A semiological analysis of an Old City: Reading the Antalya Kaleici

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ABSTRACT

This paper brings together semiology and the urban by regarding the methodologies of key philosophers and cultural theorist of the twentieth century. Cultural theorist and analyst Roland Barthes is the first person who invited planners and architects to take a look on the possibilities of converging the spheres of semiology and urban thinking. In this paper after an overview of the current state of semiology, the language of the old city (Kaleici) of the Antalya was analyzed with Roland Barthes's semiotic theory. Therefore, Kaleici was investigated on the micro and macro scale within this paper. The everyday functioning of the city is micro scale and deep investigation is the macro scale which tells a common language of the urban. Social life of the Kaleici was also analyzed to describe the concealed excitement generated through the activity of purchasing (commercial) and meeting (other people), both connected to urban existence expressed mostly by the youth in the city. On the other hand the revelation of the meaning of water which means the Mediterranean Sea to Kaleici was analyzed.

KEYWORDS: Semiotics; Reading the City; Antalya, Kaleici.

1   INTRODUCTION

The word semiotics comes from the Greek root seme, as in semeiotikos, an interpreter of signs. Semiotics as a discipline is simply the analysis of signs (Cobley and Jansz, 2004). Semiotics is the theory of signs and interpretation. A sign is something that refers to something else. A road sign refers to a rule, a black cat is a sign of imminent danger. Signs are socially constructed, agreed upon in a group of people, and can only be interpreted by an observer familiar with the codes of meaning. All sorts of signs exist, grouped in sign systems governed by diverse types of rules. Communication depends on the interpretation of signs and knowledge, implicit or explicit, of the elements to be interpreted and the rules of interpretation, the codes involved. The theory of signs is therefore necessarily a theory of interpretation. Semiotics states that a lot of the issues dealt with in this study can be regarded sign systems: not only language but also architecture, history, landscape, organizations. All these structures deserve to be treated as more or less coherent sign systems, governed by their own laws of meaning, their own codes and conventions. Sign- systems can be linguistic and non- linguistic. Architecture is a non- linguistic sign-system: buildings can mean things, more or less clearly, more or less objectively, according to more or less widespread and more or less clear rules (Chandler, 2007; Bal and Bryson, 1991).

Semiotic analysis was based in the theory established by the semiotician and the Swiss born linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913). He offered an analysis of the state of language in general and an understanding of the conditions for existence of any language (Cobley and Jansz, 2004). The focus of Saussure's synchronic approach was the nature of the linguistic sign. Through this he was able to make a number of crucial points which are integral to any understanding of the European study of sign systems (Cobley and Jansz, 2004). Saussure defined the linguistic sign as a two-sided entity, or a dyad. One side of the sign was what he called the signifier. A signifier is the thoroughly material aspect of a sign. Inseparable from the signifier in any sign is what Saussure calls the signified. The signified is a mental concept (Chandler, 2007). In most cases the language of semiotics tends to use terms in a way that may not be readily comprehended by the reader.

According to Hassenpflug (2011) urban space is composed of three main dimensions: functional, aesthetical and symbolic. Taken together, these structures or layers are intrinsically related to the society which inhabits and produces urban space. Therefore, there has been a long discussion on the city's readability, influenced by famous linguists, anthropologists, philosophers or sociologists like Barthes (1988), Lefebvre (1991), Eco (1976) and Gottdiener (1994). Gottdiener (1994) mentioned that sociological understanding of urban semiotic analysis is 'an unfinished project' to understand social forces, structures and conflicts of spatial analysis (Gottdiener, 1994). Although Barthes (1988) provides a truly universal definition of what the 'city' means as a space of communication or a place to meet, he under-estimates the signifying strength of urban centrality when the center is seen as the place of most intensive communication, 'erotic space' (Barthes, 1988). Lefebvre (1991) offered the most comprehensive understanding of the urban with political semantics, assuming that all urban space is political, that the city is constituted by ideologies. His prioritization of the political in decoding and recoding the city tends to hide both the cultural and universal dimension of the urban (Lefebvre, 1991).

