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IMAGED EXPERIENCES: MAPPING THE TRABZON CITY CENTER

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Abstract: This research sets out from the cycle of impaired belonging between city dwellers and the cities they live in and the weakened perceptibility of urban identity in spatial experiences as a result of the chaos and rapid flow of daily life in today's cities that evolve around consumption culture. This cycle is addressed with experiential mapping applications, which prompt citizens to take a step back and slow down their rhythm of life as a way to connect with their city. Based on this, it is aimed to reveal the deepening of the relationship between city dwellers and the city through experiential mapping, which provides a more meaningful and conscious interaction with the urban environment. In this research, the urban identity formed between urban space and the user was analyzed by image analysis, taking the Theory of Imageability as a basis. The application process consisted of three main phases and was conducted with ten students studying at Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Architecture. The research findings show that experiential mapping and semantic rating, applied with a view to increasing the visibility of urban images peculiar to Trabzon city center, enabled the participants to direct their focus on and explore the spatial components of Trabzon city center, suggesting that experiential mapping can be an effective tool in exploring the potentials and problematic aspects of cities.

Keywords: Experiential map, Urban experiences, Urban images, Trabzon

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1. Introduction

Cities are densely populated settlements that bring together large masses of different people and different functions. Cities, which developed into centers of production in the wake of the industrial revolution, are places where the effects of globalization made themselves felt the most intensely as they triggered a change in traditional social structures (Begel, 1996). Globalization has penetrated almost every area of the world from the 1980s onwards, and it has reshaped cities in many ways, leading to an inevitable transformation of cities with the effect of socio-cultural and economic developments. Once the "spaces of production", industrial cities evolved gradually into "spatial centers of social consumption" (Krätke, 2014). The emerging new production-consumption model and the urban policies that developed in parallel therewith focused largely on money spending patterns, and the spatial transformation of urban areas took place in the same direction (Yaylı, 2012). This consumption model went beyond mere consumption of goods and services and extended to consumption of urban spaces and social values because as the consumption habits of societies changed, new spatial needs came into play that triggered a transformation of the relationship between city dwellers and the city as well as the physical structuring of cities (Aliağaoğlu and Mirioğlu, 2020), causing the identities of cities defined by their differences and authenticity to fade away (Giddens, 2012).

Globalization, a much-debated topic in a variety of aspects, led to an inevitable transformation of the cities in Türkiye, as in all other developing countries, which resulted in impaired urban identity and weakened bonding between city dwellers and the city in environments that have become centers of economic attraction during the process of urbanization. Most city dwellers find themselves trapped in a consumption-oriented and rapidly flowing circulation that prevents them from noticing the images they come across in the course of urban experiences.

In the physical sense, cities are defined as a set of streets that provide access from and to buildings and structures where large numbers of people live together and which create different meanings for these people (Milgram, 1970); and in the social sense, they are defined as a living organism that has the potential of bringing together urban city dwellers in different ways and give them the freedom of choice in various life scenarios (Šenk, 2021). The everyday life actions and behavior patterns of city dwellers come to life in this organism. On the other hand, for urban identity, the meaning attributed to the city by its dwellers is as important as the characteristics of the city itself. In other words, cities can be given meaning neither only by a physical environment nor only by the

presence of people living in the city. Cities are shaped by the interaction known to exist between humans and their environment and the behaviors that emerge as a result of this interaction (Özgen and Türkseven Doğrusoy, 2020). According to Gehl (2011), in low-quality public spaces, necessary activities take place first, while in high-quality public spaces, necessary activities take place with approximately the same frequency, but people prefer to do them for longer periods of time (Carmona et al., 2003). Improved physical conditions lead to a significant increase in the number of pedestrians, more time spent outdoors and a wider range of outdoor activities (Gehl, 2011).

The city is impregnated with endless mobility that feeds on everything and everyone that is part of the life it surrounds. If we traced back this mobility, the most befitting word to describe the identity of modern cities brought to life by the globalizing world would be speed. In today's cities, everything flows quickly and everyone moves quickly in a hurry to get somewhere (Alver, 2012). This speed and the urban experiences passing by faster than normal expose city dwellers to rapidly and constantly changing environmental stimuli, making it almost impossible for them to follow the changing images surrounding them, and impede their conscious interaction with their environment (Simmel, 2005). This, in turn, weakens both the city dwellers' contact with urban space and their bond with the city. Urban dwellers attach identity to their city to the extent they come into contact with it, and cities find their identity through a social synthesis of these individual identifications. However, urbanization problems and the hustle and bustle of daily life taking hold of many cities today have destroyed the time and space for people to take a step back and consciously listen to and notice their surroundings. The consequence of this is that city dwellers become less likely to attach meaning to the images they see around them, and cities become a mere object of consumption.

Within this accelerated life scenario, city dwellers are exposed to constant spatial experiences. Harvey's (2022) "The Urban Experience" starts with this question: "Who among us will refuse the opportunity on arriving in some unfamiliar city, to ascend to a convenient high point and look down upon the intricate landscape of streets and buildings and the restless flow of human activity among them? Why do we feel so curious to do what long-term residents rarely consider … and what do we gain by it?" He attributes his reply to Michel de Certeau's (1984) thoughts on ascending to the heights of New York's World Trade Center. According to Certeau, the ascent lifts us out of the city's grasp, out of the feverish motion of street life, and allows us to become voyeurs. Thus, the bewitching world by which one was possessed is transformed into a readable text that lies before one's eyes (Harvey, 2022). This ascent is equivalent to an urban reading that corresponds to taking a step back and slowing down one's experience in the daily flow of a city.

Walking, which is an inevitable part of daily life, is also a way of experiencing a place and a city. Through daily walking, the individual develops a sense of place in the space they experience. In other words, daily walks, which differ in terms of purpose, speed and rhythm, enable creative and critical relationships with urban space. In this context, walking can be considered as an important and alternative research method in urban design (Matos Wunderlich, 2008). The pedestrian perspective in defining the urban fabric should not be limited to human visual capacity. Pedestrians can develop a more comprehensive understanding by experiencing the spatial diversity of the urban fabric as they move from one street to another (Araldi and Fusco, 2019).

Şenel's (2019) paper contains a heading that reads as *"passing a place every day and staying in that place for a day"*. This phrase gives many clues about the effectiveness of experiential mapping in urban experience. In other words, the act of experience is *"passing through a place every day"* in cognitive maps, while in experiential maps it is *"staying in that place for a day"*. To build and strengthen their bond and sense of belonging with their city, city dwellers should slow down the experiences they have in the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives, even if it is for a day, take a step back and get familiar with the identity of the city. This is where experiential mapping comes into play as an area of activity that promotes this slowdown.

