ABSTRACT

Urban spaces are the socal arenas of urban life; they are the places of experience and communication. But the rapid changes in economical, technological and social areas effects our cities in terms of public space. Turkish cities are also in a state of loosing their public space including streets, boulevards and public plazas due to many reasons ranging from political decisions derived by short-term economic interests to the lack of maintenance of the physical environment. The collective memory of space contains the inferences from dynamic processes of human and socail will, and critical interpretation. It is a shared socio-spatial history of a specific group of people who coincidently have constructed collective environmental experiences. These shared activities, events make people create a sense of common background. The time elapses and the spatial environments evolve with massive economic, technological, and socail changes. To this end, the collective memories transform in accordance with the spatial use and experiences, which, in turn, may change the meaning of space. Within the methodological context, this paper emphasizes the role of collective memory studies in revealing the changing socio-spatial processes. It evaluates the Amusement Park in Mersin as a social urban place for the community, also draws the changes in the collective memory. This paper is a rewriting of the collective memories by comparing different time sequences to observe the changes on the amusement park as an urban physical space and the impacts of these changes on the collective memory. We use in-dept-interviews with Amusement Park inhabitants over different ages. These age groups will be helpful to define different time sequences. The comparison between different time sequences will demonstrate the transformations of the collective memory of these inhabitants. This discussion of the Amusement Park as an urban place and effects of the physical change on the collective memory will open up a new point of view. In conclusion, as Rudofsky emphasized today's cities grow with no concern for the future and with no thought of the community. The understanding of the local governments on the production of space completely exclude the human aspect. In this sense, the findings of the case study showed that today the point that we have arrived practically identifies with the loss of the meaning of the Amusement Park.

Keywords : Collective Memory, Mersin Amusement Park, Transformation of Physical Environment, Spatial Transformation, Human Experience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important thing in urban life is public realm. Humans are social creatures. Besides their daily needs (food and beverages, shopping, entertainment, etc.), humans requires also social relations in their daily life. Public realm has an important role in the social relation of human beings. It is not only a variety of social relations but it is also a space where public social life takes place in all its forms. Therefore urban public places are spaces for public meetings in which intellectual discourse and social interaction take place (Montgomery, 1997:88). Urban space is a public realm that people share and where they carry out functional and ritual activities and a ground for politics, religion, commerce, sport, etc. (Madanipour, 1996). Madanipour (1996:145) defines public space as; '*Public urban space is the space that is not controlled by private individuals or organizations, and hence is open to the public. This space is characterized by the possibility of allowing different groups of people, regardless of their class, ethnicity, gender and age, to intermingle'*.

Sennett, defines public space as a place where individuals can meet and becomes aware of the society in which they live in. Especially, the interactions among people from different cultures and classes are important for the togetherness of society. A life in which groups are remote from and unaware of one another leads to the formation of clashing communities and the alienation and disintegration of society. People from different classes and cultures must meet one another and share the common public sphere, because these areas are spaces of freedom that belong to everyone and where everyone has equal rights (Sennett, 1977).

The human activities in the city where the individuals can be able to express themselves is a part of social life and it takes place in urban public spaces in city life. These activities are communicating, sharing and debating with each other. As Kostof (1992:187) mentioned public spaces were 'proud repositories of a common history, sense of a shared destiny' (Kostof, 1992:187), help to awaken the social and collective togetherness, and cultural background of urban life. The social and collective togetherness makes marks which creates memories on individuals' mind. The memories which belongs to that spaces are the part of a common history.

The collective memory of space contains the inferences from dynamic processes of human and social production of social space, collective consciousness, social will, and critical interpretation. It is a shared socio-spatial history of a specific group of people who coincidently have constructed collective environmental experiences. These shared activities, events make people create a sense of common background. People, spatial environment and human experiences help people to communicate and interact. Furthermore, experiences and activities help people to develop a meaning in their environment. Meaning the environment develops belongingness, identity and consequently sense of a community. Collective memory bases on these concepts.

