

SENSE OF PLACE and**“ ONE DAY A MONTH STREET BELONGS TO US* ” ACTIVITIES IN ISTANBUL**

Ozlemnur Ataol, Research Assistant, Istanbul Gelisim University, Faculty of Architecture,
Phd Student, Yildiz Technical University, Architectural Design Program
Istanbul, ataolozlemnur@gmail.com

Ebru Erdonmez, Associate Professor, Yildiz Technical University, Faculty of Architecture,
Istanbul, ebruerdonmez@yahoo.com

Abstract

Space is defined with user and becomes place. In other words, user gives sense to space and space is shaped according to his/her intended use. In particular, public spaces are places that should be shared and are being shaped by the users and these spaces are the venues of social relations. User-shaped public spaces, are more long-lasting and they turn into sustainable places.

Placemaking is today a popular concept which aims to strengthen the relationship between individual and place. This concept contains planning and design practice and brings the user into these practical factors. Placemaking is not just pioneer concept in creating useable public places but also this action by using social, cultural etc. factors which change according to the user gives sense to space. Sense bringing to space is mentioned as conversion of this space into a usable place and supporting the actions of users that they want to do in that place.

With placemaking movements people are encouraged to create and improve their own public places in accordance with their needs and requests. One of the best examples of this movement in Istanbul, Turkey that was initiated by “Street Belongs to Us” (in Turkish “Sokak Bizim”) Association. “Street Belongs to Us” Association try to draw attention to increasing dominance of motor vehicles on the streets and needs of pedestrian-oriented city design with pedestrianization actions carried out every month in different streets. Workshops held in each month starting with the activity of the motor vehicle free from different streets, this provides the streets gaining sense and conversion of space to place in accordance with the wishes and needs of users.

This study aims to examine the concept of placemaking through activities that have made by “Street Belongs to Us” Association and discuss process and results of activities through interviews with founders of the association.

Keywords: placemaking, public space, social sustainability, “Sokak Bizim” (Street Belongs to Us)

* in Turkish “Ayda Bir Gun Sokak Bizim”

We are Alone without Public Spaces

Space gains sense and becomes place when it has been adopted by users. Today cities have lots of spaces that lost their magic and this prevents effective utilization of urban space. As a result, public spaces that adopted as places of gathering have lost their publicity and it reduces the rate of encounter of citizens with other citizens.

Decreasing rates of encounter between citizens increases social segregation. Therefore through emphasis on sustainable public spaces; communities should be tried to be sustainable. Public space has no specific limit and shape, public space is a behavior. Therefore, it is a difficult process to create and maintain public spaces. In other words, according to Schneekloth & Shibley (2008), public space is not something that we have, something that is created by user as practitioners of architecture and planning.¹ We can not imagine ourselves outside of space; that is why we are physical beings. Therefore trying to maintain ourselves can be realized by trying to maintain the public space or in contrast trying to maintain the public space can be happened by trying to maintain ourselves as users.

Spaces, which support social and cultural activities and form infrastructure of social networks should have some features. These spaces are hosting the sense of community and belonging, ensuring tolerance for people from different cultures and beliefs and respect, making friendly, cooperative and helpful behaviors appear in the settlement, providing equal accessibility to everyone for cultural, communal and sports activities and creating unsuitable areas for crime which prevents antisocial behaviors.² Social infrastructure places which do not include these specific features create useless debris spaces and cause weak or negative sense of space.

Space will not be appropriated by users or will not be used often and will not be long-lasting because of weak or negative sense of space. Starting from this point, it might be said that sustainable communities need places that well-designed, well-managed, safe and be used each day by people come from different income and culture. In other words, sustainable communities need public spaces which combine all these features.

