

# Consumption of Historical Space: Spatial Transformation of Safranbolu Historical Bazaar

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## Abstract

Under the influence of the consumer culture that dominates the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism, competing cities have begun to resemble each other and their identities have been damaged. It is thought that the Safranbolu Historical Bazaar is an example of the process described due to its constant marketing by the tourism industry and the danger of its unique culture being commodified and collapsing. In this study, it is aimed to first examine and reveal the threats to the sustainability of cultural heritage through the relations established by the space with the concepts of production-consumption and tourism, and then to create a framework that will ensure the sustainable development of the transformation that the space undergoes throughout the production process in historical cities. Based on this, the study aims to contribute to the development of alternative conservation approaches for the Historical Bazaar by producing information that will strengthen and transfer the unique value of the space. The study was designed with qualitative research methods and multiple data collection tools were used together. Observations and in-depth interviews were conducted in order to reveal spatial practices. As a result of the evaluations in the Historical Bazaar, it was seen that the transformation of the city was shaped around a heritage discourse that emphasised consumption, and suggestions were presented to contribute to the sustainability of cultural heritage.

## Keywords

production of space, consumption, historical city, Safranbolu historical bazaar, transformation of space

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Transformation and consumption in the production of space in historical cities

Time and space are subject to social, historical, and political transformation. In other words, time and space cannot merely be treated as abstract concepts; instead, their qualities – which are embedded directly within life itself and ultimately constitute life in its broadest sense – must be comprehended holistically across disciplines. Time and space are neither empty, formal molds lacking content nor categories that independently provide knowledge of an external reality removed from human existence. Although time and space are distinct formations, they are interdependent; the existence of one necessitates the other. Therefore, a comprehensive and profound understanding of time and space must be reconsidered to include bodily experience alongside social formations and historical conditions. Lefebvre,

who acknowledges the mutual interaction between time and space, argues that all historical conditions are essentially related to the production of space (Kurtar, 2019).

According to Lefebvre (2015), understanding space as a social product requires a deeper analysis of production, the product, and the interrelations between them. Spatial and social components must be evaluated dialectically as parts of a whole. Societies produce their own spaces and cultures through their specific modes of production. In the social structure, social space is redefined in every era through its tendency to transform society alongside the prevailing mode of production. Moreover, although space both influences and is influenced by the mode of production, it transforms along with it (Lefebvre, 2015). Through Lefebvre's spatial analysis, a new framework emerges for reevaluating space not just as a physical reality but in terms of social relations.

In traditional social production modes, the maintenance and reproduction of production relations occurred within space, without space itself posing a problem for sustaining these relationships. Today, however, the spread of new forces of production within the framework of capitalist modes and relations of production is evident (Ghulyan, 2017). At its current stage, capitalism's emerging global dominance increasingly manifests itself through the transformation of cities and architecture (Çoban, 2015)

The transition from one mode of production to another – fragmenting space and shaped by the contradictions embedded in social production relations – holds significant theoretical value. Each mode of production generates a new space suitable to itself during this transition. Conversely, these transitions necessitate the transformation of space and the reorganization of its structure (Lefebvre, 2015). This process began with modernism.

How the city inherits previous production forms and how new production relations are integrated and become dominant within the city has been the focus of numerous urban studies. The subsequent transformation of this inherited structure by capitalism, the positions it assumes to meet changing needs, its interaction with the city, and how it reconstructs urban form in accordance with political and economic imperatives should be viewed through the structural and dialectical lens of Marxism. In the process of self-reproduction, capitalism transforms everything it interacts with – especially nature and social life – including environment, objects, and human relations. This transformation inevitably includes the geography, region, and space in which production relations occur. In this accumulation process, particularly today, the city occupies a pivotal place both as the locus of production and as a resource commodified by capitalism (Şahin, 2020). The reorganization of production enables capitalism's geographic mobility and facilitates the use of distinctive local features, while also contributing to changes in spatial organization through new work arrangements (Durukan, 2020).

In traditional societies, space was produced by everyday life, enriched with historical and social relationships and values that generated authentic experiential qualities. However, under the influence of capital, the historical production and social significance of space are often disregarded unless they contribute to its exchange value. This process suppresses the unique experiential qualities of social space, leading to the loss of its cultural and social values (Ayşin and Turhanoğlu, 2014). The transformation of traditional production relations has caused the breakdown of certain everyday life practices. Newly

acquired behaviours have contributed to the spread of consumer culture. Hence, studies concerning cities often begin by examining the modes of production and forms of spatial organization that influence urban space (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023).

Over the past two decades, geographers have increasingly focused on how space is socially produced. Notably, Lefebvre (2015) and Soja (2019) argue that space is a product of human imagination and activity, emphasizing that the concept of space is more closely related to how we experience, value, and develop our surroundings than to intrinsic physical characteristics. These structures evolve over time and reflect our cultural understanding of the world. Harvey (2006) highlights the economic forces that shape places, especially the dominant role of capital. Following Urry (2018), studies have explored consumption cultures and the social construction of consumption, deepening our understanding of places as objects of consumption. One of Urry's conceptualizations – the visual consumption of places – refers to how tourists consume local lifestyles and, through their actions, contribute to reshaping those spaces. These ideas have provided fertile ground for geographers and scholars studying consumption (Overton, 2010).

As one of globalization's most powerful tools, the consumption economy has led to significant functional and formal changes in urban physical spaces. Global capital demands the creation of new spaces that stimulate consumption (Görgülü and Kaymaz Koca, 2009). Urban space is increasingly being produced as a consumption object, and repeated spaces shaped by consumption patterns now resemble products rather than architectural works.

Furthermore, another outcome of capitalism's consumption-driven spatial organization is the aestheticization of urban spaces through reinterpretation and representation, aiming to transform them into centres of culture, art, tourism, and entertainment. In this process, cities are defined in diverse ways to appeal to different types of tourists.

