Workshop 1 - Public Space and Neighbourhood Quality
Being Side by Side on Changing Neighbourhood and Family Relations in Yenimahalle

Övgü Pelen

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BEING SIDE BY SIDE
ON CHANGING NEIGHBOURHOOD AND FAMILY RELATIONS IN YENİMAHALLE

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BEING SIDE BY SIDE
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Introduction

Social space is a social product... Social space contains and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to (1) the social relations of reproduction, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and (2) the relations of production i.e. the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions... Social space thus remains the space of society, social life. Man does not live by words alone; all 'subjects' are situated in a space which they must either recognize or lose themselves, a space which they may both enjoy and modify... From the point of view of knowing (connaissance), social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society.¹

Henri Lefebvre defined space as a social product, since it would be a mistake, to think of a person, as a social entity, away from its environment. He stated that social space contains two items. In this paper, the first item that is the social relations of reproduction will be discussed in terms of neighbourhood and family relations.

As a unique case in Turkish housing history, Yenimahalle have always had strong neighbourly relations due to several socio-economical and cultural reasons. However together with the transforming socio-physical environment, it had to face with an important change in neighbourly ties and family relations. In this paper, the transforming environment with its causes and effects will be explored. Therefore, it can be said that the aim of the paper is to draw attention to the dissolving relationships between neighbours and family members in a socio-physical perspective. As a survey method, interviews with five people who used to live or still living in Yenimahalle conducted. The scope of the interviews was wider, since the aim of the research was to explore what were the changes in the lives of the interviewees when they compare life in the original Yenimahalle houses with life in apartments. However, the scope of this paper will be limited with the changing neighbourhood and family relations in Yenimahalle. This is because of the interviews conducted since what changed significantly in the lives of these interviewees were the relations mentioned. Before moving to these changes, it could be necessary to mention a little bit about the formation process of Yenimahalle as an urban neighbourhood.

On Historical Perspective of Yenimahalle

In 1923, Ankara was declared as the capital of Turkish Republic. Therefore, the town had to face with an important immigration and suffered from an insufficient infrastructure. There was an increasing need for housing. This is the reason why state actively participated in the development of different solutions for the creation of new residential areas in the city.

In 1948, Laws number 5218 and 5228 approved. These were very important steps for the construction of Yenimahalle. Law number 5218 gave the municipality the role of producing new building areas with their urban services, and the law number 5228 provides the necessary legal framework for the provision of convenient credits to the people in need and in will of building their house. Lot owners are obliged to build their houses within a limited time that is within three years. Otherwise, the municipality had the right to take the land back. This important detail was the guarantee of the realization of the project in a fast and efficient way. The municipality was responsible from the planning of the new residential area. A competition was held. However, first prize was not given to anybody. Inspired from the second and third award winner projects, the technical office founded by the Municipality, prepared the site plan and five house types. (Tokman 1979: 46)

Construction of Yenimahalle was carried out between the years 1949 – 1951. What Zeynep Önen wrote in her master thesis about the site of Yenimahalle is, “The site organization proposed for the area seeks therefore to develop a self-contained order based on the physical characteristics of the land… The unity of the area is reached by the organization of the major public facilities along Ragıp Tüzün Caddesi, both the main artery of the settlement and the extension of its connection to the city.”  

We can see the initial settlement of Yenimahalle and its relation with some important parts of Ankara in Figure 1 and the main artery of Yenimahalle that is the Ragıp Tüzün Caddesi and another main artery now used mainly by public transformation, which is called İvedik Caddesi in Figure2.

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Figure 1: Yenimahalle initial settlement and its relation with some important parts of Ankara

Figure 2: The main arteries of Yenimahalle: İvedik Caddesi and Ragıp Tüzün Caddesi
According to the initial site plan (Figure 3), there were five different house types, but each of them was single-family type, one type was one storey high and it was 65m² (Figure 4), the others were mostly two storey houses and were about 90m², and 115m² (Figures 5, 6, 7). Depending on the slope of the site, a third storey for basement was added to some of the houses. These houses were organized on the site as blocks of two, four or six. The settlement was a typical example of the row-housing model.

