

# Assessment of urban identity characteristics in public places: A case study of Ortaköy Square

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## Abstract

The city square is the best interaction point between various inhabitants and the city. It is the place where urban identity is well grasped. This study aimed to understand if it is important to have urban identity characteristics to be a successful public place, or not. Therefore, urban identity and public place terms analyzed in the notion of identity and the notion of place. The significance of the city square emerged as a connection between urban identity and public place. To clarify the importance of the urban identity characteristics in successful public places, Ortaköy Square is chosen for the case study. The study area is a public place that the richness of urban identity characteristics was defined in the researches before. In this study the relationship between urban identity, public place and citizens was explained by using the methods which are literature research and photo-analysis. According to these analysis, it is proved that Ortaköy Square is a successful public place. Binding on the studies before, urban identity characteristics were pointed out. Ortaköy Square has all the components to reflect urban identity. It is cleared that urban identity is a necessity to be a successful public place and it exists especially in city squares.

## Keywords

Urban design, Urban identity, City square, Ortaköy Square, Public place.

## 1. Introduction

Cities take place in minds with their urban image and identity features. These characteristic facts are focused in the city squares, which are public sharing arenas and attracting the attention. Hereby, users are faced with the elements which reflect the character of city and urban identity and feel these features while they are experiencing the city square. The city square- the arena of the public memorial events- which has clear defining characteristics, understandable elements, historical background and which is used actively, can make people feel the explicit urban identity (Erdoğan, 2011).

In this study, which urban identity characteristics a successful city square should have, were determined. When understanding the importance of the urban identity characteristics and why a successful square is needed as a case study area, from general to specific, it was needed to understand the two major concepts of urban design; place and identity.

Places are physical things, with some degree of permanency and constancy of sensory impact. Their form, their content, and the organization of their parts both create and set limits to the functions they fill. Thus, the study of places is also the study of people, their needs and their life-styles, insofar as all human action occurs in one place or another (Press and Smith, 1980).

Identity is found both in the individual person or object and in the culture to which they belong. It is not static and unchangeable, but varies as circumstances and attitudes change; and it is not uniform and undifferentiated, but has several components and forms (Relph, 1976).

These two interpretive definitions show that identity is the key to relate people and the place. To become a significant place either an empty space, the place needed to be attached by some people. The historical, physical, socio-economic or cultural elements combine an essence for a place. The essence of a place or the meaning is the identity of a place. It's how people remember the place. Also, the identity of the individuals or groups in a place, create an ambience and give an identi-

ty to a place, too. Identity is a complex concept which provides people both to understand the difference between places, individuals, groups and the similarity between people who share the same place, features or cultural background.

On the other hand, the city has its own identity. The uniqueness of a city is the urban identity. The urban identity has various elements which diffused in city and its inhabitants.

Place, identity and inhabitants are three major components of urban life. To perceive a place, inhabitants seek for some elements there, which make them feel "in" that place. Additionally, people have an instinct to attach somewhere.

The city square is the center of the city which outlines all the details of the city and the inhabitants. It is like a demo – a smaller copy of the city, which enables people to experience the whole urban characteristics of that city. City squares give brief information about the city, because they are the significant places which reflect urban identity.

If the square has a significant identity, it also gives us the clues of urban identity of the city which it is in. City and urban identity feed the city squares, and city squares help users to understand the city and urban identity. It is a feedback system that both sides benefit from each other (Erdoğan, 2011).

## 2. Why defining urban identity characteristics?

This study aims to establish the weight of urban identity for being a successful city square, fundamentally. Urban identity characteristics are the defining elements of a city square. This study investigates how urban identity characteristics reflected on city squares and what is the interaction between city, city square and urban identity. While analyzing this interaction, individuals' perceptions, observations and activities should be guides to reach the right answers. This study significantly uses the former surveys, researches and literature about the case study area, reveals the common points and responds several questions.

This study intent to explain the fea-

tures to create a successful city square and to analyze urban identity features. At last the interaction of these two is determined.