This study examines consumption in historical cities as a complex phenomenon, not limited to organizing places for specific uses or opening adjacent areas to economic use. Rather, places are increasingly consumed visually, their inherent qualities transformed into perceivable images. This transformation of space and its reproduction for consumption purposes are closely tied to advancements in transportation and communication, as well as the organization of social time. The growth of the tourism industry, enabled by the planning of leisure time and expanding travel opportunities following industrialization, has accelerated this in historical cities (Koçyiğit, 2007).

Tourism holds significant economic and social value by offering the opportunity to experience a place's unique qualities. However, space now often functions as a tool that guides visitors toward consumption. This goes beyond the consumption of objects within a space to include the consumption of space itself as a commodity. Urry (2018) notes that tourism is an alternative form of consumption in which space is at least visually consumed. Central to tourist consumption is the viewing of landscapes or urban scenery that contrast with everyday life and offer new experiences. In this way, space becomes an image, leading to a shallow, placeless transformation that erases distinctions between places.

Post-globalization shifts in production and consumption dynamics have altered perceptions of historical cities. As cities lose many of their former functions, social and economic balance has become difficult to maintain. Cities, under the pressure of economic development, have been reorganized as tourism areas, placing the preservation of cultural heritage – beyond the physical – at risk. Influenced by consumer culture, competition among cities has caused them to resemble one another, damaging their identities. Thus, there is a growing need to develop strategies for the creative and sustainable transformation of historical cities' social, cultural, and economic values. The danger of space being consumed in historical cities corresponds to capitalism's powerful, restructuring-driven transformation. In-depth analyses of this process can help identify potential threats to urban sustainability. Within this framework, a critical and creative perspective is essential to developing governance tools that respond to evolving community needs (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2024).

In historic city centres, visually consumption-oriented approaches weaken experiential and communicative aspects that define a sense of place. The new communication system driven by capital transforms historical cities into visual consumption centres, reducing their identity to commodities. In this global system, the lack of balance between development and conservation leads to the erosion of place attachment, urban integrity, and social identity. The physical pressure of tourism – necessary for urban continuity and economic development – manifests in the increasing identification of places with consumption. This is also evident in Safranbolu's historical bazaar, where shifts in production relations and economically driven policies have placed space at risk of being consumed (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023). The city's economy heavily depends on successfully presenting and interpreting its historical character (Strange, 1996). This may

result in a transformation that undermines the historical identity of the city. The failure to sustain the unique experiences embedded in daily life, despite preserving physical elements for economic reasons, is one of the key drivers of this negative transformation (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023).

Efforts to protect historical city centres and ensure their socio-economic development today have largely centered on transforming them into tourism-focused spaces, often sidelining their social and cultural foundations. The transformation of historical spaces into objects of tourist consumption contradicts sustainable urban development. Practices that overlook the needs and expectations of local residents lead to the consumption of space, both physically and symbolically, through the erasure of local uses and meanings.

## 2 Purpose and significance of the research

This study primarily aims to identify the threats to the sustainability of cultural heritage by examining the interrelations between the production and consumption of space and the phenomenon of tourism. Subsequently, the objective is to propose a framework that will enable the sustainable development of spaces undergoing transformation in historical cities. In this context, the study intends to contribute to the development of alternative conservation approaches for the Safranbolu Historical Bazaar, alongside principles, strategies, and recommendations that will reinforce the original value of space and ensure its transmission to future generations.

Focusing on this objective, the research explores the relationship between the transformation of historical cities under the influence of consumer culture and strategies developed for their sustainable development.

The study employs qualitative research methods to examine the spatial transformation of historical cities under the impact of capitalism. Within the scope of the case study, multiple qualitative data collection tools were utilised. To uncover spatial practices, observation and in-depth interview techniques were employed. Physical traces of spatial transformation were mapped through spatial analyses, which were enriched using archival sources and recent academic studies relevant to the research area.

In this sense, this research, unlike previous studies on this topic, examines the area not only through its tangible values but also through social, cultural, and economic perspectives. Another key distinguishing feature of this study is its use of MAXQDA (24.0) software (Cleverbridge, online) to systematically analyze verbal, visual, and textual data.

### 3 Research methodology

The methodology of the study is structured around three stages: defining the problem, conducting the analysis, and developing recommendations (Fig. 1). This method was developed in light of the fact that the research topic has occurred or is still occurring in the selected region and that the majority of the data to be assessed is qualitative in nature.

The first step towards generating sustainable proposals for historical city centres influenced by consumer culture is to understand spatial transformation through the lens of changing production relations. By analysing the transformation of space in historical cities, it becomes possible to reveal the values of social space, assess the risks of its commodification, and thereby contribute to the sustainability of cultural heritage.

To identify the nature of spatial transformation, it is essential to understand how capitalist reproduction processes reposition human activities and modes of production in the city according to the needs of each era. This perspective informs the second stage of the methodology – analysis – which involves defining the areas of investigation and the spatial aspects to be explored. These areas, when examined in line with the initial conceptual framework, will form the basis for the broader analysis of the city.

Within daily life, communities experience the formation of space through diverse functions. Historical cities are shaped not only by physical elements but also by the social values they embody and the historical relations they reflect. These relationships are manifested within spaces where economic and social life unfolds. Urban spaces where the fundamental functions of city life occur include public spaces for social interaction, private spaces for living and domestic life, places of worship, and recreational areas.

To reveal the transformation of these identified spaces, field observations were conducted, and data gathered from in-depth interviews with users who actively experience these spaces were analysed thematically through a coded, section-based approach. The results were interpreted alongside the findings from observational data. The spatial representation of the collected data was supported through mapping techniques.

The MAXQDA program (Cleverbridge, online) was used in the analysis of the transcripts obtained from the in-depth interviews. MAXQDA is a software designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed-method data, text, and multimedia analysis in academic and commercial institutions. The program is a qualitative software that can be used to analyze data and quantitative findings in all fields, suitable for explanation and theoretical analysis of social and cultural phenomena (Marjaei et al., 2019). MAXQDA is the preferred software for researchers who want to work with quantitative and qualitative data in many fields, such as interview research, focus group analysis, internet-based surveys, and the analysis of audiovisual documents.

