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# Architectural and Urban Identity Transformation of Eskisehir - An Anatolian City

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**Abstract** City is the arena where we identify ourselves and interact with others and our environment; cities are epicentres of interaction, transition and fusion of different communities and their cultures. Thus, it is important to discuss the elements of change and their consequences in architectural - urban spaces and their products in the context of identity. Urban identity can be defined as the impression invoked on its inhabitants by the environmental, historical, socio-cultural and spatial values. Both architectural and urban identity have a dynamic structure, susceptible to every change on both social and administrative structure. Both global and national economic fluctuations in the last decades and industrialisation throughout the 20th century caused dramatic and diverse changes in the conditions of life, consumption forms, the perception of time and space consequently transforming architecture and city. The changes in all the different aspects of the city life and structure with time cause transformation of architecture and urban identity. This dynamism caused by changes and new formations in the cultural life and environmental conditions also leads to transforming customs and the ways we occupy/use/live in a place. Consequently, these changes and new social norms that can transform the way we occupy a space and our demands from a place can be asserted. All new requirements caused by these new conditions of urban life transform the existing architecture and spaces. In this presentation, the transformation of the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir will be discussed through its dynamics like architectural and urban transformation, industry and politics.

## 1. Introduction

Architectural and urban identity can be defined as an impression invoked on its inhabitants by the environmental, historical, socio-cultural and spatial values. The change in all the several aspects of the city life and structure causes transformation on architectural and urban identity in time. Changes and new formations in the cultural life and environmental conditions have been positioning new customs and places in the collective memory, on the other hand, new social norms transform the way we occupy a space. Both global and national economic fluctuations in the last decades and the industrialisation throughout the 20th century caused dramatic and diverse changes in the conditions of life, consumption forms, the perception of time and space, consequently transforming the architecture and the city. Architectural and urban identity has a dynamic structure, susceptible to every change on both social and administrative structure. All new requirements caused by these new conditions of the urban life transform the existing architecture and spaces. In this paper, the architectural and urban transformation of Eskisehir, which is a central Anatolian city in Turkey, is studied through its dynamics.



## 2. Architectural and urban identity

A city is a place where a variety of identity is kept. These identities can be exemplified as the identity of an individual, a group identity, a national identity, identity of places, socio-cultural identities. The city is an arena where we identify ourselves and interact with others; cities are epicentres of interaction, transition and fusion of different communities and their cultures. Thus, it is important to discuss urban spaces in the context of identity [1]. The features, which combine, define and highlight the city, are the ones that establish the architectural and urban identity. As Burgess [1] stated, the entire complex of urban life has a character of its own, and every city has its way of life, a skeleton and a physical and social structure. The nature of life brings out the formation of architectural and urban identity, which can differentiate in every urban setting.

Lynch describes identity, as a distinctive object from other things, as a separable entity, not equivalent to something else but in the sense of individuality and uniqueness. He also evaluates identity issue as one of the criteria of urban design as well and defines the characteristics of a place with clear perceptual identity, recognisable, memorable, vivid character, and differentiates from other locations [2]. Identity is the extent to which a person can recognise or recall a place as being distinct from other places by having a vivid, or unique, or at least a character of its own [3]. Violich also focuses on the physical environment with our involvement and interaction with it in establishing the identity with a place from a phenomenological perspective [4]. Relph deals with the phenomenon of the identity of places by considering the essence of the place. He rejects describing places just using their location and appearance. According to him, places are sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, other people, individual experiences, care, and concern for home. Additionally, they should be sensed in the context of other places. He defines three core elements of the identity of places, which are the physical features or appearance, the observable activities or functions, and meanings or symbol. For him, the dialectical links between them are the basic structural relations of that identity [5].

Tankut et al. deals with three factors in understanding the identity of an urban place. Besides the physical features of an area, architectural structure of the city and the modes of production form a foundation to look at the identity issue critically. Also, they emphasise that identity issue should not only be considered as a physical feature but also should be the reflection of the lifestyles [6]. Col [7] defined urban identity as a significant complexity which is a result of the period from past to future that affects urban image, differs from one city to another. Cities have unique characteristics due to the different scale and interpretations. These features can be physical, culturally, socioeconomically, historically and morphologically structured with a complexity of urban dwellers and their life styles; and also with continuously developing and eternizing the notion of sustainability. The development of the architectural and urban identity is a historic case. It can develop or transform in time; to a stratification of different periods and cultures. According to Karabey [8], the architectural and urban identity is the accumulation of its most distinguishing characteristics. This identity takes shape and develops in the historical flow. Therefore, the civilisations ever born, lived, and collapsed there contribute to that identity.