There are some important points that emerged in Worpole and Knox (2007) 's study investigated social value of public space. According to study, public spaces play a vital role in social life. Social role of public spaces are establishing the connection with the local and providing opportunities to get mixed with others. Public spaces facilitate spreading of goods, ideas, friendships and abilities. Public spaces are co-production instead of being formed as a result of terms of urban design and construction that expressed physically. In other words, public spaces can be active with human presence. Well design and management of public space is important because good design encourages people to use that space. Multiple ownership and shared responsibility ensure the management of public space in an effective way. Public spaces act like self-organized public services. They have many benefits like providing social activities so make individuals feel good,

¹ Schneekloth, L. H. & Shibley, R. G. (2008) "The Public Realm: Weaving a Regional Civic Life" Landscape Journal, 27:2 - 08, pp. 205 - 218.

² Woodcraft, S., T. Hackett, and L. Caistor-Arendar (2011), "Design for Social Sustainability: A Framework for Creating Thriving New Communities." The Young Foundation www.youngfoundation.org.

giving the feeling of being part of a community, bringing awareness to the differences because of being places of exhibition of culture and identity, providing children and young people to meet new people. These benefits allow establishment of local relations and develop a sense of community. Public spaces are not only formed by architects and city planners; also people are a part of this creation by using, by using, owning and managing them.³

Placemaking process comes into play for formation of sense of place where social and spatial characteristics of the public space are forgotten, evade or missed. Placemaking movement started with the question of what constitutes the best public space for the people in the 60s, focused on needs and desires of users in the beginning with the aim of determination to use which physical elements in space for creating frequently used public spaces. Study by MIT DUSP shows that not only this movement that began 50 years ago touching place as a result but also the making process is important, because placemaking process has benefits for public spaces as well as configuring and strengthening the communities.⁴

Different Definitions of Placemaking Process

Public places built sense of community, urban identity and culture. City users in other words citizens also create urban culture. Therefore, there are spatial and social responsibilities of public spaces and urban communities.

Study by MIT DUSP indicates that Alexander & Ishikawa (1977)⁵ and Lefebvre (1991)⁶'s arguments are formed the main philosophy of placemaking. When one of them stated that good places are made by people instead of architects, the other opposed top-down urban management for restricting social communication through right to the city argument.⁷ In addition, today authors have been making different placemaking definitions.

Creating Sense of Place / Sense of Ownership: Placemaking is a process that empowers users by giving priority on decision making to user against urban spatial top-down decisions. This process aims to support environmental sustainability, develop public spaces and create new ones, intensify public participation, deepen neighborhood relations, develop social justice and mainly create the sense of the place. Public spaces are areas in public ownership but gain spatial value with presence of users. Good public places are crowded, because people have many reasons to use them and they differ from space with these characteristics. In a sense space is a physical fiction and has not been transformed into place. Space can be transformed into place when it

³ Worpole, K. ve Knox, K. (2007), The Social Value Of Public Spaces, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, İngiltere.

⁴ MIT DUSP (2013) Places in the Making: How Placemaking Builds Places an Communities, MIT. (<http://dusp.mit.edu/cdd/project/placemaking>)

⁵ Alexander, C. & Ishikawa, S. (1977) A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction, New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Lefebvre, H. (1991) Production of Space, Blackwell Oxford.

⁷ MIT DUSP (2013) Places in the Making: How Placemaking Builds Places an Communities, MIT. (<http://dusp.mit.edu/cdd/project/placemaking>)

provides reasons for people to use.⁸ Public awareness can be formed with making act that constitutes the essence of placemaking process and this formation finds body in place and ensures emergence and ownership of public spaces. It's an indicator of formation of the sense of space and sense of ownership when people own, save, want to have a right to say about place and use this place frequently.