The hypothesis is;

Physical, cultural, historical and socio-economical features are the facts to understand the effectiveness of a public place design. The variety of activities and users compose a remarkable public place which exhibit the urban identity. And the square is the most significant public place of the city. Therefore, it is the best place to define and understand the urban identity (Erdoğan, 2011).

The significance of the study is to define the features of good public places and urban identity. Afterwards, the interaction of these features will be revealed and it will be shown that urban identity is the most important feature for being a good square-a good public place- (Erdoğan, 2011).

This study is materialized in the boundaries of the assessment of the perception of urban identity and urban identity characteristics in

Ortaköy Square, in pursuit of general scanning in context of square-identity-user relationship (Erdoğan, 2011).

### 3. Determining urban identity characteristics

Urban identity is a notion which is not physical but can be related to physical, cultural, socio-economic and historical features of the city. To understand the impact area of the urban identity, it is needed to grasp the roots in literature. In this study, urban identity is deeply researched in light of the earlier studies which are about the notion of identity. Hence urban identity concerns the place and individuals; the notion of place is defined. From general to specific, urban identity and city square terms cleared by help of literature.

In this study former researches about Ortaköy Square were analyzed

and the common points of these researches used as data about the case study area (For further information about the researches please see the references [Kara, 1995], [Güler, 2004], [Erel, 2007], [Aygün, 2009], [Mumcu, 2009], [İnceoğlu, 2007]). In all these researches and especially deeply in Inceoğlu's (2007), it was shown that Ortaköy Square is the most significant city square of Istanbul. According to the features in these studies, Ortaköy Square was chosen as the case study area to understand the characteristics of urban identity. Additionally, this study investigates the approaches to evaluate urban squares and the importance of identity in successful ones. Therefore, the former perspectives of different researchers and research groups were analysed and the "ten principles for successful squares by PPS" is chosen for discussing the success of the case study area (See (White, 1999), (Gatje, 2010), (Janicijevic, 2010), Urban Design London (UDL, 2010), (PPS, 2010) for these approaches).

PPS present a deep and comprehensive approach to create and sustain public places. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization which was founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William (Holly) Whyte, the author of *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. They are working on parks, transportation, markets, downtowns, civic centers, multi-use, campuses, waterfronts and squares all over the world. The following diagram shows which features are examined by PPS, when they evaluating a place. These features are used for all places that PPS works on (Erdoğan, 2011).

Later on, this study used photo-analysis, observations and data collection methods to confirm the hypothesis which was mentioned above. In short, Table 1 presents the route of the study.

**Table 1.** *The methodology of the study (Erdoğan, 2011).*

Method	Practice	Consideration
Literature	Searching the literature	Analysis of the data
Case study	Photo-Analysis	Analysis and confirmation of hypothesis
	Observation	
	Data collection	

#### 4. Assessment of principles for successful squares and urban identity characteristics in Ortaköy Square

The case study area, Ortaköy Square is located in Ortaköy District of Beşiktaş, Istanbul. The center of Beşiktaş is the important transportation hub of Istanbul, where sea traffic and car traffic intersect. Ortaköy Square is 20 minutes walking distance away from Beşiktaş.

Ortaköy Square is located near the Beşiktaş-Sarıyer Road, and it is close to the Bosphorus Bridge where Asia and Europe are linked (Erdoğan, 2011).

In history, Ortaköy has been a settlement since antiquity but became more significant in Byzantine Period. A church built near the Ortaköy Square and the place became a popular point. In Ottoman Period the popularity of the place existed and increased by building a Mosque. It has been organically developed an interaction point and lately as a square. Hence, the historical pattern of the place is protected till today; it's a favorable place for inhabitants.

Ortaköy Square is listed as "60 Great Places of The World" for PPS. That is why it is chosen as a case study area to define urban identity characteristics.

In the following, the existence of the ten principles for successful squares by PPS will be proved for Ortaköy Square by help of photo-analysis, observations, data collection and earlier researches.

