

## **ABSTRACT**

Urban public spaces such as city squares create an image for a city; these spaces become meeting places and centers for various activities that improve the physical and social environment of a city. Urban activities that turn a city square into a public place have generally been considered political in Turkish society. Both contemporary and traditional public spaces have existed as stages of opposition groups and arenas for playing out the tension between classes. Hence, the city square, which had been a democratic public space, is now being reduced to limited functions such as traffic circulation; these spaces have generally been designed with the goal of solving traffic problems in metropolitan areas as opposed to providing space for pedestrian activities. This transformation calls for a re-evaluation of the role of the public square and how it is functioning in developing countries, and the exploration of new spatial types of public spaces which can be introduced in the public realm.

This paper examines the dynamics of public space transformation following a socio-spatial-symbolic framework of analysis in which the urban environment is examined through its social and physical processes of development. To this aim, transformation of public culture and public life in Ankara city is the subject of this paper.

The objectives of this paper are:

- To trace the evolution and history of public life in Ankara with regard to public spaces in the city,
- To trace how public spaces have been used in the city center in the past and how they are being used today, with a focus on the role of city square as a primary public space,
- To describe how changing uses of public spaces in Ankara have resulted in change in their physical forms over time,
  
- To explore the implications of current trends in the use of public space in Ankara and the emergence of new public spaces,
  
- To explore public space theory with respect to the use of public space and what makes a good public space.

The material, which constitutes the basis of this paper, was retrieved while researching in Ankara by literature research, participatory observation, photographs, and interviews and discussions with stakeholders of public spaces of the city.

The paper is illustrated with images and descriptions of selected city squares and their changing patterns in planning and design. The explorations and

representations aim to provide an understanding the relationships between cultural dimensions of urban design and user behaviors in a specific culture.