

A HOLISTIC RESEARCH APPROACH TO MEASURING URBAN IDENTITY: FINDINGS FROM GIRNE (KYRENIA) AREA STUDY

Derya Oktay* and Havva Alkan Bala**

*Faculty of Architecture, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey

**Faculty of Architecture, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

derya.oktay@omu.edu.tr, de.oktay@gmail.com

Abstract

As cities are losing place identity under the influence of industrialization, technological advancements and globalisation, a key task for mainstream politicians, urban planners/designers and residents is to understand what makes a city unique and recognizable. As urban identity is formed not only through identifiable and memorable formal attributes, but through the meaning attached by the users of the city, there is a need for a holistic approach integrating objective measures achieved through pre-analysis of the urban environment, and subjective measures achieved through user surveys. This study, based on such a holistic research framework, aims to measure the urban identity in Girne (Kyrenia), using survey data with a sampling of 250 participants, following a pre-analysis of the town. The results of the analysis indicated that although historic landmarks are so powerful in constructing the urban identity, traditional urban pattern and social life have not been found significant in constructing the images of the city unless they are frequented by local residents. On the other hand, the new housing developments lacking locally appropriate architectural and contextual qualities do not influence the urban image at all. Further, as the findings revealed that the perception of urban identity changes in time, there appears an opportunity to regain and/or enhance identity through various strategies. These include urban design strategies that depend so much on the specific context of a particular area, including all environmental dimensions defined in the paper.

Keywords: *Urban identity; holistic approach; local urban context; character; change; user survey.*

INTRODUCTION

It is often argued that any place should have its own 'identity', a key concept that is defined as 'the distinguishing character or condition of a person or a thing' (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1983). Lynch (1981) also defines identity as 'the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places'.

When human beings dwell, they are simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character. In this context, two psychological functions involved: orientation" and "identification" (Norberg-Schulz, 1963). The problem of orientation has been given a considerable attention in recent theoretical literature on urban design. In this context, Lynch's conceptualisation of man's orientation with different elements of the city (defined as 'path', 'districts', 'landmarks', 'edges' and 'nodes') makes the basis for image-making. Here Lynch (1960) implies that an individual's knowledge of a city is the extent to which 'the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places'. Although he limits himself to discuss the spatial function of these elements and thus leaving us with a fragmentary understanding of 'place', the work of Lynch constitutes an essential contribution to the theory of place. Place identification that is explained with the feeling that the place encourages users to express themselves and make them become involved in its affairs has been a prime characteristic of human beings since earliest cultures (Norberg-Schulz, 2007).

The quest for one's identification with a specific environment and its analysis through the notion of identity are part of a long tradition of research. The need for place identity was first highlighted by Relph (1976, 147) as follows: "A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and follow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If, on the other hand, we choose to respond to that need and transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience." The topic of specialization of identity was developed further by some other authors since 1970s (Proshansky *et al*, 1983; Sarbin, 1983; Feldman, 1990). They have generally defined the concept of place identity as a substructure of self identity which comprises cognitions about the physical world in which individuals live. However, the literature cited above, like many studies in the field of urban design, have been restricted to form perspective, and neglected to consider the social dimension of environment. Place identification, in fact, is supported not only by the physical dimensions of the place but also social environment associated with it (Lalli, 1992; Pol, 2002; and Kyle *et al* 2005; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Choi, 2011; Sepe and Pitt, 2014). Based on these discussions, this paper aims to determine the measures of identity in an urban setting, and analyses the inhabitants' identification with the city in a holistic research framework covering the multi-dimensional aspects of urban identity.

Exploring the Concept of Urban Identity

At a time when many places are beginning to look alike, effective urban design policies and strategies have the potential to reinforce local character and create places with identity. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the concept of identity is needed and an understanding of the ways through which it can be achieved without reducing the concept to an aesthetic dressing possesses a great importance.

In relation with experience of a city, place-identity leads to 'urban identity'. Urban identity is thought to be formed not only through identifiable and memorable formal attributes, but through the meaning attached by the users of the city, concerning all elements of the built, natural and social environment. Therefore, there is a need for a holistic approach integrating objective measures achieved through pre-analysis of the urban environment, and subjective measures achieved through user surveys.