Any human activity that involves physical and mental connection between an observed location and its environment describes a cognitive image of a given location. The message conveyed by the environment is ultimately based on individual interpretation and depends on the decoding and reconstitution of encrypted meanings (Rozman Cafuta and Sitar, 2017). With this in view, the aim of this research is to reveal how and to which extent experiential mapping can help city dwellers deepen their relationship with the city by entering into a more meaningful and conscious interaction with their urban environment. This paper uses experiential mapping as a tool to discuss Certeau's *ascent* in making sense of the city.

2. Materials and Methods

The research focuses on identifying city center images in the city center of Türkiye's Trabzon province through a slowed-down spatial experience, adopting an approach of concentrated experience and selective perception. For this, we employed experiential mapping, a method comprising successive philosophies such as slowing down the rhythm of life and experiencing everyday paths from a different perspective. To evaluate urban identity taking shape between urban space and the user, we used image analysis based on Lynch's Theory of Imageability.

According to Cosgrove (1985), when looking at the emergence and development process, maps have always served as an objective and observation-based document drawn up to create and finalize the knowledge of a place.

Şenel (2014) states that rather than a static representation of a place, the act of mapping has evolved into a process of sense-making and repositioning between the mapped place and the mapper. With this aspect, mapping holds an important position especially in architectural practice and is used as a tool for representing how the spirit of a place is influenced and reconstructed by human existence, spatial experiences and design actions. In this sense, it is seen that cognitive maps that can be applied with a large number of participants depending on the size of the study area have been employed in many studies from past to present (Cadwallader, 1979; Evans et al., 1984; Jang and Kim, 2019; Topcu and Topcu, 2012). Exploratory pursuits that contain original meanings and in which information is obtained through a bottom-up operational method rather than top-down are experiential mapping (Schoonderbeek, 2017). Experiential maps, on the other hand, involve more complex processes than cognitive maps as they use a multi-layered methodology that consists of several phases and analyze a broad set of verbal, written and visual data.

But studies employing experiential mapping are not only smaller in number but also in sample size. In Lynch's Image of the City, for example, the experiential phase of the two-phase research conducted in three different cities in 1960 was carried out by one observer, and the cognitive phase with a group of city dwellers (Lynch, 2022). Spencer and Weetman (1981) studied in their two-phase research 30 subjects who were new university residents without any prior experience of the city and asked them to draw sketch maps of the city center, the campus and their individual daily paths. The research by Yorgancıoğlu and Çalak (2020) focusing on contacting real life, touching and interacting with space, and gaining a unique perspective and deep perception of a place was conducted with 20 architecture students. As in the studies above, each an example of experiential mapping applications involving complex stages, the number of participants in the present study using a multi-layered research design was kept limited.

A three-phase design was adopted for the implementation of the present research, seeking an answer to the research questions "How does experiential mapping allowing for a slowed down spatial experience affect the interaction between Trabzon city center and city dwellers?" and "What are the clues that the images reflected on experience maps give us about the potentials and problems of the city?". The hypotheses formulated for the purpose of this research are:

H_1. Slowed down and focused spatial experiences are an effective tool in unveiling the images that the participants have of Trabzon city center in their minds.

H_2. Experience maps allow to identify the potentials and problems associated with Trabzon city center from the perspective of city dwellers.

Unlike large-sample studies on urban identity that draw on statistical data and generalizations, the present research adopts a multi-layered research design that focuses on urban images unveiled through individual experiences and interpretations with a limited number of participants. Figure 1 shows the research model in which the study group consisted of ten students (6 female, 4 male), all in their third year at Karadeniz Technical University, Department of Architecture.

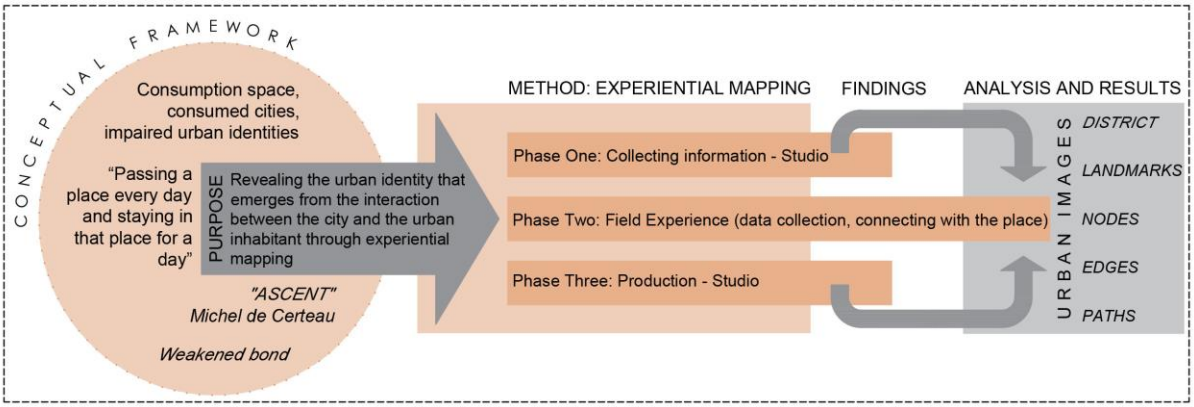


Figure 1. Research model.

The city center designated for the purpose of this research defined an area that started from Atatürk Square and extended all along Kahramanmaras Street, Uzun Street, Kunduracılar Street, including the secondary roads connecting these three axes (Figure 2). The area has a multi-layered structure that is home to many historical landmarks as well as shopping, leisure time, eating and drinking places. As such, the study area is a place where many city dwellers with different demographic characteristics can find something to their taste and come into contact with the city. This area, which sets an example for urban centers that develop with a focus on consumption, had a good potential for giving us the data we needed for this research, as it mediated an urban experience focused on crowds, chaos and speed.

