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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF THE HISTORIC ISPARTA RAILWAY STATION AND THE CONVERTED ISPARTA MILLET PARK

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ÖZET

Günümüzde, kullanılmayan ancak tarihî ve kültürel miras değeri taşıyan alanlar üzerinden kentin ekonomisine, peyzajına ve ekosistemine değer kazandırmaya yönelik çalışmalar giderek daha önemli hâle gelmektedir. Bu bağlamda, tarihî Isparta Tren Garı, Isparta Millet Bahçesi konsepti aracılığıyla âtıl durumdan çıkarılarak önemli bir kültürel ve kamusal peyzaj alanına dönüştürülmüştür. Tarihî Isparta Tren Garı, Isparta'nın tarihinde önemli bir yere sahiptir ve Millet Bahçesi ile ele alındığında turizm ve rekreasyon açısından önemli bir rol üstlenmektedir. Bu çalışma, Tarihî Isparta Tren Garı'nın tarihsel sürecini ele alarak yapının kent için taşıdığı önemi vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Millet Bahçesi kapsamında uygulanan tasarım konsepti; mekânsal sürdürülebilirlik, yapı strüktürü, kullanılan malzemeler, donatı ve mobilya elemanları, bitkisel tasarım, aydınlatma, su ve enerji kullanımı, altyapı çözümleri, erişilebilirlik ve kullanıcı açısından işlevsellik gibi başlıklar altında analiz edilecektir. Ayrıca, alanın kültürel peyzaj açısından taşıdığı önem değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihî Isparta Tren Garı, Isparta Millet Bahçesi, Kültürel Peyzaj, Peyzaj Tasarımı

ABSTRACT

Today, actions aimed at adding value to the city's economy, landscape and ecosystem through areas that are currently unused but possess historical and cultural heritage value are becoming increasingly important. In this context, the historic Isparta Train Station has been transformed from an unused space into an important cultural and public landscape space through the Isparta Millet Garden concept. The Historic Isparta Railway Station holds an important place in Isparta's history and, in combination with the People's Garden, plays a significant role in terms of tourism and recreation. This study will highlight the historical process of the Historic Isparta Train Station and emphasise its importance for the city of Isparta. It will analyse the implemented People's Garden design concept, spatial sustainability, building structure, materials used, fixtures and furniture, plant design, lighting, water usage, energy usage, infrastructure design, accessibility, and user usability. The importance of the space in terms of cultural landscape will be examined.

Keywords: Historic Isparta Railway Station, Isparta Public Garden, Cultural Landscape, Landscape Design

1. INTRODUCTION

Historical cultural sites are symbolic values that bridge the past and the present as an indispensable part of cultural heritage. According to UNESCO (2017), cultural landscapes are examples of human societies and settlements that have evolved over time under the influence of multifaceted social, economic and cultural forces representing the 'joint work of nature and humankind' and the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment, and which possess distinctive characteristics.

Historical cultural landscape values and spaces are the bearers of collective cultural identity and memory. On the other hand, they are the main elements that enhance the image and attractiveness of the city they are located in, strengthen the sense of belonging, establish an emotional connection with the past, provide socio-economic contributions to societies, are part of contemporary life as living elements of cultural heritage, and at the same time reveal the value of historical spaces (Tural, 2024; Ahunbay, 1996; Metin et al., 2017).

In today's world, where globalisation has weakened local identities, historical sites are the main elements that shape a city's unique image. Heritage buildings enhance the city's brand value and make it more attractive to tourists. As seen in UNESCO heritage examples, historical areas raise international recognition and prestige (Tursun, 2024; Koroleva, 2024).

The concept of cultural landscape can be defined as landscapes with a unique character that have been affected and changed in whole or in part by human activities throughout the historical process (Yener & Gül, 2016). The preservation of historical cultural landscape sites yields not only cultural but also economic benefits. Cultural tourism contributes to the revitalisation of local economies and job creation by increasing tourism revenues (Göğebakan, 2015). Historical sites are not merely static objects representing the past but are 'living heritage' areas integrated into contemporary life. According to UNESCO's definition, living heritage encompasses cultural practices that communities pass on from generation to generation and continuously reproduce. Maintaining the original function of a historical structure enables its genuine preservation by keeping it alive within the community (UNESCO, 2003; Wijesuriya, 2015).

The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate how spatial organization can be designed in historical spaces in a way that adheres to sustainability principles, is contemporary, and preserves the unique identity of the space. To this end, the Isparta Historic Train Station site, transformed into a National Garden, is examined through the lens of this example. The study assesses and proposes public space organization in maintaining the architectural integrity of the historic fabric, the contribution of the fixtures, furniture, and materials used to enhance the aesthetic and functional spatial experience, the determination of the aesthetic and functional values of the planting design, and the sustainability of technical infrastructure.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Work Area

Isparta is located in the Lakes Region, in the west of Türkiye's Mediterranean Region, forming a natural transition zone between the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia and Aegean regions. The city, with an average altitude of 1,050 metres, is surrounded by the Taurus Mountains to the south and the Sultan and Söğüt Mountains to the north and is encircled by the Burdur and Eğirdir Lakes. Isparta experiences both continental and Mediterranean climatic influences, with hot, dry summers and cold, snowy winters. Having been home to many civilisations throughout history, the province has significant tourism potential due to its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, rose cultivation and carpet weaving.

