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Exploring Identity Issues in Development Areas of Vernacular Rural Settlements: A Case Study of Behramkale, Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable rural development is a challenging issue, considering the pressure of change brought by the demands of globalisation and intensified tourism activities in rural vernacular settlements. While studies in this field often focus on historical centres, research on the distinctive urban and architectural identity of “village development areas” in rural vernacular settlements remains scarce. To address this gap in the literature, a field study was conducted in the vernacular rural settlement of Behramkale, located in the Northern Aegean region of Türkiye. The study explored the continuity of architectural and urban identity and its significance. The research involved a qualitative assessment of primary data obtained through architectural surveys and archival documents collected in 2017 and 2021. Data analysis not only focused on static features of place identity but included dynamic and perceptual features of place identity. Planning policy inadequacies and the implications of top-down decisions on vernacular rural Türkiye are discussed. The key finding from the study highlights the necessity for a more participatory and site-specific approach to preserving vernacular rural heritage’s urban and architectural identity for sustainable development. In this regard, the paper proposes that an identity-based and people-centred approach should be integrated into the policies for the development areas of vernacular rural settlements. This integration aims to preserve the local architectural identity and promote a belongingness community among residents.

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Highlights

- Contrary to the mainstream literature, which concentrates on the static (architectural) features of identity, this study investigates the continuity or discontinuity of static, dynamic, and perceptual features of vernacular identity.
- This study illustrates that existing top-down methods in Türkiye fail to address the issue of preserving and maintaining local identity in vernacular heritage settlements.
- A reduced connection between the old and new areas has resulted in a lack of community attachment and a reduced sense of belonging, potentially leading to social and economic segregation between the development area and the vernacular settlement.
- It reveals that from the planning process, a lack of site-specific and identity-based design decisions generates dis-identity issues in the development area of vernacular rural settlements.

Contribution to the field statement

- This paper adds to the existing literature by focusing on the distinctive urban and architectural identity of “village development areas” in rural vernacular settlements.
- The originality of this paper lies in the methodology and findings where the authors broadened the scope of place identity in their research with an angle borrowed from social sciences.
- This paper suggests areas for further study on the conservation of rural heritage sites.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, due to the growing adverse impacts of climate change on the water-food-energy nexus, as well as the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Pandemic, sustainable rural development has become a high-trending topic on the policy agenda of many countries. Rural development aims to bring about social change and sustainable economic growth to benefit the rural community's ongoing development (Mihai & Iatu, 2020). The World Social Report of the United Nations (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021) points out how rural development can be reset to achieve sustainable development.

While promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for residents in rural settlements, preserving vernacular heritage settlements plays a vital role in creating economic, environmental, and social benefits (Vythoulka et al., 2021). Vernacular heritage is defined as the fundamental expression of a community's culture and its relationship with its territory and as an effective response to functional, social, and environmental constraints. A vernacular settlement's urban and architectural identity is shaped by a complex set of cultural, environmental, and historical factors that reflect the unique character of the region and its people. The built environment plays a critical role in shaping our experience of places. Moreover, it can contribute to creating and expressing place identity through the design, construction, and maintenance of buildings, public spaces, and other urban landscape elements (Farhad et al., 2022). Conserving the identity of architecture in the built environment helps to strengthen place identity, which is always associated with other terms such as memory, character, and genetic code (Bascherini, 2018). Thus, the authenticity of vernacular architecture does not only refer to the built environment associated with the "static authenticity" of forms, textures, and materials. Instead, it is the product of an ongoing process constantly redefined through changes and practises. Therefore, it is dynamic and pluralistic, built upon narratives and time (Esparza, 2018)

As a result of changing social, economic, and environmental factors, heritage settlements may undergo regeneration, which involves revitalising and renewing settlements and introducing development areas to meet the needs of current and future generations. However, introducing development areas and infills might expose the heritage settlements to severe pressures of commercialisation, poor design, and cultural uniformity that fade away their place identity (Said et al., 2013). In such a design approach, the meanings of places and their identities are ignored; places look and feel alike and offer similar bland possibilities for experience. Conversely, loss of identification in the built environment might cause a kind of nostalgia that ends up resulting in the design of "false vernacular" environments, where architectural elements of vernacular architecture are extracted from their original contexts and used in an eclectic way (Berleant, 1997; Kavas, 2015).

Despite an abundance of studies on vernacular rural settlements, there is little research on the distinctive urban and architectural identity of the development areas of vernacular rural settlements (Karahana et al., 2021). In this regard, the study aims to closely examine the design practice of development areas of vernacular rural settlements in Türkiye from the perspective of identity preservation and to contribute to conservation policies. To achieve this, we have formulated the following research questions:

RQ1: How can we effectively address the identity problem in these regions?

RQ2: What policies can be formulated to ensure the preservation of urban and architectural identity in development areas while promoting continuity?