In the final stage, based on the findings obtained through analysis, general recommendations and principles were developed concerning the intensity and nature of changes affecting the original value of space. The purpose of this phase was to generate knowledge that could inform and support alternative conservation decisions in the future.

#### 3.1 Data collection

To understand the relationship between consumption and space, it is essential to employ multiple data collection methods. Since the formation of social space is a process, and given the need to identify rupture points that affect the production of space, a combination of methods was used in the fieldwork – including in-depth interviews, archival research, literature reviews, and direct observation.

Archival research was conducted to enhance the validity of the study by incorporating written and visual materials relevant to the subject, alongside the spatial analysis. Before the fieldwork, relevant literature was reviewed, and the area's maps and satellite images were analysed.

The sample group for the in-depth interviews was selected from among actors who were both influential in the transformation of the region and simultaneously affected by it. The sample consisted of participants from various professional backgrounds residing in Safranbolu. The interviews aimed to collect participants' experiences and insights regarding the variables that have turned cities

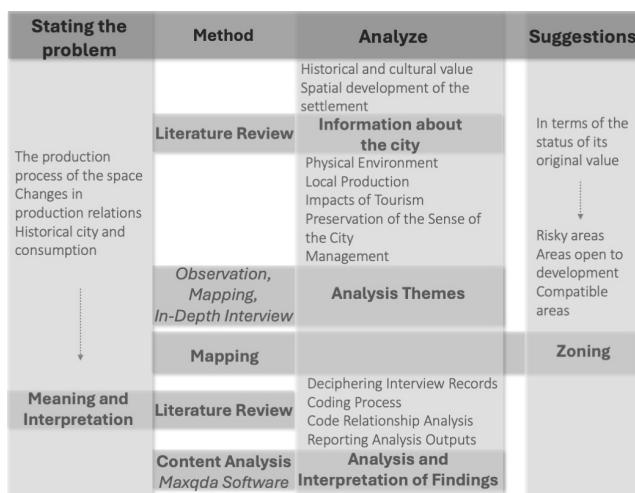


Fig. 1 Method of the study

into spaces of consumption, without imposing constraints on their responses. The combination of visual and textual data helped contextualise the relationship between social, cultural, spatial, and economic variables and consumption within the broader social reality – a reality that, as Lefebvre (2015) suggests, cannot be divorced from urban space and spatial practices.

Interviews were conducted in May, June, and August of 2024. A total of 21 individuals participated in the in-depth interviews. Audio recordings, ranging from 25 to 72 min, were transcribed for analysis.

To access everyday spatial practices, observation was also conducted. These observations were used to characterise the physical conditions of the space, its usage, and general patterns of use by the local community. Photographic documentation was employed to record observations. Observational data were particularly important in supporting the interview findings. To test the reliability of the data, documents obtained from literature reviews and institutional sources (such as statistics, journals, and maps) were also reviewed and included in the study.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The MAXQDA software program was used to analyse the transcriptions from the in-depth interviews (Cleverbridge, online). This programme was chosen for its ability to efficiently organise and assess large volumes of qualitative data, thereby facilitating the development of a conceptual model in line with the qualitative research design of the study.

Interview transcripts were interpreted within the conceptual framework established at the beginning of the research. During the coding process, a list of codes – derived from both the theoretical framework and research questions – was used, along with new codes and themes that emerged organically from the interviews and observations. These transcripts were then coded using MAXQDA (24.0) (Cleverbridge, online), allowing for a quantitative reflection of frequently mentioned concepts and helping to clarify the central findings.

## 4 Investigating the sustainable transformation of space in Safranbolu

In Section 4, based on the theoretical framework of spatial theory, the study discusses the transformative influence of global capitalism on the Safranbolu Historical Bazaar and proposes ideas for responding to the evolving needs of the local community while preserving the city's unique qualities.

Urry (2018) argues that many localities in contemporary societies are being transformed by various forms of

rapid economic restructuring. At the heart of these restructurings lies consumer culture, which manifests itself spatially (Ölmezses Şentürk, 2023). Places are shaped through consumption, and different consumption cultures lead to the emergence of various consumption-oriented spaces (Overton, 2010). In the case of Safranbolu, the change in user demographics in the city centre and the tourism-focused approach to economic development are the primary drivers behind both spatial and cultural transformation.

The concern that forms the foundation of this study arises from the observation that conservation efforts in Safranbolu, once focused on tangible heritage, are now entering a phase of commodification and representation of history tailored to a growing consumer market (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023).

### 4.1 Safranbolu's historical and cultural value

The settlement of Safranbolu developed following the Turkish conquest in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, evolving into a prominent trade centre. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it had become a major caravan station on the east-west trade route (Canbulat, 2016). Economic developments driven by the region's geographical position and characteristics enabled the city to reach a certain level of prosperity (Aktüre and Şenyapılı, 1976).

Following the decline of traditional caravan routes, the socio-economic structure shifted. Vineyards, originally worked for agricultural purposes, were transformed into summer houses. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two distinct residential zones emerged: the summer district known as Bağlar, and the winter settlement, referred to as the City or Bazaar (Çarşı). Additionally, separated from the Çarşı by a deep valley to the west lies Kıranköy, which was predominantly inhabited by Greek Orthodox residents until the population exchange of 1923. Thus, Safranbolu comprises three main areas – Çarşı, Kıranköy, and Bağlar – each with distinct spatial characteristics (Böke, 2020) (Fig. 2).

These three settlements – Safranbolu City (Historical Bazaar), Kıranköy, and Bağlar – were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994 by the World Heritage Committee. The present study focuses specifically on the Historical Bazaar, which today is the primary site of tourism activities.