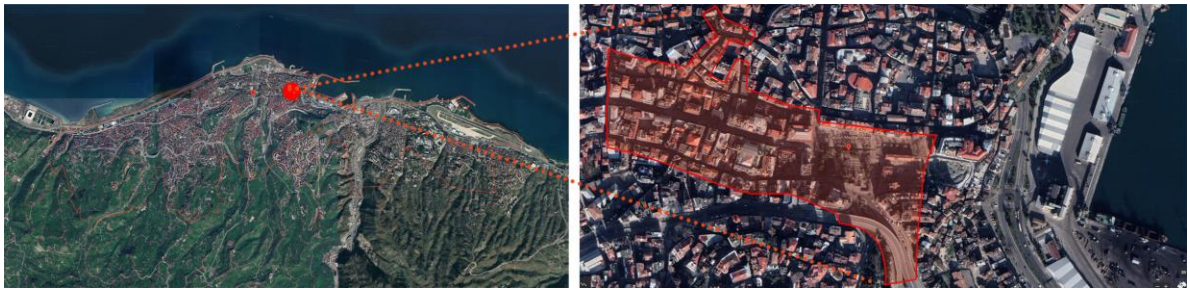


Figure 2. Satellite images of Trabzon city center.

2.1. Experiential Mapping Applications

2.1.1. Phase one: studio

In phase one, the participants were brought together in studio environment, and after briefing them about the purpose of research, they were asked to fill out an information collection form (Table 1). The purpose of the form was to do a memory reading before "generating an identity for a given place with a slowed-down experience". The form consisted of two parts. The first was aimed at gathering data about the participants' demographics, and the second was to determine their level of interaction with Trabzon city center, their level of familiarity with the city center, and the traces of the city center in their minds. A semantic rating scale aimed at measuring subjective spatial perception and evaluation responses was used to measure the participants' impressions of the city center before and after mapping.

Table 1. Information collection form questions

I	What is your age? How many years have you been living in Trabzon? Are you satisfied with living in Trabzon and why? For which purpose(s) do you visit Trabzon city center? How often do you visit Trabzon city center? How much time do you spend in Trabzon city center?					
II	Does living in Trabzon make you feel good? Can you explain why? How does it make you feel when you have to go to Trabzon city center? What does Trabzon city center evoke in your mind? Please explain. Could you rate the images that Trabzon city center evokes in your mind, using the adjective pairs given below?					
		-2	-1	0	1	2
	Congested					Spacious
	Uninviting					Inviting
	Tiring					Refreshing
	Disturbing					Relaxing
	Ordinary					Authentic
	Boring					Exciting
	Flowing/Uncontrollable					Controllable to the least detail
	Disconnected/Intermittent					Fluent/Integrated
	Dissatisfying					Satisfying
	Consuming/Slipping by					Adopted/Memorised
	Forces fast motion					Allows slow motion

2.1.2. Phase two: Trabzon city center

Phase two aimed at giving the participants "an experience that would raise their awareness of their own motion in the city" by discovering urban images in a fast-flowing urban space, in the presence of fast-flowing pedestrian motion, so as to make them attach identity and meaning to their city. Rather than trying to have the students draw a map, mapping was based on having the students record their experiences on sketch maps handed out to them, while discovering and imaging the spatial components steering their experiences. Each participant was provided with a sketch map to use while strolling through the city (Figure 3).

The participants were briefed on the research problem and the points to focus on while strolling through the city in order to have them collect data fit for the purpose, which they would need at the stage of mapping (Table 2).

Table 2. Information collection form questions

Problem description	Identifying images of the city center by way of a concentrated and slowed down spatial experience with an approach based on selective perception.
Instructions	The stroll should be as relaxed and internalized as possible, focusing on all the physical and mental spatial features around the participants that influence their behavior and shape their experience.
Terminology	Categorizing the spatial data that steered their stroll according to Lynch's Theory of Imageability (edges, nodes, landmarks and paths) and plotting the data on sketch maps.
Data collection	Photographing the imaged spaces, taking notes on sketch maps and making sketches/drawings to serve as data for experience maps.

Participants were instructed to focus on their daily paths rather than trying to stroll the entire area and to create a route according to the streets and spaces they use most frequently and the secondary roads connecting the three axes. Participants experienced their familiar routes in the city center, but this time from a different perspective and with a planned motive, gathered information and plotted the data on sketch maps (Figure 4).

2.1.3 Phase three: studio

In phase three, the participants were called back to studio environment for experiential mapping based on the notes taken on the sketch maps and the visual data obtained in the field study (Figure 5).

The materials used in this phase were provided by the researchers to maintain consistency and coherence across sketch maps. Students were given a blank map showing the boundaries of the area, pencils, cutters, glue sticks, acetate films, poster boards, pushpins and thread.

To facilitate categorization and analysis of experiential mapping data, students were instructed to use red materials for paths, blue for nodes, green for landmarks and yellow for edges. Students were told that in addition to these materials, they were free to use the area photographs taken in phase two, the notes they had taken on sketch maps and any of their sketches/drawings during mapping. The experience maps created in this phase are presented in Table 3.