Discovering and reinforcing a city's own identity can bring many advantages. One important advantage of having a reputable urban identity perceived by the users is at the place identification level. As Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996, 218) point out, place can be used to maintain positive self-esteem, this is closely associated with distinctiveness.

The perception of the visual forms, which constitutes the physical environmental context, strongly affects how we make use of the city, and relates to the following qualities: the form, proportions and style of the buildings and their relationship with other buildings and urban spaces (morphology), their colour, materials and texture, landmarks, vistas, meeting places, street furniture, signs and ground surface. However, the two organizing elements of the city, the 'district' and 'the public domain', have the most significant impact on the urban identity as (Oktay 2002). Accordingly, it is assumed that if a city has some identifiable districts and well-defined public spaces, it can be conceived as a city with strong identity even if there are weaknesses in other aspects of the urban environment. There are many cities which are identified with their well-known squares, boulevards, streets, (i.e. Venice and Piazza san Marco, Paris and Boulevard Champs Elysee, the Ramblas and Barcelona, Siena and Piazza del Campo) and characteristic residential districts (i.e. the traditional Turkish/Ottoman city and narrow streets defined by courtyard walls, London and white terrace houses, Amsterdam and canal houses).

Since identity is related to the 'character' of an area, it is important to make a distinction between character and appearance; because, character has more than a purely visual or spatial dimension, and cannot be instantly achieved following the implementation of a new urban design scheme. As Manley and Guise highlighted (1998), a place can only gain real character with the passage of time. In Rossi's words, "the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the *locus* of the collective memory. This relationship between the *locus* and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it".

In the context of natural environment, climatic, topographical, and landscape conditions are the major elements reflected on urban identity. Although every city has opportunities and constraints to develop its natural settings to give a unique sense of identity to the place, some cities are luckier to have a special geography. For instance, Istanbul, with its Bosphorus, 'Golden Horn' (the bay of Istanbul which separates the old and new parts of European Istanbul) and 'seven hills', is blessed with a unique geography. On the other hand, climate, as an intangible parameter of a place that is usually neglected, plays an important role in everyday life. As Knez (2005) highlights, it has an impact on individual, social and economic, and criminal behaviour and on meanings we attribute to places, as it is nested in places. Hence, it does not only constitute objectively a place, but also subjectively influences the way we experience and remember a place. Landscape, on the other hand, has an important role in creating the urban identity. A locally characteristic and identifiable landscape (both natural and artificial landscape) could be highly effective on urban identity. In this context, Hough (1990) suggests "the making of memorable places involves principles of evolving natural process and change over time". There is culture in nature, and the image of nature is a product of society, of culture. As highlighted by Berglund (1998, 30), "old trees, old houses, and old places – urban places as well as parks – are all symbols of survival. They remind us of those who lived before and those who will live after us..."

The notion of urban identity is also bound up in the social environment, including psychological and cultural dimensions. Since the city is for people and their communication, it should then be seen as a framework for collective identity, and be readable and decipherable through the symbols relevant to local lifestyles and through meanings as documentation of history. The social environment of an individual is the culture that he or she was educated and/or lives in, and the people and institutions with whom the person interacts. Language, religion, ethnicity, family structure, residence type, food customs, communication patterns, privacy, density, territoriality, institutions, the way people display themselves through the clothes they wear and their activities, education level, etc., in this context, are the components. As Butina-Watson and Bentley highlight (2007, 4), "what matters in the construction of people's identities is not the hardware of buildings, streets and green spaces in themselves, so much as what these mean to people. This depends on what the events and artifacts are seen as representing". In this vein, Lang and Moleski (2010) state: "a sense of place depends on the qualities of the behaviour settings that exist in a locale, and the way the milieu is constructed in response to local conditions and traditions". Here, one should be aware of the fact that the urban experience is the collective experience of places and space, and the city only signifies as we walk through it, along its paths and thoroughfares. The daily life patterns of local people in Havana, Cuba, in that sense, is a highly exemplary case in point as the identity of the city owes much to its unique social setting (people's joyful manners and dancing in the courtyards and streets). From these, there appears the need for increasing the walkability of the city, in order to enable people to perceive and recognise the value and peculiarities of a place as a fundamental component in urban identity.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Survey area: The city of Girne (Kyrenia), North Cyprus

The research presented here was carried out in the city of Girne (Kyrenia) in the spring of 2008. Girne, with a population of 69,163 (TRNC-SPO Population Census, 2011), experienced a rapid growth after 1974 as a result of the relocation of people from the south and its role as a port of trade with Turkey. Since it was the closest port to Turkey, trade activities have increased greatly and the city has become a commercial centre as well.