### 4.2 Spatial transformation of production and settlement in Safranbolu

Safranbolu maintained its position as a significant commercial centre until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, with the construction of railway lines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trade routes shifted, diminishing the strategic importance

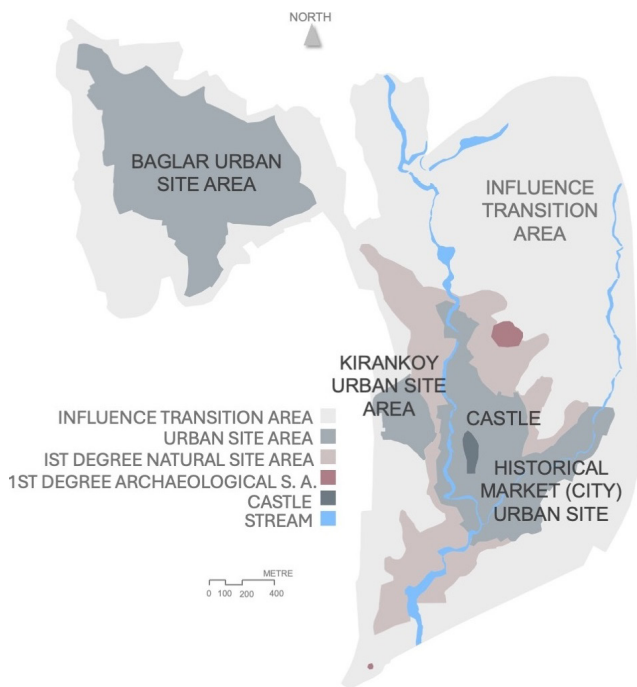


Fig. 2 Safranbolu city protected areas

of Safranbolu, which lay on one of the now-defunct routes. The successive wars that followed led to nationwide economic hardship, which was also reflected in the town, resulting in the deterioration of its socio-economic structure. Production declined, labour shortages emerged, and out-migration increased (Böke, 2020).

The core driver of this transformation of space was the shift in the town's fundamental production relations. Traditional leather manufacturing, unable to keep up with technological advancements and further weakened by the establishment of the Karabük Iron and Steel Factory, lost its economic viability. Likewise, handicrafts based on the master-apprentice model faced extinction due to the labour gap. A leather factory established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also closed due to lack of skilled workers and operational difficulties.

As the historical bazaar lost its primary functions, local residents began to abandon their mansions, which they could no longer maintain. The town's new residents were largely composed of incoming industrial workers (Aktüre and Şenyapılı, 1976:p.83; Doğanalp Votzi, 2022). This demographic shift brought with it changes that also influenced the town's cultural fabric.

From the 1970s onward, preservation initiatives began, and in 1994, Safranbolu was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Interest in the region grew significantly thereafter, and tourism initiatives gained momentum. While the factory had previously positioned industry as a major economic sector, by the 1990s, tourism began to dominate

the local economy. Today, tourism ranks among the town's most vital sectors (Türker, 2022), prompting the urban space to reorganise itself increasingly around the service industry.

### 4.3 Findings

Section 4.3 explores the lived experiences of participants with different professional backgrounds residing in Safranbolu, specifically within the Historical Bazaar – the designated area of focus. Data obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews were analysed using the content analysis method, a widely applied qualitative technique.

The findings from these interviews were categorised under five main themes: the physical environment, local production, the impacts of tourism, preservation of the sense of the city, and governance (Fig. 3). Upon reviewing these codes,

Themes	Codes	Subcodes
Physical Environment (60)	Places needed in the city (26)	Pharmacy (3) Workshop- training center (3) Museum (3) Places for young people (5) Quality place(6) Public space (6)
	Purpose of use (34)	To explore (2) Technical trip - research(3) Working-living (5) Food and drink (7) Showing guests around (7) Walking - sightseeing(10)
Local Production (77)	Lack of production (8) Lack of quality in products (12) Ongoing original production (16) Extinction of local crafts (16) Lack of originality of products (25)	
Impact of Tourism (58)	Negative effects of tourism (51)	Crowd (4) Physical wear (9) Inability to experience the city center (10) Traffic problem (10) Exceeding the city's capacity (14)
	Positive effects of tourism (7)	
Preserving the Sense of the City (104)	Identity change (4) Being seen as a potential customer (7) Transforming into a museum city (9) Changing demographic structure (13) Interruption of authentic daily life (17) Decline of the originality of the city (21) Trade-oriented approach (33)	
Management (174)	Misjudgment of tourism (4) Need for control (7) Lack of communication between stakeholders (8) Failure of the work to achieve its purpose (9) Need for public support (9) Successful conservation (11) Innovative work (11)	
	Extension of information period (25)	Ineffective use of social media (4) Inability to access cultural activities (10)
	Problems related to the use of space(46)	Inter-regional disconnect (5) Bringing vehicles inside (10) Presentation and interpretation techniques (14) Limited space usage (17)
	Education and research(44)	Lack of dialogue with local people(6) Lack of Awareness (27)

Fig. 3 The codes extracted from the interviews and the order of the themes they combine with their frequency values

the recurring themes of commercial concern and authenticity emerged prominently – aligning with previous research on the Safranbolu Historical Bazaar (Böke, 2020; Doğanalp Votzi, 2022; Somuncu and Yiğit, 2010; Türker, 2022).

The relationships between overlapping or closely related codes in the text were identified using MAXQDA's code relations browser. The concept map representing intersections among the created codes was generated using MAXQDA's code model and is presented in Fig. 4 as a code co-occurrence model. The thickness of connecting lines indicates frequency, with thicker lines denoting stronger correlations.

The relationship between each main theme and the associated codes was tabulated using MAXQDA's code relations table and is presented in Fig. 5.

When examining the code relations tables that visualise the intensity of intersections between participants' statements within the coding system, the strongest intersection is observed between the theme of governance and the sub-code decline of local crafts. In parallel, a notable overlap is identified between the theme preservation of the sense of the city and the sub-code presentation and interpretation techniques.