#### 4.1. Image and identity

Historically, squares were the center of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities. Sometimes a fountain was used to give the square a strong image (PPS, 2010). The following photographs in Figure 1 shows the image and identity items in the square.

#### 4.2. Attractions and destinations

Any great square has a variety of smaller "places" within it to appeal to various people (PPS, 2010).

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show divergent attraction points, functions and destinations in Ortaköy Square which serve variant needs.

#### 4.3. Amenities

A square should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to



Figure 1. Ortaköy Mosque and Damat İbrahim Paşa Fountain (Erdoğan, 2011).



Figure 2. Ortaköy Port, Ayios Fokas Church and Bosphorus view from the square (Erdoğan, 2011).

use (PPS, 2010).

As it is shown in the following figures (Figure 5), Ortaköy square provides clean environment, enough waste receptacles, benches and good lighting equipments for its users.

#### 4.4. Flexible design

The use of a square changes during the course of the day, week, and year (PPS, 2010).

Saturdays, Ortaköy Square becomes

a bazaar where different ornaments, jewelry and etc. are sold. There is a permanent roofing system which is shown in Figure 6, and under it, a temporary market place is created in Saturdays.

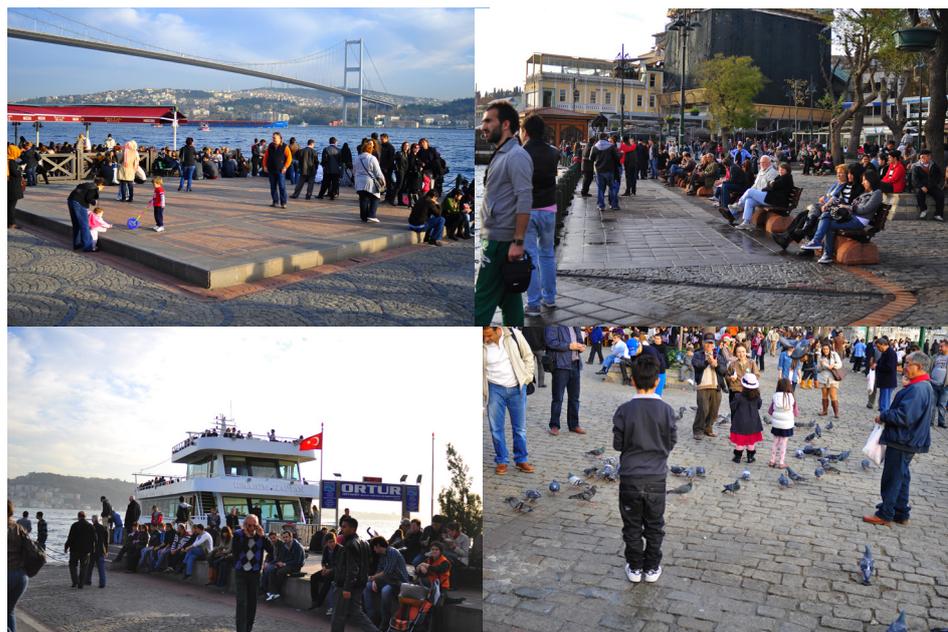
#### 4.5. Seasonal strategy

A successful square can't flourish with just one design or management strategy (PPS, 2010).

In Ortaköy square, different solutions exist to use the place even in win-



*Figure 3. Temporary bazaar, waffle & baked potato sellers, secondhand booksellers and the playground (Erdoğan, 2011).*



*Figure 4. Touristic bosphorus tour port, the elevated ground, children are feeding birds and people are sitting on benches and enjoying the view (Erdoğan, 2011).*

ter time (Figure 7). It is a popular place in every season.

#### 4.6. Access

To be successful, a square needs to be easy to get to (PPS, 2010). Ortaköy Square is a focus point and a node of the city. It is close to the other nodes. It is accessible and pedestrian-friendly place but close to major traffic zones. That is shown in Figure 8.

