CHAPTER 20

LOCAL KIDS' GAMES IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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Introduction

The cultural landscape is defined by the Council of Europe as, identified pieces of land with various kinds of social values within the historical process and composed of artificial and natural factors (Özsüle, 2005). The cultural landscape comprises the areas which are common consequences of human and nature relations (Aplin, 2007). The cultural landscape is a state in which natural resources are assigned specific cultural meanings as a result of human use. It is shaped by the interaction between human beings and their natural environment. It is a means that transfers important historic events; regional characteristics and values and traditions that belong to ancient people to current generations as well. With this mission, the cultural landscape helps humankind to understand the past. The cultural landscape's forms reveal the relation between human beings and their natural environment considering their characteristics and usage. Thus, cultural landscapes provide individuals, communities and nations with natural, ecological, social, recreational, economic and educational opportunities and help them in self-understanding.

The most important element that connects the individuals of a society to one another is their common past. The most concrete examples of their common past are the places where they live and the cultural values that they possess. Local kids' games are important common cultural values in social memory. It is essential to preserve these values as the originals so that they shall not disappear or be destroyed.

Many local events have been abandoned with modernization. It is necessary to create and develop the awareness of preserving cultural heritage and keep them alive in order to transfer the importance and the

value of local events so that sustainability shall be ensured with the link between the past and the present.

Children's playgrounds all over the world have transformed from outdoor to indoor. The games and toys bearing traditional and local characteristics have gradually been forgotten and modern games and toys have taken the place of traditional ones. Nowadays, children play far less on the streets and in gardens. As a consequence, the games become distant from nature and the elements that are far from being traditional and local in the games increase in amount day by day.

This study is about local street games which are one of the most important components of cultural landscape. In the study, the concept "game" which is considered in different aspects by different disciplines has been considered as a physical space where the game is played. The main purpose of the study is to bring local kids' games to the agenda as an important element of the cultural landscape and cultural heritage; to bring forward suggestions in order to keep those games alive and thus to ensure that the protection of cultural landscape be permanent and legible.

The Importance of Local Kids' Games

Playing a game is the most effective learning process for the child and a part of real life. It is the basis of the physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and social development of the child. Whether or not it has a specific purpose and specific rules children willingly and enjoyably participate in any case (Dönmez, 1992). Games follow nutrition in the list of the most essential needs of a child (Gökşen, 2014). Both mental and physical skills are definitely involved in games (Çolak, 2009). Playing games is a reality and a part of a child's life. No matter if he/she is at home, on the street, in a garden or at a park, a child can play wherever he/she finds the opportunity (Yardımcı and Tuncer, 2002). The game is the most natural environment where the child develops himself/herself as a social being and it helps him/her recognize himself/herself and realize the characteristics that differentiate him/her from others (Yörükoğlu, 2004). Playing games is a means that a child uses to learn and they are inseparable from each other.

Games that have been played for several generations are defined as traditional games (Cengiz, 1996). These games are irony, intelligence and physical skill-requiring activities with specific characteristics that had gained a place in folk culture and had been played collectively since the old days when entertainment options were limited (URL 1).

For a child, the game is an important pathway for cultural transition

and participation in the adult world (And, 1979). Local children's games indicate the cultural wealth of a society. One of the issues of preserving intangible cultural heritage is the toys and games that are special to that culture. By keeping those games alive, the society establishes an intergenerational cultural bond and ensures that the cultural wealth is transferred to the next generations, which is important because the cultural bond is the most important bond that keeps a nation together.

Most of the local kids' games are outdoor games. These outdoor games are the activities with which children develop themselves and their friends by affecting one another physically, socially, and emotionally. The study focuses on outdoor local kids' games.

In recent days, kids, especially those living in big cities, are lacking outdoor games opportunities. The main reasons can be listed as follows:

- Today's lifestyle has affected the way that children play. Children stay at home due to current kids' games which involve technological devices too much. Video games have taken the place of outdoor games;
- There are so few well-kept and safe spaces that are adequate for children to play outside;
- Children are not able to find time and places to play. When current conditions are considered, the time that children spend playing outside is quite little;
- Younger generations that are not used to playing outside are not aware of traditional outdoor kids' games;
- Traditional games and toys are not played even in the areas that retain their local characteristics due to the easy access to toys even in villages and rural areas.

