THE LAST AND LOST CHANCE: IMPORTANCE OF LOCATION DECISION FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Today, by the effects of global capitalism, public/private, national/international and multinational investments create very competitive atmosphere between cities. Attract people and business, provide high quality of life, limitate social and spatial problems are most common issues for local governments to make their cities better than others. It is local government’s responsibility to value opportunities which can involve their cities development rather than spatial growth. There are functions which accelerate social and economic developments of cities, such as industry, tourism, natural attractions, historical places and values, health centers and educational institutions. Each of these features attracts permanent and temporary residents to cities, support local economy, increase employment opportunities, contribute more colorful social atmosphere and bring many other benefits to the city. Then these places called with their major functions and facilities, such as industrial or touristic cities. College town is one of those major city types based on its educational functions, especially in US and west European countries. Typically, the term “college town” represents cities with a medium or large size of college or university. In this study, Norman (Oklahoma, US) and Burdur (Turkey) will be investigated through the locations of universities, their integration with other urban functions and their effects on urban developments.

Key Words: College Towns, Location, Urban Geography, Turkey

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KAYBEDĠLMĠS SON ÙANS: LOKASYON KARARLARININ KENTSEL GELİŞĠM ÜZERĠNDEKİ ÖNEĞI

ÖZET


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Introduction

Today, why do we think that sustainability is more important than ever? In terms of urban areas, it is because of more competitive socio-economic atmosphere than ever. It takes a long time to create a city with specific functions and it also requires a high budget. Hence, it is not so easy to create an urban area with a dominant function and remain its stability in terms of urban necessities. While everything change incredibly fast, it is also hard to keep up with developments in every case. In this sense, weakness of local governments, fails of administrations and slow urban development cost years of struggle to catch up the others (Durguter, 2012).

Urban development and urban growth are sometimes considered synonymous but they are not. Urban development is defined in several ways, such as demographic, economic and social explanations. All of these definitions most likely use comparison between urban and rural areas to highlight relative measures of differences. However, urban growth is the absolute increase in the physical size and total population of urban areas. In short, urban growth basically represents physical growing, while urban development requires improvements in urban functions (Keceli,
Even though these two are highly related to each other, in some cases urban development stays behind the physical growth.

Colleges and universities with a good number of students, faculties, employees, social and economic activities can be called “industry without chimneys”. Because of the fact that, these institutions attract an important number of populations and this population has high level of consumptions of local goods, including accommodation, transportation, service and they can even contribute to decision making processes of urban development (Deniz, 2013; Korkmaz vd., 2013). Besides these, social and academic activities attract temporary visitors who also bring money into the city. These are keeping local economy alive and support development of cities. All these opportunities are only beneficial with a good planning and management. Otherwise, it cannot help as much as expected.

Locations of these kinds of educational institutions are very important to involve urban development (Özcan, 2008). Educational campus areas are only become a part of the cities, if they are accessible and interactive. Because of the fact that people who are belongs to these institutions, can be true consumers of local economy (Tezekici, 1998), if they have chance to have time in central city. Also, proximity of these institutions to central business district is another highly important condition which affects qualities and quantities of local investments and services.

In most of the case, there is no other major economic activity in college towns. So, these places sustain its social and economic life based on university population and activities. They are most likely no big cities. City structures and patterns are generally established and developed around the university campus area. Services, such as accommodation, food, transportation and entertainment, are most important part of local economy. The national and ethnical diversity is another common feature of these cities because of the international students, faculties and their families.

In this study, Norman is analyzing based on its functions in the region and effects of university on urban development. Also, this will be compared with Burdur, Turkey. Burdur has a public university since 2006 and invest millions of dollars on buildings and facilities. However, location of the university does not allow this institution to support urban development at least as much as desired by local residents.

This study is not an attempting to recommend any location changes for MAKU which is impossible as administrative people declares. Instead, this is aiming to emphasize impacts of location decision of an education complex on urban development, in general. In other words, the purpose of this study is basically making this problematic and questionable decision visible by an academic expression. Alternative places for a university campus in the city, which could be more effective for urban development and local economy, are still mentioned in the text just to provide some clue about the problem to readers of this work.