Building Communities From the Inside Out: Each individual in a community is gifted and each of them contribute to community with ability and resources they have. Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) suggests a capacity inventory which founded on rules from the ancient wisdom, aimed to explore the capabilities of the community and established with acceptance to create communities by focusing on power and capacity of community members.⁹ This method reveals that thoughts and wishes of residents for any space and what kind of contribution resident can give to that space. Capabilities of the community members are listed with capacity inventory and even one step beyond this list, share of capabilities and information is realized. New members of the community and new cultural and artistic resources will be discovered. Archived capability list can be used to produce convenient information faster. In other words, this inventory work brings out abilities, knowledge and experience areas of community members and willingness to participate to activities of creating sense of community and economic development. Thus, creating community has been reinforced from the inside out and continued with process by touching space.

Put Power Back in the Hands of People: Susan Silberberg from MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning defines placemaking is a process which put power back in the hand of people.¹⁰ According to definition, placemaking process empowers the ability of creating place that abandoned to design and planning professional. Thus, the users have the opportunity to maintain their social life and gain the ability of creating place in order to create public life. Placemaking process that stands equidistant to everyone encourages participation, additionally ensures process sustainable by giving act of making hand to hand.

Rise of Citizens in Urban Design: Hou (2011) mentioned that from time to time participation and knowledge of users are excluded by academic and professional elitism in the design and planning.¹¹ Today, participation are kept at the forefront of urban planning policies that placemaking process is also based on user participation. Since 60s when placemaking concept came into being, design of community is considered over equality and justice issues. Reflection of movement to space occurs by being consulted to the user's wishes and opinions in each intervention on public spaces and encouraging to participate in the planning and making action. Project for Public Spaces also emphasizes participation in placemaking process by stating that ensuring participation of every neighborhood and people is necessary in every planning of public spaces by upper local

⁸ Madden K. (2011) "Placemaking in Urban Design", Companion to Urban Design, Routledge, pp.654 - 662.

⁹ Kretzmann, J. P. & McKnight, J. L. (1993) "Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets", Evanston IL: Institute for Policy Research, pp. 1-11.

¹⁰ PR, N (2013) "Places in the Making: New MIT Research on Placemaking Reveals the Power of Community Engagement in Design of Public Spaces" PR Newswire US, 23 October, Regional Business News, EBSCOhost, viewed 8 May 2015

¹¹ Hou, J. (2011) "Citizen Design", Companion to Urban Design, Routledge, pp. 329 - 340.

government.¹² Placemaking process that held with the participation of citizens and focuses on people's experience on space, is forced people to communicate, rethink core values of design in human scale and experience cultural practices. It is also a democratic process and ensures equality in creating urban environments.

About a Place to Call Our Own: Salzman (2012) argues that placemaking is not about the money spent on space. Real good placemaking is a matter of a community who care about the happiness and well-being of people and want to create good public spaces.¹³ In fact, placemaking is a matter of group work. This process seeks to create and develop a place to call our own.

The Practice of Democracy: Today, there are few physical public spaces actively used. Therefore, city dwellers have very few opportunities to learn how they will be citizens and they don't know how they can create their participation in community movements and their social objectives. Placemaking process creates a democratic solution to this situation with constituting projects which enable everyone to participate and these projects give the opportunity to architecture and planning to evade from just being a specialized technical expertise and also offer citizens to experience of active citizenship.¹⁴ Placemaking process with opening a dialogue for many opposing views has initiated a democratic movement. With this process, establishment of social communication to strengthen active citizenship possibilities rather than reducing it, additionally building public spaces where citizens gathered to talk, work together and share stories are provided.¹⁵ Placemaking is a human activity and the most important point of process is it takes place with the support of others.¹⁶ Democratic participation in decision processes of space that occur within the community, eventually turns into a common vision. Design and planning professionals are involved in process to realize that vision.

Creating Third Places: Oldenburg (2002) defined "third places" as areas outside our homes and our work places. Third Places are gathering places where social communication occurs and community members collected in a random manner to see familiar or unfamiliar faces.¹⁷ Placemaking also refers to the process of establishing exactly these places. For example, the markets are gathering places for people from past to present in an unchanged form. Today this

¹² PPS, Placemaking & The Future Cities, Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
<http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/PPS-Placemaking-and-the-Future-of-Cities.pdf>

¹³ Salzman, M. (2012) "A Placemaking to Call Our Own", Fairfield County Business Journal, April 9.