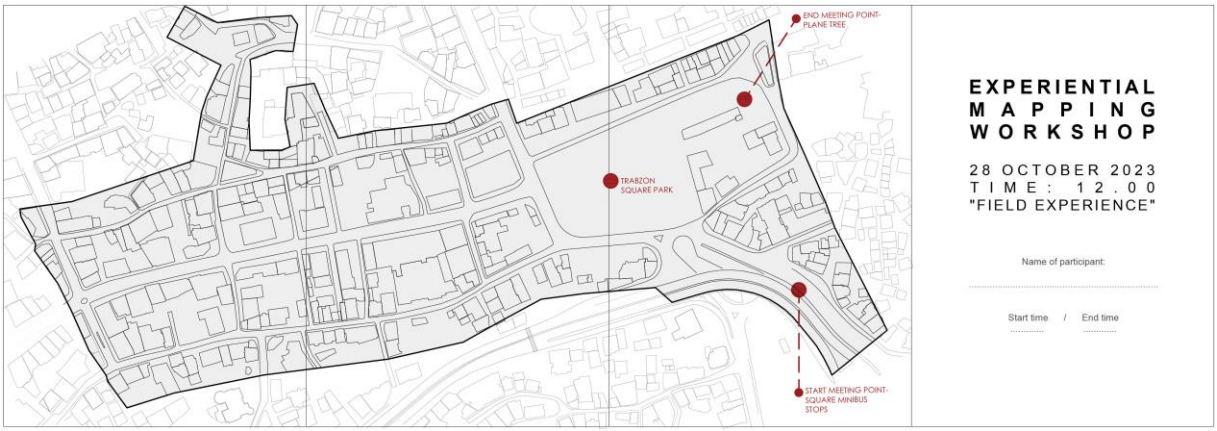
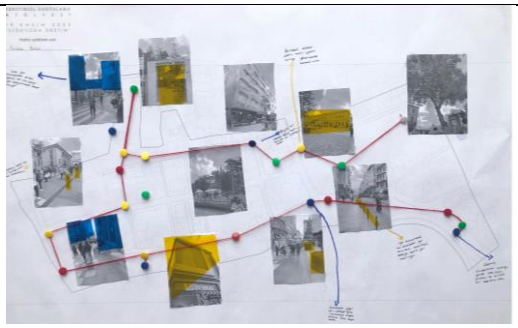
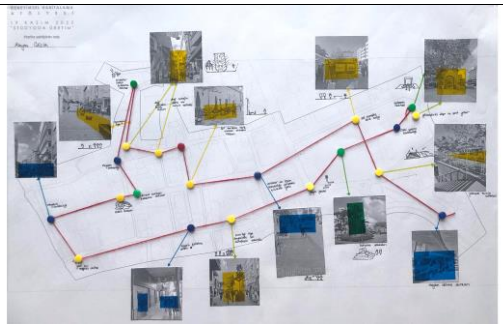
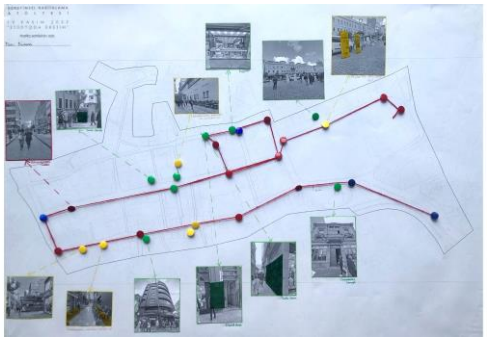
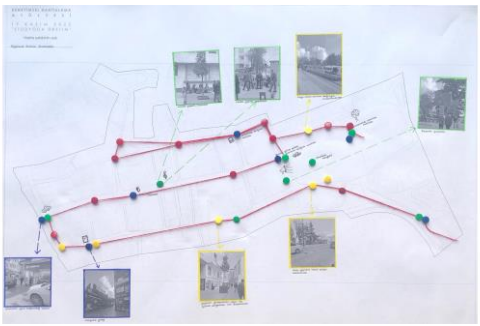
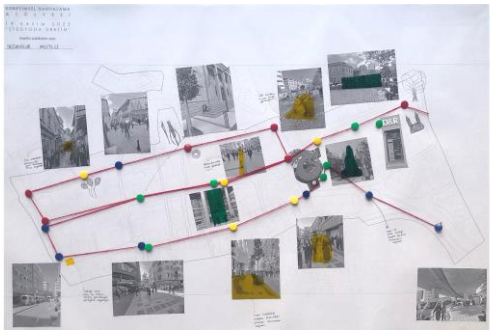
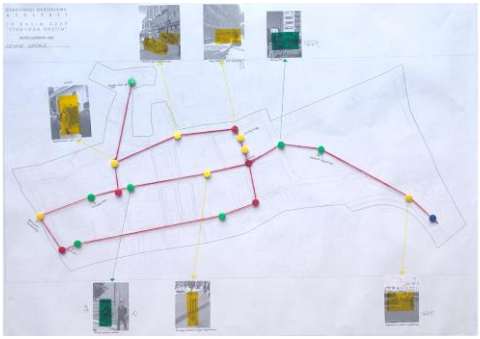
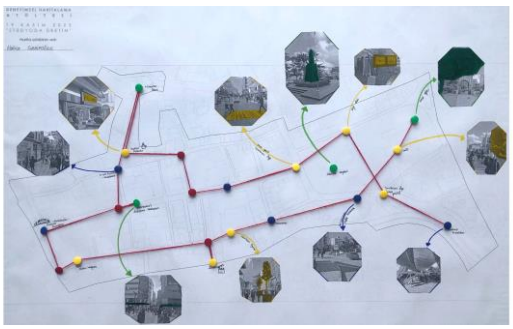
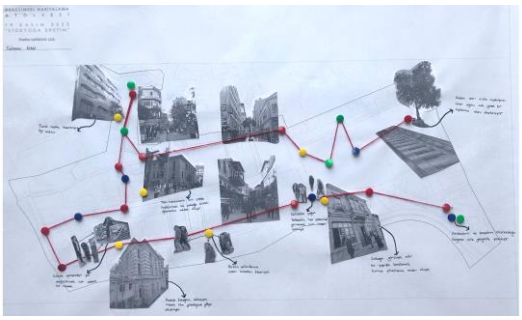
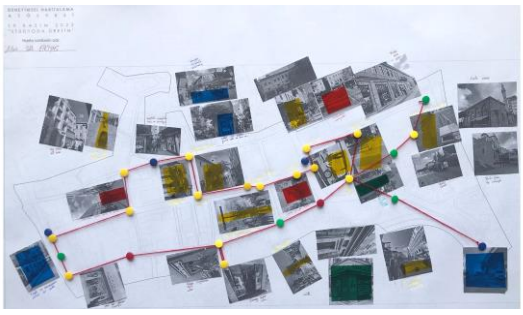


Figure 3. Sketch map of the study area

Figure 4. Field study photos.

Figure 5. Experiential mapping photos.

Table 3. Experiential maps

Participant 1		Participant 2	
articipant 3		Participant 4	
Participant 5		Participant 6	
Participant 7		Participant 8	
Participant 9		Participant 10	

After mapping, a semi-structured interview form and semantic rating scale were applied to gain insight into the participants' impressions of the city and the changes that their perception of urban space had undergone as a result of the experience.

3. Results

Table 4 shows the distribution of the participants' demographics based on information obtained from the information collection forms in phase one. The participants' reasons for spending time in the city center

were shopping (9), sitting/resting (8), meeting with people (8), leisure time (3) and essential part of daily transportation (3).

Before the experience, the participants were asked whether they were satisfied with living in Trabzon in order to assess their general perception of the city. Only three out of 10 participants answered yes. Among those who responded positively, P1 and P8 had been living in the city for 2 years and responded that the reason for their satisfaction was mainly the nature of the city. P4, the third who answered yes, stated that the reason for their positive response was because they had been born and raised in Trabzon. P5 and P6, who had been living in Trabzon since they were born, responded negatively and described the city as boring. The participants' responses showed that their interaction with the city (visiting frequency and time spent in the city center) was high enough for the purpose of this study. The data obtained from part two of the information collection forms was analyzed by means of content analysis. The analysis of a total of 30 answers given to three questions showed, that 11 negative and 6 positive features dominated the answers to these questions. The images dominating the participants' answers are presented in Figure 6 with sample statements picked out from among the questions and the answers given to each of them. Words marked with gray on the figure represent negative images, whereas words marked with orange represent positive ones. The participants described the existing urban identity in their minds with negative adjectives like non-inclusive (7), crowded (7), boring/constricting/oppressive (7), and congested/jammed (5). Another remarkable point was that the spatial features expressed positively revolved around consumption-related concepts, such as responding to needs (8) and availability of social activity spaces (6).