## 3. General historical processes that shape architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir

Eskisehir is a city located in the north-western Anatolia, Turkey. The city is located on the banks of the Porsuk River. Eskisehir has a rich soil structure, precipitating agriculture, cement, ceramics and brick industry. Additionally, automotive, motor, textile food and home appliances industries are established because of its strategic location. Being on the railway and highway crossroads connecting north and south, east and west, it makes Eskisehir logistically very important and valuable for the country's economy.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> century miniature of Eskisehir drawn by Matrakci Nasuh (Figure 1 left) [9], who lived in the period of Sultan Suleyman Han – Suleyman The Magnificent. The other, 1896 map (Figure 1 right) [10] also shows important neighbourhoods like Odunpazari (housing) and Sıcak Sular - Hamamyolu (commerce). Also, Atatürk Avenue that connects Tran station and cer (traction) factory plants to housing neighbourhood – Odunpazari can be seen.



**Figure 1.** Left: Matrakci Nasuh (Minyatür-Matrakçı Nasuh Beyan-ı Menazil-i Sefer-i İrakeyn) Miniature of Eskisehir dated 16th century, right: Map of Eskisehir, dated 1896

At the end of the Ottoman Period in Eskisehir, the economy was predicated on agriculture. The change occurred by the construction of Locomotive and Repair Atelier, which has been founded by Germans (1894). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of Baghdad – Berlin Railway line through the city, and in 1894 establishment of locomotive and cer (traction) factory plant giving service to railroad industry fortified Eskisehir's strategic position by both economic and military stand point.

In Turkey, establishment and revolutionising of the Republican era is a significant impetus that transformed all Turkish cities. Starting afresh a new state was founded, and the state enterprises like fabric, cement, sugar and fertiliser factories were established, as a part of the general socio-spatial strategy of Turkish state development of Republican Era of 1930's. Eskisehir is one of the cities that represent this progressive republican era. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic Government (1923) Eskisehir's population increased rapidly by the founding the Sugar factory, DDT (State Railroads), Car Plant (Today now called: Tulomsas- The Turkish Locomotive and Engine Industry, Inc.) and First Air Base-Service. The increase in population necessitated a housing demand, thus resulting in building new neighbourhoods, housings in the light of early modernist architecture, which played a prominent role in the formation of the architectural identity of Eskisehir.

#### **4. Dynamics of architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir**

The main dynamics generating the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir are Odunpazari traditional housing settlement, The Universities, being on a railway crossroads which causes the development of several industries, modernist heritage housing patterns, and the management of the metropolitan municipality.

We can see the historical, and cultural traits of the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir in the traditional housing settlement Odunpazari. (Figure 2). The main principle of this traditional neighbourhood was having nature and human oriented environment. They had the character of separate dwelling and shopping areas. Dwelling areas were the neighbourhoods, which were defined as administrative and social units. The general pattern of Anatolian Ottoman neighbourhood was devoid of a rational order. As the physical structure of the land, atmosphere, building techniques and materials changed, the principle components of the settlements did not change. With modernization in the 20th Century, the process of leaving the original residents of these neighbourhoods for the sake of living in modern settlements and moving of newcomers from rural areas had started. These newcomers who had different sub-cultures and socioeconomic level from the original dwellers caused the social and physical deformation of the neighbourhoods. Another change during the last decades occurred with the restoration and restitution of the traditional neighbourhoods for touristic purposes (Karasozen, Koca, 2012).