Figure 3: Yenimahalle 1949: Initial Settlement (Onen 1994: 23)
Figure 4: Original Building Stock: Plan Type A - Single Storey, 3 Rooms 65m² (Önen 1994: 25)

Figure 5: Original Building Stock: Plan Type B - Two Stories, 3 Rooms 90m² (Önen 1994: 26)
Figure 6: Original Building Stock: Plan Type C - Two Stories, 4 Rooms 115m² (Önen 1994: 27)

Figure 7: Original Building Stock: Plan Type D - Two Stories, 5 Rooms 115m² (Önen 1994: 28)
In 1950, the population of Yenimahalle was only 1967. Flat Ownership Law (Kat Müülkiyeti Yasası) approved in 1955. About this law, Ali Cengizkan wrote that it was a solution found by the system to overcome middle class losing its chance of residing in urban house, and it was allowing partial ownership on land. He added that apartment blocks were the shells for flat ownership and they gained increase in production. Mass housing by cooperations was spread and high-rise buildings appeared, as a result of intending high profit.3

In 1960, the population of Yenimahalle had a rapid increase and reached to 67,636.4 There occurred a local change in building heights in 1965. With this change, permission for the third storey on Ragip Tüzün Caddesi, İvedik Caddesi, and the Central District was given. In the year 1968, the Construction Regulations (İmar Yönetmeliği) changed, with this change an additional storey for the entire city permitted. This was the initiator of the general physical change in Yenimahalle’s physical structure and its demographic properties. About this process of change, Önen wrote by giving reference to Tokman that: “This process of change, which still did not occur as the destruction of the built-up structure in 1979 for rather the demand-offer relations determined by the socio-economic structure of the area and its population in the city (Tokman, 1979 p.91). It appears today in a more significant scale as the existing physical structure is subject to important changes.” 5 In 1990, the increase in the population of Yenimahalle continued rapidly and reached to a very big number that is 343,951.6 Another law bringing permission for additional storey was given in the year 1994. Municipality of Yenimahalle made a decision permitting the forth storey in Esentepe, Tepalı, Yunus Emre, Yeniçağ, and Işınlar Districts. The laws, which gave permits to increase building heights, leaded not only a very important change in Yenimahalle’s physical environment, but caused also a rapid change in its socio cultural population with great population growths. (Önen, 1994: 31) When we came to 2006, we see that the population of central Yenimahalle reached up to 553,344.7 The Table 1 below demonstrates how dramatic the increase in population when the acceptance of these laws considered.

7 [Internet, WWW], Adres: http://www.yenimahalle.gov.tr/sayilarla_yenimahalle.html [Accessed: 23.05.2006]
Table 1: Laws Increasing Building Heights with Population Growth Ratio (Kaba, 1995: 50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>years</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Population</td>
<td>16220</td>
<td>36847</td>
<td>6943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cengizkan dealt with the implication of flat ownership in detail. He emphasized that flat ownership brought more dependency on apartment housing, segregation of social classes in urban ecology, and mentioned that it influences neighbouring negatively. Referring to Murat Balamir, what he wrote about the implications of flat ownership is as follows:

>> Along with the flat ownership, people are forced to disturb neighbours against their will. The conflict rests on the flat ownership challenging the physical dependency of the flats, the independent Turkish house with its hierarchy of private space, left itself to cells, which have adjacent neighbours in four directions. Balamir notes density in market production as twice higher than density in cooperation production housing. This brings more physical dependency in apartment housing. People are compelled to form visual and aural relationships, which causes stress and dissatisfaction. So they rather form sparse contacts than denser ones, that is though the relationships are more in numbers, they are not intensive. Another important result of flat ownership is the apparent segregation of social classes in urban ecology, increasing differences between neighbourhoods, and increasing the heterogeneity of neighbourhood formation in interest and status differences. This increases insecurity of neighbours towards each other and neighbouring is negatively influenced. Flat ownership has also caused the disappearance of the street as a uniting neighbourhood element. Today stair and elevator wells have replaced street element in the high rise.  