By addressing these research questions, we aim to shed light on the best approaches to maintaining the unique identity of these settlements amidst ongoing development.

Behramkale has been selected as a case study, with its cultural heritage dating back to the Bronze Age (Arslan & Aslan, 2014) and the designated development area established in 1993. This study helps to address the inadequacy of planning policies in heritage conservation and the consequences of top-down decisions in the formation of development areas in vernacular rural settlements. Conservation practices of this settlement have been discussed from the aspects of identity and community

engagement, promoting a more participatory and site-specific approach. The framework of the study can be followed through Figure 1, as seen below.

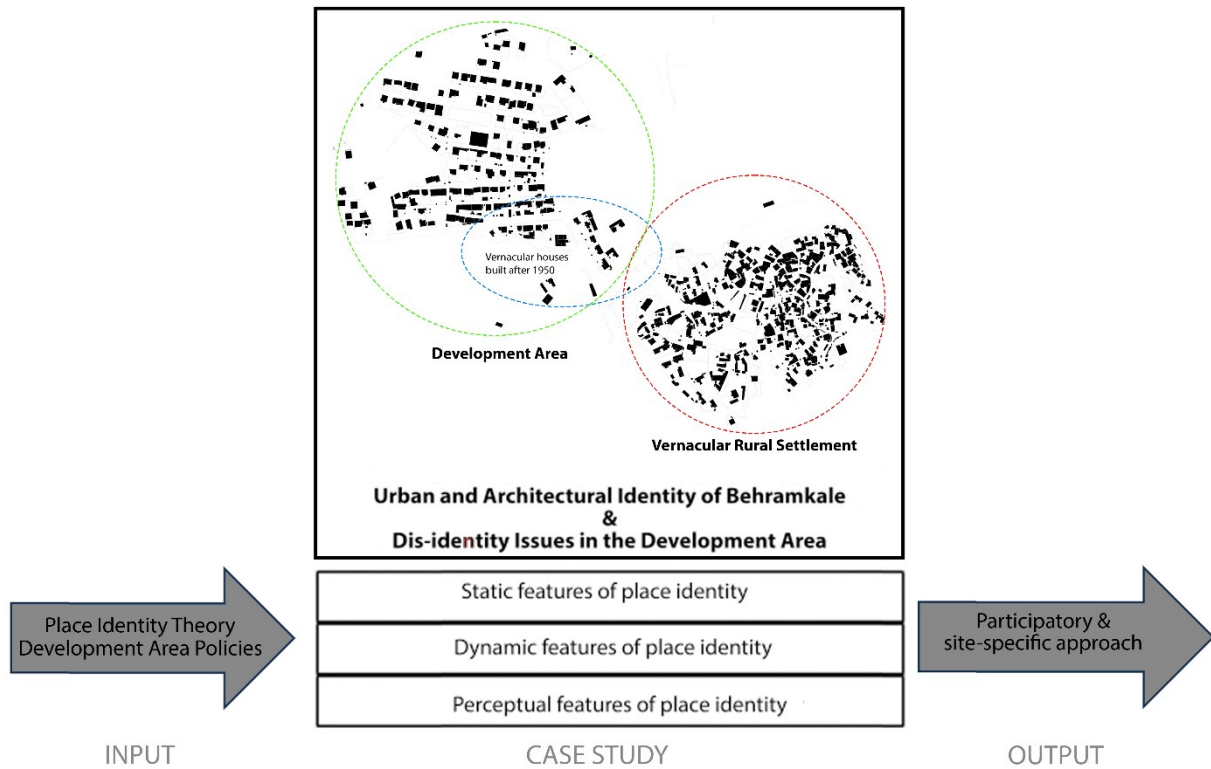


Figure 1. Framework of the Study (Developed by the Authors).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Urban and Architectural Identity of Vernacular Rural Settlements

As stated by the International Union of Architects (UIA) in the Copenhagen Declaration on December 7, 2009, all architecture projects are linked to their wider natural surroundings and reflect social, cultural, and heritage values (Salgın et al., 2017). Vernacular settlements depict the plainness of this architecture formed by geography, social and cultural values, daily life, local materials, and production methods (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023).

Identity includes personal evaluations, experiences, and views in addition to physical, cultural, and social traits (Anastasiou et al., 2022). It is the degree to which a person can recognise or recall a place as separate from others by having vivid, unique, or distinguishing characteristics (Lynch, 1960, 1984). According to (Abusaada & Elshater, 2023) detailed review, place identity is linked to meanings, everyday lifestyles, and urban forms. (Duan et al., 2022) state that urban identity is linked to culture and physical form. Architecture is a component of identity and contains the themes, traits, and ideas assigned to society (Alzahrani, 2022). The broad spectrum of architectural forms is an unlimited source of crucial elements of identity that are formed over time, built on long-term experiences and a need for functionality applying local building materials (Skataric et al., 2021). Vernacular settlements are often characterised by their unique architectural and urban features reflecting local culture, climate, and social organisation. Some of the essential elements of urban and architectural identity in vernacular settlements, such as mass and articulation, openings, architectural detail, materials, and principles of facade arrangements, have vital importance in preserving and enhancing the character and identity of historical urban environments (Yasin Baper & Hassan, 2012). Since buildings and the built environment are physical manifestations of a society's culture and history, historic buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces become tangible reminders of the past and contribute to a collective sense of identity and belonging.