**Figure 2.** Traditional housing settlement-Odunpazari [11]

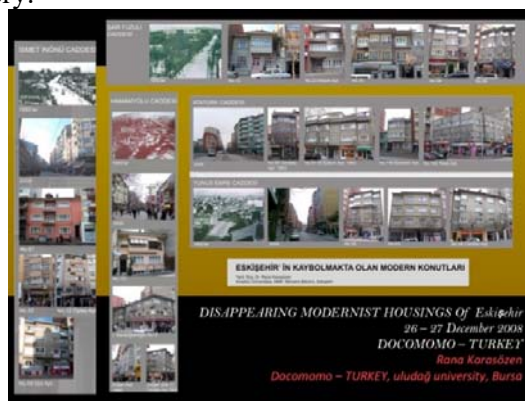
Karasozen and Koca [12] underscored that the restoration of Odunpazari conventional neighbourhoods for touristic purposes drew out a kind of change expected to serve the consumer culture, which caused changes in the physical, utilitarian and social character of the settlement breaking the social manageability (Figure 3). Despite the increase of physical standards and brightness of the restored settlement, it has the risk of transforming into a stage set without its soul and socio-cultural values.



**Figure 3.** Traditional housing settlement-Odunpazari today, after restoration [13]

**Apartments- early modernist housings:** By the 1950's, migrations caused by employment opportunities with the establishment of several factories in Eskisehir, the population arise and a need of new housings occurred. The residents built new neighbourhoods with/for higher incomes of the traditional housing settlement (and by then called "upper neighbourhood") Odunpazari are constructed two-three storey houses with gardens, which are built of stone or brick on the lower neighbourhood. This pattern later evolved into family apartments (Figure 4).

The period started with 1920's, called as the 1930's Early Modernism, the distinctive features without reflecting overly academic properties, more anonymous single storey houses and apartment buildings, were prominent of urban scenery.



**Figure 4.** image derived from Karasozen Poster Presentation of DOCOMOMO – Turkey (2008), [14]

With building regulations of 1965: "storey ownership law" caused massive demolition and construction in the construction industry, subsequently erasing the character of those modern housings.

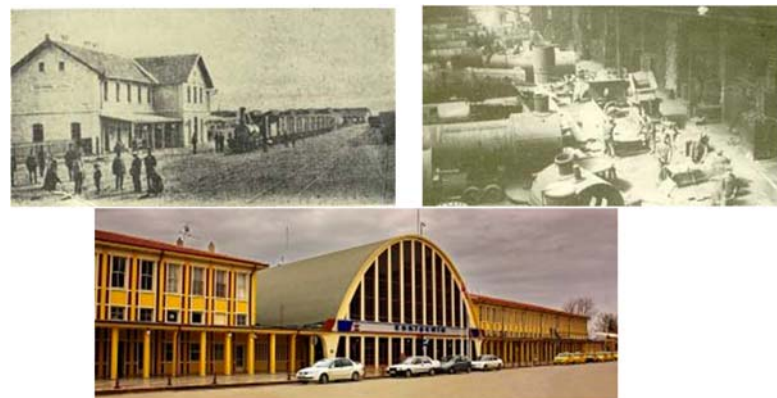
Karasozen (2008) states that this disappearing of this early era modernist housings means disappearing of continuity of architectural history and identity.

Additionally, by 2000's these modernist era apartments are being replaced by high density-adjacent patterned mixed-use buildings. The new neighbourhoods and districts are being built as gated communities-residences (Figure 5), which is a postmodern trait and transformation of architectural and urban identity.



**Figure 5.** an image and symbol of Yenisehir Konaklari from its bulletin (Yenisehir Residences – A gated community-housing example in Eskisehir [15])

The other prominent element of the architectural and urban identity is *railway and its industries (TULOMSAS)* (Figure 6). The passing of the İstanbul – Baghdad Railway Line through Eskisehir in 1894, was the cause of tremendous changes in the socio-economic structure of the town and provided the initial impetus for the development of industrialisation in the region.



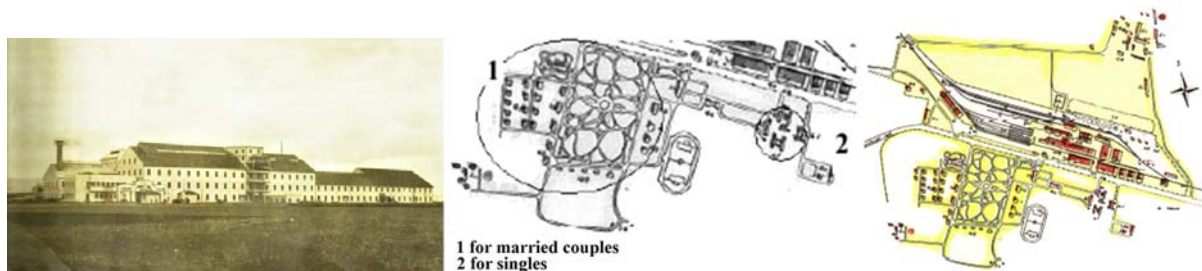
**Figures 6.** first railway station (top left), the locomotive and train car production plant (top right) [16], train station (1955) [17] (bottom)