¹⁴ Schneekloth, L. H. & Shibley, R. G. (2000) "Implacing Architecture into the Practice of Placemaking" Journal of Architectural Education, 53/3, pp. 130 - 140.

¹⁵ Giroux, H. A. (1988) Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁶ Schneekloth, L. H. & Shibley, R. G. (1995) Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Communities, New York: Wiley and Sons.

¹⁷ Oldenburg, R. (2002) Celebrating the Third Place: Inspiring Stories about the "Great Good Places" at the Heart of Our Communities, Da Capo Press.

function continues. In local markets people from the different level of income and ethnic groups come together and they share news and local political gossips with each other.¹⁸

Concept of Process Over Product: Placemaking defines as a process because placemaking attaches importance to community actions to add sense to place and focuses less of production place. In the placemaking process, main change occurs in the minds of individuals who constitute the society rather than changing in spaces. This situation reveals the return of community sense and transformation of mind and space as final product is interactive. While place is transformed by community, community is transformed by place.

Way of Tactical Urbanism: Tactical urbanization can be considered as one of the methods of placemaking to touch the space. The most important one of the five characters of tactical urbanism that support the placemaking process define by Street Plans Collective is developing social capital between citizens and building organizational capacity between public - private institutions and with their components. Besides, tactical urbanism proposes local solutions to local planning challenges with planned and layered approach to spatial planning changes and constitutes short-term promises and realistic expectations.¹⁹ Tactical urbanism is defined as short-term actions for long-term spatial and social changes by Lydon & Garcia (2015). Tactical urbanization is a mechanism that makes the community members as a part of planning process with more active capacity. In fact, it's about how to play more active role of leadership by citizens in design projects that they want with the available resources. In actual fact, where individuals assume more leadership roles, publicity reveals deeper and visibility of publicity increases. The idea is tested with tactical urbanism that start with little resources, so before the major source and political power is channeled here, functioning of idea is examined. It can be said that tactical urbanization is a wise deal with change.²⁰ Colorful painting of Sali Pazari Slope Stairs by someone living in that area can be an example of tactical urbanism in Istanbul. The resident who has painted the stairs stated that he did the painting to make other residents happy. Disturbingly stairs have painted gray with a night operation by local authorities (Image-1). Because of uprising of citizens in social media, local municipality were forced to take a step back and the stairs painted colorfully again. The painting movement grew like a snowball under the name of "Get the Brush and Come" in different parts of Istanbul to support Sali Pazari Slope Stairs. For example, colorful painting of concrete blocks separating driveway and pavement by Kadikoy Municipality of Istanbul demonstrate some local authorities' support (Image-2).

¹⁸ PPS, Placemaking & The Future Cities, Project for Public Spaces, Inc.
<http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/PPS-Placemaking-and-the-Future-of-Cities.pdf>

¹⁹ Bartram, S. (2014) "Grassroots Placemaking" Parks & Recreation, September, www.nrpa.org

²⁰ Lydon, M. & Garcia, A. (2015) Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action For Long-Term Change, Washington: Island Press.



Image-1: Before and After Situation of Stairs (URL-1)²¹ **Image-2:** Bahariye Street, Kadikoy (URL-2)²²

Placemaking puts public spaces as a work area in the heart of the process. This is not only planning and design process, is also a management of public space where users actively participate. Management partnership encourages individuals to use and share the space they imagine. The situation of what they dream has come to life in place provides the formation of sense of place. Sense of place is defined as being an important welfare component formed as part of an individual's identity and contributes to formation of sense of community, neighborhood and cultural identity.²³

