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A Research on the Relationship Between Functional Transformation in Spaces and Gentrification, Nevşehir Uçhisar

Mekânlarda İşlev Dönüşümü ve Soylulaştırma İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Araştırma, Nevşehir Uçhisar

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ABSTRACT

The concept of gentrification, which was widely discussed around the world in the 1960s, concerns the complex phenomenon of physical and social mobility. Since its emergence, numerous definitions have been proposed, although they are largely based on the manner in which it was initially conceptualised. Although many definitions place an emphasis on the social consequences of gentrification, this broad perspective often fails to take into account the contextual diversity and specific characteristics of gentrification in various cities. This study aims to demonstrate that gentrification is linked to spatial and physical transformations, which are shaped by spatial dynamics that can either impede or accelerate the process. The Uçhisar town of Nevşehir was selected as the study area due to its transformation driven by tourism and its historical architecture. The influx of tourists has resulted in the conversion of numerous rock-carved houses into accommodation facilities. The research entailed an examination of these transformations and the conduct of interviews with architects and operators engaged in the renovation processes. The objective was to assess the impact of alterations to the built environment on gentrification, the influence of gentrification on that environment, and the potential emergence of a new architectural language. Furthermore, there is a cyclical relationship between spatial transformation and gentrification, either triggering or inhibiting it during the transformation process. This demonstrates that the concept has spatial parameters, moving beyond its traditional definition as a social problem. Furthermore, it highlights that the concept is not solely a sociological phenomenon.

Keywords: Adaptive reuse; gentrification; tourism gentrification, Uçhisar.

ÖZ

Dünyada 1960'larda tartışılan soylulaştırma, fiziksel ve toplumsal hareketliliği içeren kaotik bir durumdur. Ortaya çıkışından günümüze, ilk söylendiği şekliyle temel alınsa da farklı birçok tanımı yapılmıştır. Tanımların çoğunda da toplumsal sonucuna odaklanıldığı ve bir "soylulaştırma genellemesi" yapıldığı görülmüştür. Ancak bu tür bir soylulaştırma anlayışının, farklı kentlerde görülen soylulaştırmanın bağlamsal çeşitliliğini, özelliklerini ve/veya varsa sınırlarını bulma sürecini gölgelemekte olduğu görülmüştür. Bu nedenle çalışma soylulaştırmanın, özellikle mekânla ve fiziksel dönüşümle ilişkili olduğunu, buna bağlı olarak mekânsal dinamiklerle direnç gösteren ya da tetiklenebilen bir kavram olduğunu göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. Bunu yaparken örneklem alanı olarak turizmin aktif bir role dönüşmesi ile tarihi yapı stoğunun dönüşümüne şahitlik eden ve soylulaştırma ile temas halinde olan Nevşehir'in Uçhisar beldesi seçilmiştir. Turizmin bölgeye hâkim olması ile pek çok kayadan oyma konut, konaklama yapısına dönüştürülmeye başlanmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında bu mekânlar incelenmiş ve tasarım süreçlerine dâhil olan mimar ve işletmecileriyle yenilenme sürecine dair görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Yapılı çevredeki değişimlerin soylulaştırma-yı nasıl etkilediği, soylulaştırmanın yapıyı çevreyi nasıl etkilediği ve yeni bir mimari dil yaratıp yaratmadığı sorularına cevap aranmıştır. Analizler sonucunda mekânsal dönüşümle soylulaştırma arasında bir döngü olduğu, dönüşüm sürecinde mekâna dair dinamiklerin soylulaştırma üzerinde tetikleyici ve engelleyici etkisi olduğu saptanmıştır. Burada kavramı yalnızca toplumsal bir sorun olmaktan çıkarak mekânsal parametrelere sahip olduğu görülmüş ve kavramın yalnızca sosyolojik bir kavram olmadığı saptanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yeniden kullanım; soylulaştırma; turizm soylulaştırması; Uçhisar.

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I. Introduction

While gentrification appears as a process that increases the polarization among classes by separating the working class from the middle class when viewed from a class and state perspective (Glass, 2010; Lees, 2019), from a functional point of view it appears as a situation where different classes live together and housing preferences are heeded (Smith, 2015; Zukin, 2010). The term, which was first introduced by Ruth Glass based on her observations of neighborhood transformations in London, has been reconceptualized and discussed many times over the years (Glass, 2010). In the academic literature, it is emphasized that the concept is mostly discussed in the discipline of sociology, that it transforms day by day and goes towards a global process, and that it cannot be evaluated away from the context (Maloutas, 2011; Lees et al., 2016; Kızıldere, 2018; Cartier, 2017; Shaw, 2005). This emphasis has often been seen in empirical studies as a result of focusing on the social consequences of gentrification. It has been noted that the similarities in the results of gentrification overshadow the diversity in the process, and the eclectic use of field studies contributes to inductive rather than deductive reasoning. At the same time, it is implied that this situation removes the contextual diversity of the concept and involves researchers in a race to find the best or the worst of the process (Maloutas, 2011; Liu et al., 2019). In this sense, it is thought that describing the gentrification processes instead of debating over details (Kızıldere & Günay, 2018) will help to shed light on the concept from the conventional point of view.

This research aims to present an interdisciplinary approach to the concept of gentrification, which emerges at the intersection of different fields such as sociology and urban design, from the field of architecture. For this reason, it reveals a new perspective by examining the concept of gentrification, which has recently become a problem in cities and other urban areas and is sometimes adopted as a policy in the field of architecture. While doing this, it aims to show that the concept is a process that is shaped and transformed according to the transformation of spaces, and that it can be prevented and sometimes triggered by the dynamics of the place itself.

In the processes where mass tourism can be a pioneer in urban development and used as a development strategy, the effect of tourism and gentrification is seen as one of the pillars of the subject in the context of urban development-architecture-sociology. With the development of capitalism, the use of tourism in cities as a means of entering into the regional race has also provided an opportunity to see the cores of gentrification in these places (Cocola-Gant, 2018). One of the first studies in the literature to explain gentrification with the tourism component is that by Gotham (2005), who defined tourism gentrification as the transformation of a