Kandemir, (2017) defines urban identity as a dynamic and susceptible impression of every change invoked on its inhabitants by environmental, historical, sociocultural, and spatial values. Susceptibility to change is highly sensitive in historical environments and requires interventions to preserve the local identity to maintain a sense of continuity and connection to the cultural heritage of a place. Each building has its unique identity based on the creative vocabulary of the architect, whereas vernacular architecture preserves the region's identity. The architectural identity of a region reflects this society's culture and lifestyle through its built environment (AL-Mohannadi et al., 2023). A specific local culture's architectural identity represents a living landscape with a common sense of place generated over time by the community's collective efforts to include meanings and ways of life (Nooraddin, 2012). The features and properties of an urban physical setting that give an individual a sense of place, are referred to as urban and architectural identity (Saleh M.A.E., 1998).

The connection between the built environment and community culture can be weakened due to rapid sociocultural and environmental transformations due to globalisation, intensified tourism, or changes to governance and policies. Architects, urban designers, and planners must tackle the issue of continuity of tradition following the demands of contemporary life to cope with continuous change in built environments. Using traditional materials, design elements, and building techniques can help reinforce a sense of continuity with the past. At the same time, contemporary interventions sensitive to the historical context can add a new layer of meaning and identity to the urban environment.

2.2 Development Areas Policies of Vernacular Rural Settlements in Türkiye

The need for development areas in vernacular rural settlements may occur with the increase in population of the settlements (when there is no adequate parcel to build a house) or because of the building restrictions in heritage sites where the construction of new buildings is banned.

Villages outside the metropolitan municipalities' boundaries are subject to the Village Law (Law No. 442-1924) and Law No. 3367 (1987), which include the legal provisions about development areas. The planning process of development areas is stated in Law No. 3367 as follows; with the confirmation of the council of elders, the head of the village applies to the affiliated civilian authority for the planning of the "village development area" with a list of locals who demand to have their place in the village. The Directorate General of Spatial Planning states that a commission of experts and a representative from the village decide the most suitable place as a development area for the village. The village settlement plan, which includes the existing settlement and development area, is a subdivision plan apart from Zoning Law No. 3194 and the related regulations. It is prepared according to the needs of the village, considering the current situation and the future potential of the village, in the form of upper-scale plans, cadastral sheets, and opinion letters taken from relevant public institutions and organisations (Erdem & Yalçınöz, 2023).

Since the 2000s, concerns about the quality of new buildings in vernacular rural settlements have risen among researchers (Balta & Atik, 2022; Şimşek, 2020) and authorities of the government. Between 2008-2017, in cooperation with public enterprises and universities, research projects were conducted in the villages of Balıkesir, Kayseri, and İzmir, as well as in Kastamonu-Küre Village and Erdek-Yukarıyapıcı Village, to analyse their architectural properties and prepare a guide for new design decisions in these villages and their development areas (Çorapçıoğlu et al., 2010, 2011; Guler K., 2020; Hasgül et al., 2021). However, such comprehensive studies were limited to those listed above. In 2016, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change declared that with an aim for the "revitalisation of the local architectural texture, which is under threat due to uncontrolled construction in rural areas", they presented "residential projects in accordance with the local architecture" for 81 provinces of Türkiye (Polat E.O., 2016). Eventually, between 2017-2019, to "create a sustainable historical environment and a local silhouette that is authentic to the 'place' in rural areas", the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change published the books "Residential Projects in Accordance with Vernacular Architectural Properties I-II-III-IV" for thirty-four cities in Türkiye. As a supplementary document for the design of new residential buildings in rural settlements, the books

include some drawings of typical projects for each city (Figure 2). These books are also recommended to the residents of the recently planned village development areas. According to the plan notes of these development areas, if villagers ask for any projects from the municipality, they would be directed to the ministry's books.



Figure 2. Amasya Vernacular Buildings and the Plan and 3D Drawing of Type 1 As a Proposal (Oruç et al., 2017).

3. Method and Materials

3.1 Case Study Selection Criteria

Behramkale is selected as a case study for this research because of its unique vernacular characteristics and the formation of a development area after 1993, following Law No. 3367 (1987). Construction of new houses has been banned in the vernacular rural settlement since 1982 when Behramkale was protected as a heritage site. However, the entire development area has been filled in over the past 30 years. Observing continuity and changes to the urban and architectural identities by comparing the vernacular settlement to the development area provides opportunities to decode the reasons and motivations behind these decisions. The primary data for the research is based on architectural surveys and archival documents that were collected by the research team in 2017 and 2021. This case study provides an opportunity to discuss recent supplementary documents released by the Ministry for Development Areas and to argue for a more participatory and site-specific approach to sustainable development.