#### 4.7. The inner and outer square

The streets and sidewalks around a square greatly affect its accessibility and use, as do the buildings that surround it. An active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square (PPS, 2010). Ortaköy Square is a welcoming place with the small cafes and shops (Figure 9). At first, on the streets that open to the square, little shops and stands welcome the pedestrians and lead them to the square. At the square, little cafés, Ortaköy Mosque and the Bosphorus view meet with users and welcome them (Erdoğan, 2011).



*Figure 5. Sample of several benches on the square, people alternatively sits on elevated ground (Erdoğan, 2011).*

#### 4.8. Reaching out like an octopus

Just as important as the edge of a square is the ways that streets, sidewalks and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it (PPS, 2010).

Ortaköy Square is a welcoming place by the Bosphorus view and attractive shops in the entrance (Figure 10). The traffic flow slows down at the entrance of the square; this is another feature to be a welcoming place.

#### 4.9. The central role of management

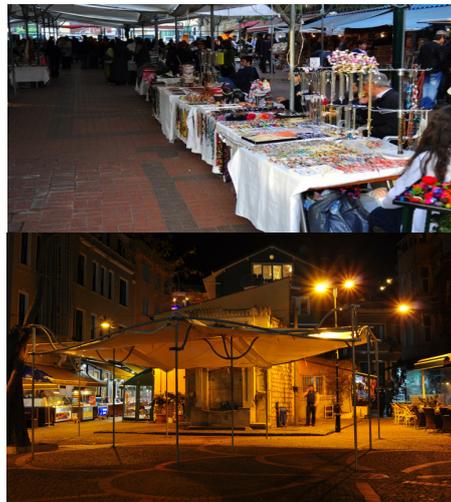
The best places are ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively (PPS, 2010).

Ortaköy Square has always considered important for local government and municipalities. Since it has been a significant public place at all times, the historical buildings and pattern of the place is preserved, the pavements and façades renovated and the managers try to sustain its inviting features. See Figure 11 to observe the restorations.

#### 4.10. Diverse funding sources

A well-managed square is generally beyond the scope of the average city parks or public works department, which is why partnerships have been established to operate most of the best squares in the United States (PPS, 2010).

Funding sources are not working



*Figure 6. View of the bazaar on Saturday and view of the bazaar at night in weekdays (Erdoğan, 2011).*



*Figure 7. Both indoor and outdoor usage, Outdoor cafés are crowded even it is winter and adjustable shading elements due to the weather (Erdoğan, 2011).*



*Figure 9. Little cafés on the outer square (Erdoğan, 2011).*

in Turkey as proper as in USA, but In Ortaköy, Ortaköy to Beautify and Fisherman Protection Association aims to organize meetings and conferences to improve their town and community, to contact with local and international organizations and associations, either to organize activities about fishing. They support other social organizations' activities in Ortaköy, too (Erdoğan, 2011).

### 5. Conclusion

By determining the Ortaköy Square depicting PPS's ten of ten principles, this study proves that Ortaköy Square is a successful public place.

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*Figure 8. Important routes surrounding the square (Erdoğan, 2011).*



*Figure 10. A street which is opening to the square and has the Bosphorus view at the end of it and Another welcoming street which attracts people by food shops (Erdoğan, 2011).*



*Figure 11. Good-looking façades are the result of the restoration (Erdoğan, 2011).*

Being related to urban identity is a key to be a successful public place.

The 10 principles are used as a summary to realize and identify the features of the place. And considering all these features related to the successful public places and urban identity; it is found that Ortaköy Square is a successful public place which reflects urban identity (Erdoğan, 2011).

To understand the powerful urban identity in Ortaköy Square, which characteristics of urban identity exist in the square will be discussed. Urban identity characteristics were defined by several researchers before. The common points of them were analysed and Table 2 occurred as a conclusion.

This study found that the urban identity characteristics in Ortaköy Square which are the same features that make this place successful.