middle-class neighborhood into a relatively wealthy and elite settlement with the proliferation of corporate entertainment and tourism venues. Tourism is a component that interacts with consumption-led growth and development, cultural value and heritage. Simultaneously, its development is a dynamic process involving complex social interactions on a global scale. Consequently, it is increasingly used as a tool for economic development in contemporary cities. As gentrification expands in many cities, more critical explanations of the link between tourism and gentrification are required (Gotham, 2005, p. 1115). It is crucial to acknowledge the correlation between tourism and gentrification, as urban tourism often results in the displacement of local communities. Furthermore, the marketing of tourism destinations is intricately linked to the production of space. In conclusion, the phenomenon currently referred to as 'tourism' should instead be defined as the process of 'tourism gentrification' (Cocola-Gant, 2018, p. 205). A review of the literature on tourism and gentrification reveals that both processes are regarded as co-actors in the production of the post-industrial city. Furthermore, both are outcomes of strategies employed to attract capital and consumers (Gotham, 2005; Judd, 1999; Mullins, 1991). The term 'tourism gentrification' can be defined as a process of socio-spatial change whereby neighbourhoods are transformed in accordance with the requirements of affluent consumers, residents and visitors. Judd (1999, p. 52) elucidated the pivotal point of this process, noting that the literature demonstrates that both processes are mutually reinforcing and occur concurrently in time and space. In some instances, the expansion of gentrified areas results in their designation as tourist destinations. Conversely, urban promotion strategies designed to attract tourists can also give rise to a new built environment that attracts new residents with higher incomes, thereby encouraging gentrification processes. The result of this interdependence is that both processes tend to coexist in the same urban environment, leading to what has been termed 'tourism gentrification'. This can be defined as a process by which space is produced and consumed for a cosmopolitan middle class who demand and produce similar urban environments wherever they go (Judd, 1999, p. 52). Although globalization and mass tourism processes are a much-needed source of external income for cities (Orbaşlı, 2000), tourism in cities affects both societies and the existing building stock with the change of class served by historical cities, crowding, and the shaping of cultural traditions (Bobic et al., 2022). By accepting tourism as a development strategy, there is a function change with commercialization in places where institutional interventions are made, both with government support and private-sector initiatives. After this change, spaces start to serve new classes, unlike their current users, thus continuing their physical transformation according to the demands of these classes. This creates a threat and pressure for the existing users of the regions and

the surrounding building stock to adapt to the process, as the spaces appeal to different classes and income groups. On the other hand, there is an emotional state where the tourist seeks the traces of the daily life of the locals in a new city and wants to feel as if he/she was a traveler (Cocola-Gant, 2015, p. 13). A detailed analysis of the concept of tourism and gentrification, based on a combination of analytical and empirical studies, reveals that social displacement and the re-functionalisation of areas undergoing such changes result in tourists being deprived of the opportunity to experience the original social and architectural fabric of the location in question (Perez 2019; Kesar et al., 2015; Liang & Bao, 2014). In this sense, the focus of tourism in this research, which begins with the hypothesis that gentrification is related to space, constitutes a limitation of the study.

The present study goes beyond the sociological framework created by gentrification and deals with the issue of whether its interaction with tourism creates a new architectural form. If so, the research moves on to analysing the related parameters; namely, showing how the negative effects of gentrification are minimized on the spaces, determining the positive effects of gentrification, and identifying the effect of the local dynamics of the historical region on gentrification.

The study carried out this analysis process in the Uçhisar town of Nevşehir, which is one of the important pillars of Cappadocia cultural tourism and makes significant contributions to national and international tourism at the city scale. Uçhisar is a multicultural town with its own important historical, architectural, and social characteristics, and the city is still developing. As a result, today, while restoration works continue in the old historical settlement, it is impossible not to have physical and social transformations in a region that is used as the main theme of tourism in the process of urban development and is referred to as a touristic town. In the historically significant district of the town, the number of visitors has increased, and both the housing dynamics and the residents' experiences in neighborhood life have begun to change as well (Utku & Uludağ, 2021). In this sense, the contact of this district with the concept of gentrification involves a lot of parameters that can be assessed. The present study is related with these parameters not only socially and within the scope of displacement as per the classical definition of gentrification but also with physical transformation beyond its social framework. The motivation for this relevance is the observation that there are parameters that trigger and prevent gentrification in the transformation process of the accommodation units converted from housing for the needs of tourism in the region. In this way, it is aimed that future attempts to study similar cases can help to prevent gentrification in its conventional form, which is likely to negatively impact tourism in historical regions, or to maintain its positive contributions as shown in the present work.

As a result of the study, the parameters of physical transformation and gentrification that trigger and/or prevent each other are evaluated through spatial components. The first is the change in user profile. For Uçhisar, the new and upper-middle class coming to the district has become the tourist class, which is the temporary user of the district. For the temporary class, there is a functional transformation. While the spaces have become places of experience for the tourist class, on the other hand, these spaces have preserved their original and historical features and protected the area from destruction and disintegration. Thus, the approach of the designers in the transformation process emerges as a parameter that directly affects the gentrification process. Furthermore, while actor interventions are present, the transformation of the spaces into their original form and the effort to imitate their former functions contribute to the experience-based spatial diversity of tourism for users. On the otherhand, this analysis of Uçhisar's unique situation highlights the complex interplay between spatial transformation and gentrification. The notion of 'contextual gentrification' is particularly insightful, emphasizing that development can occur without the negative consequences typically associated with gentrification. Understanding these local dynamics is crucial for fostering sustainable growth that respects the community's character. It is shown that the spatial transformations that are likely to occur with the interaction of formerly existing users and new classes in such tourism districts are realized by preserving the existing local features. What is more, we will reveal the kind of spatial dynamics that trigger gentrification in the districts and the spatial components that are protected or changed as gentrification progresses in these districts. In this way, the factors that enable other regions with similar characteristics to prevent the negative effects of gentrification are determined based on this case study in Uçhisar. Lastly, it is aimed to emphasize the interdisciplinary stance of gentrification, which is addressed in existing studies with issues such as social continuity and economic interaction, by emphasizing its relationship with architecture.

1.1. Methodology

The present study investigates whether the physical effects of an important subject such as tourism on urban areas have an effect on the gentrification process, and whether the resulting gentrification traces are only visible in physical terms. Uçhisar, which is an important tourism resort in Cappadocia, started to use tourism as a development strategy. As this situation created a different gentrification process in certain districts, on-site observations, spatial investigations, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to shed light on the causes and processes. More specifically, the transformation of the existing housing stock into accommodation units for tourism purposes were analyzed based on on-site observations. By means of the data obtained from the physical analysis, it

is searched whether gentrification has indeed created a new architectural language in the districts under question. The aim of this section is to examine the spatial changes of the buildings that started to transform from permanent housing units to temporary accommodation units around the Uçhisar Castle, which is a major landmark in the city. The discussion further continues as to what kind of changes have occurred in the quality of the places after the town adopted a tourism-oriented development strategy.

There are also significant actors in the analysis process of the physical transformation-gentrification relationship in spaces. While the tourism concept planned by the local authorities and conservation boards for the region continues in the town, architects, building owners, business owners, and others also continue to transform the houses. For this reason, it was decided that it would be useful to obtain the views of the actors in the physical change analysis. For the interviews conducted in the study, the opinions of the architects and hotel owners involved in the design process, who are directly involved in the physical transformation, were taken and evaluated.¹ In this way, answers were sought to questions such as for whom and how the spaces are designed today; as well as how the scale, architectural programs, and spatial use have changed. In all, the purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the impact of functional transformation in the region on gentrification in social and physical terms. The transfer of ownership of numerous accommodation units in the region has made it challenging to ascertain the identity of the original designer or renovator responsible for transforming residences into hotels. However, it also makes it difficult to reach the first people who were personally involved in the transformation. Consequently, the spatial changes of the hotels, which are situated in a vast area and have remained under the same ownership since their inception, have significantly impacted the transformation of the region and serve as a valuable brand asset for the town. In light of this, the input of hotel operators and architects who have played a pivotal role in the transformation has become crucial. In the course of the interviews conducted with the architects and operators of the hotels, the changes experienced by the design inputs of the demolished, ruined or neglected housing texture were evaluated. This was done in relation to the transformation of these textures into accommodation units, which entailed the addition or removal of spaces. In addition, the strategies followed in the design process regarding the region, the spaces transformed according to income level criteria and user profiles, and the limitations in the transformation process were also evaluated. The objective is to ascertain the local dynamics of "gentrifying" or "non-gentrifying" in relation to the transformation of spaces during the renewal process.