The Isparta train station, which is the area of study, is located in the Karaağaç neighbourhood in the city centre. The historic building, which covers a total area of 75,150 m^2, has a long and flat form and is suitable for walking paths, recreational areas and other historic buildings. The city centre and commercial areas are located to the north of the site, while green spaces and residential areas are located to the south. Its location at the end of the main transport axis connecting the Government House via İstasyon Caddesi Boulevard places the railway station close to the city's commercial centres and makes it easily accessible (Tekin, 2025).

Isparta and its surrounding area have hosted diverse civilizations throughout its millennia-long history, embodying a historical legacy stretching from antiquity to the Ottoman Empire. The structures and areas that bear the traces of this legacy still reveal the city's historical fabric today.

2.1.1. The Historical Development of Isparta's Historical Train Station and Its Transformation into a National Garden

Isparta Historical Railway Station is the most prominent architectural representation of the early Republican era's railway policies in the city. Completed in 1936, the station building was constructed as part of the railway mobilisation in the early years of the Republic and has largely retained its original fabric to the present day (Anadolu Agency, 2023). Due to the railway line only extending as far as Eğirdir during the Ottoman period, Isparta's centre remained unconnected to the network for a long time. This changed with Atatürk's visit in 1930, Following the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, the direct connection of Isparta to the railway network became an official goal (TCDD, 2014).

Although the İzmir–Aydın line reached Eğirdir in 1912 during the Ottoman period, the centre of Isparta was not included in this network, resulting in a significant disruption in transport and trade. Despite efforts to connect the city to the railway, the line ended at Eğirdir, leaving Isparta outside the system (Wikipedia, 2023; Isparta Governorate, 2023; Gezeneren, 2017).

On 6 March 1930, Atatürk, who was forced to travel to Isparta by car, listened to the demands of the people and gave clear instructions for the city to be directly connected to the railway network. This visit was a turning point for the Isparta line, and the project planning process was initiated shortly thereafter (Isparta Manşet, 2025; Haber32, 2014).

Within the framework of the early Republic's nationalisation and new line construction strategy, the construction of the branch line extending to Isparta was officially decided by Law No. 2611; the construction process accelerated with the nationalisation of the ORC line in 1935. The 13 km Bozanönü–Isparta line was completed in 1935–1936; the cut-stone station building reflected the general station typology of the period with its modern, functional and simple architecture (Atatürk Encyclopedia, 2021; Çelik, 2019). On 26 March 1936, Isparta Station was opened for service with a ceremony attended by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü. In his speech, İnönü particularly emphasised the contributions the line would make to the regional economy; the opening ceremony, with its large public attendance, was recorded as one of the important milestones in the city's modernisation history (Milliyet, 1936; Ulus, 1936; Haber32, 2014).

Figure 1. Abandoned state of the historical Isparta Train Station

City branding has become a strategic concept that determines the competitiveness of cities in the 21st century. Among the city's identity values, "Carpet" and, especially, "Rose" stand out; the Isparta Rose is considered the city's most powerful symbol and tourism product. The need to develop a thematic tourism product that offers visitors an experience has emerged to promote rose and rose cultivation culture on a national and international scale.

Accordingly, the "GÜLPARK: Isparta Rose Theme Park" idea was developed by Prof. Dr. Atila Gül and Adnan Yılmaztürk on May 22, 2010. A conceptual framework was established, and a holistic planning approach was proposed to bring together Isparta's cultural, economic, touristic, and social stakeholders. The project's proposed implementation area was determined as the Isparta Historic Train Station and its immediate surroundings, and work has begun. The "Feasibility and Holistic Inventory of the Gülpark Project," prepared by the project owner, the Isparta Special Provincial Administration, was accepted under BAKA 2011 Direct Activity Support under the number TR61/11/DFD-03 and approved on March 19, 2012. Completed in three months, the project has begun its journey to becoming one of the world's first thematic rose parks. The evaluation of the Isparta Historical Train Station site as a cultural and recreational centre integrated with the rose theme made it possible to address the city's historical identity and touristic appeal simultaneously. In this context, the Isparta Train Station area, envisioned for Gülpark, was declared a Tourism Centre on October 23, 2011, marking a significant step toward repurposing the area in line with a theme park approach. The results of this project were presented to all stakeholders at a workshop held on June 22, 2012 (Ajans32, 2012). However, the project was not implemented for various reasons.

Following this initial initiative, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change revisited the "National Gardens Project," launched in 2019, and planned the transformation of the Isparta Historical Train Station and its surroundings into an Isparta National Garden. The planning process began in 2021, and the tender process was completed in 2022. The project, implemented on an area of approximately 86,000 m^2, aimed to create a high-quality green space open to the public while preserving the historical fabric. The transformation was carried out by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, and the implementation process was completed at the end of 2023. The registered station building, warehouse, and workshops were restored and converted into cultural functions, creating a holistic public landscape with rose and lavender gardens, walking paths, and play and event spaces. This project attracted attention as the first public garden integrated with an active train station (Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, 2021; Isparta

Municipality, 2022; TOKİ, 2023; Tekin 2025). The public garden's maintenance and operation services were transferred to Gaymakçı through a tender.

