



ASSESSMENT OF THE PICNIC AREA OF BOZTEPE AS URBAN FOREST*

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Abstract

Unplanned urbanization and intensive caused by rapid population growth in recent years, located in the cities has led to the degradation of green areas..This situation has begun to create social and environmental problems in the life of the city's people. the concept of the urban forest, which is intended to be built in and around the city as a solution to the problem, has come to the agenda. The notion of "urban forest", which is among the Widely adopted urban green space systems both in Turkey and around the world, has derived from the Efforts to turn urban spaces into more habitable places and decrease the negative effects. Urban forests are supplementary elements that contribute to the society in economic, ecologic, sociologic and aesthetic terms, and that connect urban and rural texture to one another.

In the current study, taking into consideration the demand of the residents of Trabzon for a quality green space, we will analyze whether Boztepe forestland could be turned into an urban forest in terms of the criteria: distance to the city center, areal extent, access, recreational utilization, vegetation and capacity. In order to scrutinize the area of study in recreational sense, a survey study will be conducted with urban people, and in this way, the recreational capacity of the area will be revealed. Given the amount of green space per capita is quite small in Trabzon, a substantial increase will be seen in the green space per capita thanks to the study being conducted. Therefore, it is assumed that this advantage will offer new opportunities of utilization to people living in Trabzon in recreational terms.

Keywords: Open Green Spaces, Recreation, Urban Forest, Urban Forest Criteria, Boztepe.

1.Introduction

Urban forests are urban open green space systems that make ecological, economic and recreational contributions to the city and urban people alike. Most of the urban open green spaces in Turkey are insufficient in terms of both quantity and quality. As a result of that, attempts of urban people to reach natural areas brought along the notion of "urban forests". However, legal and scientific fundamentals of urban forests have yet to be adequately established; and therefore, a definitive definition has not been offered yet. Before starting with the notion of "urban forest", we need to clarify the term "urban forestry" first.

Urban forestry flourished around 1960s in the North America in an attempt to preserve and enhance natural resources existing in and around urban areas. This endeavor, which merely aimed at establishing planning and management schemes around urban settlements at the beginning, had support from a wide array of sources in later stages (Konijnendijk, 2003:176). Changing and expanding urban areas, and accompanying pressure on the forest zones within cities in terms of many aspects (economic, social, ecological and political) resulted in faster urbanization of forests (Randrup et al., 2005:11). The phrase 'urban forestry' was first introduced in 1965 at Toronto University in order to refer to afforestation function of local governments (Grey and Deneke, 1986:10-30). In this way, authorities tried to ensure that cities grow in a systematical and regular manner through which green spaces are integrated into cities in a natural way.

It was, then, defined by Society of Urban Foresters in 1972 as a special branch of forestry, and planting trees and managing forests for recreational purposes with the goal of maintaining psychological, sociological and economic welfare of urban people were determined as the primary objectives of urban forestry (Atay,1988: 24-45). At earlier stages, especially at the dawn of the 20th century, the term urban forestry focused on roadside planting schemes in urban areas, but as time passed, the frame of the term was developed and expanded in order to fully introduce the forest ecosystem into urban areas (Wolf, 2003: 19-21). In our country, on the other hand, the term urban forestry arose as a result of increasing awareness of the contributions and benefits which urban forests provide for urban people.

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Urban forests can be expressed as roadside trees, park trees, green roads, fence trees and trees in open spaces located within and around the settlements where we live (Moll; 1995:12-16). According to Wenger (1984), the term denotes the management of public and private forest areas that are surrounded by urban settlements (Wegner, 1984:455-480). Dunster and Dunster (1996), on the other hand, perceive the term as a more specialized form of forestry management that can be related with cultivation and management of trees planted in areas that can be utilized and/or influenced by urban population (Dunster and Dunster, 1996: 40-52). Therefore, the term includes forests, street trees, trees in parks and gardens, as well as the ones standing in deserted places and at the corners of the streets (Salbitana et al., 2016:1-34). Urban forests are actually the most important natural elements of cities that live as complex ecosystems, which are the outcome of integration of natural operations and human influence (Gezer and Gül, 2009:211-230).

1.1. Functions and Benefits of Urban Forests

Urban forests have many benefits for urban settlements in ecological, economic, recreational and aesthetic terms.

Ecological Aspect: Urban forests alter the ecological conditions of cities, and produce the vital oxygen for urban people. They maintain a natural balance by softening the impermeable and solid surfaces of cities. They contribute to the water cycle by creating permeable surfaces and thus hindering surface flow of instant and heavy rainfalls, which have increased in recent years due to climate change. Preserving the biological diversity, they enable various creatures continue living in the urban environment (Tilki et al., 2008: 92-100). They also regulate the climate of the cities and control the airflow deriving from extreme heats.

Economic Aspect: Urban forests can meet up to 25-90 % of the firewood demand of urban population. This rate is especially high in developing countries. Besides, people benefit from the fruit trees planted within cities as a source of food (Dirik and Ata, 2004:63-77).

Recreational Aspect: Urban forests are quite important for mental and physical health of urban people. With the recreational opportunities they offer, they enable urban population to interact with nature within cities, and closely observe the seasonal changes taking place as the time passes (Dirik, 2001:16-23). Creating a sense of integration with nature, they regenerate the psychological health of people living in cities.

Aesthetic Aspect: In terms of aesthetics, urban forests present impressive sceneries by softening the firm and rigid look of cities. By emphasizing important spots of cities, they gain a unique identity for them (Tilki et al., 2008: 92-100). Besides, the color 'green' arises the feelings of happiness, comfort and peace.