Girne is located on the northern coast of the island of Cyprus, where the urban life dates back to Hellenistic periods to 58 B.C. The history of Girne has seen various periods under the rule of various civilizations including Romans, Byzantines, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans, British, Greeks and Turks. The city is built around the horseshoe-shaped antique harbour, and surrounded by beautiful scenery at the foot of the northern range of mountains (the Beşparmak Range), which steeply slope towards the sea as a vast land for olive trees (Figures 1-5).

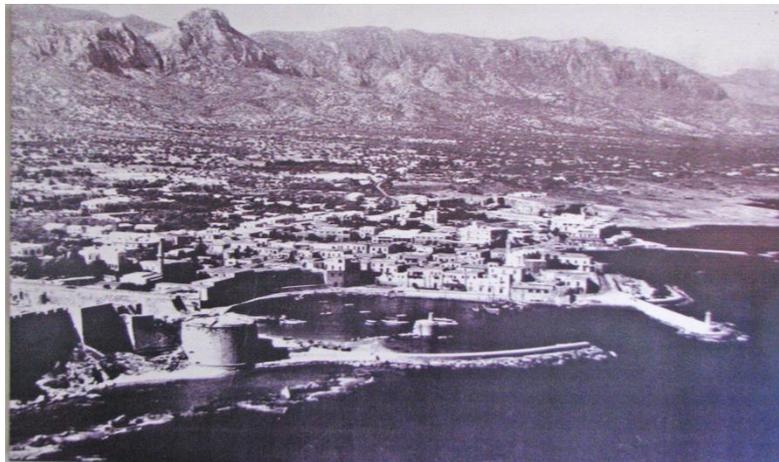


Figure 1. The view of the city of Girne and Beşparmak Range in the older times (Source: Girne City Archive)



Figure 2. The air view of the city of Girne (Source: D. Oktay archive)



Figure 3. The view of the harbour (Source: D. Oktay archive)

In Girne, despite the need for tourism, retail, leisure, and residential developments, new constructions represented minimal urban development while rehabilitation and renovation work has proliferated in a period of two decades before 2002, owing to the uncertainty of the political state. However, the city has faced a serious problem of 'urban sprawl' in the last 6-7 years, owing to the now ill-fated UN Peace Plan of 2002 commonly known as the 'Annan Plan'. The said plan had generated an atmosphere of genuine confidence in the estate market that resulted in the surge in construction activities called the 'construction boom' in the whole of the island. What followed from these events in the absence of a working master plan was a scattered urban pattern to provide 'homes' or 'second homes' for the speculators and the expatriate Europeans (Englishmen and Germans in particular) who prefer the mild Girne winter to the cold and wet winter of their countries, and the loss of invaluable natural environment (olive orchards and other plants) on the hills surrounding the city. Besides, the population has significantly increased.



Figure 4. The view of the Venetian Castle and the antique harbour (Source: D. Oktay archive)



Figure 5. Characteristic urban pattern in Limanarkasi district (behind the harbour)
(Source: D. Oktay archive)

Pre-analysis

The observations reveal that Girne's geographical position on the Mediterranean coast is a strong element in making the character of the city. The sea provides a natural 'edge' to the city although in some areas it is broken through the interruption by hotel developments. The city is also blessed with the backdrop of the Besparmak Mountains Range. The old harbour with a unique architectural heritage, once only used for lighters and long shore boats in the older times, is currently the most popular area for tourists and the local people to dine and spend time, and could be considered a 'node' in Lynch's terms (Lynch 1960, 47) although it doesn't link with the vehicular traffic. The seventeenth century Venetian castle dominating the harbour is the most important reference point or 'landmark' in Lynch's terms (Oktay, 1998/2006).