The study of signification of elements in the built environment is not restricted to the field of urban semiotics. Cognitive geography and environmental psychology for example, fields of study that either directly or indirectly deals with the signification of the components of the built environment (Broadbent, 1980). These components are identified as material objects, and as such they are the vehicles of signification. Signification can be understood in terms of the built environments a symbolic act that involves some physical object as well as some discourse on that object. In the case of urban semiotics these material objects may include elements as familiar as streets, sidewalks, tree plantings, public squares, building facades and buildings themselves (Barthes, 1986). For this study architecture will find a definition as that portion of the environment that is human-made. More specifically it indudes that which is artificially made and, simultaneously, that which it comprises, i.e. in part, human settlement space (Eco, 1980). But for the purposes of this discussion architecture will refer to both architecture proper (i.e. buildings, facades) and landscape architecture (i.e. street layout, public squares and walkways) and the architecture of community. Barthes (1986) refers to urban semiotics as the study of the process of connotation or social signification of cultural objects relating to ascribed values. Eco (1980) refers to al1 sign systems as a cultural phenomenon, and represents culture as a form of communication, within which architecture (the design of the built environment) is of particular importance.

The aim of this study is twofold. Firstly a semiotic analysis of urban space will be conducted in order to demonstrate the role semiotics and architectonic language to the expression of spatial components within the historical core of Antalya. The semiotic analysis will develop a relationship between the primary components within the space and the culture that it is meant to express. Furthermore, a relationship will be developed between the city center and the city as a whole, with respect to the water. Secondly, this study examines historic and contemporary literature regarding the development of Kaleici (old city) architecture and planning prior to the different period of time. The analysis starts with observations as to how people 'use' the old city, and examines the most basic, categorical and generic semiotic structures and practices that come into play in historical core life. Photographic survey is used to

provide visual source for semiotic analysis of particular points within the study area. The images are categorized into the context and elevation to avoid discrimination between artifacts photographed.

2   SEMIOTICS OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Many actors are involved in the process of constructing the city as a physical, social, economic, cultural and political entity. Apart from various professional groups (such as architects, investors, entrepreneurs, local politicians, members of municipal administrations, artists, etc.), it is the differing forms of citizens' collective action that contribute to shaping the physical and social appearance of urban spaces (Giersig, 2008). Through their built environment, cities mirror the attitudes of past and present generations towards urban planning. At the same time, however, they reflect the increasingly diverse and often conflicting preferences of numerous and unequally influential social groups. Ultimately, cities are shaped by a complex interplay of local influences and developments on regional, national and global scales retroacting on the local level. In this sense, the reality of cities can be understood as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional "urban palimpsest" (Pauwels 2009). The fact that each city has a unique character of its own is due to this complex configuration of layers and dimensions (Hassenpflug, Giersig, and Stratmann, 2011). Significant efforts of Geoffey Broadbent (1980) and Umberto Eco (1980) regarding the study of the semiotics of architecture constitutes not only the urban artifact but also the social, economic and cultural spheres that produce these artifacts in urban design empirically. Eco (1980) analyzed architectural components in terms of their meaning and function. He also created a body of work that allows architects, urban designers and those who interact with such professionals to manipulate the environment and thereby influence the way users understand their environment. According to Gottdiener (1986) streets, squares, buildings and facades are the elements of urban space within the case of urban semiotics. The Image of the City published in 1960 by Kevin Lynch is one of the most important sources for semiotics. Lynch (1984) defined the physical urban form with his reductionist approach and the legibility of spatial elements such as path, node, edge and also so on, represented a watershed in architectural analysis.