This analysis has revealed that the spaces are gradually being designed for the upper middle class or tourist class, which has a different profile to the current class. With these assessments, the impact of local features, values and dynamics that have been preserved or transformed on the gentrification of the area has been analysed.

The findings from both the spatial analyses and the interviews helped to reveal the parameters affecting the gentrification process in the district. The study evaluated these parameters under three main headings: (i) Functional spatial transformation; (ii) Facade and street approaches; and (iii) Public space permeability. In these headings, the past and present use of the accommodation units were compared, while evaluating the contribution or resistance of the transformed or preserved parameters to the gentrification of the district. In addition, an attempt was made to determine whether gentrification has caused the emergence of spaces that serve the tourist class by displacing the previous users.

2. Case Study and Its Relationship with Gentrification

2.1. The Historical Development of Uçhisar

The town of Uçhisar, located in the central region of the Nevşehir province, is a hill settlement originally established for defense purposes in the Cappadocia region, which is an important tourism hotspot in Turkey (Fig. 1). In terms of architecture, the town has been quite stratified and rich from the past to the present. It has experienced many changes in the planning and mapping process due to its proximity to Cappadocia, which is included in the UNESCO list. As a result, the entire region is known internationally owing to its unique value. The region of Cappadocia, which includes Uçhisar, was included in the UNESCO list in 1985, and it was taken under protection under the title "Göreme Natural and Historical National Park" in 1986 (UNESCO, 2022; Uçhisar Municipality, 2022).

Uçhisar has a multicultural structure due to its history and the many civilizations it has accommodated. For long, the Uçhisar Castle served for defense within its borders and was inhabited until the 1960s, still attracting a lot of touristic attention today. The castle is a natural formation into which many rooms, shelters, water cisterns, and tombs have been carved since the Roman period (Fig. 2) (Uçhisarlılar Association, 2021).

Upon examination of the historical development of Uçhisar, it becomes evident that the region lacked a cadastral plan until the 1960s (Erdem, 2008). The most significant factor influencing both the settlement order and the planning process in the

¹ In this study another important actor is the local residents living in the area before the physical change. Since this study focuses only on the parameters of physical change on gentrification and spatial change, the impact of local residents in the process is not addressed. For the impact of local residents on the process, please refer to Utku & Uludağ, 2021.

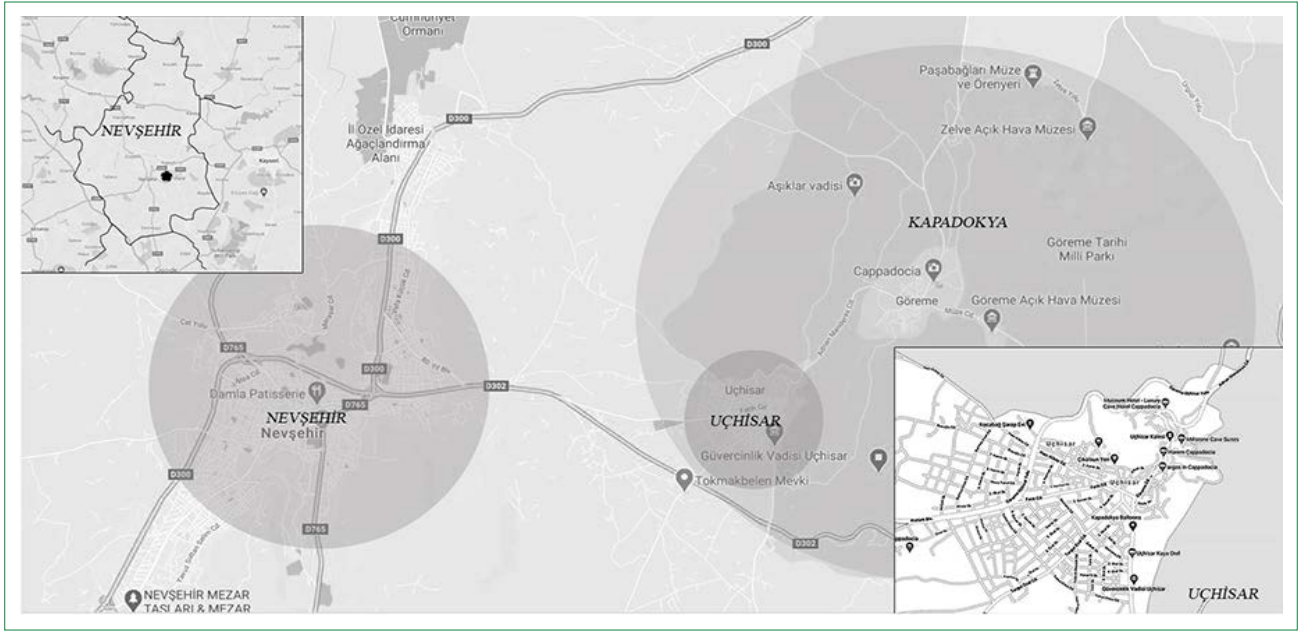


Figure 1. Location of Uçhisar.

Image prepared by the author using Google Earth.

region is the Disaster Law, enacted in 1962. In the context of the planning process of Uçhisar, the Disaster Law enacted in 1962 and its subsequent effects between 1962 and 1967 must be taken into account. This also encompasses the fieldwork conducted as part of this study and its subsequent impact on the planning process. It is therefore necessary to consider the gradual collapse of the castle and the houses on the outskirts as a consequence of this legislation. In this context, the residents of the surrounding area were forcibly removed by the state due to the perceived risk of disaster. This resulted in the houses in the vicinity of the castle becoming ruins and gradually collapsing. In 1969, it was stated that there are living and abandoned houses around the castle that have survived to the present day in the municipality. It was also mentioned that there are spatial and behavioural traces in the abandoned houses (Cimşit, 2007, p. 80). The planning process of Uçhisar underwent tourism-oriented changes in the 1970s, with the gradual spread of these changes to the settlement area observed (Tuncer, 2014, p. 289, 290). The initial plan for the town was the 1/1000 scale 'Uçhisar Tourism Settlement Area Implementation Zoning Plan' created by Uçhisar Municipality. This plan was influenced by the tourism development policies that were being implemented throughout Turkey at the time. The plan proposed the development of tourism facilities in the region, which led the town to identify tourism as a development strategy. All subsequent planning and conservation decisions were evaluated within this framework.