On Neighbourhood Relations in Yenimahalle

The importance of neighbours in a family’s life as social actors is not a questionable issue. Neighbours, after parents and relatives, are the most important factors for the children’s childhood. Sometimes neighbours are children’s role models, or they sometimes be very good friends for the parents. They are the natural witnesses of the events of a family such as childcare, illnesses, divorce, fire, robbery, and so on as Ergenekon mentioned while explaining the reasons why neighbours are important and meaningful for our lives.  

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Consequently, neighbourliness as a social formation is something crucial for a family. Cengizkan mentioned the importance of being in good relations with the neighbours by giving reference to Reiner. He wrote, “Reiner encounters the question, ‘is neighbourliness a step (cause) to good life, or is it the indication that the ideal has been reached?’ we think that it is both a cause and a result, because social relationships are complex and mutual.” This sentence from Reiner expresses how important good neighbourhood relations are for a good life.

Depending on the interviews carried out with Yenimahalle inhabitants or former ones, it can easily be said that neighbourliness used to be one of the most important social formations and neighbours used to be one of the most important social actors in their life. Moreover, it can be inferred that there was an identity of being a “Yenimahalle inhabitant”. About the formation of this identity a Yenimahalle inhabitant Ergenekon wrote:

The physical structure of Yenimahalle is based on the project won in the competition, its aim was to make a huge number of people, owners of a house with a garden, the social structure of Yenimahalle is based on the conditions needed to be required by the people who were going to own the lands and take the house credits. One of the most important conditions shaping the social structure was, not to own a house in Ankara, and to have a regular income. These conditions excluded the tradesman of Ankara who had properties, and the rural population living in (gecekondus) shantytowns. Therefore, the population, which resemble in terms of being state officers, whereas, differentiate in terms of occupation, geographical and cultural origin; socialized owing to the neighbourhood relations and a new identity of being a “Yenimahalle inhabitant” (Yenimahalleli) emerged… The recognition of Yenimahalle identity appears as a result of the respect of the neighbours’ community living there.

Ergenekon explained that neighbourly relations in Yenimahalle were carried according to climatically convenient conditions, in interior and exterior spaces such as rooms, houses, gardens, streets, school, market, and parks. Moreover, they were diversified according to seasons and bio-cultural events affecting the families and continue from the early morning until late at night. She mentioned that the social limits of neighbourhood are set by principles of physical proximity, relative equality and reciprocity. Moreover, she defined the meaning of neighbouring relations in Yenimahalle as mutual affection, respect,

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indulgence, help, solidarity, union and meeting. She emphasized how close the relations with neighbours were in Yenimahalle and mentioned that neighbours were indulged in the levels of a family life as much as relatives and close friends are.\textsuperscript{12}

**On Changing Neighbourhood and Open Spaces**

Together with the socio-cultural homogeneity of inhabitants, the physical environment especially the street life and gardens contributed to constitute good neighbourly ties. Most of the interviewees emphasized on the importance of the well designed open spaces of original Yenimahalle houses. About the buildings belonging to the original fabric and their contribution to social relations was explained by Önen in this way,

Front garden usually constitute open spaces where the relations with the exterior and the neighbours is still felt and where the greenery is directly perceived from the street. In these senses, they contribute to the physical and social context and act as transition zones between the private and public spaces. Isolated from the public space, back gardens, on the other hand, are reserved to more domestic and private uses. They generally contain additional storage spaces and several fruit trees.\textsuperscript{13}