2.1.2. The Importance of Isparta's Historic Train Station in Collective City Identity

Isparta Historical Railway Station is not only an infrastructure investment reflecting the transportation policies of the early Republican era, but also a historical site with a strong emotional and symbolic resonance in the city's memory. The station's place in social memory and its impact on the city-wide modernisation process have made it a defining element in the formation of Isparta's identity. In this context, assessing the station's importance in terms of collective memory, symbolic value, city identity and architectural uniqueness reveals the role it plays not only physically but also culturally. Isparta Historical Train Station is not only an important infrastructure investment reflecting the transportation policies of the early Republican era, but also a symbolic space that has left strong emotional traces in the collective memory of the city's people. Journeys by black train, farewells to migrants, sending off soldiers, transporting the sick, and university students' first contact with the city have given the station a central place in Isparta's nostalgic memory. Through these experiences, the station has become the spatial embodiment of emotions such as 'departure–return,' 'longing–reunion,' and 'separation–hope' in the public's mind (Yavuz, 2021; Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2013).

The construction of the building began with the railway directive issued by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during his visit on 6 March 1930, and this vision ensured Isparta's integration into the national railway network; while the station's opening on 25 March 1936 by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü cemented the structure's place in the modernisation of the Republic (Haber Merkezi, 2014). Forming a defining focal point in the city's identity, the station contributed to the shaping of the axis of modernisation by triggering the development of İstasyon Caddesi (Station Street); its unique architecture, built with cut stone and especially Köfke stone, made it an important element connecting the structure to the city both geologically and culturally (Tural, 2024; Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2013).

Economically, the station has played a key role in transporting Isparta's world-renowned rose oil production, as well as in delivering the region's unique carpets and rugs to domestic and international markets; thus, it has contributed to the revitalisation of the regional economy as an important logistics centre for the agricultural production and handicraft sectors (Urban Strategy, 2023). In all these respects, Isparta Station continues to be a cultural focal point stretching from the past to the present, carrying a multi-layered meaning in economic life, collective emotions and urban identity.

2.2. Methodology

This study adopted a holistic research approach, involving multiple site visits covering the area, the structure and its immediate surroundings. Each visit involved on-site examination of the structure, spatial organisation, landscape elements and usage scenarios; detailed observations were supported by survey studies. In addition to field observations, a comprehensive literature and archive review was conducted; the historical development of the area, the regional and national scale of the railway network, the processes of change over time, and the cultural context of the structure were evaluated to establish a solid knowledge base for the study. In line with this holistic methodology, key issues such as spatial organisation and design concept, botanical design concept, fixture-furniture and material selection, structural structure and functionality, and technical infrastructure were analysed in detail. Thus, both the current state of the building and the surrounding landscape have been addressed in all aspects, aiming to achieve a consistent assessment in terms of design and the balance between conservation and use.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Isparta Historical Train Station National Garden General Information

The project area is located in the Karaağaç neighborhood of the central district of Isparta province and encompasses the historic Isparta Train Station Complex and its immediate surroundings. The area is a short distance from the city centre via Station Street (Figure 2). The area includes registered structures (such as the Warehouse Building, Maintenance and Repair Building, Water Tank, and Housing Building) and original railway structures, but these structures are not in any functional use and are currently idle (Figure 3).

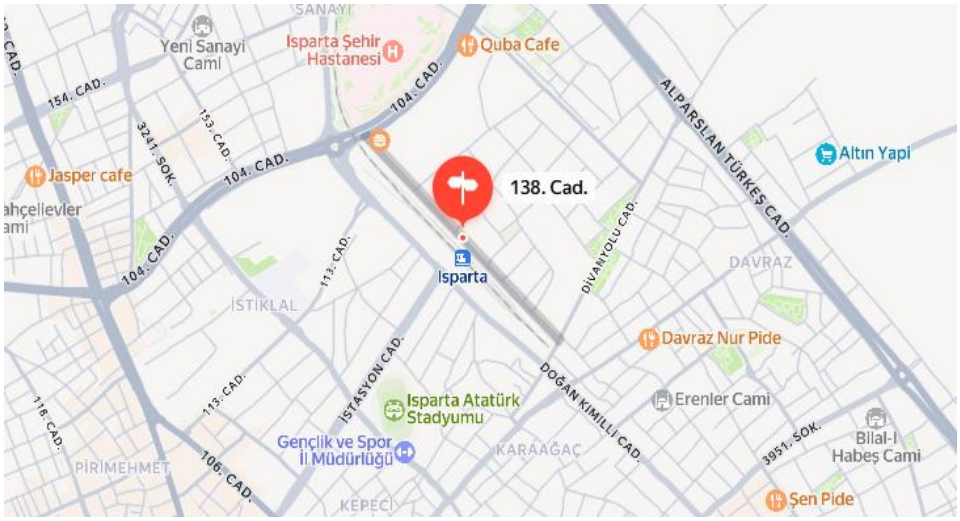

Figure 2. Location of the Isparta Historical Train Station National Garden within the City

Figure 3. Old images of Isparta Historical Train Station

Isparta Train Station was allocated for use as part of the Isparta National Park Project, as part of a protocol signed between the General Directorate of State Railways (TCDD 7th Regional Directorate) and the Isparta Municipality. The project, in collaboration with the Isparta Municipality and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, aims to make the area more attractive for tourism, in accordance with the National Parks Guide.