In the second tier of frequency, the theme local production intersects with innovative and positive initiatives, while preservation of the sense of the city intersects with demographic shifts and interruption of authentic daily life. The governance theme also prominently intersects with the sub-code loss of authenticity.

In the third tier of intersection frequency, the governance theme overlaps with lack of awareness, commerce-oriented approach, innovative initiatives, presentation and interpretation techniques, and traffic problems. Similarly, preservation of the sense of the city co-occurs with lack of awareness and commerce-driven approach, while the impacts of tourism theme intersects notably with physical deterioration and vehicular access to pedestrian areas (Fig. 5)

### 5 Discussion

As a result of transformations in production relations, it is evident that traditional professions no longer survive in the town. Primary livelihoods such as leatherworking, forestry, and livestock farming have been largely replaced by tourism. Doğanalp Votzi (2022:p.325), in her fieldwork

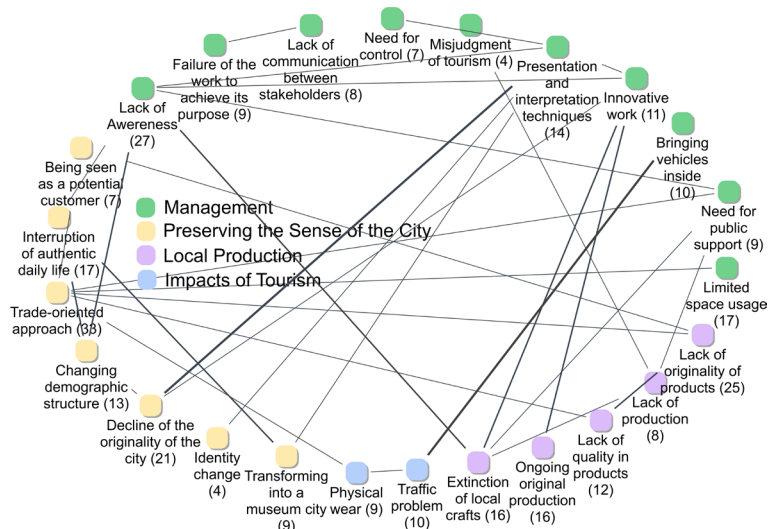


Fig. 4 Code co-occurrence model

Code System	Lack ...	Trade...	Chan...	Transf...	Extinc...	Ongoi...	Traffi...	Innov...
Physical Environment								
Local Production								
Impact of Tourism								
Preserving the Sense of the City								
Management								
<b>SUM</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

Code System	Lack ...	Need ...	Interr...	Lack ...	Lack ...	Physi...	Prese...	Declin...
Physical Environment								
Local Production								
Impact of Tourism								
Preserving the Sense of the City								
Management								
<b>SUM</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

Fig. 5 Code relations browser data

conducted in 1982, observed that traditional trades were still active within the Historical Bazaar, with its shops, workshops, mosques, baths, inns, and weekly grain and vegetable markets, serving as the town's economic and social hub. However, she also noted that as traditional crafts diminished, the bazaar began to lose its productive function and gradually transformed into a museum-like display catering to tourist consumption.

As shown by earlier studies (Dağı and Çelik, 2020; Deniz and Çelik, 2020; Köse and Akbulut, 2019; Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023; Yaman, 2022) and field-based analyses, traditional crafts have not been adequately preserved in the Bazaar, and commercial functions serving tourism have intensified as part of an economic development strategy. According to the code co-occurrence model, the disappearance of local crafts is closely related to a lack of awareness among the local population.

While the Historical Bazaar has garnered attention for its tangible heritage preservation, the failure to protect traditional crafts and production techniques poses a risk to the intangible heritage. As tourism's influence grows, craftspeople striving to continue their work have shifted their product lines from everyday items to goods tailored for tourists. Today, these crafts – used in restoration work – are performed and reinterpreted as touristic spectacles, gaining new meanings through stylised presentations (Köse and Akbulut, 2019). Currently, only a few coppersmiths and blacksmiths continue traditional production, alongside a single *yemenici* (traditional shoemaker). Outside these few, most of the products in the Bazaar are mass-produced souvenirs lacking authenticity.

Historically, Safranbolu was also a prominent agricultural production area and settlement (Türker and Gür, 2024). During fieldwork, participants highlighted the insufficiency of locally produced goods. Safranbolu Delight remains one of the few original products still in production. Yet, with the increasing number of shops, concerns regarding quality and discomfort caused to visitors during aggressive sampling practices have been raised by participants.

Kaya (2019) identifies one of the major conservation issues in urban heritage areas like Safranbolu as the inability to maintain the social fabric of the town. The departure of original inhabitants, alongside the repurposing of buildings for different functions, causes the historical environment to lose its essence as a "city" and instead turn into a visually appealing but experientially empty museum. This scenario is seen as a potential risk for Safranbolu as well. With the pressures of modern living, the traditional lifestyle is no

longer observable in its original form. Today's local residents largely consist of families who settled in vacant houses following the establishment of the iron and steel factory, as well as investors who moved in for commercial purposes.

The presence of multiple social groups in the region has led to changes in senses of belonging and identity, resulting in the disruption of traditional daily practices (Altınörs Çırak, 2019; Kaya, 2019). The fundamental elements that give meaning to space – through shared societal interactions – are now at risk. The use of historical character for economic strategies has gradually diminished residential functions and, in turn, reduced the density of the local population. Many mansions located near commercial areas in the centre of the Bazaar have been converted into tourist accommodations (Fig. 6).

In the Safranbolu Bazaar area, the gradual withdrawal of the local population from the space – alongside the erosion of original uses and values in a physically preserved yet socially disconnected environment – brings with it the looming threat of spatial consumption. The data obtained from the field study support this concern, revealing that the loss of values contributing to the sense of the town is closely linked to demographic changes, the interruption of authentic daily life, and a general lack of awareness.