The time elapses and the spatial environments evolve with massive economic, technological, and social changes. To this end, the collective memories transform in accordance with the spatial use and experiences, which, in turn, may change the meaning of space.

Within this context, to reveal the changing socio-spatial processes of urban life gains importance because collective memory records the unwritten transformations on people's lives, it tells us the non-visible transformations instead of visible ones. At this point of view, in this research our theoretical contribution emphasizes the need for explaining the production of space in reference to dynamic processes that takes place within space. These dynamic processes are the living processes that the users of the spatial environment face with and they are not determined by the planning processes. This research is aimed to reveal the changes in

socio-spatial processes with the collective memory study. For this reason it evaluates the Amusement Park in Mersin as a social urban place for the community, also draws the changes in the collective memory. Mersin Amusement Park is an important social area which were established temporarily in the Atatürk Park during the republic period. After 1960, the Amusement Park was permanently moved to the seaside. And it is still used today. Mersin Amusement Park was an important social space at 1960's but now it has been used rarely by the children. To understand the unwritten transformations of people's social lives we examined the Mersin Amusement Park. We use in-dept-interviews with Amusement Park inhabitants over different ages. These age groups will be helpful to define different time sequences. The comparison between different time sequences will demonstrate the transformations of the collective memory of these inhabitants. This discussion of the Amusement Park as an urban place and effects of the physical change on the collective memory will open up a new point of view.

2. TRANSFORMATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

2.1. Collective Memory

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004), divided the memory in to two distinctions under the theory of memeory. 'The tradition of inwardness' and 'the external gaze'. He calls 'the tradition of inwardness' as an individual phenomenon memory (Ricoeur, 2004). Radically opposed to the concept of the subjective nature of memory is the approach of 'external gaze' which argues for the existence of a collective consciousness and asserts the primacy of the collective aspect of memory. (Ricoeur, 2004). 'The tradition of inwardness' proclaims that memory is a subjective experience and memories belong to the individual. Accordingly memory assists the construction of identity by differentiating the individual from others (Ricoeur, 2004). St. Augustine, an early Christian theologian, claimed that 'Memory is private because the memories of an individual are not those of others and that when one remembers; one always remembers oneself, which leads to the notion of reflexivity (Ricoeur, 2004). This claim is the foundation of many contemporary cognitive-psychological studies in which memory is defined as a subjective experience and that it can only belong to the individuals and characterize their personal life (Ricoeur, 2004).

The tradition of 'external gaze' evolved with the widely acknowledged founding father of social memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs in 1925 with his book. Memories were first attributed directly to a collective entity by Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1992). The French sociologist claims that ' all memory depends, on the one hand, of the group in which one lives and, on the other, to the status one holds in that group. To remember, one therefore needs to situate oneself within a current of collective thought' (Halbwachs, 1992).

Frow (2007) challenges the theoretical approaches to the phrase that most of the time adopt theories of individual memory as he believes that they do not reveal the ways in which collective memory is constructed. A significant intervention in this sense to the conceptual approaches to collective memory is Kansteiner's definition of three types of historical factors that interact and form collective memory.

Firstly, he states 'the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past' (Kansteiner, 2002:180). It is possible to explain this component of collective memory as constituted by, barrowing from Burke (2004), oral traditions, 'actions and rituals such as commemoration', and their space. This component, therefore has a spatial character in its embodiment of the external reality of the present and its representation of the past as again an external reality-then in total, constitutes what is to be remembered, the images.

Secondly, Kansteiner (2002:180) mentions 'the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions'. Memory makers can be perceived to be the people who produce the external reality by their acts, and the representations by their academic and artistic works. They are the ones who select and present 'memories and written records', and 'pictoral or photographic, still or moving images'. Memory makers, then, are the mediators of collective memory, who practices or represents the reality to be transmitted through time.