The traditional urban pattern of the two old quarters (*Limanarkasi*, the neighbourhood behind the harbour with its contained outdoor spaces, Mediterranean style white-painted stone buildings with inner courtyards, fruit and citrus trees in the courtyards, flat roofs, plain cornices and small balconies, and *Turk Mahallesi* / Turkish Quarter with its narrow streets and *cumba* {bay-window} houses, developed in the Ottoman period) had unique architectural and natural characteristics and strong community ties in the past. In *Limanarkasi* district in particular, the street itself was the communal meeting place that extended into the house at ground level. Today, despite the functional transformations, social gathering among the neighbours in the street is still popular as observed in certain parts, even if the houses have private courtyards at the back. However, in some places where the vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow is dense, they sit close to the entrance inside and keep their door open to watch outside. The old buildings enclosing the harbour, originally the carob depots in the past during a period of trading with Arab countries are the other unique features in the town. However, today these two historic quarters, or 'districts' in Lynch's terms, have a tendency to lose their authentic urban character due to the increasing number of shops, cafés and restaurants that favour international styles and images rather than reflecting the Cypriot image.

On the other hand, the newer quarters extending the outskirts of the city in the last 10 years have no special character at all. These housing areas, which spoil the precious land on the Kyrenia Range foothills covered by olive trees are contrary to the local traditional pattern; the

residential buildings in these areas are modern concrete-frame slabs and isolated on their individual plots (Figures 6-7).



Figure 6. New apartment buildings in Girne (Source: D. Oktay archive)



Figure 7. New villa developments on the outskirts of the Besparmak Range (Source: D. Oktay archive)

The positive qualities of a definite centre cannot be observed either in the major square of the expanded city, the Municipality square, or in the other square by the sea (Monument Square) where the ceremonies are being held. Both squares lack three-dimensional qualities; the major square which has a potential of being a 'node' in Lynch's vocabulary, serves as a traffic island

only, and the other square, despite its potential of being a lively gateway to the harbour area, reveals a very artificial image and cannot attract people. The promenade along the coast here seems to be the most popular place at weekends, and has great potential of being a strong element of urban identity, that could be considered a 'path' in Lynch's terms. Owing to the urban sprawl, the vehicular traffic has significantly increased in the last ten years, and the walkability of the city has therefore been limited. The streets in the newly developed areas cannot be considered strong elements of townscape as they lack many social-spatial qualities found in the traditional texture and do not have distinctive features. The major commercial streams on the other hand, seem to be the most well-known 'paths' although their physical and spatial qualities lack.

It is very unfortunate that locally characteristic green elements are not valued in the new designs and developments, and this in turn, causes very artificial images that dominate the mountainous areas.

User survey

The survey research consisted of three phases, based on a multi-methods technique:

- a questionnaire survey design phase - to determine the data needs and approaches that would be used to gather data and to design and test data-collection instruments;
- a data collection phase - to administer the questionnaires, complete the site observations, and measure environmental conditions;
- a documentation and data analysis - to report main findings.

Using a random sampling procedure, the sample consists of 310 residents (permanent residents of 18 years of age and over). Participants live in varied neighbourhoods, that is, town centre through outskirts, covering a heterogeneous socio-economic characteristic of the population. 250 interviews were successfully accomplished in an 81 percent response rate. The face-to-face interviews were carried out in spring 2008 by the trained interviewees of a professional survey company (KADEM, Nicosia) in close contact with the researchers, the authors of this paper. Filling out the survey was done individually at the participants' homes, and the average length of an interview was about 30 minutes. The interview process was monitored by fieldwork supervisors, and the data collected were validated through independent checking.

The survey form consisted of two sections. The first section included questions that tap at people's perception of urban identity, their rating of importance among various determinants of identity, and their perception of change regarding the city's identity in time. In the second section, participants' socio-demographic characteristics were identified by asking questions regarding gender, age, education, occupation, citizenship, status of the dwelling, monthly income, and length of residence in Girne.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Characteristics of the sample

As presented in Table 1, of the 250 respondents, 53 percent were male, and 47 percent were female. Ages ranged from 18 to 85 with a mean of 43. 37 percent of the respondents have been living in Girne for 34 years or more, 33 percent have been living for 19-33 years, 17 percent have been living for 6-18 years, and smaller percentages have been living for less than 5 years. 82 percent of the respondents were the citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 12 percent were the citizens of Turkey, 5 percent hold the citizenship of both countries (TRNC and Turkey), and a very small portion were the settlers from other countries. 74 percent of the respondents were either high school graduates or university graduates. The respondents

included a variety of professional status including businessmen, students, homemakers, retired people, workers, shop owners, teachers, officials, etc.