While analyzing the data obtained in phase three, the researchers examined each map created by participants and traced the images they had marked on them in writing or with photographs, sketches or collages. To exemplify the process steps followed in this analysis, the notes plotted on the maps and some of the images associated with them are given in Table 5. Based on the analysis results, the researchers categorized the participants' expressions as edges (8), nodes (5) and landmarks (11) and identified a total of 24 city center images.

Table 4. Demographics of participants

Participant	Age (years)	Time lived in Trabzon (years)	Satisfied with living in Trabzon; reasons	City center visiting frequency	Time spent in the city center per visit
P1	19	2	Yes; nature	1-3 times a month	1-4 hours
P2	19	8	No; non-inclusive	1-3 times a week	1-4 hours
P3	19	1	No; lack of belonging	1-3 times a month	1-4 hours
P4	21	21	Yes; hometown	Everyday	4 hours or more
P5	21	21	No; boring	1-3 times a week	1-4 hours
P6	20	20	No; boring	1-3 times a week	1-4 hours
P7	20	2	No; congested/jammed	1-3 times a week	1-4 hours
P8	19	2	Yes; nature	1-3 times a week	1-4 hours
P9	20	1	No; unplanned urbanization	1-3 times a month	1-4 hours
P10	22	2	No; congested/jammed	1-3 times a month	1-4 hours

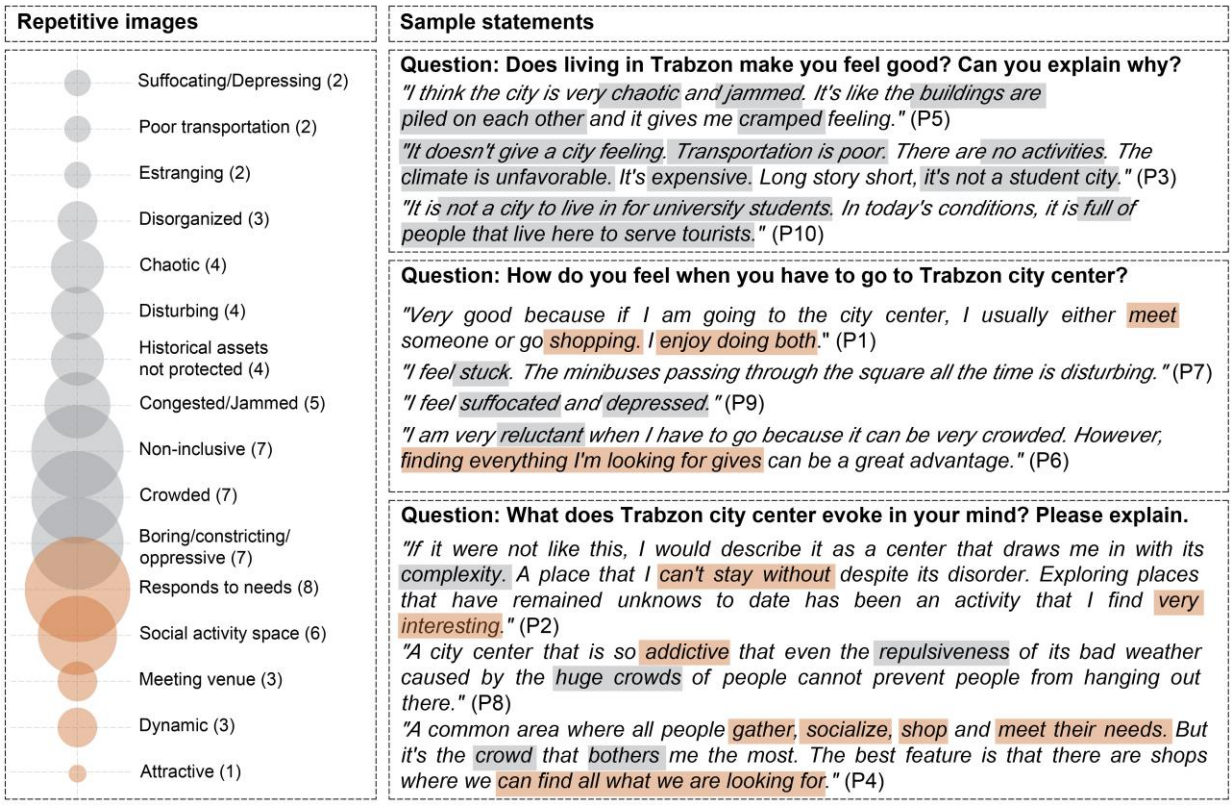


Figure 6. Content analysis findings of data obtained from information collection forms.

Table 5. Analysis steps for identifying city center images

	Participant expressions plotted on the maps	City Center Images
Edges	Crowd forcing mass movement (P1), Pedestrian circulation (P2, P10), People (P3), Crowds of people (P5, P6, P8), Crowd (P6, P7), Human density (P9)	Crowd (10)
	Tables overflowing onto sidewalks (P2), Tables belonging to shops (P3, P9), Grocery stalls (P3), Stalls overflowing onto sidewalks (P6), Shoe store (P6), Office block columns (P3, P9), Seating areas of food and beverage shops (P3, P7), Street food (P8), Commercial spaces overflowing onto sidewalks (P10)	Commercial functions overflowing onto sidewalks (12)
	Lighting poles on Kahramanmaras street (P1, P5, P6, P10), Flower pots on Uzun street (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10), Garbage containers in the Square (P5), Seating elements (P10), Ornamental pools (P7), Planting spaces (P3, P4)	Urban landscape elements (flower pots, benches, pool, lighting, etc.) (16)
	Chaos at minibus stops (P1, P7, P8), Minibus stops in the Square (P2, P6), Minibus stops (P3, P9, P10)	Minibus stops, chaos (8)
Nodes	Vehicle density (P1), Vehicles (P2), Intersection of vehicle road and pedestrian road (P3), Traffic chaos caused by vehicles (P4), Car park entrances/exits (P4), Vehicle crowd (P2, P5), Crossroads (P4, P5, P7), Car park in narrow space (P2, P9), Traffic (P10)	Traffic (13)
	Entry to crowded streets (P1), Crowds of people (P2, P5), Crowd at Iskender Pasha Mosque (P2), People shopping (P4), Bustle of people at the banks (P2, P4), Mass motion of people (P5), People waiting for minibuses (P7, P8), Chaos at the crossroads (P9), Crowd (P10)	Crowd (14)
	Street music (P3*2 times), Street musicians (P4*2 times, P5, P6), Musicians (P8)	Street musicians (7)
Landmarks	Street music (P3*2 times), Street musicians (P4*2 times, P5, P6), Musicians (P8)	Historical structures (12)
	Suluhan (P1), Historical buildings (P1*3 times, P8*2 times, P10*2 times), Historical buildings in the Square (P3*2 times), Historical coffee shop (P1, P8)	Atatürk Statue (6)
	Atatürk Statue (P2, P4, P5, P10), Atatürk Statue in the Square (P6, P7)	Crowd (10)