The rock-cut structures located around the Uçhisar Castle constitute the research limits of this study. As stated earlier, the residential settlement continued around the castle until

the 1960s, at which point it was declared a dangerous area due to falling rocks. Then, the people living on the outskirts of the castle started to form a new settlement around the southern borders of the town. By the 1970s, the remaining inhabitants around the castle gradually began to leave the area as well and the settlement moved southwest. For this reason, it has been stated that the area around the castle not only became ruins, but as a result of the inadequacy of the facilities provided by authorities, the people who had moved into the new settlement took all the construction materials of their old houses and used them to build new houses, thereby increasing the neglect of the castle area (Özbay, 2018). This neglect continued until the 2000s, when gradually individual interventions started to take place. Investors bought these ruined houses and started restoration works, and the story of the region's introduction to tourism slowly began to emerge in these years. The restored buildings were gradually put into use with non-residential functions such as hotels, restaurants, and shops (Utku & Uludağ, 2021) (Fig. 3).

Today, the town of Uçhisar, which has a hotel, hostel, and shopping mall containing restaurants and souvenir shops to serve tourists, has morphed into a region where the daily life is intertwined with tourism and the locals mostly make a living in this way (Uçhisar Municipality, 2020). At the time of the case analysis of the study (2021), the town of Uçhisar, which has 61 hotels and pensions and 86 other commercial units (food and beverage units, shops serving tourism), has become a region where daily life is intertwined with tourism and where locals mostly make a living through tourism (Uçhisar Municipality, 2021). This situation has both increased the relation-



Figure 2. Uçhisar castle and view of its surroundings.

Images are from the author's photo archive, 2021.

ship between the social structure of the town and tourism, and has led to the change of the physical environment with tourism. On-site observations revealed that many houses are for sale to be transformed (Utku, 2021). This transformation appears to have coincided with gentrification. In addition to being a source of income for the local people, the fact that the historical environment is in the process of renewal by protecting as much as possible its original and authentic fabric is important data for the present study. For this reason, the research focused on the potential of this region for tourism and gentrification. The fact that the region as a whole is be-



Figure 3. Residential settlement on a hillside, from top down: 1978, 2008, and 2022.

Images are from Argos Office and author's archive.

ing renewed and turned into a touristic hotspot indicates the threat of mass tourism that may arise in there. In this context, the analyses here are based on how physical changes occur against this threat and how the spatial components resist or trigger the process of gentrification of the region.

2.2. Case Study

The presence of tourism in the town is an advantage that increases the value of the available space along with commercialization. Therefore, the possibility of being an increasingly com-

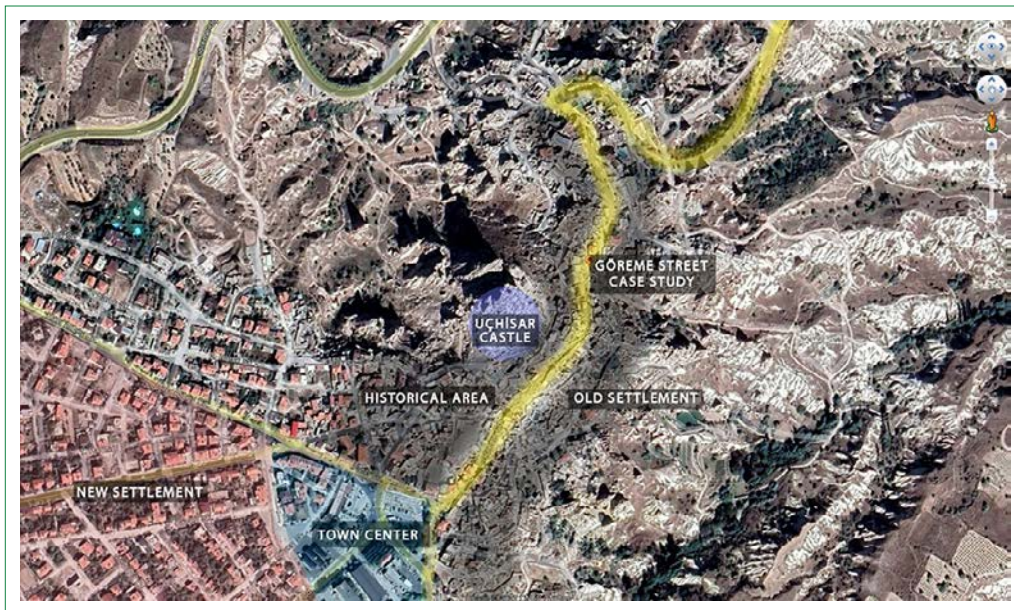


Figure 4. The view of Göreme Street and its surroundings.

Image prepared by the author using Google Earth.

mercialized region causes these spaces to undergo a change that will eventually appeal to high-income groups and, gradually, leaving out the local users over time. This makes the gentrification process questionable because it is thought that local dynamics will slowly disappear, leaving not much for touristic purposes. In this context, it has been analyzed how the gentrification process has an impact on the spaces, and how the local dynamics of Uçhisar can be preserved for the new users of these spaces.

The area intended for analysis includes the new accommodation units (hotel rooms) located at Göreme Street, which circles the castle and has undergone physical transformation (Fig. 4). While the livelihood in the Cappadocia region was initially based on agriculture, after the increase in the number of commercial units serving tourism in the 2000s, the local people started to earn their living from tourism as well. This situation has caused many buildings in the region to be transformed by the intervention of individuals as well as local authorities under the pretext of being included in tourism. As a result, the locals started to build their entire daily lives around this concept by interacting with the so-called 'tourist class'. At the same time, while the Uçhisar district has been assigned a residential-based settlement plan, one can also observe the presence of social problems due to the fact that numerous commercial functions have also penetrated the district along with tourism, making it appealing only to the high-income class. In this sense, it can be assumed that there is a lot of gentrification data to be analyzed in this district in terms of the physical and social environment transformation.

In order to investigate the effect of physical change on gentrification due to tourism, the author chose the accommoda-

tion units that mark the development and branding of the town. Two hotels (Argos in Cappadocia Hotel and Museum Hotel), which occupy the most space in terms of surface area, were examined, and their spatial changes, design processes, and transformations that could affect the town and its social order were analyzed. The chosen hotels have been influential in the overall development process of the region from the beginning, and they are still preferred by many tourists for accommodation (Fig. 5). It was determined that the units used as temporary accommodations in the two hotels in question had been converted from original housing structures. The other reasons for choosing these hotels, each of which has up to thirty rooms, for analysis are: (i) access to the first designer in order to learn about the initial approach in design; (ii) the hotels not having changed ownership up to the time this research was being carried out; (iii) being the largest settlement in the town and in terms of people gathering in one place, and also having the largest number of rooms; (iv) being the first hotels to contribute to the transformation of the town; and (v) being the most commonly known hotels in the branding of the town. In addition to all these items, the relatively high number of temporary accommodation units provides this study with the experience of observing a range of diversity related to spatial changes.