New residents, who are often unfamiliar with the nuances of traditional life in the area, struggle to fully grasp the meaning and significance of heritage. One of the key findings that emerged from the study is the tendency of these newcomers, who engage in production with a commercially driven mindset and lack a strong connection to the sense of the place, to reduce heritage to its economic utility. As a result, spaces undergoing transformation are increasingly commodified through newly assigned, market-oriented functions.

Sevgi (2024) stresses that in the Historical Bazaar, the failure to adhere to the principle of designing new functions in relation to former uses results in spaces becoming commodified entities, disconnected from their historical context. This loss of continuity effectively transforms once-vital urban places into consumable objects devoid of cultural memory. UNESCO's 2006 Periodic Reporting also highlights several threats and risks, including development pressure, visitor/tourism pressure, lack of infrastructure, renewal trends focused on tourist accommodation, and serious traffic/parking problems (UNESCO, online). As outlined in the monitoring report, Safranbolu presents a visible example of the tension between tourism and conservation. While tourism is undeniably instrumental in generating urban and regional economic value, if managed



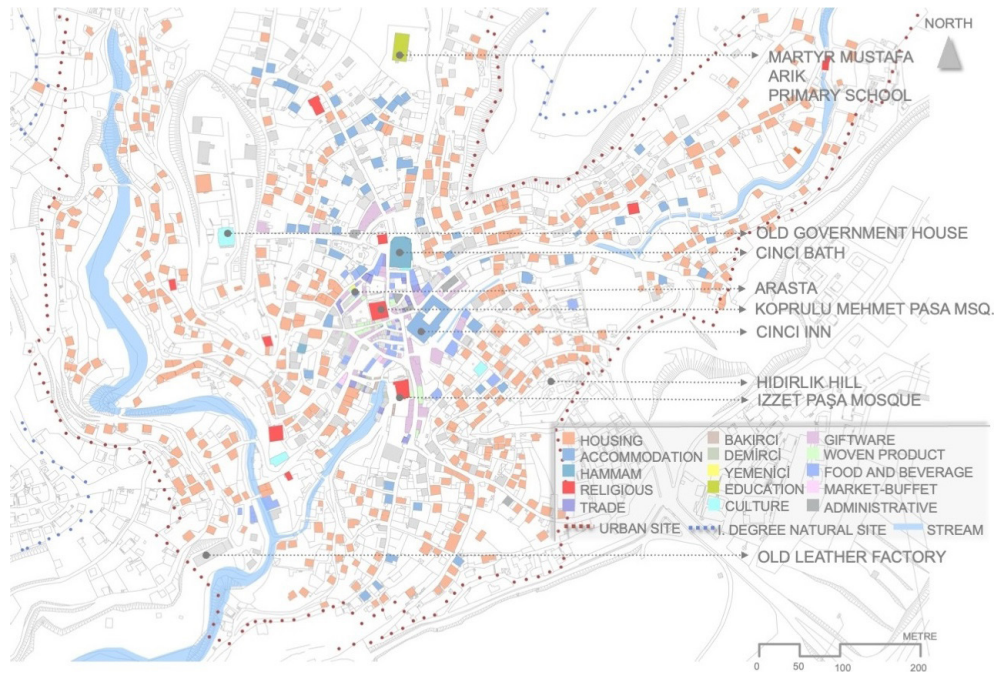


Fig. 6 Transformation of the functional status of the Old Bazaar centre

solely with a consumption-oriented development perspective, it may lead to several adverse effects on the transformation of historic towns.

Recent research indicates that the Historical Bazaar is particularly prone to overcrowding during holidays, which results in the physical overcapacity of the site being breached (Sevgi, 2024; Türker et al., 2024). Both direct observations and participant statements from the field confirm that the Bazaar is undergoing physical wear and tear due to excessive use – effectively becoming consumed in a literal sense. Combined with increased vehicular traffic, this situation impairs the perceptibility of the historical fabric, thereby negatively affecting visitors' and locals' spatial experience (Fig. 7).

In addition to the issue of capacity overload within the Historic Bazaar, spatial usage patterns reveal broader concerns stemming from the unplanned management of tourism. The over-concentration of visitors in certain zones, while peripheral areas such as Kıranköy and Bağlar remain underutilised, indicates a lack of balanced spatial planning. Furthermore, vehicular access into the narrowest streets of the Bazaar creates significant pressure on both the physical fabric and the spatial experience. Field data confirm that traffic congestion – particularly during peak periods – is one of the town's most pressing issues. The unrestricted entry of vehicles at all times has led to visible wear and tear on the urban texture (Fig. 8), underscoring the urgent need for alternative, locality-specific traffic solutions.

Since Safranbolu's inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994, there has been a notable increase in tourist activity. However, due to insufficient visitor management strategies, tourist flows remain highly concentrated in specific commercialised areas of the town. This concentrated usage not only exacerbates physical degradation but also undermines equitable visitor distribution. Participants in the study affirm that while the central Bazaar remains overwhelmed, moving toward its peripheries reveals spaces where more authentic daily life can still be observed – albeit sporadically (Fig. 9).

Görmüş et al. (2018) support these findings by noting that the streets associated with shopping and heritage façades form a visible tourist axis, where photographic evidence lacks details of everyday life. This suggests that either such everyday scenes have vanished or that the architectural aesthetic has overridden the lived experience in the tourist gaze.