To determine the density and distribution of identified city center images, the maps were transferred to CAD and then superposed. On the superposed map, red represents the paths, yellow represents the edges, blue represents nodes and green represents landmarks (Figure 7). The circles denoting the city center images are sized according to the frequency they were repeated by the participants.

When we look at the map distribution of identified images, it is seen that landmarks and nodes are concentrated at similar points, whereas edges are spread all over the area. The concepts that stand out among the edges are crowd (10), commercial functions overflowing onto sidewalks (12), urban landscape elements (16) such as design elements like flower pots, benches, lighting elements, pavement, and peddlers (7). It is seen that nodes are perceived as concepts that obstruct spatial legibility in the city center, and concepts such as minibus stops (8), traffic (13) and crowd (14) are imaged as the reason for this. When we look at landmarks, it is seen that they are predominated by historical buildings (12), followed by street musicians (7), the Atatürk Statue (6), and plane tree (5). When the experiential maps are evaluated in terms of the streets preferred by the participants, it is seen that all participants used the three main road axes in the area and made markings for these roads, whereas the usage rate of secondary roads remained quite low.

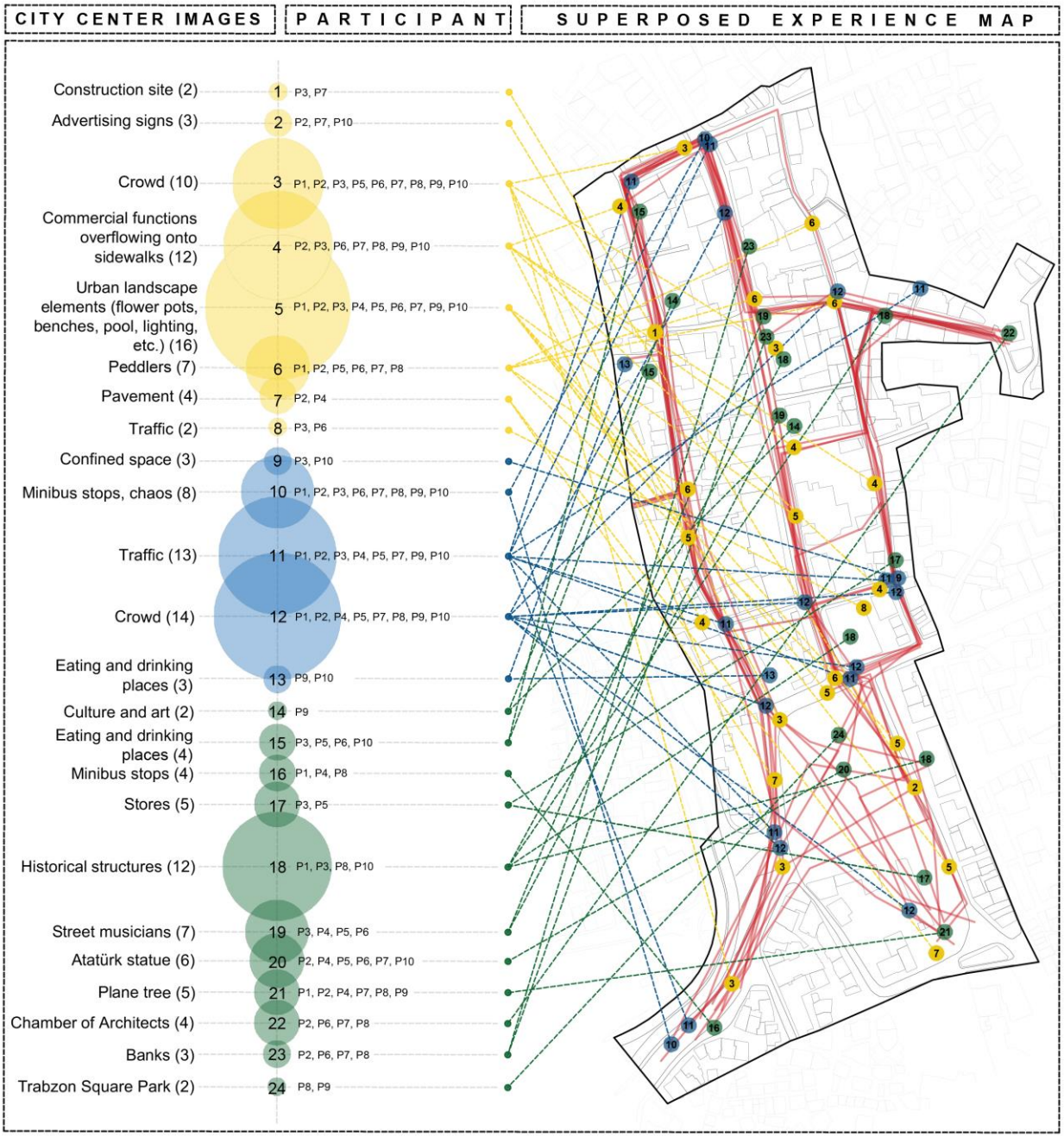


Figure 7. Experiential map analysis and findings.

Figure 8 shows a graph of the average values of the participants' responses to the semantic rating scale in phase one and at the end of phase three, respectively. In the graph, gray represents pre-experience data and orange represents post-experience data.