College Towns: An American Phenomenon

Gumprecht has a simple and excellent description for college towns. He says, “with their unusual densities of young people, highly educated workforces, comparatively cosmopolitan populations, dominant institutions of higher education, and characteristic landscapes such as the campus, fraternity row, and college-oriented shopping district, college towns represent a unique type of urban place” (Gumprecht, 2003). Indeed, it is very easy to recognize college towns when you travel interstates in US and visit random towns. College oriented symbols, flags, advertisements, sign posts and of course ethnically colorful social environment are taking the visitor into the unique atmosphere of the college of the town.
His description actually says many things in a few words. For example, only landscapes of college towns are worth to be a topic of an academic book because they are all having special identity and represent the history and culture of both that town and college, which has been established in a century. As another sample, college-oriented shopping districts are places that you can only observe in college towns. There are student’ neighborhoods, or with Gumprech words “student ghetto”, where one can observe such settlement pattern with apartments, green spaces, sport fields, laundries and only young, ethnically diverse residents.

College towns are simply separated from the other smaller or larger cities. These are the home of a college and there is no other major economic activity. Existing of the college, social behaviors and activities of college population are strongly affecting the characteristics of local community. Almost everyone in the town, in one way or other, have a relation and interaction with college or people from college. That is why Gumprech separated college towns from the other cities which are also home of a college or a big university, such as Austin, Texas or Chicago, Illinois. Because these kinds of cities have other social, political and economic roles too; which means the largest university of these towns is not dominated either society or urban areas.

General urban settings of college towns are quiet, very simple urban pattern and absence of commotion of city life. Pioneer university founders believed that these were the only proper environment for learning (Gumprech, 2003). Unless the university culture established and integrates with the city, it is hard to create this atmosphere in random place.

Another distinctive feature of college towns is campus area as a public space for everyone in the city. There are parks, trails and sport fields for public use. There are historical landmarks and buildings. Festivals, annual ceremonies and professional games are most common social organizations that usually happen in campus area with everyone’s participations. Visitor offices organize campus tour for groups of people who are wants to take a walk around the campus. Visitor office’s friendly staffs inform them about the architecture, history and secrets of the old parts of the campuses. So, whoever wants to taste the flavor of that college/university, there are many opportunities to do so.

Simply, if the college/university is the largest employer in the town, the enrollment of the college is around 15-20 percent of total population and percentage of the labor force works in educational occupation is larger than any other sector in town, you can easily call that place a college town.

With all these features and more, college/university is truly heart of socio-economic life in American college towns.

Location Decision

Location is even more important for creating public spaces and oriented social behaviours (Liao, et al, 2012)

Location decision is a topic as old as human history. Even in the early ages, people had some basic criteria to find locations for simple places and institutions. For example, when we look at the plan of the Babylon, we see that most important buildings of the city located in the middle of the city, such as royal palace, court, military headquarter and warehouse for the surplus. Environmental relations have been always considered when people chose a location for cities. Safety, topography, availability of resources, available fields for agriculture and further expansion may be listed as some of those environmental characteristics. Today, even though the list of criteria has been changed, there are still many factors for decision makers when they are supposed to find an appropriate location for an institution or business.
“The community planners will also be concerned with the location of public facilities like schools and social service centers, both for the convenience of the people served and for reinforcing the development of a desirable land use pattern.” Levy (2009) says. Indeed, the quality of public and private services is strongly dependent on their location and it directly influences quality of everyday life of the residents (Keceli, 2012; Goonewardena et al., 2008). Location is also an important parameter of growth management system besides regulation of the amount, timing and character of development (Levy, 2009). Herbert (1982) also mention on importance of location decision for focus on socio-spatial problems by different academic disciplines and their specific approaches.

Based on the location theory, all urban functions and facilities should be included in the system as either continues, network or discrete manner (Nickel and Puerto, 2005). Their efficiency of use would depend on chosen location that they built on and relations with other parts of the city. There may be more than one optimum location for the facilities but that is the role of decision maker to find out the best one by consideration of all other urban elements.