While participants largely acknowledged the success of tangible heritage conservation in the Historic Bazaar, they also criticised the overemphasis on aesthetic restoration aimed solely at tourism. This selective transformation disrupts the relationship between space and community, rendering such places incapable of delivering genuine experiential value. Detached from their social context, towns undergoing similar transformations often risk becoming homogenised – losing their unique character and drifting toward placelessness. In such settings, heritage itself becomes endangered by the very tourism

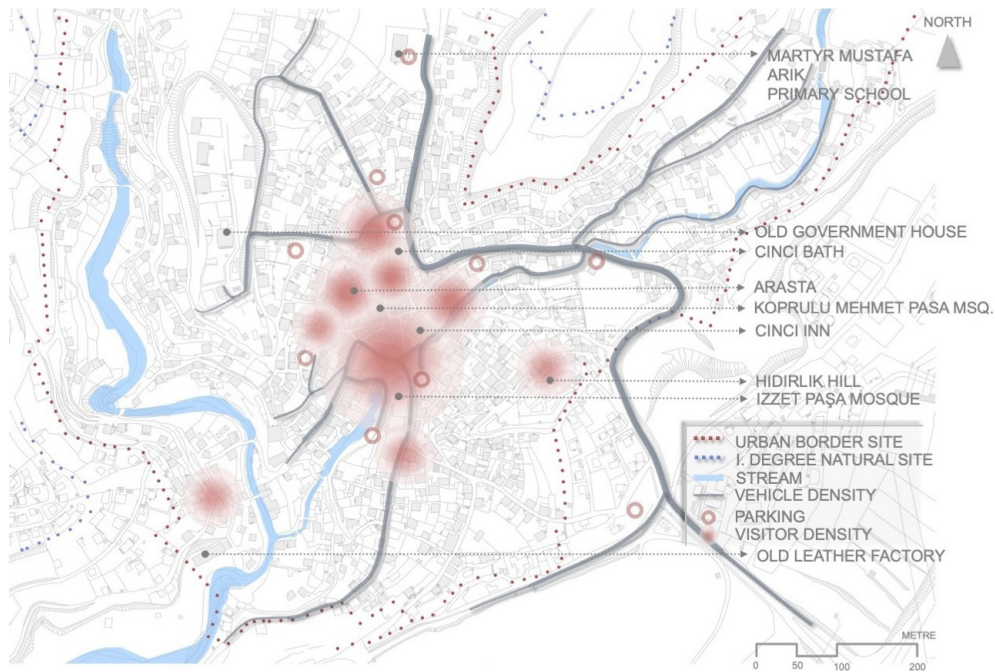


Fig. 7 Areas of the centre that are exposed to heavy use in the Bazaar



Fig. 8 The density of people in the Historical Bazaar centre at different dates, the congestion caused by vehicles in narrow streets and the restriction of pedestrian movement

it is meant to sustain.

At the heart of this issue is image-based consumption: the selection and re-presentation of spatial elements that are visually appealing to tourists. This process reduces place to a set of curated images, fostering visual rather than meaningful engagement. The Historic Bazaar appears to follow this trajectory, as conservation efforts prioritise the aesthetic dimensions of tangible heritage. Ölçer Özünel (2011) notes that in such artificially

reconstituted spaces, not only is the setting commodified, but culture itself is reconstructed through consumption.

One of the study's most striking findings was the frequent co-occurrence of presentation and interpretation techniques with concerns over the loss of authenticity. The reinterpretation of Safranbolu's historic character to fit within a competitive tourist market, while effective in attracting visitors, has contributed to a shallow, image-driven representation of place.

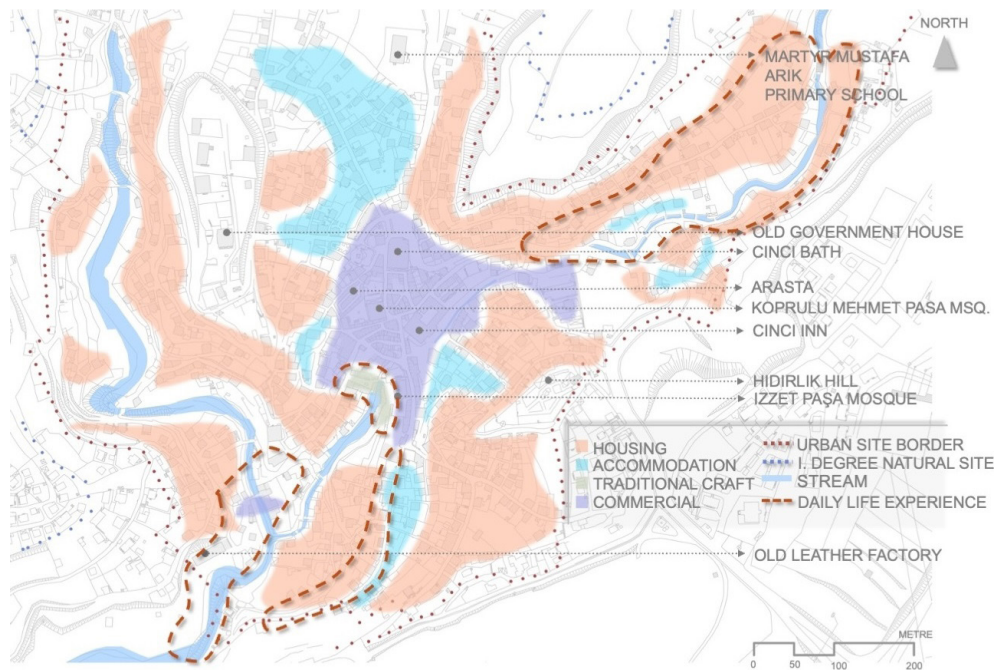


Fig. 9 The general area uses of the market centre and the areas where participants enjoy experiencing the city and daily life are experienced

Among all coded themes, "management" emerged with the highest frequency. This theme encompasses vital areas such as the importance of continuous education and research, the need to reconsider how intensely used spaces are evaluated, and the critical role of knowledge transfer in shaping the urban experience. These elements are essential for developing resilient strategies that protect the integrity of place while allowing it to evolve meaningfully.

### 6 Conclusions and recommendations

Cultural heritage sites serve as sources of knowledge not only locally but also internationally. Due to the impact of globalization, heritage sites that possess particular local significance – especially those that represent a unique and exceptional testimony to history and are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of humanity's common heritage – have attracted increasing attention. This interest has significantly contributed to the growth of cultural tourism, which is considered a major type of tourism (Sevgi, 2024). However, while historic cities are increasingly highlighted for their unique characteristics, they are simultaneously undergoing transformation under the influence of new spatial reorganization dynamics.