Besides a technology addiction and its adverse effects, children who grow up deprived of street culture are rapidly falling away from traditional elements. To grow up being isolated from their own traditions causes children to alienate their own culture.

While playing games on the streets children not only develop themselves and their friends by affecting one another physically, socially, and emotionally but also learn something from one another. The main effects of outdoor games on a child's development can be listed as follows:

- These games contribute to the recognition of his/her society by the child;

- Since they mainly include physical activities such as running, walking, jumping, sliding, climbing, throwing, swinging, shaking, crawling, grabbing, picking, cutting, fastening, unravelling, knotting, kneading, pricking, painting, sewing, knitting, etc., they contribute to the physical development of the child. They allow the child to acquire new skills depending on physical activities;
- Outdoor games help the child to experience various kinds of emotions such as joy, mercy, fear, anxiety, friendship, love, respect, confidence, winning, losing, independence, responsibility, sharing, etc. While doing this, these games contribute to the child's emotional development as well;
- Outdoor games also contribute to the social development of a child since these games are mostly played in groups. A child playing in a group learns how to communicate, make new friends, cooperate, find an agreement point, work as a team and be disciplined and organized. A child playing outdoor games also learns the social norms and how to act as a group member;
- The mentioned games develop the feeling of self-confidence, discipline, leadership and responsibility in a child;
- The games enable a child to identify and utilize various objects; to find solutions for the problems that he/she encounters; to explore and discover his/her environment; to generate ideas; and to develop his/her skills such as strategic thinking, imagination and attention. These all contribute to a child's mental development;
- Outdoor games also contribute to a child's lingual development. These games enable a child to express himself/herself, to understand what other children say and to learn new words. There are many kinds of kids' games that involve both physical and lingual activities. The ballads, short poems, tongue twisters and riddles in games contribute to a child's lingual skills and enable him/her to learn the local language and improve his/her pronunciation;
- With the help of the roles he/she plays in a game, the child discovers and adopts various social roles;
- In a local kids' game, all the necessary materials for the game are supplied from nature such as tree branches, pine cones, stones, battens, walnuts, water, soil, mud, etc., and these materials are used within the frame of kids' creativity in the game. This not only develops kids' creativity but also enables unique toys to be produced;
- Outdoor games allow the child to be in touch with nature;
- A child has a lot of fun in all kinds of outdoor games without any

exception;
- Outdoor games create a bond between the generations as an indicator of the cultural wealth of a society and ensure that culture is transferred to the next generations.

Cultural Landscape—Local Kids' Games Relation

The cultural landscape consists of not only natural characteristics but also tangible and intangible cultural values. It includes both the norms in the past and current traditions of the region. Therefore, cultural landscape is a very broad concept.

Besides cognitive and affective elements, local games have sociocultural aspects (Çok et al., 2004). They have an important cultural wealth with the meaning and memories shaped in local inhabitants' minds. Local kids' games form one of the subject matters of cultural landscape since they are evidence of the past and have collective memory forming characteristics between the past and the present. Local kids' games and toys are a part of the cultural landscape with their cultural landscape characteristics in spatial, emotional, visual and physical aspects.

Local characteristics indicate unique and rich cultural landscapes. Like other aspects of cultural landscape, local kids' games include unique values at national, regional and local scales. They can also give clues about the economic, social, physical and cultural values of a society. According to Cengiz (1997) games are one of the most important elements of cultural analysis studies since they provide a point of view that enables the structure and the characteristics of the culture, from which the games arise, to be understood.

Streets are the places where social, economic, cultural and spatial forms become integrated with one another. Local kids' games are most commonly played on the streets and these streets are the most important urban spaces where the cultural landscape can be best interpreted. This is because the streets reflect different lives and sections from different lifestyles and bear tangible and intangible cultural values, therefore transferring the traces of the past to the present. For this reason, not being able to keep those street games alive, means a kind of cultural slaughter and also can be considered as an injustice against children.

Local Urban Identity—Local Kids' Games Relation

Today, the uncontrolled growth of the cities leads to radical changes in many of the local characteristics and cause them disappear. Whereas the

individuals are provided with economic, social and cultural opportunities within this development process, they are deprived of the sense of belonging as a result of disappearing local features, the traditional roles of the cities and urban identity. Technological developments are also one of the most important oppressions on fragile landscapes and these developments speed up the loss of local identity.