3.2 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Primary data for this research has been obtained through architectural surveys and archival documents. These valuable sources were collected by the research team during two distinct periods: first in 2017 and then again in 2021. The decision to gather data at two different periods allows for a comprehensive analysis, capturing potential changes and developments over time. A qualitative data analysis method that enables a deep exploration and understanding of the nuances and complexities present within the data is employed in this study. The findings of the data analysis have been presented under well-known components and elements in place identity literature, such as static, dynamic, and perceptual features.

3.3 Analysis Framework

Empirical data has been analysed by using Relph E.C., (1976) conceptualisation of place identity. According to Relph E.C. (1976), the identity of places is composed of three interrelated components: natural and artificial characteristics, observable activities and functions, and the meanings given to them by human intentions. Natural and artificial characteristics are the physical features that shape the physical environment and the materialist fabric of structures and open places. These are the “static features” of urban identity. Activities and functions that refer to the mutual interaction among people and the way they use physical fabric are called “dynamic features”. Lastly, features of meaning that are connected to human behaviours, intentions, experiences, and expertise, including signs and symbols, refer to the “perceptual features” of urban identity (Ibrahim et al., 2014; Surchi & Nafa, 2021) (Table 1).

Table 1. Components and Elements of Place Identity (Relph, 1976; İbrahim et al., 2014; Surchi & Nafa, 2021).

Components	Elements
Static features (Physical characteristics and appearances)	Natural characteristics; urban and architectural characteristics (spatial features; building form/spatial organisation; construction techniques and building materials; traditional indoor design elements)
Dynamic features (Activities and functions)	Indoor and outdoor activity; liveability; interaction; containment; access; and permeability
Perceptual features (Meanings, signs, symbols)	Image; experiences; sensations; the conception of the inhabited and lived space; recognising the formal and spatial characteristics of the building, on behalf of the observer

The urban and architectural identity of the vernacular settlement and development area of the case study has been analysed in the context of the components and elements of place identity (Table 1) under the results section.

3.4 Case Study: Behramkale

Behramkale lies on the Aegean coast in the Ayvacık district of Çanakkale province, Türkiye. The distance to Istanbul is 147 kilometres. (Figure 3). Behramkale's (the ancient city of Assos) history dates to the Bronze Age (Arslan & Aslan, 2014). It faces the southern Aegean Sea shoreline to the west, Mount Ida to the east, and Lesbos to the south across the Straits of Mytilene from its location above a hill 235 meters above sea level (Arslan & Aslan, 2014). The ancient city's geographical area partially overlaps with the historical settlement of Behramkale located inside the ancient city walls, which became an Ottoman territory port in 1330 and has been under Turkish authority without interruption since then (Serdaroglu U., 1995). The village has a Mediterranean climate (hot Mediterranean summers) and rich forests. Summers are dry and hot, while winters are warm and wet.



Figure 3 . Location of Behramkale, Türkiye (Google Earth and Authors)

After the start of archaeological excavations in 1981 and the designation of Assos, the ancient city, and the harbour as 1st-degree Archaeological sites in 1982 by the Superior Council of Immovable Antiquities and Monuments, the strain on this location has grown. The geographic border of the first-degree Natural Site was established by the same act. The historical part of the village has been placed under protection. Village inhabitants (population 660 (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023) mostly worked in

fisheries, livestock, forestry, and agriculture until the designation. Since then, tourism has been their primary source of income (Gocer et al., 2021). The area had 254 houses, some of which were vacant or utilised as summer residences. The designation of the site was changed to Urban Archaeological Site later in 2000. Since 1991, Behramkale has been considered within the bounds of the tourism development area. In 2017, UNESCO added the archaeological site of Assos to its World Heritage Tentative List. Delays in developing the Behramkale Conservation Plans interrupted the locals' usual practice of building their homes in new spaces. Previously, younger generations used to build a house in the courtyard for seniors to reside in when they constituted a new family. The increased demand for spatial change, however, was barred by protection restrictions; as a result, a development area was established in 1993 to respond to the needs of the locals, out of the historical settlement near the river, on the borders of a 3rd-degree Natural heritage site.

4. Results; Urban and Architectural Identity of the Vernacular Settlement and Dis-identity Issues in the Development Area

The urban and architectural identity of Behramkale and the dis-identity issues in the development area of the village are discussed according to the static, dynamic, and perceptual features as indicated in Table 1.