During the construction of the railway line, a small maintenance and repair workshop was established in Eskisehir in 1894 by the Germans to make the repair and maintenance of steam locomotives and wagons used in the Anatolia-Baghdad Railway Line. The foundation of today's Tulomsas (The Turkish Locomotive and Engine Industry, Inc) is laid down with these workshops. Architecturally in these production sites, there are several listed buildings built in late 1890's and early 1900's and more contemporary, modernist heritage buildings are documented. The Factory provides most its worker's dwellings; there is also a hospital, a sports hall, an events hall (for weddings and special occasions), a vocation school and parks in the factory campus. The dwellings, which were built, starting from 1923, are in early modernist style (or the style called as Early Republican Architectural Style in Turkey) [18]. There are some listed buildings and unique elements on the factory dating back to the initial establishment like the water tower (Figure 7), the wooden tiles of the floor of a production line, also some other buildings like signalization chieftaincy, supervisor building, first railway station (Figure 6). These establishments act as a symbol of modernization and urbanisation of the early republican era in Turkey; by changing customs, social life and culture; providing jobs, education, health care, and a new way of life defining architectural and urban identity.



**Figure 7.** Tulomsas factory water tower (left), production buildings (right).  
 Source: top right Kandemir's private collection, 2015

Another industry, which was established in Eskisehir and created a major impact and change in life and city, is **Sugar Factory** (1933) (Figure 8). The factory settlement not only has just its industrial plant but also has an area of social facilities which this pattern nationally created a symbol in the formation of industrialisation and change in the community. As Ayhan expressed [19] factory offices and production grounds provides homes to labourers that enable tenants to know each other and family relationship, to act with solidarity and cooperative energy. There are housing options for families (single house dwellings with private gardens) and apartments for bachelors. There are also social facilities: a cinema and a restaurant, a guesthouse, a hammam/hot bath, sports area, park, and a hospital. Communal spaces where the workers were participating collective life that most were not lived in a public-urban environment before they began to work in the factory at that time [18]. People were coming from the city centre for sports events, watching a movie, etc. the presence of these places in Sugar Factory settlement was revolutionary for its time, created a cultural shift and in the sense of architectural identity, evolving and transforming social life.



**Figure 8.** Sugar factory (1933), site plan of dwellings in the plant, site plan of sugar factory (general) [10], [19].

Another similar establishment, which created a substantial change in city life, and architectural and urban identity in Eskisehir, is Sumerbank Textile Factory, established in 1965. Sumerbank textile factory and its goods were essential elements for defining the cultural-folkloric customs for decades in Turkey. The unique textiles with their pattern and fabric defined most of the population's clothing style. Their factory settlement was nearly equally important as sugar factories because they create change and transformation in architectural and urban identity and social life in Eskisehir. However, with 1990's economic change, the factory and its site were privatised and sold. Now we cannot see its unique character and effect on daily life and architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir, as before.

Another element essential to the urban identity of Eskisehir is **industrial production plants and facilities of bricks** today called chimney district, located adjacent to the railway line and Tulomsas on the north. At 1980's and 90's rapid urbanisation; the industrial production plants and facilities of brick and other factories are surrounded by housing neighbourhoods and apartments, which led to the relocation of these factories to the urban periphery - Organized Industry Districts. The brick factories' production areas today become a part of the city centre. These brick factories and surrounding facilities with unique industrial character are conserved by the supreme council of monuments. Some of the production plants and facilities (unique buildings, blast furnaces and industrial chimneys) are listed. Some of the emptied production sites have become a construction site of plazas and new shopping centres; while the some of the chimneys and blast furnaces of bricks and tiles are listed as industrial heritage elements.

Unfortunately, some of the listed production sites are left to decay while the others converted to nightclubs and restaurants. The old wine factory and a wheel rim factory, which are in the area, converted to nightclubs/café/disco by a private entrepreneurial firm that also owns chains of cafes in several cities in Turkey. The restoration and reuse of the buildings are done carefully; thus, the transformation changed the quality of urban life, provided new businesses to the community, and activities for tourists and young university population. On the other hand, when commercial and social activity shifted from historical-former districts and neighbourhoods to this area, other businesses lost their business volume.