The third component Kansteiner (2002:180) proposes is constituted by, 'the memory consumers who use, ignore or transform such artifacts according to their own interests'. Memory consumers are the people who provide the required continuity in the articulation of traditions and representations, and therefore who give the temporal dimension to collective memory. Put very roughly, for the present, memory makers are the subjects of the traditions and representations that pursue their practicing. Memory consumers belong to the future, and when the future becomes present, they become the memory makers who practice traditions and produce representations for the next future. Then, it is essential to handle these components as not sharply seperated but as interwoven.

2.2. Transformation of Collective Memory in Urban Space

A group belongs to a part of space, this group transforms the space to its image, but at the same time, it yields and adapts itself to certain material things which resist it. It encloses itself in the framework that it has constructed (Rossi, 1982;77). The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of environment, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it (Miles, Hall, Border, 2000: 172-173).

The collective memory and the urban public space are the representations, assemblages and exchanges between the users and the environment. Finding the roots in the collective experience of everyday life, the collective elements are ordering experiences of that chaos (Boyer, 1994:76). The disappearance of social and cultural aspects of urban public space is the demolishment of the collective memory belongs to that place.

Within this context, we search the transformations of the physical environment and how these changes affect the structure of the users' life in terms of human experience; perceptually, emotionally and behaviorally and of their communication with others and the physical environment. And then we discuss the question of how these changes affect the people's remembrances, collective memory and meaning that they construct through years for that specific environment.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1. Method

Within the methodological context, this research emphasizes the role of collective memory studies in revealing the changing socio-spatial processes. It evaluates the Mersin Amusement Park as a social urban place for the community, also draws the changes in the collective memory.

The aim of the study is analyzing the transformation of collective memory in terms of users' needs (sense of place, sense of belonging), human experience (perception, cognition, emotional and behavioral responses) and communication (social and communal communication)

This research is a hermeneutical study that based on open-ended questions in in- depth interview. The basic aim of the questions is obtaining the living processes or the living dynamics which give meaning to a space.

Figure 1. Mersin Amusement Park (2017) (Source: Source: http://wowturkey.com)
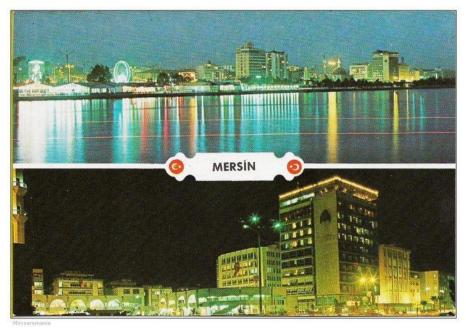

Figure 2. Mersin Amusement Park in Atatürk Park (1960) (Source: http://wowturkey.com

3.2. Participants

We made in-depth interviews with 18 users of Mersin Amusement Park. The research group consists of 2 people who are over sixty years old, 6 people who are over fifty years old and 7 people who are between twenty five and forty years old and 3 children who are seventeen years old. These different age groups may help to define different time sequences. The comparison between different time sequences demonstrates the transformations of the collective memory of these users.

3.3. Data Analysis

The comparisons and the evaluations of Mersin Amusement Park for different time sequences will indicate the transformation of the space, experience and meanings on the urban space and this represents the transformation of collective memory. It is analyzed with content analysis method.

3.4. Results and Discussion

The Amusement Park is a symbol of social life in Mersin when the country became the Turkish Republic. After the country became Turkish Republic, the social life was shaped by as a composition of Republican Ideology and public ideas. And in Mersin, Amusement Park is an attester of the historical development of the Republican Era. Mersin's transformation and alteration in its urbanization process can be observed from the social life of the city.