Perceived elements of urban identity

Major elements perceived as the most significant in making the urban identity

In response to the question “please identify the significance of each following element in terms of contributing to the image of Girne”, 73 percent of the respondents identified the historical places and landmarks (reference points), 61 percent identified the natural environment and, and 57 percent identified the social environment as the most significant elements. The evaluations were made using a five-point response scale that ran from ‘very weak aspect’ (1) to ‘partially significant aspect’ (2), and to ‘very significant aspect’ (3). Overall, the respondents expressed mixed feelings regarding the most important elements of urban identity, on the basis of their many different ways in which their relationship with the local area impacted. The findings reveal that historical places and landmarks play the most important role in the identity of Girne. Natural elements are also seen important although the percentage of respondents (61 percent) who agree with this is lower than those emphasizing the role of historic elements (73 percent). However, there is a weakness in terms of perception of traditional urban pattern as a characteristic setting in making the image of Girne, and recreational areas cannot make a significant contribution to the image of the city (Table 2).

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample (Source: Authors)

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	68	27.3
25-39	83	33.2
30-55	49	19.6
56-...	50	20.0
Total	250	100.0
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	133	53.0
Female	117	47.0
Total	250	100.0
<i>Nationality</i>		
TRNC	204	81.6
Turkey	29	11.6
TRNC+Turkey	12	4.8
Other (Bulgaria, Germany, Moldavia)	12	0.4
Total	250	100.0
<i>Education</i>		
Elementary	32	13.0
Secondary	32	13.0
High school	119	47.6
University/Postgraduate	66	26.4
Total	250	100.0
<i>Length of residence</i>		
> 34 years	92	36.8
19-33 years	82	32.8

6-18 years	42	16.8
1-5 years	15	6.0
< 1 year	19	7.6
Total	250	100.0

<i>Residential status</i>		
Owner	193	77.2
Renter	55	22.0
Other	2	1.0
Total	250	100.0

Table 2. Major elements perceived as the most significant in making the image of Girne (Source: Authors)

<i>Major elements</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Historical places / reference points	182	72.8	2.82	1.048
Natural environment	154	61.0	2.63	.936
Socio-cultural environment	143	57.2	2.58	1.066
Economic potential	133	53.2	2.55	1.158
Built environment	119	47.6	2.45	1.195
Recreational areas	68	27.2	2.16	1.544

Most influential elements of the natural, built and social environment

In order to identify the most influential elements of the natural, built and socio-economic environment, respondents were asked to rate the influence of a number of qualities the city possesses. Using a three-point response scale that ran from 'not influential' (1) to 'somewhat influential' (2), and to 'very influential' (3), the most influential dimensions were identified.

As seen in Table 3, in each set of characteristics, several elements were rated as the most influential on the urban identity. The city's unique location along the coast and on the slopes of the Besparmak Range achieved a high rating by the majority (82 percent) of the respondents, that is in agreement with the pre-analysis. The locally characteristic vegetation, such as olive trees, begonvilles, carob trees, etc., seems to make some contribution to the urban identity as well (52 percent).

The built elements which achieved the highest rating were St. Hillarion Castle (82 percent) and Bellapais Monastery (80 percent), the historic landmarks outside the city. Girne's antique harbour and the Venetian Castle, the two unique places, which were assumed to be the most identifiable features, achieved a moderate rating only. Traditional urban quarter behind the harbour was not mentioned favourably as a major element of identity.

Amongst a number of elements making the socio-cultural context, Girne's image as the center for tourism achieved the highest rating (81 percent) by the respondents. In addition, the role of Girne American University on the urban identity was mentioned by 64 percent of the respondents. The traditional daily life patterns such as people's sitting and socializing in front of their houses or shops have not been highlighted at all.

The best and the worst features of Girne as perceived

In addition to the questions directly referring to urban identity, participants were asked to choose the best and worst features of Girne among a number of positive and negative aspects. Table 4 shows the most outstanding aspects identified by at least one-fifth of the respondents.

