


# Chapter 5

## Questioning Thresholds Between Natural–Unnatural: Urban Design Strategies for Cities in Turkey

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses the relationship between natural and unnatural in the framework of urban design strategies for sustainability. A descriptive reading is presented through theoretical perspectives and examples of application approaches. The authors' proposals for different cities in Turkey as urban design projects which deal with different problems and potentials in scope of the relations between natural-unnatural are presented. The thresholds and balances between natural-unnatural and urban design strategies for sustainability are discussed within the content of the projects. The key points are elucidated through mentioned examples which are focusing on design approaches, relations, scenarios, and principles.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, when a large part of the world's population lives in cities, the growth of cities in parallel with the increase in migration to cities and the increase in the urban population creates an artificial environment that gradually spreads over natural areas. Lefebvre (1970) defines the term “urban society” as a society emerging from industrialization that absorbs self-absorbs or dominates agricultural

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production. With the rise of capitalist society, which determines today's lifestyle, urban residents lead a fast, disconnected life from nature and based on consumption.

Along with designers and professionals in related fields, municipal authorities seek and produce solutions to many environmental problems and develop different models strategically on the urban scale. Zero carbon increase, collaborative consumption, renewable energy generation, district heating systems, bike-sharing, charging and pedestrianization zones are solutions that transform cities into sustainable directions (Mega, 2010). In a revolutionary decision to completely remove or limit the use of vehicles in some parts of European cities (Burdett, 2014; Mega, 2010; Nieuwenhuijsen & Khreis 2016), the urban space is left to the use of pedestrians as a more livable environment, and this approach is becoming more common. On the other hand, the "slow city approach" has been developed since the late 1990s on the basis of a return back to a more connected existence with nature. In order to improve life in cities, various similar initiatives and strategies are implemented to increase sustainability at different scales (Mega, 2010).

In Turkey, idea generation, strategy development and qualified application practices regarding urban spaces are carried out widely through urban design competitions. Within the scope of urban design, addressing the "nature-urban space" relationship and determining sustainable principles are generally defined as basic requirements. Problems related to these issues can be grouped under two main headings;

- While reconsidering the zoning plans where the cities expanded as a result of the growth, ensuring the integration of the design with the existing natural environment and other problems specific to the identified site,
- Reconsideration of existing city centers by associating them with other dynamics of the city and natural districts.

This chapter discusses the relationship between natural and unnatural in urban space within the framework of urban design strategies for sustainability. A descriptive reading is presented with examples from theoretical perspectives and practical approaches. The authors' proposals as urban design projects that address different problems for different cities in Turkey are presented in six defined sub-headings. Key points are illuminated through these examples focusing on design approaches, relationships, scenarios and principles. "Continuity and integration", "conservation and rehabilitation", "human-nature relations", "identity", "social dimensions and public life", "production and sharing" were determined as sub-headings in order to discuss the thresholds and balances between natural-unnatural and urban design strategies for sustainability in the content of projects.

## **BACKGROUND**

The concepts "natural-unnatural" in the urban environment can be considered from different perspectives in terms of their meanings. In the studies, many definitions of "natural" have been made in the city, and "unnatural" can be considered as a term that refers to human-made (domestic) environments that include natural elements, the built environment, or both. Definitions to be made in this context may be variable and open to questioning depending on the situation, in any case, the main issue is to question the relationship of humans with nature in the city.

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