3   ANALYZING ANTALYA KALEICI ON A SEMIOLOGICAL LEVEL

In this study, the effects of physical change to the conservation of Antalya Kaleici are examined within the semiotic approach (see Figure 1). Historical city center is the place where a combination of different urban areas and in relation to each other intensively. The development process of Kaleici was started with the Hellenistic period. The area between the west end of the region and Antalya is called as "Lycia". Including Antalya and ending by Manavgat "Pamphylia Plain" is located along the coast (Bean 1999). The region which is known as Pamphylia in Antique age is located on Antalya Plain (Toksöz 1959). It is mentioned that there were six cities located at Pamphylia and Attaleia (Kaleici) was in the west (Erten 1997). Only Attaleia as one of the Pamphylia's cities has remained up to now as well as in the Seljuk and Ottoman periods (Ercenk, 1992). At the beginning, the city of Attaleia was located in Antalya Kaleici area. Antalya Kaleici settlement or with the original name "Attaleia" was the west peripheral city of Pamphylia. It was established in the bay around the plain which lie between Akdag and Beydag in West Taurus on the Teke Peninsula. The city still takes place on the cliffs with 20-30 meters height around a small bay. The overlay of the city resembles rising of terraces like the form of a theater (Beaufort, 2002). In 203 AC, the residents of Antalya obtained rights and special privileges by their devotion to the Roman Empire (Erten 1997). The gate of Hadrianus as the main entrance to the city and the walls on the two side of the gate are known to belong to Roman period. After the division of the Roman Empire in two parts in 395 AC, Antalya stayed within the boundaries of Byzantine Empire (Cimrin, 1999). In this period, Antalya had a significant role in military power, religious importance and trade. It became an important harbor of East Mediterranean (Foss, 1996). By the Xth century, Antalya had great contributions in economic means to Istanbul, as an important city of Byzantine. During Byzantine period, while other antique cities were destroyed, Antalya was the only city left existing in Pamphylia

region due to its vigorous fortification walls against enemies (Foss 1996). In the Byzantine period, the gridiron pattern of Roman cities started to vanish (Morris 1994), organic pattern took the place of it (Tanyeli, 1996). It is known that the construction of the fortification walls increased with a rising speed because of rebellion of Arabian, and the cities moved to the acropolis of the ancient cities (Cezar, 1977). In Antalya, the reason of forming two different patterns which are divided by the second inner walls is because of the density in the north of the city due to the rebellion of Arabian. Tanyeli (1996) expound that in Antalya, the construction of another second inner wall narrowed the urban area and encircled just the harbor. Hence, the harbor and its surroundings were getting a function as an inner castle with this wall.

Figure 1: Antalya - Kaleici

In XIth century, the rulers of the city were the Turks and Byzantines, alternately. Antalya remained as a strong castle city of Byzantine till the end of the XIIth century. In 1204, by invasion of Istanbul (Constantinapolis) by Frank Crusades and Venice, the relation between Antalya and Byzantine was cut off (Cimrin, 1999). Antalya was an important city for Seljuks. In Kaleici, the historical buildings maintained till today are mostly from Seljuk period. In fact, during historical process, Antalya got importance in urban meaning in this period. The structures of this period are Mevlevihane, Yivli Minare Kulliyesi with Madrassa and bath in it. Due to the locations of Ottoman structures within the city, the city grew through the north out of the walls. In this period, Muslims should have increased because new regional structures were built in Greek and Jewish quarters. While the organic pattern was common in the areas where Turks lived, in the area along the road from the gate of Hadrianus to Hidirlik tower gridiron pattern had been kept till 1920s. The Christian population lived in this area. Moreover, the city developed in organic pattern in Ottoman period. The fortification walls repaired in the Seljuk period lost their functional features in this period in Antalya like other Ottoman cities. The walls were not the urban element any more, they were demolished in time.

Cultural, economic, social, and religious structures from Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman and Republic periods were existed together. Venues and facilities today have lost their function within the historical process. Seljuks buit Yivli Minaret and Mosque over the remaining of Byzantine Church of Agios Ioannis Theologos (see Figure 2). For Barthes, the eroticism of the city can be identified with the "sociality" of urban life. The city integrates people with completely diverse backgrounds and completely different intentions. This belongs to its very structure. "The city," Barthes (1995) argued "is the site of our encounter with the other," and he continued that "it is for this reason that the center is the gathering point of any city; the city-center is instituted above all by the young, the adolescent." Today

Kaleici is the center for attraction of the urban population extending beyond the walls with migration in the historical process. Kaleici is the place for the socialization of young people and adults and it indicates birth of the city of Antalya in terms of a connotational message (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Kaleici Yivli Minare   Figure 3: Kaleici, People and the Sea