These findings support the hypothesis that the special geography of the town, with its integration with nature, proximity to the sea and the view to the mountains despite some interventions, has a very positive role on the perception of the city (valued by 85 percent). Presence of historical environment and historic reference points were also considered 'best features' by more than half of the respondents as well (54 percent). However, the other important feature of the town, its unique traditional urban texture was not favourably mentioned by the respondents. When they were asked to choose the worst features of the city, building density was referred to by the majority of the respondents, followed by the expensive living and intensive traffic.

Table 3. Perceived elements of identity at levels of natural, built and social environment
(Source: Authors)

<i>Perceived elements of urban identity</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard.dev.</i>	<i>Perception</i>
Natural Environment (9 A-F)					
Location along the coast and on the mountains	204	81.6	2.86	.694	High
Temperate Mediterranean climate	178	71.2	2.70	.685	High
Olive trees, begonvilles, carob trees, and etc.	130	52.0	2.49	.995	Moderate
Panoramic view of the city from mountains	176	70.4	2.72	.794	High
Fresh mountain air due to its location	133	53.2	2.66	.723	Moderate
Beaches in and around the city	178	71.2	2.69	.699	High
Built Environment (10 A-H)					
Antique harbour and the Venetian Castle	204	71.2	2.83	.577	High
Traditional urban pattern/places/buildings	154	61.6	2.61	.840	High
Winding streets with surprising vistas	123	49.2	2.39	.820	Low
Old courtyard houses creating a continuous wall	129	51.6	2.46	1.018	Moderate
Bellapais Monastery and village with unique qualities	199	79.6	2.86	.810	High
View to St. Hilarion Castle	206	82.4	2.82	.609	High
Housing areas spread out on the mountains	86	34.4	2.09	.905	Low
Holiday villages, hotels, residential complexes, etc.	156	62.4	2.60	.865	Moderate
Social Environment (11 A-G)					
Tourism city as a recreational/entertainment hub	203	81.2	2.83	.742	High
Cultural and arts activities	118	47.2	2.36	.821	Low
Narrow streets and lining shops in the old quarter	118	47.2	2.49	1.15	Low
Sitting in front of the buildings/houses	69	27.6	2.01	.996	Low
Presence of the Girne American University	159	63.6	2.55	.936	Moderate
Cosmopolitan structure embracing various cultures	129	51.6	2.54	1.155	Moderate
Accommodation of people from Limassol	96	38.4	2.33	1.297	Low

Level of perception:

% 70-100: High; % 50-69: Moderate; % 25-49: Low.

Perceived changes in urban identity

It is a fact that, in response to social, economic and political forces, cities are always changing; a city has never been static; it is evolving and in the process of evolving, can also destroy and replace its parts. Therefore, urban identity has to be considered in a time-based perspective. In this regard, respondents were first asked to choose one of the following statements: "The city loses its identity"; "Identity does not change"; "Identity is being

strengthened”; “A new identity is being established”; and “Chaos is being established instead of identity”.

According to the findings, almost half of the respondents (46 percent) believe that the city loses its identity, one-third of the respondents (21 percent) think it does not change, 15 percent think new identity is being established, 10 percent think it is getting stronger, and 8 percent believes that chaos is being established instead of identity (Table 5).

Table 4. The best and the worst features of Girne as perceived (Source: Authors)

<i>Best features of Kyrenia</i>	%
Integration with nature, proximity to the sea and the view to the mountains	85
Presence of historical environment and historic reference points	54
Social activities and entertainment	37
Liveliness during the day and night	27
Unique traditional urban texture	20
<i>Worst features of Kyrenia</i>	
Building density	67
Expensive living	41
Intensive traffic	37
Noise	25
Limited job opportunities	25
Lack of maintenance of streets and open spaces	25
Too many immigrants from other countries	22

Table 5. The perceived identity and change in Girne (Source: Authors)

<i>Perception of urban identity</i>	
The city loses its identity	46,0
Identity does not change	20,8
Identity is being strengthened	9,6
A new identity is being established	15,2
Chaos is being established instead of identity	8,4
Total	100.0

In addition, the mode of change as perceived by respondents was measured by the following single question: “How have your thoughts about Girne changed?” Findings reveal that the perception of Girne’s urban identity has changed negatively for the 40 percent of the respondents, while 31 percent has been neutral, and 28 percent positive (Table 6).