By means of Flat Ownership Law, and with laws that permitted increase in building heights, new apartment blocks began to be constructed in Yenimahalle. There were new legislations for car parking and for many others issues, these lead to destruction in the gardens of the original fabric since these areas began to be used as car parks. New buildings were constructed in a bigger area that is, the first and second floors projected for about 1.5m forward, thus the garden area became smaller. This architectural change not only affected the physical environment but also the social life, since people used to get together in these open spaces. What Önen wrote about this new buildings and their use of open space is, “New buildings, however, introduce different types of relations with exterior space. While some of the front gardens are totally reserved to parking (and act in direct continuity with the street), others are organized as gardens of visual purpose where no sequence of life is planned to happen. The back gardens are reduced to half their original size and are seldom used unless the ground floor inhabitants take the responsibility of the use by their private initiative.”\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p.105


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p.45
Another important element that could act as a social agent is the street. Street life and the appearance of the street are directly related with the happiness of the inhabitants. All of the interviewees mentioned about the importance of the street life for neighbourliness, because neighbours used to get together in these open spaces when the weather was nice. By giving reference to Morris and Mogey, Cengizkan emphasized the meaning of streets for the inhabitants and its relation with the satisfaction and the dissatisfaction of the neighbours.

Streets are some sort of shells of territoriality. “The lot is perceived as personal territory and community space.” Morris and Mogey state that the street is considered as a social unit in most studies of working class areas and it is “the object of strong loyalties, although it acts as uniting only on ceremonial occasions.” They further declared that, “satisfaction with neighbours was independently related to liking the appearance of the street”... They also found that “loneliness was consistently related to dissatisfaction with neighbours and to disliking the appearance of the street.” These arguments clarify the importance of the street.  

Depending on the theoretical background set by Morris and Mogey about streets and their relations with neighbourliness, one example from the interviews would strengthen this idea about street life, and its effects on people’s experiences, memories with their neighbours. One of the interviewees was a Social Anthropologist and her ideas about the usage of outdoor spaces, street life and its relation with neighbourhood relations is as follows:

There is no open space today, only balconies. We used to sit in front of our entrance doors. All the neighbours used to sit, drink tea, salute, and invite each other to houses. You cannot sit in front of your entrance door here in apartment blocks. There exist green areas; however, it is “identityless”. I said “identityless” (lack of identity) because; there exists an ‘absent’ open space. I mean it is not living. However, open space in Yenimahalle used to live, children used to play in the streets, while their parents sitting and looking at them. When you look at the street in Yenimahalle, you feel that it is the open continuation of the house and you have memories there: the peach tree, which gives flowers every March, tea service of Aunt Ayşe, and her delicious cookies and so on. I mean street or open space is the extension of your house. There is no such thing in here. There is parking lots and grass that you should not walk on. Moreover, it is getting harder to salute to each other. Giving a salutation make people feel as the invasion of privacy. When I feel in the same way as I mentioned, I felt guilty and ashamed of myself.


The experiences of this interviewee demonstrate the importance of street life and open spaces in Yenimahalle inhabitant’s neighbourly relations. They had created a secure and peaceful social environment with their neighbourhood relations. However, according to Ergenekon, together with the destruction of the old houses and the construction of apartments instead, an unhealthy urban ecology and an unsafe future are waiting for Yenimahalle inhabitants. This unhealthy urban ecology can be realized by looking at the condition of Yenimahalle today. (Figure 11-12-13-14) There is a rapid construction process of apartments together with the rapid increase in population whereas the infrastructures stay the same. (Figure 15-16-17-18) Many new physical and social problems affecting the social life and daily life, emerged with the up going population and stable infrastructure like, traffic, parking problems, lack of playgrounds, danger for children while playing in the streets, destruction of the greenery and so on. However, it is hard to change the infrastructure in such a settled and finished urban neighbourhood. The term finished is used because it was designed and constructed according to an estimated population in the first planning process. Unfortunately, with the changes in the original fabric, and together with the laws permitting increase in building heights, Yenimahalle is subject to a non-returnable transformation process. This process not only created physical problems but also with the changing population, it created social problems in terms of neighbourliness and family relations. One of the women I interviewed told her ideas about the changing neighbourhood relations:

Relationships used to be stronger and more intimate, more reliable. People used to share many things with each other. The neighbourhood used to share many things together. And, because each house used to have gardens, neighbours used to sit in the garden, and drink tea. In winter times, neighbours used to come together in houses. In summer times, we used to go to picnic with neighbours. Women got together and went to matches together with men. Hippodrome was close so we used to go there to watch horse races. Moreover, families did not need to spend extra money for the education of their children. This led to the family income to be higher. Therefore, you could meet with your neighbours more often and you could spend for them more, for dinners etc. In addition, you could spare more time for them. I have a kid going to primary school and I cannot invite my neighbours if my son has an exam because, I am preparing my schedule according to my son.