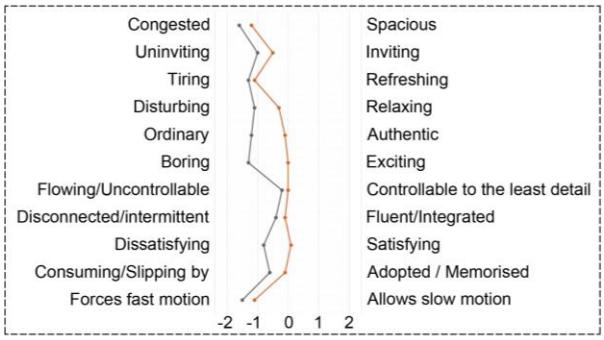


Figure 8. Semantic rating scale findings.

When we look at the pre-experience graph, it is seen that the participants had a negative perception of the city before the experience. This finding is supported by the mean values ranging between -1 and -2 for the statements "congested", "tiring", "ordinary", "boring" and "forcing fast motion". In contrast, the post-experience graph is largely neutral and shows a positive trend in all aspects, with a noteworthy positive differentiation in the adjective pairs "disturbing-relaxing", "ordinary-authentic", "boring-exciting", and "dissatisfying-satisfying".

4. Discussion

Information collection forms, a semantic rating scale and experiential mapping were used to analyze the participants' images of the city center. A collective interpretation of the findings shows that while the participants utilized 16 concepts (Figure 6) to describe their pre-experience impressions of the city, this number increased to 24 post-experience (Figure 7). While the pre-experience images mostly consisted of adjectives signifying the problems of the city and consumption-related statements; even though there were still some similar points, a semantic diversification was found in all post-experience aspects with the addition of different concepts such as spatial components that add value to the city and cultural elements that identify the city center. In other words, the experience enabled the participants to discover the reasons behind the negative ideas they had about the city such as suffocating, boring, congested, chaotic, and disorganized as well as the positive attributions referring to consumption. For instance, participants realized that their description of the city as congested was due to "commercial functions overflowing onto sidewalks", "peddlers", or "urban landscape elements" that made their experience difficult at times. Further, the participants' pre-experience description of the city center was a social activity and meeting venue that responded to needs, whereas post-experience they described it with place-specific components such as historical texture, landmarks, and street musicians, which suggests that experiential mapping made the participants develop an awareness of regional identity.

When the pre-experience and post-experience semantic differentiation graphs are interpreted in the context of the study design based on the premise "fast city, fast experience, weak bond", it is seen that the perceptual picture, which was negative before the experience, showed a relatively positive development after the experience (Figure 8), which is a significant finding when interpreted with a view to the research problem of “positive effect of slowed-down experience on the perception of urban space". In a similar vein, Knox (2005) argues that good walking infrastructure and people's use of it for their daily activities can contribute to enhancing the attractiveness and image of a place, which directly affects quality of life.

Analyzing map content, studying them in detail and trying to see them anew in the sense of stepping outside familiar ways of looking is reported to be a useful starting point (Pinder, 2003). Emphasizing the importance of reactions and preferences of experiencers to different spaces, Pocock (1971) states that the value of mapping stems from the fact that although each individual's image is unique, it allows common images to be recognized. Based on these views, we analyzed the experience maps in detail and determined the most prominent/most frequently repeated concepts and related themes as shown in Figure 9. Interpretation of the map samples of the spatial components imaged by the participants reveals that *edges* and *nodes* derive their own meanings, while the *landmarks* and *paths* are addressed with their original meanings.

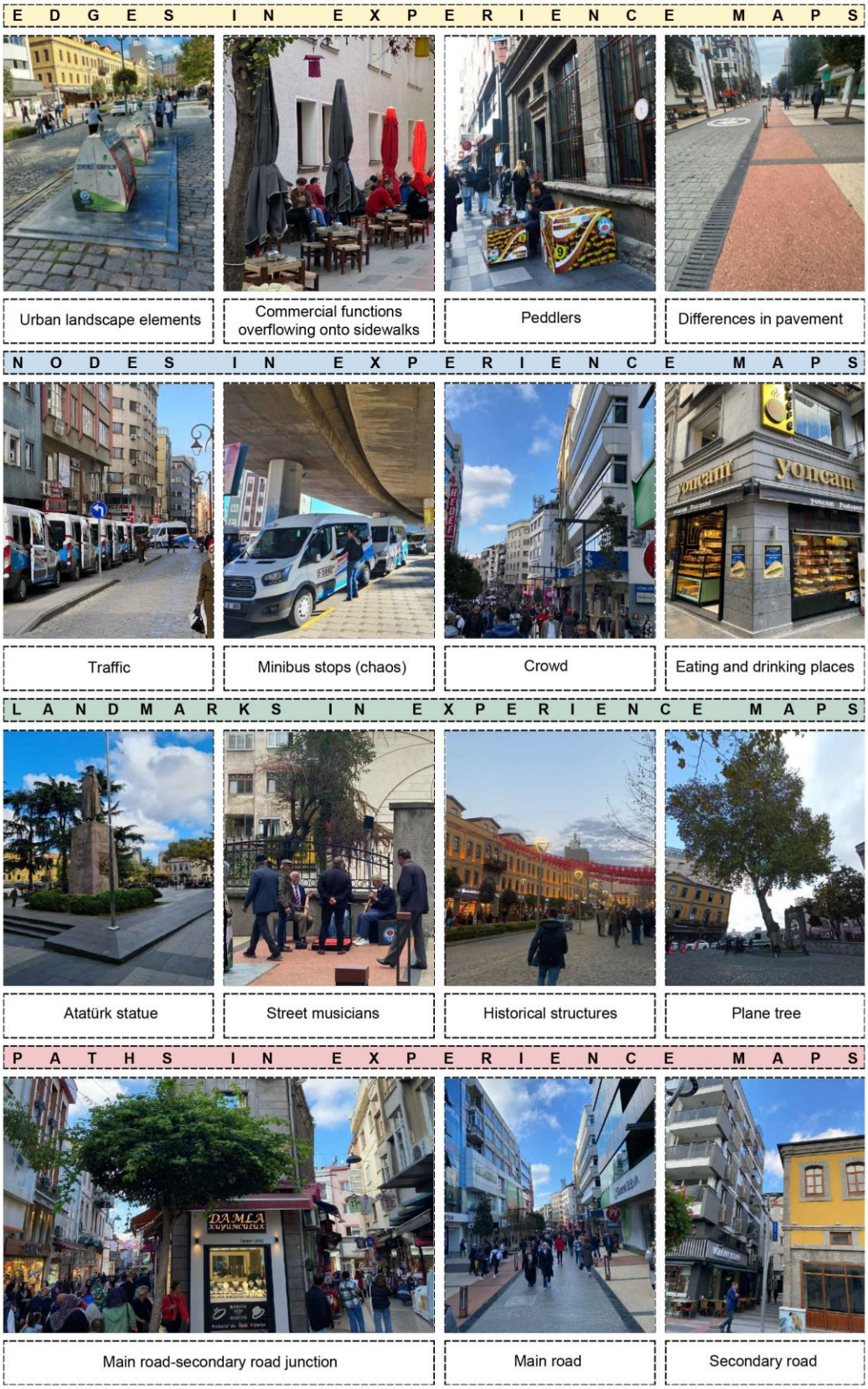


Figure 9. Prominent images in experience maps.