In the analyses, as a way of examining the processes of change taking place in spaces, it was preferred to learn under which conditions and depending on which strategies the actors involved in the renewal process carried out their interventions. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with the architects and business figures (hotel owners) involved in the design

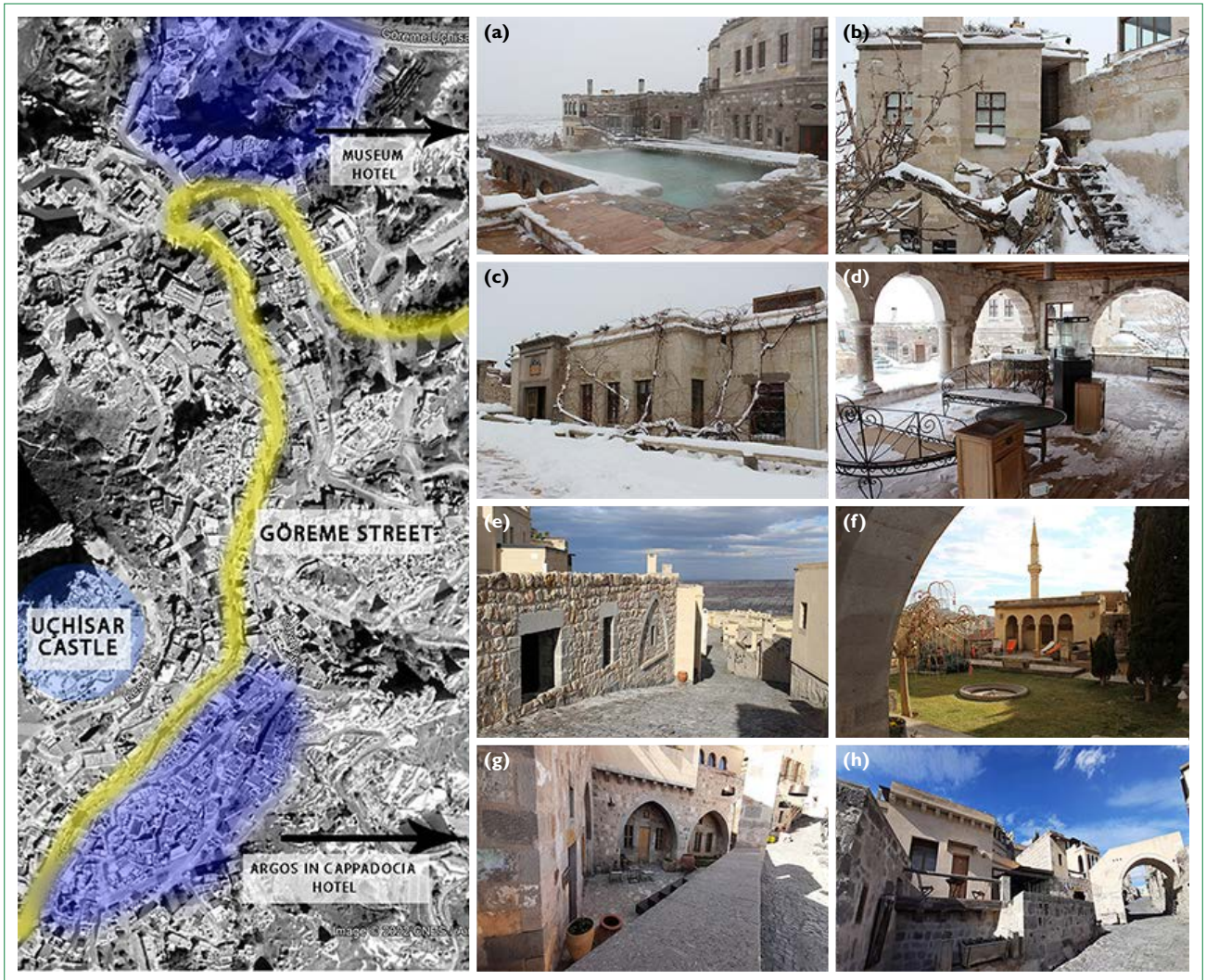


Figure 5. View of hotel units marked in blue shade (on the left). Museum Hotel (a-d) and Argos in Cappadocia Hotel (e-h).

Image prepared by the author using Google Earth.

process to learn about the background of the hotels. In the interviews, questions were asked with respect to the changes (added or removed spaces) in the design due to neglected, ruined, or demolished housing texture while transforming them into accommodation units. The respondents were also asked about the strategies to boost commercial activities in the district during the design process, the income level criteria, and the spaces transformed according to user profiles. The aim here was, on the one hand, to find the local dynamics that either encourage or inhibit gentrification through changing the spaces; and, on the other hand, to learn about the pressures exerted on the spaces caused by physical change and the supply-demand balance due to user changes during the gentrification process. It was observed that the spaces have been increasingly designed for the upper-middle class or the tourist class, which are two profiles different from the previous owners' class. Within the scope of the development strategy of the district, it was evalu-

ated whether the planning approach was inclusive or exclusive of the local people. With this assessment, the effect of preserved or transformed local characteristics, values, and dynamics on the gentrification of the district was analyzed.

3. Findings and Discussions

As stated earlier, in the process of transformation from housing to temporary accommodation units, three main headings were created while analyzing the relationship of spaces with gentrification. These headings cover the evaluation of all the features of the residences, which have been transformed into accommodation functions by physical transformation since 2000. The evaluation is with respect to three main criteria: the interior design, transformation strategies, and the relationship of space with the environment. During the analysis, the aim was to focus on the transformation process that goes in line with gentrification, as well as transforma-



Figure 6. Interior of hotel rooms converted from residential use.

Images from the author's photo archive, 2021.

tion and gentrification triggering each other, rather than mere past and current space comparisons.

3.1. Functional Spatial Transformation

In this study, the growth pattern and strategies of the hotels were assessed in terms of evaluating the extent of gentrification around the Uçhisar Castle. Firstly, in the interviews, the respondents were asked what their goals had been in the spatial transformation process. The two major hotels aim to prioritize the provision of comfort and luxury required by tourism; however, the respondents also emphasized the importance they attached to protecting historical buildings. This was seen as inevitable to meet the needs of short-term holiday-makers coming to the town. In Uçhisar, the significant point in the transformation process is how these strategies reflect on the spaces.

In Uçhisar, the houses generally have two distinct typologies: houses on hills, and houses on slopes (Cimşit, 2007; Argos Office Archive, 2021). The structures examined on the Göreme Street are also buildings that have slope and hill residence characteristics in terms of plan design. When the analyzed hotel buildings and other transformed structures in the surrounding area are examined, it is seen that most of them have been converted from residential functions. These spaces, where the houses are used for many different purposes, create an advantageous environment for their new users in the process of function transformation, with their cultural values that have been preserved until today. Those spaces that cannot be used as residences anymore due to effects such as climatic conditions, size, and spatial comfort – for instance, caves - have been transformed into places that offer different experiences to their new users. The main reason for this is that the spatial use of the town has a structure that exists both under and above the ground. Therefore, spatial diversity prevails in each hotel room.