4.1. Static (Physical) Features of Place Identity and Dis-identity







The vernacular settlement of Behramkale has an organic urban pattern in harmony with the topography. The separation of the agricultural fields and residential areas gave birth to the village's compact morphology. In simple prismatic forms with stone masonry walls and courtyards, the settlement presents North Aegean traditional dwelling characteristics. Functional units (such as a stable, toilet, storage, fountain, hearth, and granny flat) are arranged around the courtyard. High courtyard walls and stone-paved roads characterise the streets.








Most of the resources used in the historic part were regional and natural, including andesite stone, wood, and earth. Due to the necessity of obtaining materials close to construction locations, the vernacular buildings' construction methods and materials were directly influenced by the climate and endemic environment (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023). The historic part is situated on the north slope of the hill and aligned with the topography in the wind's predominant direction to allow natural ventilation. Primarily square-shaped houses have 70-100 cm thick masonry walls. Earlier examples of vernacular houses had flat roofs of pressed mud. However, most of them are renovated to pitched roofs with ceramic tile (Table 2).

In contrast, the village development area was designed in a grid pattern, with broad and unpaved streets and extensive rectangular parcel lands in contrast to the organic layout of the old settlement. Furthermore, the ancient city walls served as a physical barrier between the old settlement and the development area, preventing them from developing a close bond. Still, the earliest buildings from the 50s and 60s were built with vernacular character. More recent structures vary in materials/construction techniques, plan size/ layout, and facade proportions, with bigger floor areas, large openings, and a variety of contemporary facade materials. Villagers continue to build with stone, but it is commonly found on the lower floors or as cladding for some buildings. Most houses, especially the upper floors, are constructed using hollow brick or aerated concrete brick masonry. The settlement contains reinforced concrete houses with hollow brick filling. Some structures have cement plaster or stone cladding covering their exterior walls (Table 2), which serves both aesthetic and protective purposes. Buildings that were built traditionally tend to have similar facade proportions to the historical settlement in the area. These structures reflect the architectural heritage and maintain visual harmony with the surrounding traditional buildings. However, there are also buildings in the area that deviate from the traditional pattern. These modern structures often incorporate design elements, such as terraces, balconies, and large windows, that are not typically found in historic houses. These additions cater to contemporary lifestyle preferences and offer improved natural lighting, outdoor spaces, and views. While stone is still utilized in construction; its use has become more selective, with hollow

brick, aerated concrete, and reinforced concrete being more commonly employed for practical and economic reasons (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023).

Table 2. Urban and Architectural Characteristics of Vernacular (Old) Settlement (Developed by Authors)

<p>Settlement Characteristics</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Houses are located on north facing slope of the hill * Organic pattern in harmony with topography allows wind flow around the buildings * Sinuous curving streets with stone pavement and high stone walls surrounding courtyards * Green elements in the courtyard to provide passive cooling strategies 	
<p>Building Form/Spatial Organization</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Functional units (stable, toilet, storage, fountain, heath, granny flat, etc.) around a courtyard * 1-2 story height buildings, compact form (more likely 50–60 m² square/rectangular plan) * With few, small openings, shade, and a high thermal mass, the temperature within is stabilised. 	
	 <p style="text-align: center;">Courtyard</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Courtyard with green</p>

		
<p>Construction Techniques & Building Materials</p>		
	<p>Hearth</p>	<p>Fountain</p>
		
	<p>Wooden beams supporting the wooden slab</p>	<p>Remains of the stone walls and timber beams</p>
<p>Traditional indoor design elements & ornaments</p>	<p>* Local materials and traditional construction methods (masonry stone walls without plaster and timber floors with timber beams) * Earliest buildings with flat roofs * Timber window frames with timber shutters and timber doors * Timber floor coverings in living and sleeping areas, stone floor coverings in other areas * Plaster and paint on inner walls or natural stone</p>	
		
	<p>Wooden cabinet system (yük)</p>	






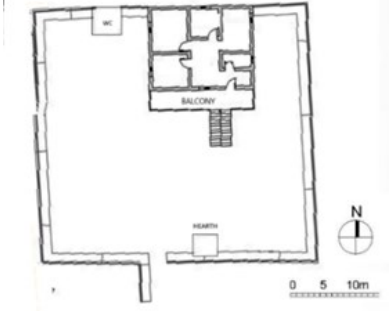
		
	<p>Bathing cubicle (<i>gusülhane</i>)</p>	<p>Hearth/ Fireplace</p>

Table 3. Urban and Architectural Characteristics of Development Area (Developed by Authors)

<p>Settlement Characteristics</p>		
<p>Building Form/Spatial Organization</p>		
	<p>House Exterior</p>	<p>Typical house plan in the development area</p>

- * Grid pattern with a flat topography that blocks wind effect
- * Courtyards turn into vegetable gardens and are surrounded by short masonry (stone or brick) walls
- * Toilets and hearths are still used in the gardens
- * Wide and unpaved streets