This project, which is Türkiye's only active train station integrated into a public garden, plays a significant role in preserving the historical fabric and supporting local tourism. The total area of the site, covering 75,150 m^2, has been redesigned for recreational uses, open green spaces, and tourism activities. The aim of this process is to preserve the historical fabric, faithfully restore registered structures, and enhance public green spaces with modern landscaping (Tekin 2025).

The historic Train Station building continues to operate, preserving its original historical texture and functional features. Furthermore, registered cultural assets such as the Warehouse Building, Water Tank, and Housing Building within the area have been given new functions by the Antalya Cultural Heritage Preservation Regional Directorate, diversifying their uses.

The project area was designed as a public space within the scope of its linear structure in the northeast-southwest direction, with existing registered buildings and new functional buildings foreseen, with the Gar 1936 Cafe & Restaurant, tea gardens, buffet, restrooms, water tower, exhibition areas, walking paths, children's playground, skateboard area, rest and seating areas and green texture.

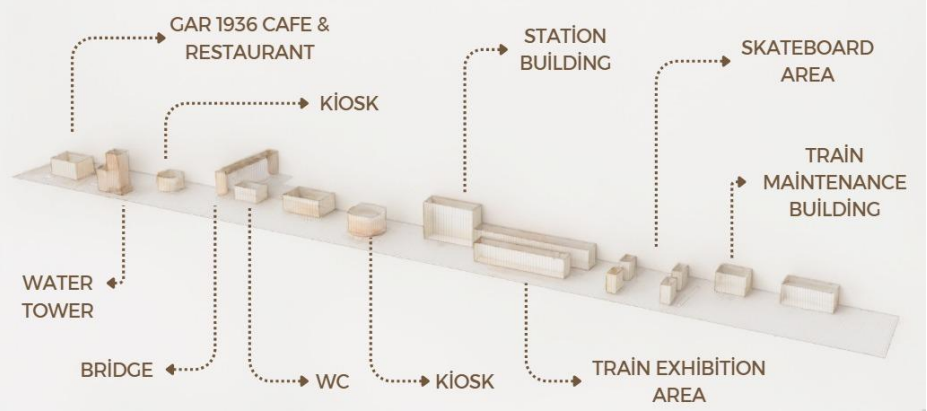

Figure 4. Mass Layout Diagram of Isparta Historical Train Station National Garden

Figure 5. New Arrangements of the Surroundings of Isparta Historical Train Station within the Scope of the National Garden

3.2. Current Situation Analysis of Isparta Historical Train Station National Garden with SWOT

A SWOT analysis of the current situation of the Isparta Historical Train Station's National Garden was conducted as a result of existing data, observations and examinations.

Strengths

- Preserving and revitalizing historic train station structures with new functions rather than their current state.
- Supporting cultural identity with local architectural and landscape elements.
- Supporting environmental sustainability with extensive green spaces.
- Located within walking distance of the city center.
- Providing recreational activity areas that appeal to different user profiles.
- Transforming registered warehouses, water tanks, and housing structures into exhibition and event spaces increases recreational diversity, etc.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate functionality and facilities for a National Park on an urban scale, considering its size.
- Lack of sufficient capacity for gathering spaces during and after disasters.

- Some of the planned facilities have not yet been put into service.
- Insufficient parking capacity.
- Lack of an organic connection with surrounding green spaces.
- Bicycle and pedestrian paths are located on the same axis; there is no separate bicycle path.
- Some urban furniture is incompatible with the local identity and functionally inadequate.
- Risk of noise and air pollution due to traffic congestion.
- Although there is a bridge between the station area and the opposite sides, access is closed, limiting pedestrian movement.
- Fiberplastic seating units are incompatible with the surrounding area and inadequate for user comfort.
- Access to the area from any location poses a security risk.

Opportunities:

- Being the first of its kind in Türkiye to integrate an active train station and become a public garden.
- Containing historical and thematic features that will enhance the city's tourism potential.
- Providing a suitable platform for promoting local products such as roses, carpets, and rugs and for sharing cultural heritage.
- Possessing a potential visitor base that will contribute economically to the surrounding tradespeople and service sector.

Threats:

- The risk of excessive user density putting pressure on green spaces and infrastructure.
- The potential for environmental damage due to uncontrolled visitor use.
- Noise and air pollution, and the potential for direct threats due to proximity to the city center.

3.3. Landscape Design Assessment of the Isparta Historic Train Station and National Garden

This section examines the Isparta Historic Train Station and National Garden project based on key criteria such as spatial organization, planting design, building structure and functionality, technical infrastructure integration, and equipment and material compatibility. The impact of each design decision on historical identity, sustainability, and user experience is examined. This assessment was conducted to demonstrate how the project implemented a holistic design approach consistent with national and international conservation principles.