In the functional transformation of the examined hotels, the size of each room carved from the rock varies, and the arrangement of the resting unit and the bathroom space differs both in size and in the arrangement of the interior. In addition, compared to the former housing units, these transformed spaces in the hotels have changed the residential functions (barn, cellar, living room, sleeping room, rest room, stove, tandoor, etc.) into spaces with fewer functions (sleeping/resting, viewing niches and bathroom). It can be seen that the spaces are designed in such a way that is above the quality standard of the region and according to the comfort level of the tourists (Özbay & Tosun, 2021, interviews). Therefore, the rock-carved spaces that do not fit the requirements of the housing user of today have been transformed into cultural experience spaces that provide new experiences for tourists. This shows that gentrification, in a rather indirect way, alters the user profile based on their income. Existing users cannot use rock-carved spaces due to climatic conditions, heating-cooling difficulties, and dampness. Therefore, this change has transformed the rock-carved spaces that do not meet the conditions of the residential user into cultural experience spaces that provide new experiences for tourists. The spaces are diversified and renewed by providing technical infrastructure according to the comfort level of the tourist. In this way, with the support of both space equipment and technical infrastructure, new and more useful spaces have been created than existing residences. In a sense, this shows that gentrification creates differentiations in the user profile of the spaces through the differentiation/renewal it creates in the spaces (Figs. 6, 7).

There are also changes in terms of comfort and luxury, depending on tourist demand, in the spaces that have been converted from a residential typology to a hotel function. The expectation of comfort in these places is inevitable for the tourist class, which comes to experience both culture and relaxation in a different way. This expectation is found to



Figure 7. Interior of hotel rooms converted from residential use.

Images from: www.argosincappadocia.com.



Figure 8. Rooms with indoor and outdoor pool and jacuzzi.

Images taken from author's archive and Argos in Cappadocia Hotel official website: <https://tourmkr.com/F12qs3h52T/12751453p&268.45h&74.03t>.

have turned into a commercial target by the hotels in point; although the strategic approach is to preserve the spirit of the place, some additions have been made to the rock-carved rooms to make the spaces more attractive to visitors. The rock-carved spaces, each of which differs in terms of formation and is transformed as such into hotel rooms with a different concept in design, have been equipped with a jacuzzi, pool, and seating niches with authentic furniture and material that diversify the experience of tourists. In par-

ticular, in contrast to coastal tourism, the attachment of swimming pools to the rooms in the space with an arid climate is seen as an important innovation designed to attract the attention (Fig. 8) (Özbay, 2021, interview). According to both the architect interviewed and other literature articles consulted, this innovative add-on approach is quite favored among visitors and can cost them more per night. It has been observed that many such innovations with regard to the rooms have increased the overall standard of accom-



Figure 9. The use of the niched partitions left over from residential use after their conversion to a hotel room.

The image on the left is from the author's photo archive, 2021, and the image on the right is from Argos in Cappadocia Hotel official website <https://tourmkr.com/F12qs3h52T/12751453p&268.45h&74.03t>.

modation quality in Uçhisar. This has been determined as a feature that increases the tourism quality of the town.

Through interviews (Tosun & Özbay 2021, interview) and observing the changes in the spaces, it was stated that the spaces were designed to appeal to the tourist class in order to increase their attractiveness. As mentioned, the strategies of the hotels started with 'preserving what is', but it was stated to continue the understanding of preservation by bringing the luxury and comfort required by tourists and tourism to the region (Tosun, 2021, interview). The transformation actually refers to the issue of ensuring the comfort of tourists. It has been observed that the aim is to make the user who comes for rest, vacation and cultural experience feel the life that emerges underground as a whole with its spaces. In summary, after the arrival of these changes and innovations in the district of Uçhisar castle, an intertwined relationship has developed between local contextuality and gentrification: On the one hand, there is the conservation effort that includes a context-dependent design goal and the process of reflecting this to the user; on the other hand, the concern to create quality in the spaces has emerged in accordance to the user profile.

Similarly, in the interior decoration elements of the hotels, the niche walls left from the residential use of the rock-carved spaces have been preserved. This situation has been evaluated as an element that will make the user feel that the room is a historical place (Fig. 9). Apart from this, ethnographic elements (carpets, carpet looms, pots, jugs, etc.) of a residential texture, which are thought to resonate authenticity and historical value, are used as decorative elements. Despite the effort, though, it can be said that these elements can convey a sense of artificial locality among visitors.

3.2. Facade and Street Approach

Apart from the hotels whose spatial configurations and settlements were examined, it was determined, from the analyses made of Göreme Street and the buildings, that the buildings

which have been transformed into new functions try to conserve the former relation between the building and the street (Fig. 10). The hotels are built in the form of terraces based on topographic elevation, forming dispersed settlements along the street. To elaborate, the housing units have turned into the rooms of the hotels, and the streets have turned into corridors connecting these rooms. This transformation offers the tourist an environment that enables them to experience the street and facade texture of the district, rather than a classic hotel experience. In essence, the experience offers an environment that changes the user of the district; in other words, not residents, but tourists. The transformation also creates the grounds related to gentrification.

It has been seen that the facade design has an inseparable relationship with the street texture in the process of transforming the houses into hotels on Göreme Street. The reason for this relationship is the fact that the street under study gave a facade to the houses for a while, held together the buildings with the function of shelter, and the neighborhood culture in the district continued on this street for many years. As a result, the transformation of the houses into accommodation units and the dimension of the street function also provide data for the examination made within the scope of gentrification. Concerning the main street and alleys, in their housing function they used to be the children's playground, where horse-drawn carriages would pass and park, and where former residents would gather. Now, they are corridors connecting the rooms of the hotels. They have turned into places where tourists can access accommodation units, where parking spaces are used mostly by private vehicles, and where cultural and nature tourism is experienced (Fig. 11). The streets have now become both transit spaces for the local user and touristic experience spaces for the town visitor.

The approach of the houses to the street texture after their transformation should also be mentioned here. The decline of the neighborhood culture may lead to the clarification of the



Figure 10. Göreme Street in the 1970s (a) and 2020 (b).

Image on the left is from the photo archive of the Uçsarlılar Community in Facebook, and the one on the right is from the author's photo archive.

boundaries of use in the region (preventing the access of every user) and the deterioration of the local texture of the region. As a result of on-site observations, the way the accommodation units are opened to the street during the restoration process was analyzed. The doors of the existing houses opening to the street were not changed after they became accommodation units. The use of the streets does not only belong to the residents. This is a strategy that allows all kinds of users, which can prevent the process of gentrification (Fig. 12).

The hotels that have left a mark on the branding and transformation of the district have emerged through the transformation of multiple, separately-located residences. For this reason, some of them do not have any clear boundaries and have not made any physical transformations in their spaces. Contrary to this concept, others have been transformed with an introverted design, especially considering privacy, and are limited to garden parapets. In other words, they have clear boundaries, and their structures are designed with a concept that only those staying at the hotels can enter and experience (Figs. 13, 14). For this reason, different settlement patterns have been found as an effect of gentrification, and the results show that the use of streets and alleys has been changed to fit Uçhisar's overall pro-tourism livelihoods.

These two approaches are factors that differentiate street use in the town in terms of user profile and refer to the concept of public use and accessibility. While the buildings on Göreme Street were used as residences in the past, the streets and its alleys were at a level accessible to the residential user. However, as the houses, one by one or in combination, turned into temporary accommodations, this caused some hotels to mark their boundaries and the organic street

texture based on natural topography to be interrupted at certain points. In general, the most important reason why hotels cannot play a role in preserving the original street texture – for instance, its use as a residential area - is related to concerns such as privacy, commercialization, and institutionalization required due to the hotel functions. In this sense, the goals of the actors involved in the transformations come into play. Concerning Göreme Street, the fact is that the street in its present form can be used by both hotel guests and other pedestrians, making it a key factor in the gentrification process. This situation is determined as a partially protected local dynamic for the town, and it is thought that it would be an effective parameter in the design processes of the remaining housing units to be transformed (Fig. 15).