In addition, the people around you and life conditions changed. You cannot easily communicate with the new comers because nobody thrusts in each other. Therefore, relationships are getting more and more trapped inside the houses, and now it is closed inside rooms. I mean everybody escape into the rooms now.

From these words, it can be understood that together with the economical problems and the changing conditions of life, Yenimahalle inhabitants prefer not to mix up with others easily. This is due to socio-


economical conditions but also the changing environment and population. Sencer and Ayşe Ayata detected what middle classes think about neighbourhood relations based on a research they carried out. They argued that by examining the social class and background of those inhabiting the various districts, attitudes and behaviour patterns in fields ranging from the utilization of housing areas and urban space in Ankara to the consumption of culture, from ways of bringing up children to the uses made of housing and from patterns of relations between neighbours to environmental awareness can be understood. They put forward the idea that middle classes prefer not to mix up with other social groups. They questioned that whether good neighbours is an important criterion in housing choice for social classes and they came up to a conclusion that in lower middle-income groups good neighbours are the most important criterion for housing choice. In these groups, it is common that a desire for the development of strong relations between neighbours and the establishment of closely woven ties of community solidarity is common. For the middle classes, on the contrary, relations with neighbours are not an important criterion. Among those of the high levels of social environment turns out to be a very important criterion in the housing choice. They emphasize that no other group places as much importance on the social environment as those who have been through higher education. They explain the reasons of the mentioned facts as follows:

Firstly, well-educated women are more involved in public and social life and their concern and awareness of markets is therefore greater. Secondly, these women are more likely to be in young families, and such families are more likely to have financial problems and to reveal such issues. For women with low levels of education, by contrast, the most important criterion of choice of housing is developing good neighbourly ties. The physical structure of home and ease of internal use take on a little more importance for those with intermediate levels of education.

This was the reason why lower middle income and high-income groups place good neighbours as the most important criterion for housing choice. On the contrary, it was detected that middle classes do not prefer to mix up with other social groups. The reason for it can be considered as what Cengizkan explained while explaining the implications for neighbouring. Together with flat ownership, increasing differences with neighbours and increasing the heterogeneity in interest and status differences increased insecurity of neighbours towards each other. Moreover, “mobility increase has lessened the dependence on neighbours and the neighbourhood. House dissatisfaction, also, may have lessened contacts.”

19 Ayata, Sencer – Ayata, Ayşe. G. “Gender Relation in Housing, Community and Urban Culture” Housing Question of the Others, Ankara, Chamber of Architects of Turkey, 1996, p.62
20 Ibid, p.63
The changing neighbourly relations of Yenimahalle are because of several reasons, one is as mentioned earlier the transformation of open space and its disappearance in people’s lives. One other reason was the transformation of the original fabric. The first transformations of the original Yenimahalle houses were conducted by dividing the houses vertically to prepare three different houses for three different families. The alterations could be seen in Figure 8. The original house was sufficient for one family because it is about 90m². Living room, dining room, kitchen and a small toilet were located in the ground floor; two or three bedrooms and bathroom were located in the first floor. The first alteration was to rent the basement floor to a family, so ground floor and first floor remained for the owners. A later alteration was to change the position of the stairs so that ground floor and first floor could be separated and could be rent to different families however; wet spaces and room areas were not comfortable enough. Therefore, new additions were needed. In Table 2, spatial dimensions of the original houses and the altered ones can be seen. From the Table it can be seen that total area of the dwellings became nearly half of the original sizes. For instance, a 90m² dwelling with 2 bedrooms, with a bathroom of 5m², transformed to two 45m² dwellings with 1 bedroom with a bathroom of 3m² which is not convenient for a four people normal family.