Table 6. The mode of change as perceived by respondents (Source: Authors)

<i>How has your perception of identity changed in time?</i>	<i>>34 year</i>	<i>19-33 year</i>	<i>6-18 y</i>	<i>1-5 y</i>	<i><1 year</i>	<i>Total</i>
Changed positively	25,0	22,0	52,4	40,0	10,5	28.4
Neither positively nor negatively	30,4	34,1	23,8	26,7	42,1	31.2
Changed negatively	44,6	43,9	23,8	33,3	47,4	40,4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the measures of identity in Girne (Kyrenia), an urban setting in the island of Cyprus which has unique built, natural and social environmental qualities and a dynamic urban growth, and to analyse the inhabitants' identification with the city. Within this context, a holistic approach was adopted and a questionnaire/attitude survey was carried out following a preliminary analysis in the city.

The survey findings revealed that the historical landmarks (reference points) are so powerful in constructing the urban identity even if they are outside or at the edge of the city. The traditional urban tissue was also found significant in constructing the urban identity although not strongly mentioned and not appreciated as one of the best features of the city. However, the new villa-type housing developments spread out on the slopes of the mountains were not rated favourably in terms of their influence on the urban identity. This could be explained by the lack of quality of their architecture and context in terms of local appropriateness and character, as they were also mentioned as the worst features of the town.

The findings indicated that the geography and natural environment of the city have a significant impact on making the urban image as well, that is in agreement with Oktay (1998) and Bornberg (2008).

In the context of social environment, Girne's image as the center for tourism achieved the highest rating (81 percent) and the role of Girne American University on the urban identity was mentioned by the two-thirds of the respondents (64 percent). The traditional life patterns that are still visible in the old quarters have not been highlighted at all, probably due to the lack of a proper activity pattern in these areas and the lack of integration with other districts of the city. The findings also indicated that the university has some significant impact on the urban life.

Further, as the findings revealed that the perception of urban identity changes in time, there appears an opportunity to regain and/or enhance identity through various strategies. In this context, it can be stated that appropriate urban design solutions depend so much on the specific context of a particular area, including all environmental dimensions. The following can be suggested to create and/or enhance the identity of Girne and all other small cities with unique built, natural and social environmental qualities and a dynamic urban growth:

- The urban sprawl should be taken very seriously by all authorities considering its negative effects on the urban image and identity.
- The walkability of the town should be increased through adopting traffic calming schemes, improving the physical conditions of the pedestrian paths and sidewalks, and promoting diversity of public uses along the streets in the central area.
- Designing with nature, integrating with nature and using nature to the advantage of its people should be key themes in future urban/architectural developments.
- A heritage awareness strategy should be planned by the local authority in order to increase the attraction and use of the older core of the city and its traditional buildings by all types of users at all times.
- Presence of traditional social-spatial context in the urban scenery should be sustained through the adaptive re-use provided that local people still reside in some of the buildings in the older core.
- The landmarks that help identify the city should be highly valued and protected; in newly developed urban areas, new symbols, landmarks or focal points should be introduced into the urban townscape.
- Although we do not have to recall again the romantic plazas of Renaissance Italy as the model of good city design, we should still consider the street as a community room, and design or redesign them as 'places to go and spend time' with people's physical, social and aesthetic needs and expectations are in mind.

All these recommendations bring about the need for preparation of an area character appraisal and management plan for the particular city, provided that the future policies are protecting the urban identity.

This research has focused on the urban environment. A number of limitations with the present approach is recognised by the authors as the discussions and evaluations refer to the city, a very complex organism, as a whole, and it is therefore considered tolerable that the relationship between urban identity and some variables (i.e. cultural background, educational level, tenure status, and so forth) was not analysed in the scope of the paper. Although the authors are confident that the survey materials used in this study could be used in other contexts, and urban identity may be measured in other cities of North Cyprus in order to obtain more comprehensive evidence, further work could examine the salience of other important environment and identity settings, such as residential environment and identity settings, and focus on such potential predictors.