3.3. Public Space Permeability

In contrast to the hotels that serve tourism in Turkey which have their own boundaries and where entrance and exit is not allowed except for the hotel user, there are hotels with no clear boundaries that continue to preserve the street texture in certain neighborhoods. In Uçhisar, the structure-function construction of the town, which has changed with tourism, necessitated the questioning of whether the local and non-local public can actually use and benefit from these transformations. It is determined that the examined hotel rooms put the street and neighborhood texture at the center of their transformation strategy. During the restoration processes of the units, it was aimed to preserve historical values to be seen by everyone and not to deprive the visitor of contact with the view and the existing historical building stock. This situation reveals implications with respect to gentrification for this study. After the transformations, the fact

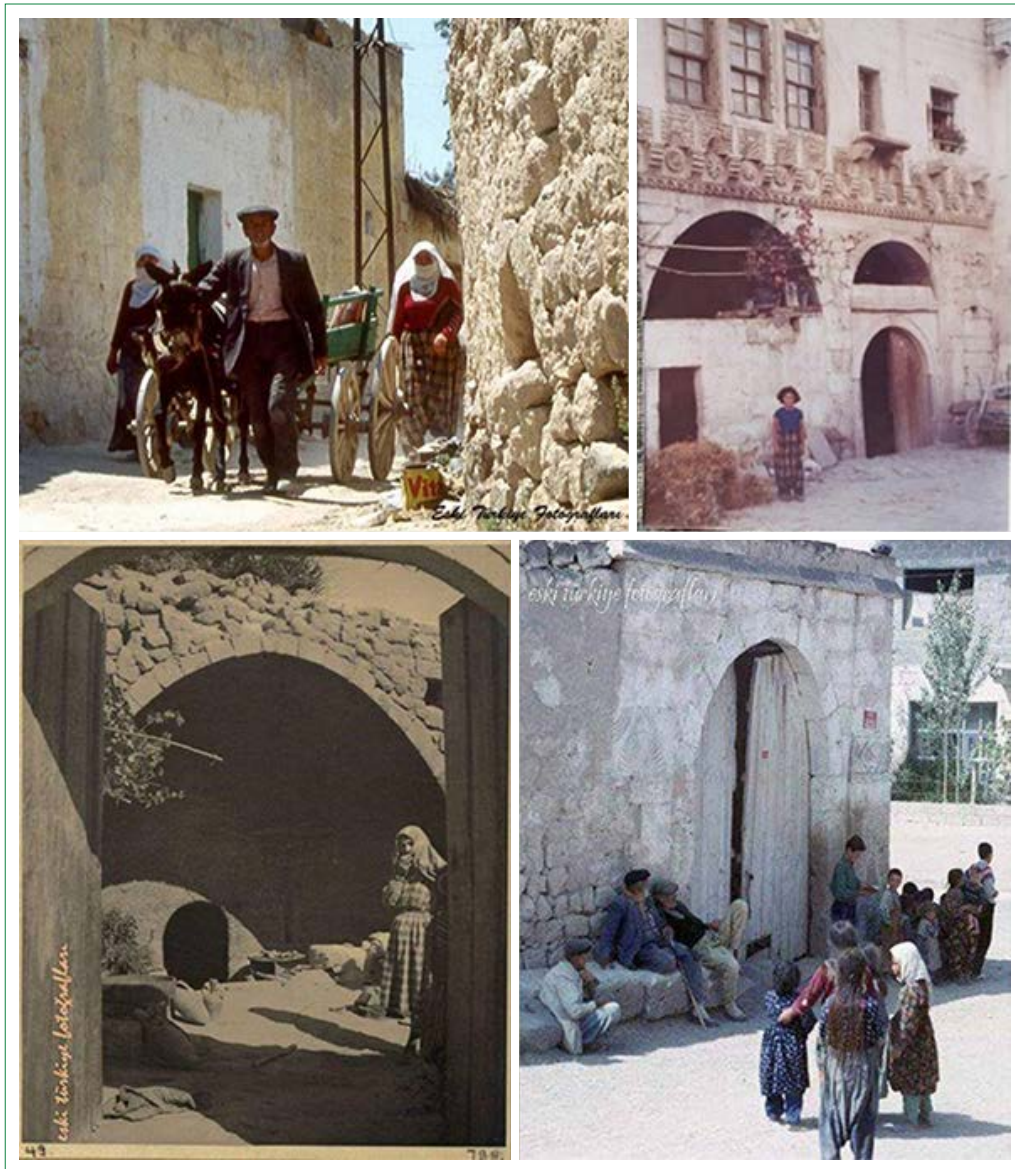


Figure 11. Göreme Street in the 1970s.

All images provided by Hasan Baş, a former construction worker in the Cappadocia region.

that no discrimination is made for the users in street use can be identified as a factor preventing gentrification. In addition, the exclusionary environment between the classes and the situation of addressing only the upper-income group have vanished. Therefore, it can be concluded that such transformation in case of Göreme Street in Uçhisar has served as a parameter that reduces the negative impact of gentrification.

After the transformation of the former housing units into temporary accommodation units in the district, the use of the neighborhood by the public also changed. It could be observed that the public in general is using the streets and the common spaces formed by them as far as the hotel boundaries and their design allow; to clarify, in the interviews, the

main goal was stated to define the concept as “a hotel with a village passing through” (Fig. 16). This meant undergoing a transformation in which the hotel starts and ends without marking its boundaries within the historical texture (Özbay, 2021, interview). Such decisions affect the public permeability of the area, both for its old and new users, as well as for the renewal process. In this way, a user who does not stay at the hotel but comes to the district for tourism purposes still has the opportunity to visit the historical features of the town and experience the street texture as it is. This is a parameter that does not prevent the permeability of public spaces and causes the local traces of the area to be followed by visitors. As a natural consequence, this prevents class and spatial segregation in the district in Uçhisar, revealing the importance of



Figure 12. Göreme Street in 2021.

Images from the author's photo archive, 2021.



Figure 13. View of the Argos in Cappadocia Hotel rooms with entrances from the street.

Images from the author's photo archive, 2021.



Figure 14. Outside view of the Museum Hotel surrounded by a parapet.

Images from the author's photo archive, 2021.

the built environment dynamics with regard to gentrification. Although the strategic goals of such hotels, which are considered to be pioneers in the transformation of the district,

help to bring comfort and luxury to the town, they are also considered critical in preventing the negative outcomes of gentrification by preserving the cultural heritage.



Figure 15. Examples of hotel rooms whose doors open to the street.

The image on the left is from Argos official website, <http://argosyapi.com/>. The image on the right is from the author's photo archive, 2021.



Figure 16. Room units with doors opening directly to the street.

Images are from the author's photo archive, 2021.