3.3.1 Spatial Organization Analysis

Functional Uses: Evidence regarding the functional uses of Isparta Millet Bahçesi (National Garden) indicates that the area was designed as a multifunctional public space shaped around the historic station buildings. The project, which covers approximately 75,150 square meters, features a balanced layout of social, cultural, recreational, and landscape-focused units. The location of the Gar 1936 Café/Restaurant within the historic restoration building exemplifies the repurposing of cultural heritage, while the handicrafts centre’s promotion of traditional carpets and rose products strengthens local identity. Children's playgrounds are equipped with equipment for different age groups and comply with accessibility principles. Skateboarding and rollerblading provide a dynamic activity area for young users, while the outdoor fitness area supports adult sports activities.

Walking/running paths form a loop around the park, while lawn and recreational areas are supported by seating areas and pergolas. Its linear structure, running along the northeast-southwest axis, integrates the former railway axis with the current recreation area, creating an important reference in terms of spatial continuity and cultural memory.

Transforming the historical places envisaged in the project into green areas and providing functionality is one of the multi-layered use principles emphasized in the landscape design literature (Yener & Gül, 2016; Kaplan, 2020; Türk & Gül, 2022; Çelik, 2020; Özdemir & Arslan, 2019).

Transportation Relationship (Circulation Axes and Connections): The park's transportation and circulation system is based on a pedestrian-first, holistic spatial design. The central location of the historic station buildings, along with large squares and pedestrian axes, provides a clear directional framework. A pedestrian-focused design approach has resulted in a vehicle-free internal circulation network. The main axis serves as a strong public spine connecting functional areas. The association of naturally curving paths with rose and lavender gardens enhances spatial continuity. Multiple entrance points provide direct connections to surrounding neighborhoods, and parking outside the park increases security by freeing the inner parking area from vehicle traffic. This circulation system is consistent with contemporary urban design approaches that prioritize accessibility and pedestrian experience in open spaces. Eliminating vehicle traffic within the park enhances accessibility and pedestrian experience in open spaces (Ertekin, 2019; Yıldız & Çorbacı, 2021).

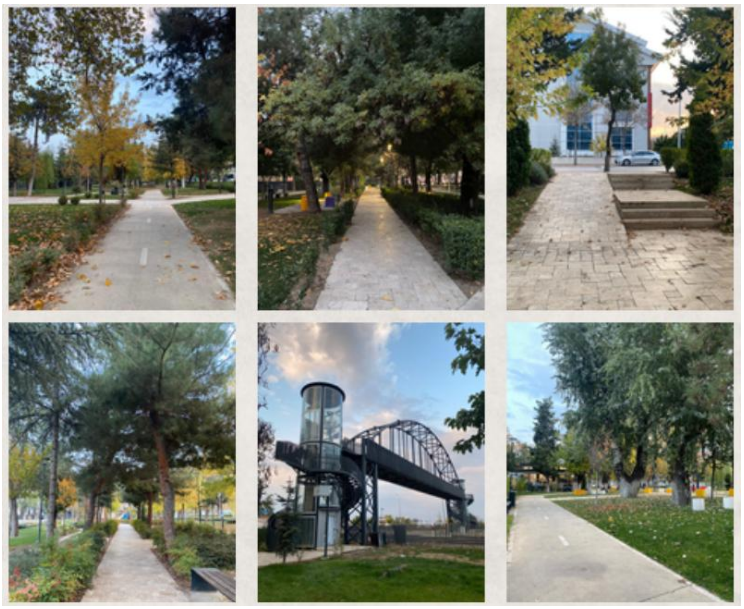

Figure 7. Pedestrian Circulation and Transportation Relationship in the National Garden (From the authors' archive)

Spatial Forms and Scales: Historical buildings within the area were preserved in their original forms and scales, while new additions were constructed with simple, lightweight structural systems, blending in with the historical fabric. To preserve the human scale, buildings were planned as single or two-story structures, and low-profile solutions were chosen to avoid increasing mass density. Additions such as pedestrian bridges, pergolas, and terraces were supported by lightweight steel and timber structures, prioritizing transparency and elegance in material selection. Facades and landscape divisions created along the linear park area increased the legibility of the space and created perceptible micro-spaces. The consistent use of landscape patterns (plant textures, material forms and colours, grass area forms, etc.) strengthened the visual integrity of the space. This transformation, enriched by the adaptation of registered buildings to new functions and thematic gardens, open

activity areas, and public spaces, reflects a conservation-use approach aimed at the contemporary use of historical industrial heritage.

In many literatures, emphasis has been placed on ensuring the balance and harmony of protection-use in landscape design and forms in historical heritage (Ahunbay, 2021; ICOMOS, 2017; Kuban, 2018; Ahunbay, 2021).

Figure 8. Form-Scale Integrity of Historical Buildings, Playgrounds and Public Spaces in the Nation's Garden (From the authors' archive)

Colour Harmony: The colour palette applied throughout the area represents a conscious choice, aiming for holistic harmony between the natural landscape and the historical fabric. Different shades of green form the primary colour of the landscape, creating a serene environmental atmosphere, while the purple and pink tones in the rose and lavender gardens emphasize the area's local identity. Preserving the unique earth tones of stone grey and brick red in historic station buildings is important for cultural memory. In newer buildings, matte grey metal, wood textures, and natural stone tones were chosen to achieve visual tranquility, while natural material colours were used for flooring and furniture. The overall avoidance of artificial or bright tones in the color palette aligns with the principle of "visual peace" recommended for open spaces. Furthermore, the use of cultural colour themes in carpets and handicrafts strengthened the spatial identity. Numerous studies have stated that colour use and harmony should align with the colour harmony in historical spaces and perceptual harmony (Kuban, 2018; Çelik, 2020).

