

CHANGES IN URBAN SKYLINES AND PERCEPTION OF THE CITIZENS: A STUDY OF ISTANBUL

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Abstract

Being a citizen or resident of a particular city or urban center does not only refer to a person's participation in the city but also encompasses their sense of belonging to and being a part of the city. In the perspective of urban space, the sense of urban belonging is an indicator of how people feel about themselves as part of the city, their feelings of urban consciousness, and their sense of responsibility toward the city and urbanized areas around it. Cities that have a recognized urban identity increase people's sense of belonging to them. As it happens, when citizens feel that they are a part of the city, they react to it with greater sensitivity. Therefore, creating cities where perception and identity are high affects urban life and contentment levels of its residents. Cities are living beings that evolve from the time of their first settlers and continue to develop and change as long as the city exists. Traces of the past can be found today in many cities as well as signs of the future they are seeking. Although all cities are made up of the same basic physical elements, their semantic structure, organizational principles, and relationships differ to give them their unique character. In other studies on cities, the perception of the city and its permanence are significantly affected by the visual characteristics of the city's skyline. Urban skylines have great importance for a city's esthetic texture and its evaluation. Maintaining a high quality in the texture of a city is important. Texture refers to the general way it looks, like the skyline, but also factors such as what materials it is built of, whether everything is close together or far apart, or whether the buildings are only a few stories tall or they are skyscrapers. Thus, how people perceive a city's identity can be profoundly affected not only by its urban skyline but also by other characteristics of its texture. This study examines citizens' perspective of the city skyline of Istanbul and measures their levels of contentedness given the rapidly changing skyline. To achieve this, surveys have been conducted with two groups of subjects. The first group included professionals in architectural disciplines such as architects, urban planners, interior designers, and landscape architects. The other group included members of other professions. The results revealed that none of the respondents are contented with the changing skyline of the city. They expressed discomfort and irritation about irregular settlements, the lack of green spaces, a lack of a common language of architecture, and the lack of a uniform scale for structures that are visible components of the city skyline. These issues prompt the respondents to not feel like they are a part of the city. Therefore, it would be advantageous for the city leaders to seek more balance and cohesion in the development of the skyline in order to have a more meaningful, sensible, and livable city.

Keywords: urban skyline, city image, urban perception, urban identity.