4. Conclusion

This paper addresses the question of whether gentrification has created a new architectural language with the functional changes in the building stock of Göreme Street in the town of Uçhisar, which is located in Nevşehir, Turkey. The region is the focus of attention by many visitors from Turkey and the world due to the historically valuable rock-carved houses, which have been undergoing transformation into temporary accommodation structures. In the study, due to many unique features of the town, a multi-faceted view of gentrification is provided.

Tourism in Uçhisar is a key component considered alongside gentrification in the renewal process of its historical housing fabric. The expectations of tourists and visitors drive the course of the hospitality sector, new trends, organizations that respond to these trends, touristic structuring, experiences, and spatial typologies. Recently, there has been an attempt to create an environment that meets all these expectations from the locality. In order to respond, certain parts of the town are being reconstructed and an artificial transformation is emerging. Put differently, it has been stated that spaces that can exhibit themselves with their own nature are gradually turning

into consumable spaces and scenes equipped with new theatrical joints (Güner, 2019). In general, this situation can create the possibility for the transformative effect of tourism to bring about negative effects due to gentrification. Conversely, though, the present study shows that the possibility of gentrification brought about by tourism-oriented transformations differ in the case of Uçhisar. This town is a focal point of cultural tourism with its nature and historical structures; however, emerging within the scope of the tourism industry at the moment is not only the spatial diversity that serves cultural tourism, but also the necessity of accommodations that serve the comfort and taste perceptions of this class. Uçhisar has, rather exceptionally, both developed with this industry and preserved the parameters that keep its local dynamics alive, affecting the gentrification process along the way. The affecting parameters reveal how and for whom the spaces are designed, and within what degree of limitation or flexibility these changes have been made. To find out, on-site observations were made regarding both the interior spaces and the surroundings of the building stock that form the town in its entirety.

In these observations, the most fundamental question is for whom the spaces are now designed. While seeking the answer to this question, many parameters which affect the gentrification process were determined. The first of these is the change of the user profile. For Uçhisar, the new and upper-middle class that came to the district emerged as the tourist class, which is the temporary user of the district. Accordingly, the functional transformation takes place for this temporary class as well. It has been observed that with the change in the user profile, the supply-demand balance has created a diversity, which is clearly reflected in the spaces. With the change in the user profile using the spaces, it has been observed that the supply-demand balance creates a diversity in the spaces. The fact that the historical traces in the spaces are protected by certain control principles has caused this renovation approach to stand out. Therefore, it can be stated that the transformations appear in the form of spaces that 'exhibit themselves as they have always been'. To elaborate, on the one hand, gentrification has turned the spaces into experience places for the tourist class; and, on the other hand, it has preserved the original and historical characteristics of these places, thereby protecting the district from ruin and disintegration. In this way, in the transformation process, the designers' approach emerges as a parameter that directly affects the gentrification process. In regions with such historical value and architectural language, the ability to preserve traces of the past means to preserve the locality of that region. Hence, it is also a factor that limits gentrification, which is generally regarded as a means to fully redesign a given location for high-income users.

The risk of mass tourism, which causes the commercialization and loss of identity experienced by many tourism regions

in Turkey, is a possible result to be seen in Uçhisar as well. The common meaning of mass tourism is to commodify a region economically, to welcome the incoming tourist labeled as a "commercial customer" rather than a "visitor", and to present a locality that is far from originality and detached from the context under the title of 'local'. In regions affected by mass tourism, the first thing the user encounters is the application of façade and street. Recreating a locality with visual illusions could be regarded as a sign of gentrification. In the analysis of the façade and street in the Uçhisar castle district, the effective parameter for gentrification can be determined as the tourism phenomenon, which is the commercial and economic driving force for the entire town.

Gentrification could, by definition, be seen as an inevitable end for Uçhisar; nevertheless, with many local dynamics, it has been observed that the process in its conventional form can be resisted or, at times, even triggered for other purposes. When spatial diversity and functional transformation processes are examined, Uçhisar is found as an example of a region where spatial transformations do not necessarily mean gentrification, but shows a development that rather refers to 'contextual gentrification' (Utku & Uludağ, 2021) and local dynamics. When the transformation interventions in the region are examined, it is seen that interventions were made to make the effort to be a traditional town and that the rural character of the village/town was not lost while designing the new. While the actor interventions have an impact here, the effort to transform the spaces in their original form and especially to make them feel the traces of the function they had in the past reflects a feature that offers the experience-based spatial diversity of tourism to its users, although it is not a feature that completely resists gentrification in the region. Therefore, it is concluded that intention and quality in the process of spatial transformation have an effect that reinforces the inclusive approach in the relationship between gentrification and context. However, in a similar way, the pressure created by this situation, which can resist the gentrification process, on the current user who comes with the transformation of function also creates a situation that triggers gentrification. In particular, although the residential areas that are transformed into accommodation units do not lose their structural language with the effort of preservation, they change the spirit of the region, the neighborhood texture, and the daily life practices (agricultural functions, neighborhood relations, neighborhood interaction, etc.) that carry the traces of the past. In addition to the advantage of the architectural texture preserved with the sensitivity to transformation, the traces of the countryside in this region must now be maintained by different types of functions instead of housing. Therefore, in a sense, gentrification, which provides the renewal process of the region, also changes the daily life practices as it affects the rural existence of the region at the social level. One of the most significant indicators of this

phenomenon is that, until the 2000s, the primary source of income in the region was agriculture. However, with the subsequent growth of commercial units serving tourism, the locals began to derive their livelihoods from tourism, as evidenced by the findings of the field study conducted (Uçhisar Municipality, 2021; Utku & Uludağ, 2021). A number of buildings in the region have undergone transformation under the pretext of being included in the tourism sector, with the involvement of both individual and local government. As the number of tourists increased, local people began to utilise tourism as a source of income. This phenomenon has manifested in various ways. On occasion, it has manifested as the conversion of ground floor spaces into souvenir shops. At other times, it has manifested as the establishment of cultural experience environments. In yet other instances, it has manifested as a demand for the transformation of houses into accommodation units. For this reason, as stated before, unlike the classical gentrification that creates many negative outcomes conditions according to the literature, what has occurred in Uçhisar is a cycle of 'gentrification that comes with tourism, transformation that comes with gentrification, and gentrification that comes with transformation'. Important turning points on the axis of local dynamics have revealed how the process of gentrification caused by the change/transformation brought about by tourism in the region can be initiated or prevented. The transformation processes that have taken place have revealed the need for a different approach to the meaning of gentrification, which reveals local contextuality and is limited to displacement and class differentiation in academic literature.

With this background, this paper concludes that, unlike its mainstream definition, gentrification is not always associated with complete physical transformation for higher-class use and displacement of the lower class, but includes a dynamic process, such as rural or urban development, that contributes to a renewal process with many dynamics. Based on the findings here, gentrification, the way of creating a different architectural language in the built environment, can also resist ignoring the contextual features that make up the society and the built environment of a given location. An implication of the present study is that the dynamics covering the social and physical texture should be studied well in advance to prevent the transformation – or, in the worst-case scenario, elimination - of the existing architectural texture of places, especially historical ones.

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