Perception of Space: Evaluations on spatial perception have shown that strong focal points that facilitate visitors' orientation stand out. The station building and water tower serve as reference points within the space due to both their historical value and visual dominance. The walkways' perpendicular orientation to these focal points provides a natural orientation. The landmark nature of the Station 1936 restaurant enhances the legibility of the space, while the structure of sub-spaces, which are defined but maintain visual continuity, enhances the user experience.

It is recommended that historical buildings and the surrounding landscape be perceived together to create a holistic spatial organization (Özdemir & Arslan, 2019; Türk & Gül, 2022).

The Relationship between Space and Environment: Studies of the relationship between space and environment demonstrate that Isparta Millet Bahçesi functions as an open, permeable, and engaging public space within the urban fabric. The repurposing of the abandoned station area for public use constitutes a successful example of repurposing cultural heritage. Pedestrian connections to the city centre and neighborhoods increase the accessibility of the space, while surface elevations and sidewalks have been designed to accommodate disabled access. The harmony of vegetation and heights with the surrounding structures allows the space to be perceived as a natural continuity. Historical structures, which create visual focal points day and night, have established a strong relationship with the surroundings The area’s proximity to the mosque, healthcare facilities, and other urban services increases its attractiveness, while plant heights and massing that harmonize with surrounding buildings ensure perceptual continuity. The connection to Station Street strengthens its

integration with the city centre. The integrated relationship of green spaces with the surrounding fabric in the design of green spaces is a principle emphasized in the literature (Yıldız & Çorbacı, 2021; ICOMOS, 2013).

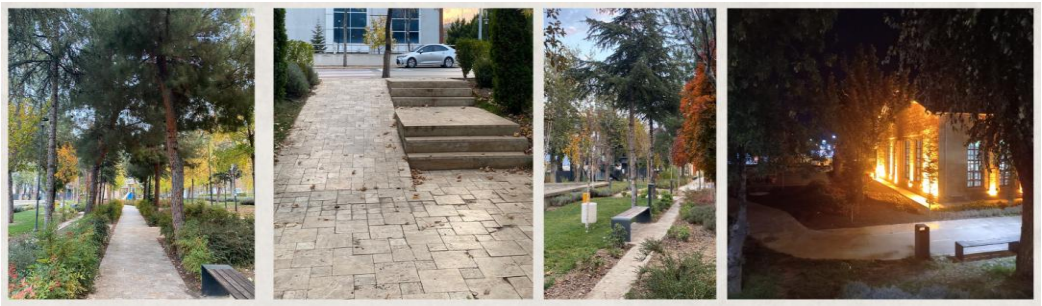

Figure 9. Visual and Functional Integrity Between Space and Environment in the National Garden (From the authors' archive)

3.3.2. Evaluation of Reinforcement and Material Design

The Function and Placement of LED Lighting Elements: In Isparta's National Park, LED lighting is positioned to enhance security on the walkways, recreation areas, and facades of historic railway stations. Their low energy consumption and long lifespan reduce maintenance costs, while the ability to use different color temperatures provides visual comfort for both orientation and façade emphasis. Automation systems that activate the lighting at specific times contribute to the park's energy efficiency.

The use of renewable energy and automation play an important role in lighting and energy efficiency (Ertekin, 2019).

Materials Used in Seating Units: Wood, cast metal, and fiber plastic were used in the seating units. Wood blends in with the historical environment by providing a natural aesthetic but requires regular maintenance outdoors. Cast metal is durable and long-lasting, but it can cause comfort issues such as overheating in direct sunlight. While fiber plastic is lightweight and corrosion-resistant, it can fade under intense UV exposure.

The selection of materials appropriate to the historical texture emphasizes the balance between comfort, durability and historical context (Bingöl, 2018; Özdemir & Arslan, 2019).

Children's Playground Design: Rubber flooring conforming to TS EN 1177 standard has been used in children's playgrounds to create a safe, non-slip, and impact-absorbent surface. Rubber flooring made from recycled materials is environmentally friendly. The use of natural tones such as light green and brown enhances the harmony of the playground with the vegetation. The use of colour and its harmony play an important role in the design of children's playgrounds (Türk & Gül, 2022).

Functionality and Material Compatibility of Directional Signs: Directional signs were placed in highly visible locations to facilitate movement within the park; reflective materials were chosen to support nighttime use. Local materials such as natural stone and wood were used for the sign bases, ensuring visual harmony with the historic station buildings. The lettering was applied with weather-resistant, fade-resistant paint.

Automatic and Economical Features of the Irrigation System: The irrigation infrastructure is managed by an automatic drip irrigation system divided into zones for different plant types. Intelligent

control units that take into account soil moisture and weather sensors prevent unnecessary irrigation, thus saving both water and energy.