**Figure 9:** General views from industrial production plants and facilities of bricks [20, 21]

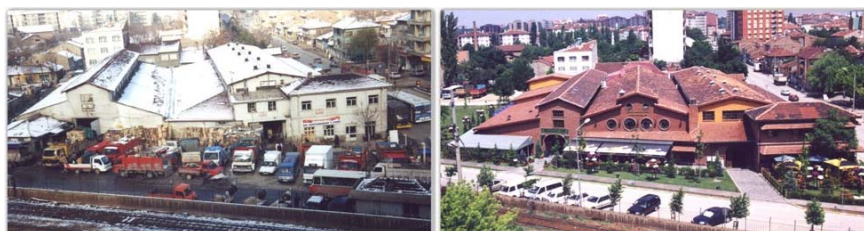
In this area, there was also a grain silo, owned by National Products Office, built at 1934 (According to official records of Supreme Council of Monuments no:2479). By 1970's silos became obsolete and left to decay. The metropolitan municipality of Eskisehir took over the property rights. Because of the municipality's limited financial resources, the build–operate–transfer model was applied for adaptive reuse of the silo building. A global private joint effort between the Turkish Akfen Group and the French Accor Group attempted the operation and changed the structure into a four-star inn. The Akfen Group's organisation attempted the development operation without obliterating the storehouse; they repurposed the structure. (Figure 10). It has become a piece of the Ibis Hotel chain, which has the property rights to the working for an expanded period [22].



**Figure 10:** Grain silo before (2009) and after (today) adaptation process [22, 23]

Another adaptive reuse project undertaken by the metropolitan municipality was ***Wholesale Market Hall*** into a youth cultural centre (Figure 11). The wholesale market (1950) built on railway line very close to the train station as two expansive structures with a shrouded yard in the middle. When it became surrounded by housing neighbourhoods in 1990's, its location became obsolete, and surrounding activities are transformed. Thus, the facility relocated to another place on the periphery. Because of its location, which just on the route between the city centre and university, the building has potentials. The ownership of the building has passed to the metropolitan municipality of Eskisehir in 1998, and the building was converted into a Wholesale Market Hall Youth Centre (Haller Genclik Merkezi) [24]. The centre has a theatre, some shops, bars and bistros, exhibition hall surrounded by shaded terraces and parks; some of the original features were conserved like cobblestone pavement and series of arches on the courtyard. The building has contributed to the change of its surroundings by creating attraction point for the young population, transformed the historical, and public and cultural elements, which are factors of architectural and urban identity.





**Figure 11.** Wholesale Market Youth Center before and after photos [25]

While the industrial establishments and changes in them create and transform the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir, there are other factors, such as technological, and recreational and entertainment elements. One of them is ***ESTRAM*** (Eskisehir Light Rail Transport System).

EsTram (Eskisehir Tramway) is a tram system in Eskisehir. The construction started at 2002, and it became operational in 2004 [26]. At the time, the system operates on two main lines, making a cross section of city centre connecting two main university campuses, providing transportation to the national bus station and train station; as well as to several health and government facilities and housing neighbourhoods. Estram transformed the modes of transportation and traffic, resulting in land speculations and evolving of housing options for students. While the general construction of multi-storey apartments and housings are 90-120 m<sup>2</sup> size with 2 or 3+1, the general construction inclination transformed to tiny 15 to 20 m<sup>2</sup> “Apart” homes for students; especially in the neighbourhoods close to university campuses, around Estram line.

Additionally, other factors, which are recreational, and entertainment elements of architectural and urban identity, are two large ***urban parks (KentPark and Sazova)***. The life and social concepts, processes, and dynamics are ingrained in places, so changes in them can also transform architectural and urban identity, which can be seen in urban parks – Eskisehir. Since their opening, urban parks have become a huge attraction for the citizens of Eskisehir and the whole Turkey.