It is revealed that visiting “the city square” is not a daily routine for all Turkish citizens. The squares are usually used for ceremonies, meetings, politic activities, just passing by etc. They are not well designed and seem half-baked. The functional diversity was not important when designing the city squares. That is why they aren't used for shopping, sitting, entertaining etc. as much as European countries. In fact, Ortaköy Square stands out binding on the historical development process. It was developed organically as a square and inhabitants always interacted there. This organic structure, natural advantages like Bosphorus view, flat area, climate etc. made the place more popular. The diversity of visitors and inhabitants gave an ambiance to the place. Also, Ortaköy Square has three religions' prayer places, handi-

craft stands, accessible and walkable area, touristic attractions, and wide food&beverage opportunities for everyone from different economic backgrounds etc. It has facilities to serve all citizens and tourists (Erdoğan, 2011).

At last, this study proved that Ortaköy Square is a successful public place, which has strong identity elements and urban identity characteristics. Ortaköy Square tallies with urban identity well, this is the most important key to be a successful public place.

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**Table 2.** Urban identity characteristics.

Access	Location	Topography & Geography	Historical Values
Number of Bus stops: 3 Number of Bus lines: 6 Sea lines: 2	Near the Bosphorus Close to main car traffic lines Accessible by walking Car Free Area	Flat area Near the sea Mild Climate	Büyük Mecidiye Mosque Damat İbrahim Paşa Fountain Ayios Fokas Church Etz-Ha Hayim Synagogue Port
Physical & Aesthetical Values	Economical Structure	Public & Cultural Structure	Functional Diversity
Bosphorus View Historical Components (see column 3) Colorful Façades Interesting Objects at Bazaar	Diverse Economical backgrounds Diverse functions for different economical backgrounds	Diverse user types Touristic Importance Historical Values Cultural Activities	Resting Meeting Vista Food&Beverage Shopping Transportation Entertainment Playground Worship Celebration

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### **Kentsel mekan olarak meydanlarda, kent kimliği karakteristiklerinin irredelenmesi: Ortaköy Meydanı örneği**

Şehirler kentsel imge ve kimlik özellikleriyle akıllarda yer eder. Bu karakteristik özellikler, tüm dikkati üzerinde toplayan ve kentin paylaşım platformu olan kent meydanlarında yoğunlaşır. Kent meydanları, kullanıcıların kenti ve kent kimliğini yansıtan bir takım unsurları gözlemlediği kentsel mekanlardır. Kent meydanı, toplumsal olaylara ev sahipliği yapan, etrafında alanı tanımlayıcı öğeler bulunan, tarihi bir öneme sahip olan ve sıklıkla ziyaret edilen alanlardır. Bu özellikleri sayesinde de kent kimliğini etkin bir şekilde hissettirir (Erdoğan, 2011).

Genelden özele incek olursak; kent kimliği kavramını anlatan iki temel kavram mekan ve kimliktir.

Mekan, devamlılık, istikrar ve duyumsal etkilere sahip fiziksel bir oluşumdur. Mekanın formu, içeriği ve organizasyonu hem o mekanın fonksiyonlarını yaratır hem de sınırlar. Bu nedenle, mekanla ilgili çalışmalar aynı zamanda insanla ilgili çalışmalardır; insanların ihtiyaçları, yaşam şekilleri, en nihayetinde tüm insan hareketleri bir yada başka bir mekanda ortaya çıkar (Press and Smith, 1980).

Kimlik, bireylerde, objelerde veya bunların ait olduğu kültürlerde bulunur. Sabit ve değişmez sınırları yoktur. Yanısıra, durum ve koşullara göre çeşitlenir. Bunun yanında, tek tip ve farklılaşamayan bir unsur değildir; aksine çok çeşitli içerik ve formlarda bulun-

bilir (Relph, 1976).