Historic harbor in Kaleici is the home for tourist boat trips and small fishing boats. This type of touristic activities is normal for the coastal historical building in terms of denotational message. Considering the historical background, it is understood that the historic harbor in Kaleici serves as a bridge between east and west. Luxury goods (spices, textiles, carpets, precious stones and glass - metal work) from Egypt, Palestine, Libya in the Mediterranean Sea, were transferred to Venetian, Genoese, Italian or even Spanish traders in Kaleici. Therefore harbor was the center of an international transfer (Cimrin, 1999). The new world order, economic system, and many other variables completely eliminated the potential for international trade in the harbor, and sailing boats, galleys are now existed for cheap touristic sea tours. In the history, major cities of Pamphylia region lost its importance during the Byzantine Period; however Attaleia (Antalya) was able to maintain its importance. City walls had been repaired several times to maintain this condition and to protect the city against Arab attacks. Unfortunately, today there are cafeterias on city walls for those who want to drink against the Mediterranean Sea and the Taurus Mountains (see Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Historical Harbour of Kaleici

Figure 5: Transformation of Harbour

As the denotational message, Kaleici with live music bars is the frequently visited place for local and foreign tourists in Antalya. However, as the connotational message, old Turkish houses in Kaleici which are now converted into bars, are indicators for innocence and privacy of the family in Seljuk and Ottoman architecture. Nowadays inner courtyards, representing the innocence and privacy of the families, are used by bars (see Figure 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Transformation of Turkish House 1

Figure 7: Transformation of Turkish House 2

Yivli Minaret Mosque complex, and its madrassa (known as Yikik (collapsed) Minaret Madrassa) turned into a place for tiny little shops where tourist goods are sold. According to the in-depth analysis, madrassa is the generic name of the educational institutions in Muslim countries, where the higher education is given. However, today, students and teachers are replaced to tourists and sellers and classrooms were turned into the shops and the original function has been lost (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Nigar Hatun Tomb

Figure 9: Transforming Madrassa in to the Souvenir shop

Tombs of the Ottoman Dynasty located in Kaleici could not be consistent with the economic structure emerged in the tourist-oriented transformation process. Nigar Hatun Mausoleum (1502) is an example for these tombs and today its door is padlocked and it is surrounded by a cafeteria (see Figure 9). Kaleici is an indicator when it is analyzed based on Barthes' denotational message and connotational message conceptualizations. Objects, people, architectural structures, open spaces, and sea coast are indicators which are forming Kaleici, and refer to the specific historical - mental concepts. The globalization that integrates and liberalizes markets worldwide is inevitable and irreversible (Steger, 2003).

Figure 10: Global Capitalism and Kaleici (Photos by Nurdan AKINER)

When Kaleici is considered as a text according to the theory of the semiotics of Roland Barthes, the global brands describe the capitalist globalization based on a denotational message, as in any city of the world. However, this is not a new situation for Kaleici. Since the Roman period, Kaleici has an important place in international trade. Indeed, the Seljuks built many inns, marketplaces and shops for the promotion of sea and overland trade. Drinking an international brand coffee at the foot of the city walls is actually not a strange situation (see Figure 10).

4   CONCLUSION

Kaleici is being housed to the stratification of different urban cultures traces from the Hellenistic period to the present day. Some of the architectural or environmental structure references were built in different periods remained in existence today. Although those representative structures differ in functional facilities today, some of them still contain traces of the period was built in. Historical cities are the physical conformation of differential relations and interactions which develop in the course of time at space. The correct perception of the urban identity and different cultural, social and economic layers will be ensured the implementation of the efficient "urban renewal" project accordingly. In this context, reading the city's memory host in different historical periods may prevent to the loss of traditional values. Therefore, examining the historic center of semiotic perspective is important. The results regarding the analysis of the language of the city will produce a joint decision for the private and public organizations and it will be an important tool in decision-making. Within this study, when Kaleici was taken as an indicator; the objects, people, architectural structures, spaces and the sea coast of Kaleici were examined in detail and under different headings for the discovery of connotational messages describing the language of the city.

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