In many researches about location decision, preliminary questionnaire uses to find out what people want and think about the planned facilities and its location, besides computational analysis (Thursby and Thursby, 2006; Chan, 2011). In the case of location decision of a university, following sample questions may provide some clue for the decision makers: (1- to prospective students) How far would you like to go back and forth from home/dorm/apartment to university everyday by walk/by drive/by public transportation? What kind of facilities would you like to have in your university campus, such as a gym, praying area, car parking, housing, etc? Would you like to stay in campus area during your free time in a day or spend your time in city center? (2- to the residents) Would you like to share your public spaces with university students? Would you like to have a university campus area in your neighborhood? How would incoming university student affect your business? Would you prefer to stay with university students in the same apartment block? There may be many other questions to get general ideas of both members of the new institution and residents of the city who will be interact with new comers sooner or later.

In Turkey, most of the city has been developed on a territory which has been used by multiple civilizations or nations for thousands of years. Therefore, street patterns, general location of city functions, topography and city shape in general very similar to each other. Even though there are some advantages to built a city on another one, such as uses of historical places as landmark by renovation, impacts of sense of place on current residents, culture and special flavor of the city life; there are also some disadvantages for planning and spatial organization, such as difficulty of change of street patterns, deal with parcels owner for regeneration, protection of historical heritages while modernization and installing new function on city.

It is a complex system on the one hand but straight on the other. This is complex because there is a lot of factors and elements in this process. This is simple and straight because the requirements of the progress are common. Existed differences are based on the general structure of the country or the area. In progress, if there is an opportunity for a new education institution, an appropriate location should be defined first. This location decision has many factors include environmental features, topography, transportation, availability of human power, market area, social environment and so on. Once it is settle down, it brings more people in to the area because of more job opportunity. More people mean more housing and more retail needs. Even though it is good for local economy, it may need more investment based on infrastructure, transportation and public facilities. Then the needs of the populations should be provided by local government, such as entertaining, recreation and open space. At the same time, there should be new legacies and policies to be able to manage a sustainable urban development in the area.
Even though this study focuses on importance of location in local scale, the location is also important for global scale. Today, where goods and people move incredibly fast and frequent, global positions of universities are another parameter for quality measures. Even though that topic is now out of the context of this discussion, just a few words supposed to be mention on it. For example, Universities in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir are not always necessarily better and bigger than the universities in Anatolian cities. However, attractiveness of cities are playing important role on preference of both faculties’ and student’s university choice for work and study. This is even more important for international guests, visitor scholars, project partner, exchange students, etc. Because, they simply desire to be in larger cities, even the institution that they would join is small.

Lastly, local economy and its sustainability is another thing to be considered during location decisions. This is one of fundamentals of economic cycles that investments, retails and manufactures supposed to be as close as possible to consumers (Parsons et al., 2002). Universities are not direct actors of economic cycles of cities; however, they have many indirect economic contributions. Efficiency of these contributions are depends on the location and attractiveness of both university and city. Simply, the closer proximity provides the more integration with city. For example, there are now approximately 11000 registered students in colleges and schools of central campus of MAKU. As a simple rhetoric, if the campus was in the central city and students (personnel does not included here) was able to hangout around this area, assume that each student would spend at least 1 TL per day, it contribute considerably amount of money to local economy monthly.

Norman: A Place of Legends

“The campus of the University of Oklahoma in Norman is typical (college town). Sprawling over 2,000 acres, it is active day and night, year-round. Indicative of the multifaceted role campuses play, its campus includes parks, formal gardens, a duck pond, an eighteen-hole golf course, a public swimming pool, conference facilities, a large hotel, and an airport, as well as eighteen restaurants, five bookstores, cappuccino bars, and convenience stores. Concerts are regularly held at the Fine Arts Center and the Catlett Music Center. The university recently built a $38 million museum of natural history. Rotating exhibits are featured at two art museums, and sporting events draw more than a million people a year to campus. Once students leave town for the summer, children invade the campus for cheerleading camps, debate competitions, and the like.” (Gumprechth, 2003).

I won’t go through the deep history of University of Oklahoma establishment and story of this magnificent place for studying but I have to refer Gumprechth (2007) public space research in case of Norman and OU, if the reader of this article interested in details about the place.

Norman is a major college town in Oklahoma. Its population is approximately 111000 and the city area spread around 490 sq km. Norman was established during late 19th century. An extended railroad helped its population growth and city has been shaped around the train station at first. Then this rail road was also used for freight transportation between southern and northern states (Web 1). In 1890, The University of Oklahoma was funded and the location of first buildings of the university is about 1,5 km away from the train station and the main street, close to the place called north oval today. University developed very quickly and the city was started to grow and develop around the campus area.