We asked to participants; the importance of amusement park in their social life. This will show the transformation of the Amusement Park in terms of perceived and experienced significance of space. Participants who are 17 years old, finds Amusement Park unsafe. They didn't go to Amusement Park when they are a child. They spent most of their time in Forum Shopping Center of Mersin Marina for fun. But on the other hand the participants over 50 and 60 years old told that Amusement Park was very important in their social life while they were child. They remember this place with the smell of orange and rose. One of the participants indicates the importance of Amusement Park as; *Going to Amusement Park is our only fun. I'm always going with my friends and family. There were no security problems. Everyone was respectful to each other'.*

The importance of Amusement Park disappeared after the last term of the 1990's. Participants indicate the reasons of this disappearance because of the immigrants. Security of the urban space is becoming important.

Participants describe the Amusement Park physically; *The Amusement Park was established in the Atatürk Park at holidays. And around the park there were restaurants, shoe shops and bazaars. Nowadays we use Forum Shopping Center for these activities.'*

Participants, over 50 years old met at these places and the life emerged in and around them. So they were the places of socialization. This place were not the place for only fun, it was also important because it was the place of communication. One of the participant emphasized this with these words; *'...it was the place where you make fun with your friends and family. But above this we met with our friends, neighbors there. I liked being there with people whom I knew or I didn't Know but this place had a lot of meaning for my life. For instance, I have met lots of people with whom I still see each other. This was the place where people eat, chat, drink and entertained this way. It was open until 11 pm. And we were there till that time, because there were no security problems'.*

Unfortunately, the character of the Amusement Park were started to transform after 1980's. Because of the immigration. The city takes immigration from the east side of the country. People like the weather, food, cheapness and the sea of the city. But the inhabitants of the city

became anxious about the immigration because security problems started to begin. From the place of the social life of Mersin, Amusement Park transformed to the place of useless and insecure.

Economic, social and political alteration makes the people to change the concept of entertainment. Next generation makes fun with their friends in big shopping centers. They don't use streets, Amusement parks or other urban spaces. Thus, the Amusement Park transformed to a anyplace. Because people think that this space has no charming attributes and it is not a socialization place.

4. CONCLUSION

We discussed the transformation of collective memory on Mersin Amusement Park by means of theoretical review and research outcomes, in other words, how these outcomes interpret in terms of theory.

'Cities comprise several layers of man-made physical elements. City has been shaped by various landscapes which have been constructed one over the other. In other words, these rewritings take its form from the different structural forms of landscapes within time. What has happened and what has been lived in its history are important because city is the place where the common memory, political identity and powerful symbolic meanings occur. At the same time, city includes the bunch of material sources which cover the opportunities and struggles for the environments that are constructed for the creative social changes. It is a 'tabula rasa' for the transformations' (Harvey, 1996). It is a reality that every civilization, culture and community mark important signs to the places where they own. The nature and character of this sign appear with the people's styles of experiencing the world (Crowe, 1994). Mersin Amusement Park was constructed as the most important urban space of Mersin. Because the people who are experiencing the change of the Republic all around the country felt the changes in the urban life. It was the place of civic values and the spaces of the community. It was the place of entertainment as well as the place of public realm. In other words, it was the place for the life of community.

However with the changing social and spatial structure of the city over time, it was the place for the life of the Amusement Park also changed. In the following years, with the change of the citizens' style of experiencing the Amusement Park, cause the transformation of social practices and the meaning of this space. Over the passing time, the urban relations that Amusement Park interacted also transformed near the changing meaning of the Amusement Park as a place. For this reason, we can read the social and spatial signs of the urban environment and we can determine the transformation within the social and spatial structure.

In the case of Mersin Amusement Park, there is an escape from the Park. People complain about the non-security and lack of social and cultural attributes of The Amusement Park. Consequently we can say that Mersin Amusement Park has lost its collective aspects which provided the relationship between its physical environment and its citizens. The dialog between the history of the Amusement Park and its users has been disappeared within the physical transformation of the urban space. People lost their reference places and their signs which they derived within their lifetimes on this place.

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