The sense of place is important for communities to be sustainable. Sustainable communities occur over time and improve slowly. In other words, social sustainability is an ongoing development process rather than a situation.²⁴ There is not certain planning criteria for the place that will allow the formation and continuity of sustainable communities but public space plays a key role in the solution of that spaces. Barron & Gauntlett (2002) indicate that socially sustainable environment must contain some certain features. These are providing opportunities for people to use their full potential and satisfying social and individual needs, creating healthy, safe, livable physical environment and supportive social environments, development and use of social resources of the community with sustainable methods to configure robust communities to adapt to changing conditions.²⁵

Attractive, active and well - functionalized public spaces help social development on a wide range of scale from small settlements to urban areas. Placemaking process is a functional method for

²¹ URL-1: <http://dolusozluk.com/dosya/756404e0e7d8690de0e18b4245489c56.png>

²² URL-2: https://38.media.tumblr.com/fda13f0e3c6e7eafb6270e7cad5c92d6/tumblr_inline_msin6tjevU1qz4rgp.jpg

²³ Williams, D.; Patterson, M. ve diğerleri, (2008) "Beyond the Commodity Metaphor: Examining Emotional and Symbolic Attachment to Place, Healty Spaces & Places: Towards a National Planning Guide, Planning Institute of Australia.

²⁴ Heller, A. and Adams, T. (2011) "Creating Healty Cities Through Socially Sustainable Placemaking" Australian Planner, 46:2, pp.18-21

²⁵ Barron, L. & Gauntlett, E. (2002) "Housing and Sustainable Communities Indicators Project Stage 1 Report - Model of Social Sustainability" WACOSS.

creating sustainable communities that will be used to extract the hidden potential of public space, because while placemaking process establishes the relationship between people and places at the same time it establishes the relationship between people in these places.

Streets are important public spaces for the establishment of close relations within the community quickly and easily. Today streets are forced to suppress the hidden spatial potential under the pressure of heavy traffic. According to PPS if you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic and if you plan for people and places, you get people and places. PPS stresses the importance of street for placemaking process with these words and it indicates the basic principle of the process.²⁶ According to Appleyard (1980), streets need to be defined as livable places, community space, playground, green space and local history. Because street reduces the loss of neighborhood identity and street life and encourages street activities. Thus, it supports the formation of community memory. While intensive use of the street causes to remain them clean, increases the interest in the detailed design of street furniture, playground, streets and sidewalks.²⁷

“Street Belongs to Us” Association and “One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us” Activities

“Street Belongs to Us” is a non-profit association based in Istanbul which shows the importance of streets to create sustainable communities and supports the actions that redound active citizenship experience to citizens. Placemaking process and the results in Istanbul can be discussed over the work of “SBU” Association. Therefore, an interview is carried out with Arzu Erturan^{28**} from “SBU” Association to understand the process. Interview sheds light on the aim, activities and approach to placemaking concept of association.

Arzu Erturan, defines herself as an experienced member of association established in 2010, is the association's chairman. She indicates foundation aim of “SBU” Association is basically organize activities to stress the importance of streets for a livable city. She emphasizes that thinking on transportation infrastructure, pedestrian safety policies and streets to reach pedestrian-oriented city primarily is the duty of citizens.

According to her, streets lost their original functions everyday through distinction of pedestrian-oriented streets and domination of cars on streets. She points out the main function of streets is to create public areas which are the important part of city life. Therefore “SBU” Association generates projects and organizes activities to restore the old functionality of streets as public spaces, draw attention to accessing and utilization problems in the city and create social awareness.

“One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us”, is the one of activities that organized by “SBU” Association, is an activity that offers citizens an alternative usage of streets instead of the usage today. This activity is an awareness project cares about participation, recommends changing

²⁶ PPS, Placemaking & The Future Cities, Project for Public Spaces, Inc. p.7
<http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/PPS-Placemaking-and-the-Future-of-Cities.pdf>

²⁷ Appleyard, D. (1980) “Livable Streets: Protected Neighborhoods?” ANNALS, AAPSS, 451, pp. 106 - 117

²⁸ Arzu Erturan is a city planner graduated from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and also works as a research assistant on City and Regional Planning Department at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.