REFERENCES

- Butina-Watson, G., & Bentley, I. (2007). *Identity by Design*. London: Architectural Press.
- Bornberg, R. (2008).. Identity by Spatial Design. *Urban Design International*, 13, 182-200.
- Berglund, U. (1998). Nature in the City. *Open House International*, 23(3), 30-36.
- Choi, H. S. (2011). Place Identity in 21st Century Architecture in South Korea, *International Journal of Architectural Research*, 5(3), 116-133.
- Feldman, R. M. (1990). Settlement Identity: Psychological Bonds with Home Places in A Mobile Society. *Environment and Behaviour*, 22, 183-229.
- Fleury-Bahi, G. et al (2008). Processes of Place Identification and Residential Satisfaction. *Environment and Behaviour*, 40(5), 669-682.
- Hertzberger, H. (2000). The Public Realm. In: M. Miles, T. Hall and I. Borden (Eds.), *The City Cultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 253-255.
- Hough, M. (1990). *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape*, University of New Haven, CT: Washington Press.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.
- Knez, I. (2005). Attachment and Identity as related to A Place and Its Perceived Climate. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25, 207-218.
- Kyle, G.T., Graefe, A. and Manning, R. (2005). Testing the Dimensionality of Place Attachment in Recreational Settings. *Environment and Behaviour*, 37, 153-177.
- Lalli, M. (1992). Urban Related Identity: Theory, Measurement and Empirical Findings. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 12, 285-303.
- Lang, J., & Moleski, W. (2010). *Functionalism Revisited: Architectural Theory and Practice and the Behavioural Sciences*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Lash, S. (1999). *Another Modernity, A Different Rationality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lynch, K. (1960). *Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lynch, K. (1981). *A Theory of Good City Form*. MA: MIT Press.
- Manley, S. and Guise, R. (1998). Conservation in the Built Environment. In: C.Greed and M. Roberts (eds.), *Introducing Urban Design: Interventions and Responses*. Longman, London.
- Montgomery, J. (1998). Making A City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design. *Journal of Urban Design*, 3(1), 93-115.
- Moughtin, C. (1996). *Urban Design: Street and Square*. Oxford: Butterworth Architecture.

- Norberg-Schulz, C. (2007). The Phenomenon of Place, In: M. Larice & E. Macdonald (eds.), *The Urban Design Reader*. London: Routledge, 125-137.
- Norberg-Schulz, C. (1979). *Genius Loci*. New York: Rizzoli.
- Oktay, D. (2006). How Can Urban Context Maintain Urban Identity and Sustainability?: Evaluations of Taormina (Sicily) and Kyrenia (North Cyprus), *Web Journal on Cultural Patrimony*, 1(2), 2006.
- Oktay, D. (2005). Cyprus: the South and the North, In: *Urban Issues and Urban Policies in the New EU Countries*. Van Kempen, R., Vermeulen, M., & Baan, A. (Eds.). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 205-231.
- Oktay, D. (2002). The Quest for Urban Identity in the Changing Context of the City: Northern Cyprus, *Cities*, 19(4), 2002, 31-41.
- Oktay, D. (1998). Urban Spatial Patterns and Local Identity: Evaluations in a Cypriot Town, *Open House International*, 23(3), 17-23.
- Pacione, M. (2005). *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Pol, E. (2002). The Theoretical Background of the City-Identity-Sustainability Network. *Environment and Behavior*, 34, 8-25.
- Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3, 57-83.
- Punter, J. (1991). Participation in The Design of Urban Space. *Landscape Design*, 200, 24-27.
- Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Ltd.
- Rossi, A. (2000). Typological Questions and The Collective Memory. In: M. Miles, T. Hall, & I. Borden (Eds.), *the City Cultures Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Sarbin, T. R. (1983). Place identity as a component of self: an addendum. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3, 337-342.
- Sepe, M., & Pitt, M. (2014). The Character of Place in Urban Design, *Urban Design International*, 19/3, 215-227.
- TRNC DPO (State Planning Organization) (1999). *Social and Economic Characteristics of Population - 1996*. Nicosia.
- Twigger-Ross, C. L. and Uzzell, D. L. (1996). Place and Identity Process, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, 205-220.

AUTHORS

Derya Oktay

Professor

Faculty of Architecture

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey

derya.oktay@omu.edu.tr

Havva Alkan Bala

Associate Professor

Faculty of Architecture

Selçuk University, Konya Turkey

halkan@selcuk.edu.tr