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Today, Norman is one of the most important social, economic and cultural centers of Oklahoma State. There are now more than 130 building in the campus area, including a football stadium, movie theater, America’s largest National Weather Center, recreational and sport areas, research centers, social buildings and more. Most of the local economy relies on university in the city, such as apartment complex, catering and food, cafes, clubs and other retails.

University attracts many people from both out of state and country. There are now more than 30000 students, almost 10000 of them are in graduate programs and almost 3000 academic staff. International students are an important part of the community and the culture of OU (Web 3). Remarkable number of these international people comes to city with their families. This means an additional population and consumer potential for the local business. Also, there are seasonal attractions in the city through the university, for example football season. During the fall semester, there are home games in Norman every other weekend. Since college football is big in Oklahoma (there is no state team in NFL), this games attract almost 100000 people from the region. Especially for the day of “Homecoming Game”, this number rise up to 200000. All these are extra income and economic benefit for local business.

Simply, the structure of the city based on university and the politics of the university always include benefits of the city. As a result, university culture support local economy and local people always support university activities. Then, they grow and develop together. By this great social and institutional cooperation, they manage to create a livable city which has successfully got into the list of Relocate America’s Top 100 Places to Live Winners (Web 2).

**Burdur: A Place of Disappointments**

Burdur is one of the smallest provinces of Turkey, locating southwest part of the country between some major cities like Denizli, Isparta and Antalya. Population of Burdur central district is 72377 (TUIK, 2012). However, people are prone to move out of the city when they have better chance for school and business. There are almost 200 thousand people, who are originally from Burdur, live in Antalya; roughly 40 thousands of them live in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir (Web 4). Burdur is one of the oldest cities in Turkish Republic (Web 5; Çetin, 2007) but it suffers today based on urban growth and development because of the lack of public and private investment. Besides population issue and absence of attractiveness of the city, insufficient policies of local government are also an important factor of these tragic conditions.

Major economic activities in the province are husbandry, agriculture and mining (marble). There is no big industry and production, so there are limited opportunities for employment in this sector. This is one of the most important reasons for people to leave the province. Based on the numbers of 2000, almost 80% of population is employed in service sector and mostly in public services (Çetin, 2007). There are many historical and natural beauties in and around the city. However, these places are not being used properly because of the lack of investment, services and advertisement.

There is a military base in the central city. This base is famous by the soldiers who are Turkish citizen but living and working abroad. They were allowed to do their mandatory military service by some amount of payment and short term (a month, instead of regular 15 month) physical service. It was one of the major income sources for local retails. Because these soldiers used to spend time in the central city as much as they could and also their families used to come over to this place as well. After the government renewed the regulation, they are not required to come base for the physical service but just pay the amount. So, the city lost a huge amount of income because of the absence of these temporary visitors.
Besides all these conditions, university is standing in Burdur as a last opportunity to gain its status. Mehmet Akif Ersoy University has been established in 2006 in Burdur based on the governmental policy called “a university for each city”. It was a teacher institutions belong to Suleyman Demirel University until 2006. These previous institution was locating in central city. After it has established as self governing university, government devoted a new campus area to build all colleges, schools, centers and other facilities of the university. However, this new place is out of the central city, so its direct interaction with central city is physically impossible.

New campus area is 8-10 km away from central city on Antalya-Burdur highway. There is no city functions and service in close proximity. Accessibility of this place is very weak, especially for those who dominantly use public transportations. In general, new universities established on side city and it is expected that city grow through this new function with all patterns, including services and settlements. However, in Burdur, it is topographically impossible to extend this city through university area because of very rough territory. Even though the campus area would develop in 8-10 years and provide services for the students, city itself would not gain the benefit out of it as much as it needs.

As it is the case in many Turkish cities now, university grows much faster than the city in Burdur. Every year there are approximately 2000 more students join the university, central campus student population has reached almost 13000 by 2013. This is already a large number to accommodate all needs of this much student when the population is city is still around 70000. Safety and availability of affordable accommodation is two of the major characteristics of college towns. Types and cost of transportation are also other important features for those students who will spend certain amount of time and money on the way each and every day. The difficulty of transportation (accessibility, cost, comfort, etc.) is one of the most common problems of both students and employees in the city.