No matter how clean, well-planned, comfortable or pleasant they are, urban spaces will be meaningless for the users unless their unique local values are preserved. Cultural landscapes where the natural, historical and cultural assets of a region are sustained in a qualified manner, speed up the creation of awareness, contribute to the shaping of conscious future generations, and create an atmosphere of solidarity among the local people by enabling them to internalize and enhance the issue of "the sense of belonging". Thus, cities gain the identity of a city which is significant, perceptible, recognizable, and genuine and has public opinion.

In the cultural landscape, local characteristics are meaningful and make sense only in the geography to which they belong. Practices in which local values are prioritized in terms of playgrounds and equipment, add unique values to the cities. By creating a cultural memory it is possible to sustain a unique identity in the cities formed by people with a common language, common background and common space.

Integrating playgrounds for local kids' games with urban landscape designs is effective for creating local urban identity since these practices physically change the components of urban landscape and bring local characteristics.

Playgrounds for Local Kids' Games in Urban Landscape Designs

Urban spaces are gradually becoming dangerous for children when the decrease in the number of open spaces due to dense and unplanned housing and the increase in traffic due to the increase in the number of the cars are considered. Today's children are being deprived of the opportunities that are provided, particularly by the streets, which are defined as the immediate environment of houses, and consequently their social, cultural and mental development is adversely affected (Tandoğan, 2014). Urban spaces that develop in an unplanned manner also affect children adversely in terms of behaviour, attitude and reaction (Al-Khalaileh, 2004). Numerous studies prove that the spaces where a child is located are more effective on the behaviours of the child than his/her intelligence and personal characteristics (Barker, 1968; Bechtel, 1977;

Wicker, 1979). Therefore, designing children's playgrounds for the purpose of enriching urban spaces is one of the most important issues of urban landscape design.

As a consequence of technological developments, children usually play in indoor spaces. On the other hand, the outdoor spaces where children play in today's cities can be listed as school gardens, streets, unused land, children's playgrounds and the gardens of the houses. Despite their various drawbacks, the streets are attractive playgrounds for children since they are close to their residences and full of surprises.

Children's playgrounds are the only official outdoor spaces designed for children (Bağlı, 2004). Since they meet the needs of children's games, these playgrounds are of great importance for the children who are to spend their lives indoors as a result of the difficulties brought by urban life and technological developments. However, these playgrounds consist of equipment which are outputs of mass production and which just fulfil the requirement of security and accessibility rather than being designed considering local characteristics. This situation is quite contrary to the creative nature of the child as the equipment mentioned above defines what the child does and does not provide any kind of flexibility.

However, spatial design should be compatible with the local texture. Design practices that bring local authenticity to the forefront should be preferred rather than standard mass produced equipment. These practices should maximize the child's interaction with the environment as well. According to Parlson (2011) playground designers should focus on local culture, geography and history in order to strengthen the playground-location relation.

It is necessary to design defined playgrounds that enable children to play local games in order to raise generations protecting their own culture, to ensure the transfer of local values to future generations, to keep local games alive as cultural wealth and to add to cities local values and a local sense. These mentioned playgrounds, which bring together children and the external world and contribute to their physical, social, psychological, mental and cultural development by enabling them to play with other children, should not have strict borders. They should be flexible and allow children to be in touch with nature and should encourage creativity at the same time. The floor and the equipment used in the playground should be compatible with the defined game type. In traditional kids' games, the game tools are usually made of natural materials. This should be kept in mind in designs.

Conclusion

The most effective method for keeping cultural values alive is employing game and entertainment elements. For this reason, it is necessary to reawaken the issue of traditional kids' games and traditional toys and keep them alive at the local scale. Before they completely disappear, these games should be compiled and recorded with a detailed regional study and they should also be utilized in a creative way so that their sustainability potentials can be determined. In order to preserve the original characteristics of local games, it is vital to properly study the rules, necessary equipment, the number of players and playground requirements.

Streets are not just a means of transportation but they are also a means of socialization and they ensure it (Özservet, 2015). In fact, streets are important outdoor playgrounds. However, in today's cities they are not appropriate for playing on due to some reasons such as safety, traffic, dense housing, noise, pollution and the lack of plants, etc. Local kids' games that are to be played on the streets should take their place among the values to be preserved and transferred to future generations within the urban development process. For this purpose, the street textures of the cities should be studied, reconsidered and developed in terms of social life and authentic cultural texture such as traditional playgrounds for children.

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