Figure 8: Plan Types and Its Alterations – Type D (Önen 1994: 53)
Table 2: Space Dimensions of Buildings Belonging to Original Fabric (Önen, 1994: 55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL m²</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DWELLINGS</th>
<th>NB. OF ROOMS</th>
<th>LOUNGE (m²)</th>
<th>ROOM (av. m²)</th>
<th>KITCHEN (m²)</th>
<th>BATHR. (m³)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Original</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>115</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altered</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

House owners preferred to move to other parts of the city and left their houses in Yenimahalle to decay without maintenance. The house, which was sufficient for one family started to be used by three families, or more (Table 4) therefore houses, could not bring high rents to the owners because of their insufficient conditions. Moreover, as a result of this process, the population in the neighbourhood increased however, because of the low rents, the socio-economic condition of the new comers was not the same as the former inhabitants of Yenimahalle. The original fabric was decaying and there was a “Downwards Mobility” where the original inhabitants replaced by lower income groups. About the figures showing the alteration process of the original Yenimahalle houses Önen wrote,

These figures stress the fact that most of the buildings are subject to a demographic overuse when compared to the original plan this is partly due to changes made at the implementation stage, whereas later changes have also modified the usage density of the buildings in parallel with the economical expectations of the owners. These expectations have as well lead to physical changes which have been described in previous parts, and which correspond to division of the original single-family house into several units of smaller size.  

Some of the houses were destructed and replaced by apartments. Flat ownership laws, and laws bringing increase in building heights, helped for the formation of these new buildings. New flats in these apartment blocks range from 60 to 200 m² and number of rooms and room areas can be seen in Table 3 in a detailed way. Some of these new buildings place two flats on each floor, in order to get more profit like in Figure 9. However, total floor areas of the flats are 65 to 75m² and the flat has two rooms and a living room. When we have a look at the plan, we can see that there is no hierarchy between the rooms and room dimensions seems insufficient. Total floor area of these buildings were intended to be bigger, this was possible by using some of the areas of the gardens and making projections in the upper floors that can be seen in Figure 9&10 in dashed lines. These increases in the floor areas made gardens half their original

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size, therefore gardens started only to be used as a decoration to look at. As a result of this process, it can be said that life in open spaces in Yenimahalle started to disappear.

**Figure 9**: Example Plan of the new apartments (Önen, 1994: 124)

**Figure 10**: Example Plan of the new apartments (Önen, 1994: 125)

**Table 3**: Spatial Dimensions of New Flats (Önen, 1994: 59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL m²</th>
<th>NB. ROOMS</th>
<th>LOUNGE (m²)</th>
<th>ROOM (av. m²)</th>
<th>KITCHEN (m²)</th>
<th>BATHR. (m²)</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-70</td>
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<td>80-90</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14/40</td>
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Table 4: Number of Families per Building in Miralay Nazım Bey Street in 1994 (Önen, 1994: 61)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY/BUILDING</th>
<th>VACANT</th>
<th>1 FAMILY</th>
<th>2 FAMILIES</th>
<th>3 FAMILIES</th>
<th>4 FAMILIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TYPES A, B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPES C, D, E</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rents for these new buildings were not as low as the old houses so the population living in these apartment blocks has a different socio-economic condition. Yenimahalle inhabitants were not anymore homogeneous. This might be another reason for the dissolving neighbourhood relations in Yenimahalle. Referring to Morris and Mogey again what Cengizkan wrote about the importance of “Homogeneity” in a neighbourhood is as follows:

Homogeneity of social class and family type in a neighbourhood is very important. Morris and Mogey state the unpopularity of class differences, especially between side neighbours. Type of occupation, visible material prosperity and similarity of house type, as they are simple and complex indices of social class, are effective on the selection of neighbours. Similarity in family life cycle results in the formation of interest groups… / Homogeneity upon life cycle stage (marital status, ages of adults and children) us an accurate representation than other factors as it indicates the mutual interaction of families because of common interests.  