Discussion

Even though a Burdur’s case study about brand positioning and city brands by Aray (2009), states that university is a chance to increase attractiveness of the city, there was not much emphasize on the importance of location in case of university-city relationships. Indeed, university is a big chance for Burdur’s urban development and become an attractive city for university students as a college town. However, it requires having specific urban patterns with efficient urban functions. And, importance of locations supposed to be rephrased here, as it is so common in literature, the relationships of functions and characteristics of patterns are strongly dependent on their location, spatial interaction, accessibility, etc.

If we need to look at a little bit of a general area of central city of Burdur, we can discuss the some other possible campus locations. Burdur is a compact city. Old town place is full of old houses and they are now under investigation for city renewal project of the government. A new university campus area may be considered in this renewal project. This area is just by the central business district and major services. At the same time, most of this area by the skirt of a hill where city forest is existing. This may be an opportunity for the landscape of a university.

There is another place in the core of central city where there is an old bus station and auto repair site (Map 1). There is a plan to remove these two places. This area can hold remarkable part of a university campus by including surrounding area. If the university were established in this place, the street which existing just by this area would convert into a perfect boulevard.

There are also many large and flat fields on the lake side of the city (Map 1). There are concerns about the stability of these surfaces and many discussions about the safety of this part. However, considering today’s engineering and construction technology, it may not be that hard to
plan and construct appropriate buildings for these areas. These areas would also attract many settlements and business through this undeveloped part of the city and may create a socio-economically live zone in the city.

One of the most appropriate place for a new campus area is where today’s military base located on west the central city (Map 1). Almost everyone have this concern after paid soldiers mandatory physical services are cancelled. This area lies beside Fethiye-Burdur highway and this road can easily be convert into a boulevard. Military base is mostly flat surface, there are woods and hills. This territory is perfect for a university campus for many reasons, such as transportation, local economy, city-university interaction and city identity. Based on the regulation change in 2011 (date and no of the regulation decision), military bases which are locating in central cities, can be removed if needed for city regenerations. Based on this regulation, military base can move to university campus area and this area is the new campus for the university. Even though it would cause to lose of millions of dollars investment in the university area, it would safe Burdur’s future and university prestige. At the same time, existing building in the current campus area can still be in use for some colleges, such as veterinary and civic engineering.

Map 1: Some of the Proposed Campus Area Locations

Picture 1: Location of MAKU Istiklal Campus Area
Bird view of the place is providing us better scene to interpret current condition and relations of city and the university. The rough highland topography is appearing between two places. If we consider the rate of urbanization and population increase (decrease) of Burdur, this spatial gap would never fill by any urban pattern by considering urban growth and urban population increase rate of Burdur.

**Picture 2: Horizontal View of the Gap between Burdur and MAKU Istiklal Campus Area**

5 km is the crow flies distance from the campus to nearest point of the city center but that point is not even close to city core. As the topography shows (Picture 2), it is almost impossible to contact university with the city by any forms and patterns of urban areas in close future. Besides the distance, the campus is on top of hilly area where wind and cold is always a potential risk for the people at the university. Road condition in winter is another part of the everyday difficulties of both students and personnel of the university.
In many ways, university should engage with the community or vise versa (Öztürk, 2009). Some of the ways were listed as student teaching (tutors), internships, volunteer activities (opportunities). Both university and community get benefits out of these sorts of interactions (Bruning et al., 2006). In this way students get opportunity to make some amount of money or at least get to experience in real life experience about their professions, community reach safe and cheap labor and university provide opportunity to their students and make itself more attractive for prospective students. On the other hand, a community and university engagement provides expertise in many areas, economic development and increase quality of life (Bruning et al., 2006).

Norman has been established on a flat surface (Picture 3) which is a fortune for an appropriate urban growth and design. In 5 km diameter from the campus area, you can reach any other part of the city in each direction (Picture 4). As it appears on the image, campus area is the core of the city.

Comparison between American college town and their equivalent Turkish cities have slight differences, in terms of rate of young population in total population, percentages of employees in universities, education level of the population, family income and unemployment rate, housing opportunities, etc. Last ten years policy of current government helps to distribute higher education institution statewide. However, many of the Anatolian cities does not develop fast enough to accommodate “college town” necessities. Therefore, these cities cannot be as attractive as American college towns for both students and faculties. In the contrast, many colleges were established before the host cities significant urban development had taken place in the region, in America (Gumbrecht, 2003).