Acting as lateral references that define a perceived space in the mind of the experiencer, edges are usually thought of as walls that divide two regions or as connections that connect two regions (Lynch, 2022). But according to the participants' experiences within the scopes of this research, edges come to the fore as perceptual or physical boundaries that disrupt spatial experience and shape the route of the experiencer, which suggests that edges are not limited to physical barriers on the vertical plane but may also include various materials on the

horizontal plane. In other words, edges can be spatial guideposts that are created in the user's mind and differ according to the user's perception.

Defined by Lynch (2022) as foci that allow a city user to enter the city, such as junctions and intersections in the transportation system, it can be seen that the nodes on experience maps are concentrated in places with dense traffic and crowds, and that they derive meanings like confusion and chaos. Whilst dense people and vehicle presence come to the forefront, meeting venues (eating and drinking) and minibus stops are also described as nodes.

Defined as point-references that the observer does not enter within but assume the role of characterizing the urban identity (Lynch, 2022), the landmarks described in this research were Atatürk Statue that has evolved into a triangulation point in Trabzon Square Park, plane tree, and historical buildings. It is also seen that street musicians, who have become a symbol in the square, are also described as landmarks.

It is seen that edges and nodes were effective in shaping the participants' paths, i.e., "channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves" (Lynch, 2022). The study shows that limiting factors on the main street such as commercial functions, peddlers and crowds sometimes caused participants to take secondary roads.

The findings obtained in line with the first hypothesis of the study show that slowed down spatial experiences had a positive effect on unveiling the images of Trabzon city center. The participants explored the city center with a deeper perception while creating their experience maps, which enabled them to unveil the city images more clearly. The findings related to the second hypothesis show that the experience maps helped to identify the potentials and problems of Trabzon city center from the perspective of the urban dweller. Mapping enabled the participants to look at the city from a participatory perspective and gave them the chance to express their visual and emotional evaluations. Accordingly, the research findings support both hypotheses. The research does not claim that images formed in the minds of users alone will be sufficient in representing urban identity. Indeed, given the multi-layered nature of urban identity, the topic can be enriched with research processes supported by different dimensions. Similarly, Belanche et al. (2017) argue that urban identity is a construct that consists of cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions and that more research is needed to understand the development of these dimensions.

5. Conclusion

Each place penetrates differently into the perception of its constant users, first-time observers or people whose attention is drawn to that place for professional reasons or other motives. Urban identity is a synthesis of these different perceptions. But in the age we live in, cities are shaped under the shadow of consumer culture and city dwellers are exposed to an accelerated spatial experience imposed by it. This makes the images of urban identity a matter of curiosity that can be unveiled in the minds of city dwellers through a slowed-down and planned experience.

This paper discusses the outputs of a field study carried out with a planned motive in the city center of Trabzon, a Turkish city that stands as an example of the fast-life scenario mentioned above. The pre-experience data collected in writing were compared with post-experience mapping results to study how spatial images were affected by experiential mapping. It was seen that the participants' pre-experience impression of the city was predominantly negative. The fact that most of the participants who had been living in the city for many years expressed negative opinions supports the idea that problematic urbanization has weakened the bond of belonging between the city and the city dwellers.

Edges such as the crowdedness of the city center, commercial functions overflowing onto sidewalks, and urban landscape elements, *nodes* such as traffic, narrow spaces, chaos, and *landmarks* such as historical buildings, street musicians, and plane tree identified by the participants show that experiential mapping increased their awareness of the city center. The fact that in the semantic rating scale, the pre-experience weighted average was predominated by negative adjectives such as boring, disturbing, ordinary, and consuming but turned towards rather positive ones such as exciting and relaxing after the experience supports the view that the experience strengthened the belonging between city dwellers and urban space. In conclusion, this study designed to create Certeau's *ascent* through experiential mapping revealed the importance of a slowed-down and focused experience in making sense of urban space. Even though the small number of participants constitutes a limitation of this study, it has been observed that even a short stroll taken by a small number of participants with a focus on *"taking a step back for a moment and think"* is effective in deriving many meaningful images of the city, suggesting that in a speed-oriented daily life depriving the urban dweller of their ability to develop sufficient awareness of a space they use almost every day, experiential mapping can be a good tool of analysis to guide future research by identifying the potentials and problems related to the city.

When we look at the literature, it is seen that there is only limited research into the effects of experiential mapping on the determination of urban identity or the interaction between the city and city dwellers. This research and the applications described in this paper are expected to provide a base for future urban research that will delve into topics like promoting urban literacy among city dwellers and unveiling the urban identity that emerges from the interaction between the city and the city dweller. We believe that this research, which places its focus on exploring spatial components through a slowed down urban experience, will make a genuine

contribution to the literature. The methodology created for the purpose of this research with a view enhancing the visibility of city images (whether of historical, cultural, artistic or other nature) peculiar to Trabzon city center through experiential mapping can serve as a valuable starting point for future research in this area. The methodology used in this study offers a novel perspective that can be used/built on when developing new approaches to planning and design of city centers and increasing urban literacy.

Author Contributions

The percentage of the author(s) contributions is presented below. The author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

	H.K	M.U.T	P.T
C	30	40	30
D	40	30	30
S	50	25	25
DCP	30	35	35
DAI	40	30	30
L	30	40	30
W	40	30	30
CR	50	25	25
SR	40	30	30
PM	30	35	35

C=Concept, D= design, S= supervision, DCP= data collection and/or processing, DAI= data analysis and/or interpretation, L= literature search, W= writing, CR= critical review, SR= submission and revision, PM= project management

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Consideration

The authors confirm that the ethical policies of the journal, as noted on the journal's author guidelines page, have been adhered to. The experimental procedures were approved by the Science and Engineering Ethics Committee of Karadeniz Technical University, (approval date: 25 October, 2023, protocol code: E-82554930-050.01.04-440132).

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