**Thanks to her for answering my questions in good faith with great interest.

streets as a start for people-oriented urban life. A Sunday of every month, a street is determined as a result of discussion with the local government and this street is closed to traffic at certain times and made available for pedestrians, bicyclist and disabled people. “SBU” Association attaches importance to existence of an alternative transportation instead of street closed to traffic in selection of the street that activities will take place and works with local authority, police department, provincial traffic offices and non-governmental organizations at the organization process of activities.

Different actors are involved in process with activities carried out each month in a different street. Activities like art workshops, backgammon tournaments, music concerts, bike tours, theater performances, workshops, picnics and traffic education workshops, sports events are organized with participation of non-governmental organizations and street dwellers from all ages (Image-3). According to Arzu Erturan, activities help to increase social interaction and sharing. Thus, creation of awareness and consciousness about public culture is consisted and reclaiming street’s task as a public space is provided. Community consciousness occurs through coming together of people from all ages and groups.



Image-3: Images from “One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us” activities (URL-3)²⁹

According to Arzu Erturan, some of the events of “One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us” convinced and encouraged some local authorities to revise these streets. Even these revision projects are not directly realized by users, still it can be observed that the events have oriented the local authorities. Decreasing the traffic speed, widening the pavements and renewing the landscape plans are some of the revision project realized by the local authorities (URL-4)³⁰

The association defined placemaking as a process that individuals are collectively organizing the places according to their own demands. In other words; individuals are not only dreaming the place they live, they plan to process to realize these intentions. At the same time, this process causes the individuals to look after the created places and being united in these places.

“One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us” is the collective planning section of the placemaking process defined by the association. In these events, the main theme is to plan the event itself

²⁹ URL-3: http://www.sokakbizim.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/IMG_3073.jpg

³⁰ URL-4: <http://www.sokakbizim.org/ayda-bir-gun-sokak-bizim/>

rather than to plan the place. This situation is used as a tool and even it is temporary, sense of place is formed in a different street every month. Arzu Erturan states that the realization of the discussed plans is not happened with the help of professional design and planning experts up to now. She submits the reason as the interactive planning and interactive democracy culture is not settled in Turkey yet. Also she emphasizes, it is even harder to realize this in a huge metropolis like Istanbul. But as mentioned before these events has a guiding and orientation role for the local authorities. The association is focused on creating awareness and gathering different people together. This situation highlights that these events can be considered equal with the making process. Lastly, she defines "One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us" events as a placemaking project which are focused on process, create awareness and participation for process and leave the results to the users.

The association is continuing its works with a new event called "Get a Dream" for enhancing its influence on social life. This projects states that the public spaces are much livable when the individuals are involved in creation process. The association aims to widespread the communal "placemaking" movement which is getting popular worldwide to protect public spaces and create new ones. Arzu Erturan stated the association had formed a website³¹ which consists ideas, experiences and needs on creation of collective spaces. She stated this website will strengthen the relations of individuals, districts and cities, additionally it will help to realize the user dreams in a collective way.

Conclusion

Placemaking term defines a process and with care about process, placemaking actually helps people that involved the process to create sustainable communities. Final product of process is always negotiable, renewable and can be established again and again in the process. This situation shows that making process can be realized at every stage of placemaking process. With placemaking, friendly, successful, participatory public space and public sense processes can be realized, instead of public space projects done at once with top-down perspective.

"SBU" Association with "One Day a Month Street Belongs to Us" activities, encourages users to touch the street, becomes the vehicle for delivering user requests to local management, focuses on process rather than final product. Thus, it provides spread of placemaking action in Istanbul. "SBU" Association's activities are important in order to creation livable cities and sense of public place and helping to germinate participatory and democratic planning processes in Turkey.

³¹ <http://blog.bidusunolsun.org>