User Comfort: User comfort is supported throughout the park by lighting, wide walkways, ergonomic seating, and shade elements. Pergolas, shade trees, and gazebos offer cool rest areas in hot weather. Drinking water points, accessible ramps, and restrooms enhance the park's inclusive character as a public space.

Contribution of Local Materials to the Historical Fabric: The local stone and wood used in the design provide visual and cultural integrity with the historic station buildings. The construction of the new mosque with local stone and wood supports the architectural continuity of the area.

Tekin (2025) emphasizes that the Nation's Garden project preserves the industrial heritage and integrates it with new functions and recommends the selection of local materials.

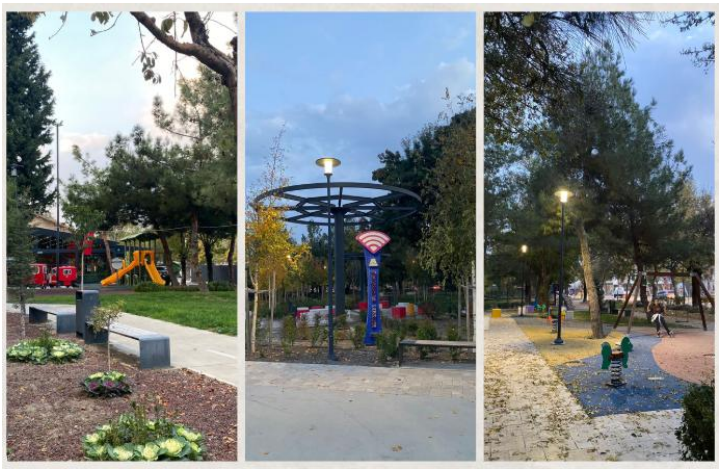

Figure 10. Functional and Aesthetic Reflections of the Use of Equipment, Furniture and Materials in the Landscape Design of Isparta National Garden (From the authors' archive)

3.3.3. Evaluation of Planting Design Concept

The planting design of Isparta National Garden was planned to be compatible with the historic station buildings and surrounding landscape, combining aesthetic, ecological, and spatial functions with a holistic approach. The use of local flora elements (such as lavender and roses) strengthened the site's identity and highlighted the regional landscape character. This approach aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of using local plant species as identity-defining elements in landscape design (Türk & Gül, 2022; Kaplan, 2020).

The use of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, combined with the principle of multi-layered planting, created both depth and visual continuity. Ornamental trees and seasonal plants softened the transitions between the historical structures and the landscape, and the solid, massive elements of the space were blended into a natural environmental texture.

The plant species used throughout the area are well-suited for both aesthetic and microclimatic adaptation. Tree species include Oriental sycamore, redleaf maple, ash, black pine, Taurus cedar, Atlas cedar, sycamore maple, linden, white poplar, black locust, weeping willow, mulberry, ornamental cherry, and three-thorned carob. Many of these species are highly adapted to the region's climate, providing shade and creating strong vertical volumes. The use of species such as wild rose, lavender, firethorn, dwarf rose, ornamental broccoli, heavenly bamboo, and viburnum in shrub groups provides variety in colour, texture, and seasonal variation. The cultural identity of symbolic species such as

lavender and roses represents a significant design that strengthens the landscape's connection to its place.

Evaluations of the planting design's compatibility with spatial identity and design principles demonstrate a high level of ecological-aesthetic harmony, a balanced distribution of layered plantings, and the successful placement of species that emphasize historical identity. The role of ornamental plants in building-landscape transitions contributes to the perceptual comfort of the space, and smooth transitions between spaces enhance legibility by supporting the pedestrian scale.

As a result, planting design creates a strong landscape language in terms of aesthetic, ecological and cultural integrity and is envisaged to serve as a qualified interface between the historical environment and contemporary park use (Kuban, 2018; ICOMOS, 2013).

Figure 11. Views of the Species Used in the Planting Design of Isparta National Garden (From the authors' archive)

3.3.4 Evaluation in Terms of Building Structure and Functionality

Findings regarding the structural and functional features of the Isparta National Garden demonstrate that the historic station complex's unique structural features have been preserved and integrated into contemporary urban life. During the structural preservation and reinforcement process for the listed buildings, the original structural systems were evaluated through stability analyses, and restoration interventions using compatible materials were implemented without compromising the historical integrity of the structure.

This approach aligns with the principles of "minimum intervention" and "material compatibility," which are fundamental to conservation architecture (Ahunbay, 2021; ICOMOS, 2017).

Within the scope of the functional transformation of the buildings, the transformation of the station building into a social centre and cultural meeting space, the storage buildings into a workshop and cafeteria, and the residences into an experience area and exhibition space demonstrates a flexible

adaptation model proposed for the reuse of industrial heritage. The transformation of a train car into a nostalgic reading space provides a symbolic spatial contribution to cultural memory. In a user-oriented spatial distribution, the buildings are positioned according to historical axes and pedestrian circulation directions; their accessible placement at focal points of active public uses enhances spatial integrity. From an aesthetic and identity perspective, the preservation of the original materials, stone textures, wooden details, and tile roofs in the buildings strengthens the memorial value of the space.