1.2. The Status of being an 'Urban Forest'

There are various perceptions as to which green areas located in cities can be identified as urban forests. Main criteria and features that make a given area an 'urban forest' were prescribed by General Directorate of Forestry through a report published in 2005:

- The area to be selected as an urban forest should be easily accessible and located close to the city. Places that have influence in urban life, like regulating climatic conditions, are accepted as urban forests in Turkey. Yet, according to Reference (Konijnendijk, 2003:176) the distance between an urban forest and a city should be 50 km or less.

- Although there is no limit in size, it is necessary to be above the transport capacity in proportion to the urban population and user capacity (OGM, 2005: 11-15). Although it is not strictly legal in terms of law, according to Reference (Konijnendijk, 2003:176), it should be at least 10 ha in size and in a position that can be utilized by visitors.

- The entrance doors should be positioned close to the main road and to the entrance. At the entrance gate, the name of the city forest is required to be suitable for the wood with wood elements and wooden materials. In addition, there should be a road map and signposts showing the venues that enable the diversity of the activity of the urban forest in the entrance. Users should be informed and guided along the roads.

- The width of the walkways within the city forest should not exceed 2 m, and should be arranged in harmony with the natural and area slopes. Walking paths should be arranged not only for navigation but also for different activities such as sitting, resting, lounging and eating. Children's playgrounds for children should be designed with little use of hard grounds by creating hills and pits in harmony with nature, natural forms.



•In areas where the scenic spots are located, viewing terraces should be constructed with observation kits to make cubic observations and natural kits for scenic navigation. Depending on the capacity, fountains and toilets should be placed in suitable places in order to meet the need.

•The urban forest should have a multipurpose use area. However, the main objective should be focused on recreation and conservation (such as biodiversity, soil-water conservation, wildlife, original landscaping areas).

•In terms of flora and fauna, there must be many living things in it. The physical structure of the city, its ecology and its landscape, its aesthetic and functional values are provided, the green texture is strengthened and its integrity is ensured. At the entrance of the city forest, parking space should be established at the capacity determined according to the number of users. Also for disabled users it should be possible to securely enter and exit.

2. Material And Method

The main material of this research is Boztepe picnic area and its surroundings in the city of Trabzon. Boztepe is located 3 km from the south of the city with its unique landscape of nature, built right on the city of Trabzon. And also Boztepe is one of the areas that offer the best traces of archaeological and written documents in the historical and cultural development of the ancient world in Trabzon city. This hill, which forms the backbone of the economy of Trabzon and rises just behind the harbor, is also the most strategic point of the city due to its central location. With this feature, Boztepe houses many values that will shed light on the city's cultural history (Emir, 2016:27-50).



Figure 1. Study area (OGM,2016).

In general, picnicking in the area has an intensive use of the grove area, eating and drinking restaurants and tea gardens, landscapes and sightseeing areas (Figure 2). The area also offers a variety of landscaping arrangements for children including playgrounds, fountains, information boards, benches, lighting elements, garbage cans, flower pots.



Figure 2. Boztepe picnic area



3. Results And Discussion

When the situation of Boztepe picnic area in Trabzon city center and its surrounding city forest could be evaluated, the following results were obtained;

- The most important criterion for being a city forest is proximity to the city. The study area provides this condition as it is 3 km from the city center. It is the distance that can be easily reached with private car or taxi in city center. In addition, this area has important contributions to forming the identity of the city with the traces of the historical and cultural development of the ancient world.
- The area is also quite sufficient in terms of recreational diversity.
- Boztepe picnic area and surroundings are very rich in natural landscape values such as wildlife and plant variety. Just above the picnic area is a forested wooded area. There are many different living creatures here. It is very important that the city is so close to this kind of living space.
- In the study area, both the entrance and exit of the area and the parking area around the picnic area are found, and it is determined that the number of observations made is sufficient.
- It should not be designed like a city park and there should not be many structural facilities. Urban forests should be equipped with basic facilities such as open flats, navigational aids, toilets, children's horticulture, sports areas, and picnic areas, car parks, especially at the entrance or only in certain areas of use. If the structural facility is required, it must be absolutely compatible with the natural construction and concrete appearance should not be included (Ermeydan, 2005: 25-35). From this point of view, there is an intensive construction in Boztepe.

4. Conclusions

Developing technology, increasing in parallel with social and economic developments, has brought to the fore the need of the urban user for green and nature. Especially in the intensely structured environments of the cities, urban forests are important areas where the city creates breathtaking green areas in terms of natural landscape values. They also provide a lot of social and psychological benefits to the people of the city. However, an application which is so important for urban and urban users is not clear in the Forest Law. Urban and nearby forest areas should be protected by a legal regulation and made available to the people of the city.

The concept of urban forestry in Trabzon has to be developed and implementation studies must be done and for this purpose these areas should enable the recreational use of urban people. Boztepe picnic area subject to the study can be regarded as urban forest when evaluated in this sense. However, different applications and precautions should be taken. Because now Boztepe is completely used for picnic purposes. Yet an urban forest is not a picnic area. The picnic areas should be controlled and should be done at the designated part, not all over the area. In addition, walking paths, bicycle paths, scatter and gathering points, resting and viewing areas should be designed in accordance with the topography of the area. Balanced slope should be graded with terrain to allow long distance walking for sporting purposes. For cyclists who are not available at the moment, bike trails and training areas can be integrated with landscape points.

Urban forests should be able to respond to the different user needs of urban people. There can be funny different uses for young people in the forest area in the study area. Variety of activities such as road finding, paintball, climbing and mountain biking can be added to the area. All proposed activities should be carried out within a plan and ecosystem continuity should be ensured without destroying the forested area.

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