Bu iki tanıma göre, kimliğin mekan ve kişileri bir araya getiren bir konumda olduğu görülmektedir. Bir boşluktan öte, farkedilir bir mekan olabilmek için, mekanın ihtiyacı olan, o mekana aidiyet hissedilen insanlardır. Tarihi, fiziksel, sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel elemanlar, bir mekanın ruhunu oluşturan etmenlerdir. Mekanın ruhu ya da anlamı aslında o mekanın kimliğidir; kişilerin o mekanı nasıl hatırladığıdır. Ayrıca, bir mekanda bulunan kişi yada gruplar da bir ambiyans yaratır ve mekana bir kimlik verirler. Kimlik; kişilerin mekanlar, bireyler ve gruplar arasındaki farklılıkları anlamasını sağlarken, bir yandan da aynı mekanı, özellikleri yada kültürel birikimi paylaşan insanların arasındaki benzerlikleri öne çıkaran karmaşık bir yapıdır.

Öte yandan, kent de kendine ait bir kimliğe sahiptir. Kentin kendine özgü olma durumu, o kentin kimliğidir. Kent kimliği kentin her noktasına ve o kentte yaşayanlara sinen bir koku gibidir.

Mekan, kimlik ve kişiler kent yaşamının üç temel bileşenidir. Bir mekanı algılamak, kişiler kendilerini o mekanda hissettirebilecek bir takım unsurları ararlar. Zaten, insanların bir mekana ait olma dürtüsüne sahip oldukları da söylenebilir.

Kentin merkezi olan kent meydanları, kent ve kentlilere ait tüm detayların altını çizen mekanlardır. Meydan mekanı adeta bir demo, şehrin küçük bir kopyası gibi, şehrin tüm karakteristik-

lerini yansıtan alanlardır. Kent meydanı, kent kimliğini yansıtmaya özelliğine sahip bir nokta olduğu için, kenti özetleyen bilgileri bir anda kişilere sunar, denilebilir.

Bu çalışmada, esas olarak amaçlanan, bir meydanın başarılı olmasında kent kimliği unsurunun ne derece önemli olduğunu gözlemlemektir. Kent kimliğini oluşturan özellikler aynı zamanda kent meydanını tanımlayan etmenlerdir. Bu çalışma, kent kimliği karakteristiklerinin meydanlarda nasıl yansıtıldığını ve kent – meydan – kent kimliği ilişkisini ele alır. Bu ilişkiyi inceleyenler, kişilerin bu alana dair algısı, gözlemleri ve hareketleri rehberlik eden en önemli unsurlardır. Bu sebeple, yapılan bu çalışma, daha önceden yapılmış araştırma, anket ve literatürü kullanır. Bu enstrümanların ortak noktalarını ortaya çıkarır ve böylelikle alan ile ilgili bir çok soruya cevap olur.

Çalışma şu hipotez üzerine kurulmuştur;

Fiziksel, kültürel, tarihsel ve sosyo-ekonomik özellikler, etkili bir kentsel mekan tasarımı kavramada önemli olan unsurlardır. Alanda fonksiyon, aktivite ve kullanıcıların çeşitliliği, farkedilir bir kentsel mekan yaratır ve kent kimliğini yansıtır. Kent meydanı ise kentin en belirgin kamusal mekanıdır. Bu sebeple, kent meydanı kent kimliğinin tanımlandığı ve anlaşıldığı en dikkat çekici noktadır.

Çalışmanın önemi ise şöyledir; kaliteli bir kentsel mekan ve kent kimliğini oluşturan etmenleri tanımlanarak; bunun ardından, etmenler arasındaki kesişmeler ortaya konulacak ve kent kimliğinin, kent meydanının başarısında en önemli rolü oynadığı ispatlanacaktır.

Kent kimliği fiziksel olmayan ancak kentin fiziksel, kültürel, sosyo-ekonomik ve tarihsel özellikleriyle ilişkili olarak ortaya çıkan bir kavramdır. Kent kimliğinin etki alanını anlamak için, temel kavramlar literatüre dayanarak irdelenmiş, kimlik ve mekan ana başlıkları altında genelden özele gidilerek anlatılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, daha önceden alana ait araştırmalar analiz edilerek, bunların ortak noktaları, alan çalışması için birer veri olarak kullanılmış; Ortaköy Meydanı'nın İstanbul'daki en belirgin

meydan olduğu görülmüştür.