Everyday life, as the true centre of human production, encompasses a multitude of complex relationships and lived practices (Lefebvre, 2015). In this context, the preservation of authentic daily life in historical environments – reimaged through new modes of spatial organization in a changing world – is critical. Research should explore how

traditional living practices, which shape historical environments, can be sustained by integrating modern needs. In the case of Safranbolu's Historical Bazaar (Çarşı), a sustainable model is needed – one that both serves multiple functions and maintains the site's authenticity. Strategies should be developed to allow tourism and everyday life practices to coexist and remain experienceable.

This study, based on in-depth interviews conducted in Safranbolu's Historical Bazaar, foregrounds participants' spatial experiences to identify not only the threats to the sustainability of the city's qualities but also the areas with potential for improvement. Through the fieldwork and interviews, the study proposes actionable steps for the creative and sustainable transformation of historic urban spaces:

- A primary step for the Historical Bazaar – which bears the traces of a consumption-driven transformation – is to reassess the heritage awareness of the user groups, which have changed due to socioeconomic factors, and to collaboratively rediscover distinctive natural, cultural, and social resources with all stakeholders. It is essential to evaluate the features that reflect the "sense of place" through appropriate thematic frameworks (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023).
- For crafts under threat of extinction, institutional collaboration becomes paramount. In Safranbolu, there are already institutions with the capacity to support such efforts. Through workshops where visitors can experience local production practices, cultural transmission can be enhanced via hands-on

engagement. Experiencing local production not only deepens tourist encounters but also fosters direct communication with the local population. Art faculties and cultural education centres in the city hold potential to offer design support, thereby enhancing the originality of local production. Creative workshops that raise local awareness and allow visitors to participate in production could be realized using existing but currently unused buildings in the city centre (Köse and Akbulut, 2019).

- Supporting traditional production is crucial for sustaining the region's unique commercial functions. This requires both the preservation and the creative reinterpretation of traditional crafts.
- With the growth of tourism, local products like vinegar and molasses have gained prominence. New varieties based on grape production, for example, can be developed to create tourism-related value (Türker and Gür, 2024). Awareness-raising among producers is also essential to ensure that these traditional practices are maintained despite increased demand.
- Safranbolu must avoid becoming a static, museum-like city visited only during certain hours. It must instead remain a vibrant, living city where daily life continues alongside its historical character (Kaya, 2019). Accordingly, research should place greater emphasis on the relationship between cultural activities and everyday practices.
- To enable daily life to persist in the Historical Bazaar, communities must be able to engage with the space through diverse functions. According to participants, in addition to core urban amenities such as banks, pharmacies, and open public spaces, there is a need for museums, youth- and child-oriented venues, and especially quality gastronomic establishments. In a place where users are constantly changing in short cycles, developing an awareness of local values will require sustained effort. Thus, ensuring the continued presence of the local population and attracting younger residents to the area is essential. This can be supported through long-term awareness initiatives beginning in childhood, and by planning dedicated activity spaces for children.
- Tourism strategies in the Bazaar should be more discerning in terms of content, quality, and the target visitor groups. To elevate the quality of what is currently a rapid, consumption-based form of tourism, the link between authentic cultural characteristics and spatial experiences must be emphasised. Enhancing the quality of on-site experiences will help leverage local knowledge and transmit historical narratives. Beyond basic signage and wayfinding, interactive and engaging environments should be created where local residents can share their creativity and stories directly with visitors.
- Safranbolu's overreliance on tourism limits its ability to preserve and enhance its physical heritage in alignment with the needs of the local community. Therefore, ways must be explored to support the continued presence of locals in the area. Creative tourism practices – usually aligned with cultural tourism – offer promising alternatives. These approaches prioritize understanding and experiencing the city through its unique values. By adopting creative tourism as a strategy, the city can maintain the functionality of its residential fabric, encourage the return of younger populations, and support their long-term residence. Creating spaces that highlight local values, fostering institutional collaborations, and establishing creative networks are vital steps.
- Continuity in heritage conservation requires raising heritage awareness and ensuring the transmission of local knowledge. Participants consistently highlighted the inadequacy of information sharing in the Historical Bazaar. Tourism should therefore focus not just on visitor numbers but on fostering interaction and shared experiences.
- To address new community needs, and to manage their impact on the city, a political framework is necessary. The city's physical, social, economic, and administrative challenges, needs, and potentials must be assessed. Prioritized strategies for preservation and development should be identified. New governance policies that utilize tools aligned with sustainable development principles will reinforce the long-term success of local heritage management (Öztürk and Yamaçlı, 2023). In this sense, the management models implemented by cities such as Regensburg and Edinburgh, which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List and have both old and new urban fabrics, like Safranbolu, can be taken as examples in terms of their holistic approaches (Ripp, 2012; Ripp and Rodwell, 2016). In Safranbolu, the absence of an implemented management plan is a critical gap. A well-structured plan that highlights both tangible and intangible heritage values can pave the way for a process of heritage-based spatial production.

This study focuses on capitalist modes of production and organization that affect historic urban centres. Based on spatial theories and a specific research approach, the study does not aim to generalize about space. Rather, it acknowledges the transformative influence of capitalist production on space, aiming to interpret new modes of spatial production shaped by redefined social practices in historic cities. The relationship between space and production processes, as well as the nature of spatial transformations, are critical for the conservation and sustainability of cultural heritage. A holistic understanding of both tangible and intangible

heritage values depends on properly identifying the components of authenticity. In this context, analysing the transformation of space through various forms of consumption is essential for developing a creative perspective on sustainability. This study offers a space-experience-based analytical framework that can be adapted to different historical cities. The proposed method can be employed to investigate consumption-driven transformations and the processes underlying them, grounded in the lived social and cultural experiences of historic urban centres.

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