Picture 3: Horizontal View of the OU Norman Campus Area

University culture and brand of the city would take 50 years to be stable and famous around the region. However, something should be done from the beginning. For example, if we’d like to have an excellent landscape with some memorial buildings, old trees or traditional ceremonial fountain, we should have constructed, planted or established them almost 10 years ago. This is what American higher education institutions have been doing in “college towns”, campus landscaping and creating public spaces (Gumprecht, 2007). As a self criticism, none of building the current campus of MAKU is memorial, no ceremony have been related with any space in campus, no efficient effort on landscaping; so, no sense of place could established for anyone yet. But, just
as a reminder, it will be ten years old campus in couple years and this will be called the missing last chance in next decades.

**Picture 4:** Location of OU Norman Campus Area

This is the first building of University of Oklahoma (Picture 5). The picture on the left was in 1893 and on the right was in 1900. Tree planting changed the landscape so fast and difference in 7 years is very clear.

The building below (Picture 6) is Art & Science College of MAKU, which is one of the first buildings of the current campus. There are at least 5 years of difference between the dates that pictures were taken. It could be much different with a sufficient management and better care about the landscape of the university. It has already lost almost 10 years in terms of development process.
There are many location decision theories and strategies, created by different disciplines and different purposes. They always have questions to find out efficient location for their business, new investment, public services, etc. For example, where are the most efficient free spaces in the city within 2 km zone of the public transportation line? Where are current accommodations services distributed and concentrated? Where do city residents prefer to have a university campus area in the city? Which location would provide best interaction between university and the city? In case of Burdur, none of the answer pointed out the current location of the university campus area.

There are many questions in people’s mind about the location of the university. Was it a governmental decision? If so, why the government prefer this place for this university? Are there any logic reasons behind this decision? If so, why don’t they explain them to both university members and city residents? Governmental policy called “a university for each city” was all about urban development, especially for developing Anatolian cities. Does this location decision support this policy or was it a part of “another” policy? When the current dorm constructed on southwest part of the city core, it has been told that the university was going to establish in that area too (Even Google Map used to show that place as university campus area during 2008-2010). All these are about intangible and tangible outcomes of the campus location. These issues about location are even more important for small scale developing cities.

In other words, these are wondering by people: What were the political behaviors and governmental rules on the location decision of this university? Did anyone examine economic condition and background of this city before this campus location publicly declared? Did any commission search for the needs of retails and their expectations from the new population of the city? Did any committee questioned students needs, hopes and demands? Did anyone talk about the transportation issues for both car owners and public transportation users? Did the physical problems of the campus area discuss before school canceled because of the risky condition based on high speed wind?

**Conclusion**

Again, this study is aiming to propose new spaces to remove the current facilities of the university. However, it is attempting to show some other possible spaces which could have been more efficient for university and urban development. Simply, it is now so tough to move this institution somewhere else in the city. However, there are still opportunities with a slight sustainability plan and keep using current facilities and continue to expansion in another location where university and the city would integrate with the city in shorter time than expected.

On the other hand, management of the spaces in universities is another topic to compare and discuss, such as 24 four hours access to work spaces, libraries, laboratories and even offices.
These are about the general safety policies and again location of the campus area. It is almost impossible to reach some of new campuses on weekend and night hours, especially for students who do not have a car.

If students have limited chose and all they need is attending such university program, they do not really be careful about the size of the city at first point. However, as a nature of human being, once they approved for a degree program, they start to look for social life both in university and the city. For new universities, especially in developing countries which has very limited budget for establishment and construct secondary facilities, it is hard to handle these kinds of demands in a short period of time. Generally, it requires at least 10 years to make everything ready to support student’s social life. In this condition, students are looking for those facilities in the city area. If city does not accommodate enough functions and facilities for needs of youths (university population), then they faced the problem in terms of livability of that city.

This simple comparison and discussion about university location, hopefully contribute to decision making process of upcoming universities. Universities are the last chance to develop for many Anatolian cities appropriately. Lost of this chance and insufficient management of spaces may cost half of century in terms of social, economic and spatial development of a city.

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