		
	<p style="text-align: center;">Kitchen</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interior furniture</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 2-3 storey buildings, larger floor areas (100-120 m²) square/rectangular i * Large openings and windows without shutters * Low thermal mass, which causes sudden increases or decreases in indoor temperature * Specialized spaces and enlarged parcel area for the modern lifestyle 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Construction Techniques & Building Materials</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contemporary construction methods and materials * Concrete slab/RC frame and timber floor & ceramic floor finishes * PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride), metal, or timber window frames with single or double glazing * Plaster and paint on inner walls, ceramic on inner walls in wet areas 	

In the old settlement, ornaments, decorations, and unique interior design elements (such as gusülhane and yüklük) played a significant role in shaping the vernacular architectural identity (Asatekin, 2005). Gusülhane is a kind of shower for a full-body wash before prayer, and yüklük is a small niche or cupboard, two essential elements of Turkish traditional houses that serve specific functions. These elements are typically designed with wooden doors or curtains (Table 2). Unfortunately, ornaments and these interior design elements disappeared from the spatial layout of the new house design. On the other hand, specialised spaces such as the kitchen and bathroom replaced these interior design elements and caused the enlargement of the parcel area (Table 3).

4.2. Dynamic Features (Features of Activities) of Place Identity and Dis-identity

The historic vernacular settlement's morphology can be characterised as an "organically evolved landscape" formed by its physical and cultural surroundings. In the vernacular settlement, courtyards were designed to be functional and practical, accommodating the needs of residents within a private outdoor setting. They often served as central communal spaces where various daily activities such as social gatherings, cooking, drying clothes, and children's play took place. These were places for women to gather and help each other with chores (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the high stone walls of these courtyards acted as protective barriers, keeping youngsters safe from traffic hazards. However, the development area of the village was designed in a grid pattern. Therefore, in

the development area of Behramkale, each parcel has an individual living unit with a larger average floor space than the vernacular settlement, located within the parcel with a front yard. On the contrary, the historical settlement has been composed of functional units around a courtyard with high stone walls bordering the street defining an introverted open space for daily activities. The fragmented composition of the units of varied sizes derived from the functional requirements no longer exists in the development area. The introverted design of the vernacular house gave way to an extraverted layout. Therefore, the use of the outdoor spaces has been changed, and the courtyard has lost its identity as the heart of social life. Instead of being used for daily living activities, gardens in the development area are mainly used for planting flowers or food plants. This change in garden usage reflects the changing lifestyles and priorities of the inhabitants (Figure 4).



Images are from the vernacular (old) settlement.



Development area

Figure 4. Courtyards and the Streets of the Vernacular Settlement and the Development Area.

In Behramkale, the mosque and village coffee houses supported social life by being meeting points and neighbourhood networking areas for locals as well as tourists. There is a coffee house in the development area, too. However, instead of being at the centre of the settlement, it is located on the main road connecting it to the other provinces.

4.3. Perceptual Features (Features of Meaning) of Place Identity and Dis-identity

The introduction of the development area in Behramkale conflicts with the values of unique architecture, cultural traditions, and historical significance and does not align with the existing vernacular character of the settlement. This erodes the settlement's cultural and historical identity and the authenticity of the area, making it less appealing to visitors, disconnecting locals, and diminishing the sense of maintaining a cohesive and vibrant community. It is seen that modern construction methods and materials have been prioritised over traditional building styles in the development area. This creates a contrast that detracts from its cultural identity, compromises the integrity and longevity of traditional buildings, and leads to the loss of traditional building skills and techniques. Conflict between old and new undermined the authenticity of the heritage settlement, making it difficult for locals and visitors alike to connect with the area's history and culture. The development area is detached from the vernacular settlement and functions solely as affordable housing for local inhabitants. Resulting in a fragmented and disjointed urban environment creates social and economic segregation between the development area and the vernacular settlement, potentially leading to



disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and social interaction. The separation of the development area (ironically, the ancient walls highlight this separation physically) from the vernacular settlement has resulted in a lack of community attachment, a reduced sense of belonging, and diminished opportunities for community-driven initiatives and economic benefits. According to in-depth interviews with the locals, the architectural identity of the village was important to the older generation, who mostly lived in the old settlement. Some locals who had an enterprise or could afford the renovation of their houses continued to live in the old settlement. Locals who had close bonds with the village also wanted to see the continuity of the architectural values of the village in the development area.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Case Study Findings

5.1.1 Static Features

The vernacular settlement of Behramkale exhibits an organic urban pattern with compact morphology, characterised by stone masonry walls and courtyards, reflecting North Aegean traditional dwelling characteristics. The historic settlement predominantly used natural and regional resources like andesite stone, wood, and earth in construction, influenced by the climate and endemic environment. However, the village development area, planned in a grid pattern, differs from the organic layout of the old settlement and features modern structures with contemporary materials and design elements. While stone is still used, hollow brick, aerated concrete, and reinforced concrete are now more commonly employed for practical and economic reasons. Regrettably, the distinctive interior design elements of the old settlement, such as *gusülhane* and *yüklük*, which held significant importance in shaping the vernacular architectural identity, have vanished from the spatial layout of the new house designs in the development area. In their place, specialised spaces like kitchens and bathrooms have been incorporated, leading to an enlargement of the parcel areas.