Ek olarak, bu çalışma kent meydanlarının başarısını ölçme yöntemlerini ve kimliğin başarılı olan meydanlardaki önemini araştırır. Bu sebeple, farklı araştırmacılara ait yöntem ve bakış açıları irdelenmiş ve Project for Public Spaces'e ait "başarılı bir meydan olmak için 10 kriter", çalışma alanının başarısını ölçme yöntemi olarak seçilmiştir.

PPS, kentsel mekan yaratma ve devamlılığını sağlamak için derin ve kapsamlı bir yöntem ortaya koyar. "Kamusal Alanlar İçin Projeler" olarak çevirebileceğimiz "Project for Public Spaces", 1975'te, kurulmuş, kar amacı gütmeyen bir planlama, tasarım ve eğitim kurumudur (PPS, 2010).

Devamında, bu çalışma, foto analiz, gözlem ve veri toplama metotlarını kullanarak yukarıda belirtilen hipotezi kanıtlamaktadır.

Ortaköy Meydanı, PPS'nin "Dünyanın En Etkili 60 Mekanı" listesinde yer almaktadır ve bu özelliği sebebiyle kent kimliği karakteristiklerini inceleyen bu çalışmaya konu olarak seçilmiştir.

Kent kimliği ile ilişkili olma başarılı bir kentsel mekan olmanın anahtarıdır. İrdelenen 10 kriter mekanın özelliklerini anlama ve belirleme için pratik bir yöntem olarak kullanılmıştır. Başarılı kentsel mekanlara ve kent kimliğine dair tüm bu özellikler değerlendirildiğinde, Ortaköy Meydanı'nın kent kimliğini yansıtan başarılı bir meydan olduğu ortaya konulmuştur (Erdoğan, 2011).

Ortaköy Meydanı'nda güçlü bir şekilde hissedilen kent kimliğinin hangi özelliklere bağlı olduğunu anlamak üzere, kent kimliği karakteristiklerine ait önceden yapılmış çalışmalar irdelenmiş, ortak noktaları ortaya konulmuştur.

Bu çalışma, Ortaköy Meydanı'nda bulunan kent kimliği karakteristiklerinin, onu başarılı kılan özellikleriyle aynı olduğunu tespit etmiştir.

Türkiye'de "kent meydanı" kavramı ve meydanı kullanma, günlük bir eylem değildir. Meydan mekanları genellikle, tören, gösteri, miting veya sadece geçip gitmek için kullanılmaktadır. Bu meydanlar genellikle iyi tasarlanmamış ve tamamlanmamış görünürler. Fonksiyonel çeşitlilik meydan tasarımında hiçbir zaman rol oynamamıştır. Bu se-

bepile de meydan mekanları Avrupa'daki gibi alışveriş, oturma, eğlence ve benzeri şekillerde genellikle kullanılmaz. Buna tarihi sürece rağmen, Ortaköy Meydanı, genelden farklı olarak doğal bir biçimde meydan olarak şekillenmiş ve kullanıcılar her daim oraya yönelmiştir. Alanın bu organik dokusu, Boğaz manzarası, engebesiz/düz yapıda oluşu, yumuşak iklimi ve benzeri özellikleri, burayı daha popüler bir mekan haline getirmiştir. Ayrıca, üç dinin mabetlerine ev sahipliği yapması, el

sanatları tezgahları, ulaşılabilir ve yürünebilir oluşu, turistik çekiciliğe sahip olması, geniş yeme-içme imkanlarını barındırması, Ortaköy Meydanı'nın diğer özellikleridir. Her türlü merak ve imkana sahip turist ve kentlilere hitap eden imkanlar sağlar (Erdoğan, 2011).

Çalışmanın sonunda, Ortaköy Meydanı'nın güçlü kimlik unsurlarına sahip başarılı bir meydan olduğu kanıtlanmıştır. Ortaköy Meydanı, kent kimliği ile iyi bir uyum sergilediği için, başarılı bir kentsel mekan olabilmıştır.