Incorporating new functions into the area without disrupting the contemporary-historical relationship is considered a sustainable balance of conservation and using (Kuban, 2018; Çelik, 2020).

Figure 13. Building Structure, Restoration Applications and Creating Spatial Integrity with New Functions in Isparta National Garden (From the authors' archive)

3.3.5 Technical Infrastructure Evaluation

Findings regarding the technical infrastructure of Isparta's National Park indicate that the area has been comprehensively equipped in line with the principles of energy efficiency, security, sustainability, and user comfort required for modern urban parks, without damaging the historical fabric. The placement of LED lighting elements along pedestrian paths and historic structures ensures both energy savings and safe nighttime visibility. Energy savings and safe nighttime visibility are considered sustainable lighting standards (Ertekin, 2019).

Programmable automatic irrigation systems tailored to plant species support efficient water use and are considered an important component of landscape management, particularly in semi-arid climates. Proper application of surface and subsurface drainage systems is crucial for preventing waterlogging, user safety, and healthy plant growth (Ahunbay, 2021).

Placing electricity, natural gas, and communication lines underground not only reduces visual pollution but also significantly contributes to maintaining spatial integrity. CCTV systems, emergency lighting, and security solutions have been installed throughout the site, ensuring safe and controlled use of public space. Furthermore, the provision of free Wi-Fi demonstrates that the technical infrastructure meets contemporary park standards not only in terms of physical but also digital accessibility.

It is crucial that all infrastructural arrangements comply with the principles of energy efficiency, infrastructure integration, and user-centered security recommended for sustainable urban open space management (Yıldız & Çorbacı, 2021; ICOMOS, 2013).

The technical infrastructure of the project area is supported in terms of water management and energy efficiency, with planning in line with sustainable landscape design principles, automatic irrigation systems, energy-efficient LED lighting and integrated rainwater drainage lines.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment demonstrates the extent to which the transformation of the Isparta Historic Train Station into a Nation's Garden complies with the fundamental principles outlined in the Nation's Garden Guide published by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. The analysis results demonstrate a high level of compliance, particularly in terms of cultural heritage preservation, multifunctional use scenarios, emphasis on local identity, accessible location, and landscape continuity. Strengths aligned with the guiding principles include the preservation and reuse of registered structures using original materials, the transformation of the station building into a social center, workshop, tea garden, and cultural experience spaces, the landscape supported by local flora, and strong pedestrian connections to the city.

However, the project still has room for improvement in sustainability, smart technology integration, universal accessibility, security infrastructure, and long-term maintenance management. The lack of renewable energy applications, smart sensors, carbon management strategies, and inclusive design standards are considered factors that limit the park's future resilience. Furthermore, the incomplete nature of some facilities, observations regarding maintenance quality, and vandalism issues indicate the need for increased sustainable and safe use of the area. While the Isparta National Park project is a successful example of a balance between conservation and use, public access, multifunctionality, and the transmission of local identity, it also has areas for improvement to reach the guidelines' recommended levels of sustainability, smart infrastructure, universal design, and maintenance management. This suggests that the project's strengths should be supported by a more resilient and inclusive approach to public space in the future.

To further align the Isparta National Garden with the National Garden Guide, various improvement recommendations are presented in the areas of sustainability, accessibility, security, and technological infrastructure. Primarily, the use of solar panels on rooftops and open spaces within the scope of renewable energy systems will reduce energy consumption and lower the carbon footprint. Composting organic waste and expanding the use of separate recycling units are crucial for sustainable waste management. Sensor-based lighting and humidity-controlled smart irrigation systems are recommended as smart infrastructure applications that support both energy and water conservation. Providing visitors with information through digital information kiosks, QR codes, and mobile apps will increase spatial readability. For security, an evening patrol system, lighting enhancements, and strategically placed CCTV cameras can enhance user safety. Accessible playgrounds, accessible sports equipment, and more visible and accessible parking and stalls for users with disabilities should be designed in accordance with universal design principles. Explanatory directional and informational signs for historical and botanical areas will enhance the site's accessibility, while microhabitats that support biodiversity (butterfly, bird, and bee corners) will enhance ecological functionality. Additionally, establishing a first aid station throughout the park for minor medical needs would be beneficial for user safety and inclusiveness. These recommendations align with both the standards targeted by the National Garden Guide and the current situation analysis of Isparta National Garden, and aim to enhance the long-term sustainability, inclusiveness, and urban integration of the area.

In order to create liveable, healthy and high-quality urban spaces, public urban open and green spaces should be addressed in urban planning and design studies at the neighbourhood, district and city scale and within spatial, locational and functional hierarchy according to physical standards (Türker & Gül, 2022).

In conclusion, transforming urban areas that have become unused or dysfunctional into quality green spaces represents a holistic urban transformation approach that not only improves the physical environment but also enhances residents' quality of life, strengthens ecological functioning, and preserves cultural memory. The repurposing of Isparta's Historic Train Station as a Public Garden is a significant example in this regard, providing spatial continuity, public accessibility, and preserving cultural heritage. However, public green spaces such as urban parks and public gardens must possess sufficient land area, multifunctional structures and spaces, multipurpose facilities, and organic connection with surrounding green and natural spaces to provide multifaceted services to the entire city.

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