5.1.2 Dynamic Features

The historic vernacular settlement of Behramkale has an "organically evolved landscape" morphology, shaped in response to the natural and cultural environment. Courtyards in the vernacular settlement served as central communal spaces for various daily activities and social gatherings. However, in the development area, individual living units with larger floor spaces replaced the fragmented functional units around courtyards. The development area's extraverted layout changed outdoor space usage, with gardens primarily used for cultivating flowers or food plants. Additionally, while the vernacular settlement's mosque and coffee houses served as social hubs, the coffee house in the development area is located on the main road rather than at the centre of the settlement.

5.1.3 Perceptual Features

The introduction of the development area in Behramkale has led to conflicts with the unique architecture, cultural traditions, and historical significance of the settlement, eroding its cultural identity and authenticity. Modern construction methods and materials have been prioritised over traditional building styles, leading to a contrast that compromises the integrity of traditional buildings and construction skills. The reduced connection between the old and new areas has resulted in a lack of community attachment and a reduced sense of belonging, potentially leading to social and economic segregation between the development area and the vernacular settlement. Locals, especially the older generation residing in the old settlement, place great importance on preserving the architectural identity of the village and wish for the continuity of its values in the development area, reflecting their strong bonds with the village.

5.2 Role of Policies for Development Areas in Place Identity Conservation

Although the rural settlements in Türkiye have different urban morphologies, as in the Behramkale case, village development areas are planned as a product of zoning plans that have a texture of linear consistency and are uniformly imposed in all regions of the country without considering design aspects like climatic conditions, terrain, and socio-cultural structure. For this reason, these settlements have



no sense of local “identity” (instead having more urban character) or a sense of “placelessness” (Varolgüneş & Canan, 2017), which is explained as “the casual replacement of the diverse and significant places of the world with anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments” (Relph E.C., 1976). In zoning plans, parcel layout, design of open and closed spaces, and average floor area are considered according to standard implications.

Apart from the urban morphology, facade organisation, architectural elements, construction techniques, and materials also play a significant role in shaping the architectural identity of a settlement. They contribute to aesthetics, cultural expression, and historical context, creating a sense of place and identity. Zoning plans give limited information about the design of buildings in development areas, such as height and floor area ratio. In such an ambiguous construction environment, the development area of Behramkale did not originate with a homogenous and qualified character but with an architectural cacophony. There is a lack of continuity and transmission of conventional construction techniques' knowledge and abilities to new buildings because of several potential causes, including the high cost of masonry and timber materials and a shortage of masonry artisans (Ergöz Karahan et al., 2023).

As described in the policies for development areas section above, until the 2000s, there was no concern among government authorities about the quality of buildings in the development areas. Village design guides could be beneficial supplementary tools for an identity-based approach to conserving the identity of vernacular rural settlements (Boyacıoğlu et al., 2015). However, since 2017, the “Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate” has referred to the books named “Residential Projects in Accordance with Vernacular Architectural Properties I-II-III-IV” in case of a request for assistance for the design of houses in development areas. The cities mentioned in these books have several types of rural settings; for instance, mountain villages and coastal villages do not share the same type of morphology or architecture. However, it is observed that suggested projects ignore such differences and rely on a kind of typification that reduces the design to a formal approach, where the elements of vernacular vocabulary come together randomly (Guler K., 2020; Polat E.O., 2016) and create “false vernacular” environments. In case of the expansion of the development area of Behramkale, locals will be directed to residential projects prepared for Çanakkale that have different architectural properties than Behramkale, since the vernacular houses in Behramkale do not have either projections or timber claddings on the façade (Oruç et al., 2017) (Figure 5).

It is evident that village development areas in vernacular rural settlements can be planned, neither like tabula rasa nor like the setting of a theatre. As the Behramkale case proved new tools are needed to plan the development areas of vernacular rural settlements to sustain local features while promoting scenarios for rural development. Identity-based and people-centred approaches can be practical tools for understanding the natural, built, and sociocultural characteristics of vernacular rural settlements and finding plausible ways of integrating these features into the evolution of village development areas. An approach that considers the architectural identity of the place as well as the locals’ needs can strengthen the role of architecture in conceptualising and realising innovative ideas around vernacular living that focus on place-making. As stated by Salman (2019), awareness of vernacular architecture, understanding its importance, and enhancement of the built environment are not nostalgic approaches to the past but an endurance of the local identity.