**Figure 12.** General scene and children learning swimming in an open swimming pool in Kentpark [27]

Kentpark inaugurated in 2008; it has a public swimming pool and a beach, restaurants and cafes and artificial lakes (Figure 12), horse riding facilities, and with riverside to Porsuk river with boats; is an important attraction for city daily life. The second, Sazovapark (Figure 13) has a Masal Kule/fairy tale tower, (that is all the towers combined in Turkey, looking like a castle), a pirate ship on an artificial lake and an underwater world. Children are learning kayaking and sailing on the artificial lake Sazovapark.



**Figure 13.** Fairytale tower and pirate ship in Sazovapark (left) [28], children taking their sailing certificates (right) Kandemir private collection, 2015

These new social activities for children, socialising, interacting places in urban life, resulting in a change of social realities, processes, activities, and formal attributes that constitute places/urban spaces, change the dynamics identify an urban setting. They transform the recreational and entertainment elements in architectural and urban identity. Eskisehir as a central Anatolian city becomes more open, interacting, active and social in open public spaces with these parks.

Eskisehir is also called *University City* because there are two prominent universities. Anadolu University and Osmangazi University alters the life in Eskisehir with young university student population. Anadolu University (Figure 14) as Eskisehir Academy of Economic and Commercial Sciences, founded in 1958. The Academy was replaced by Anadolu University in 1982. Situated in the centre of Eskisehir, it has two campuses housing 17 faculties (undergraduate level) - three of which offer distance education, 3 applied schools – one of which is of music and drama, 4 vocational schools (associate level), 9 graduate schools – five of which offer graduate and postgraduate level, and 30 research centres. Anadolu University has a remarkable success at implementing the distance education system. Today, the total number of students of the three distance education faculties is over 2 million [29].

Eskisehir Osmangazi University was founded in 1970 with the Faculties of Medicine, Engineering & Architecture and Arts & Sciences, as a part of Anadolu University. At 1993, by dividing Anadolu University and founding some of the schools and institutes again, EsOgU was restructured under the name “Osmangazi University”. EsOgU has 23667 students, 1167 academic and 1284 administrative staff [30]. These two universities are significant in culture, economy and daily life in Eskisehir. The students change the rhythm of life and even the mundane daily activities, by creating dynamism. Also, the citizens of Eskisehir are using the campuses of these universities for concerts, sports, meetings. The campuses are not only for students but also for all “students” of every age. They are places of interaction, education and activity, adding value to the public and cultural structure of architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir.



**Figure 14.** Life in Anadolu University [29]

All these changes and transformation are done by *Metropolitan municipality* under the *management* and leadership of the mayor of Eskisehir metropolitan municipality – Yılmaz Buyukersen. During the municipality elections, people of Eskisehir elected Buyukersen several times. Major Buyukersen manages Eskisehir to have a mid-European urban identity. All the new parks projects and transformation of Odunpazari projects are his creation.

## 5. Discussions

As stated above, parallel to historical processes, Eskisehir’s architectural and urban identity has evolved with time. The changing and transforming dynamics show that Eskisehir is progressing to a more postmodern outlook. While the change is inevitable with the evolving daily life with the younger population and their needs, transformation on housing can be seen evidently. One of the main portions of housing construction is “apart houses” which are built with small square meters and high density, are changing the more traditional and lower density – single houses to apartments also transforms the meaning of concepts like home, house and dormitory. On the other hand, newly developed neighbourhoods are built as gated communities, which are creating further debates on the architectural and urban identity.

Additionally, while newly opened urban parks transform daily life and its demands attracting more tourists, consequently the needs of this transformation reflect on identity by creating pseudo-traditional architectural and urban spaces.

On the other hand, industrial heritage is an important part of the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir. While some factory plants are still active (like sugar and locomotive factories), some are relocated, and their sites are listed under conservation laws. They are still essential elements of the architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir.

## 6. Conclusions

Eskisehir architectural and urban identity has been evolving from a modernist and progressive stand point of architectural and urban identity of the early republican era to a more tourism and focused on a consumerist post-modern standpoint of architectural and urban identity. While change is inevitable in every living culture and city, the transformation must be managed considering the unique elements of architectural and urban identity. While some social and economic values are considered, the underlying character of Eskisehir is changing. The historical values and elements, public, cultural and economic structure, are changing on technological, recreational and entertainment level. Therefore, these changes lead to new social realities, processes, activities, and attributes making an outcome of a new and transformed architectural and urban identity of Eskisehir, Turkey.

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