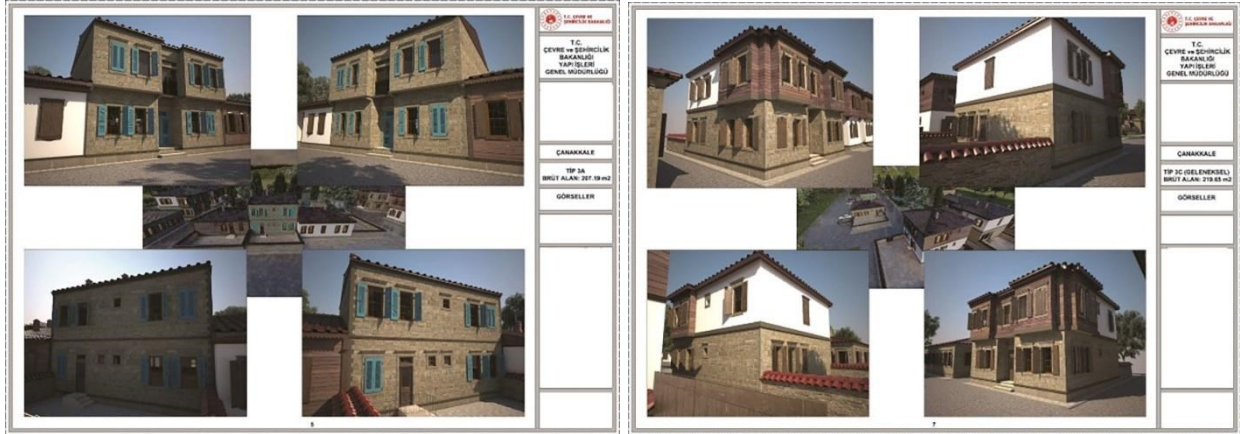


Figure 5. Typical Residential Projects Prepared for Çanakkale Region (Oruç et al., 2017)

5.3 Recommendations for Future Applications

The findings from the case study highlight the importance of careful planning and designing development areas in heritage sites to integrate harmoniously with the existing vernacular settlement and preserve its cultural identity, historical continuity, and social fabric. This can be achieved through inclusive community engagement, adherence to local architectural styles, and a focus on sustainable development practices that respect and enhance the character of the heritage area. A place-making strategy, responsive to the context through examination of issues that make the place meaningful for insiders who intensely experience it, might be more efficient for the design of the development areas of vernacular rural settlements. Participatory design approaches involving locals and stakeholders in the design process can help ensure that the development areas reflect the community's unique cultural and social values. Involvement of local communities in the decision process is often too minimal in Türkiye, limited by consultation or even declaration when proposals are already well-developed, rather than a dialogue throughout the entire process. However, promoting community participation in the development areas' design would benefit every actor.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this research has explored identity issues in the development areas of vernacular rural settlements through the case study of Behramkale, Türkiye. The study has offered valuable insights into the complexities of preserving architectural and urban identity in the face of modernization and development pressures. Contrary to conventional literature, which predominantly focuses on the static architectural features of identity, this study has extended its scope to encompass dynamic and perceptual aspects of identity as well.

Through the analysis of the Behramkale case, it became evident that existing top-down planning methods in Türkiye do not effectively address the challenge of conserving local identity in vernacular heritage settlements. The introduction of development areas often lacks site-specific and identity-based design considerations, leading to dis-identity issues that compromise the unique architectural and urban characteristics of these settlements. The study has revealed the importance of acknowledging both the physical and intangible elements that contribute to place identity.

Furthermore, the research has underscored the significance of a people-centred approach and community engagement in the design and planning of development areas. The lack of community attachment and reduced sense of belonging observed in the development areas of Behramkale emphasize the need for a more inclusive and participatory process. Such an approach not only ensures the preservation of architectural heritage but also fosters a stronger sense of community and cultural continuity.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that policies for the development areas of vernacular rural settlements should be restructured to integrate an identity-based and people-centred approach. By involving local communities and stakeholders in the decision-making process and tailoring design



decisions to the specific cultural, historical, and environmental context of each settlement, it becomes possible to create development areas that seamlessly coexist with the existing vernacular settlements. This not only promotes sustainable development but also strengthens the bond between residents and their built environment.

In the broader context, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of considering the continuity of identity in development areas of vernacular rural settlements. By extending the analysis beyond static architectural features, the research enriches our understanding of how cultural and historical identity can be preserved amidst ongoing urbanization and modernization. For further research, a site-specific and people-centred model for the development areas of the vernacular rural settlements is planned to be conducted as a guide for both the governmental authorities and the villagers.

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Conflict of Interests

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Data availability statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

CRedit author statement

Didem Boyacıoğlu: Conceptualization, investigation, methodology, writing-original draft.

Özgür Göçer: Conceptualization, investigation, formal analysis, writing-original draft.

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