He added that, “the degree of personal intimacy and total personal involvement of the partners in neighbouring differs due to their personal socio-psychological background, which affects their attitude about the neighbour role.” The changing homogeneity of Yenimahalle’s inhabitants leaded to destruction of neighbourly ties. Moreover, one interviewee stated that this situation was the reason for her removal from Yenimahalle. Referring to the interview could be a more understandable way of explaining this condition. She said:

What irritates me most about Yenimahalle is that its former population has become crowded. This made me stupefied. I mean, what made me stupefied is not the interest of a few people I know and I trust but the interference of the new coming population to my life. When the first owners of the old houses moved from Yenimahalle, the new comers migrated from the villages of Yenimahalle and we could not carry out neighbourhood relations with them. We had different understandings from neighbourliness. Their understanding from neighbourliness is to interfere with others’ lives. This was normal for

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them. This situation resembles to a concept in urban sociology that is “succession”. Which means that there exists a place, it loses its importance throughout time, and then others come to this place and fulfil the places of the former inhabitants. Yenimahalle has become a crowded neighbourhood and its infrastructure was insufficient for the crowd. Therefore, we can say that there occurred a “Downward Mobility” later on, with the construction of the apartment blocks it became an expensive neighbourhood again. However, the infrastructure stayed the same. Again, there occurred an “Upward Mobility”. This is the reason why I moved from Yenimahalle.  

On Changing Family Relations and House Life

The transformation of relations was not only in neighbourliness but it could also be seen in family life. Together with the removal of their old houses and moving to apartments, most of the interviewees mentioned about the change in their family relations. They told that they used to get together in the evenings as a whole family in the saloons however, in their new flats they complained about the problem of not coming together. Most of them related these problems to apartment life. However, according to Ferhunde Özbay when the apartments first appeared, they were considered as the dwellings of the new middle class, wageworkers and civil servants that emerged with the industrial society. They developed parallel to the form and speed of the society to create middle strata and reflected a Western life style, a modern life, with large reception rooms, and separate rooms. She stated about living in an apartment as a privilege of living in a modern part of the city and with people with a similar ‘modern’ background. She added that, “in apartment buildings housework was easier. The desire of living in apartment buildings was also related to the larger reception rooms, which were called ‘saloons’… The majority of the middle class families however had to wait for some more time to attain these ‘saloons’. The number of apartment buildings gradually increased and spread throughout the country. The flat ownership law and the laws on housing cooperatives helped their expansion. During this expansion however, their prestigious images largely eroded.”

Together with the changing conditions of family life, she emphasized that there has been an increase in the value of children in the family and in the society in addition families started to be considered important for the personality development of children among the middle classes. Today most of the families try to spare a room for each of their children. Özbay also emphasized that sparing the ‘saloons’ for the guests began to be seen as irrational so reception rooms / ‘saloons’ were opened for daily use as


living rooms. She thought that the spread of TV sets in the 1980’s was also effective in opening up the doors of ‘saloons’ for all the household members.27 The intention of the parents while opening the saloons for everyday use was to bring the whole family together there. However, children who all have separate bedrooms prefer to stay in their rooms and as a result, today there is less contact between family members. What Özbay wrote about this issue is, “Rooms for children are not only their bedroom, but they are places where children also study and play. Their friends visit them in these rooms as well. When they grow up, they dislike any control of adults in these rooms. Therefore, in many houses the daily order or disorder of these rooms was left to the responsibilities of children themselves. Children who play, study, or sleep in their own rooms have less contact with the family members in the ‘saloons’.” 28 In order to deal with this issue in detail she made some interviews. One of the women Özbay interviewed told her their story of transition from having a closed-door reception room to ‘saloons’ as follows:

When we were living in two storey wooden house, I used to feel guilty that I could not give separate rooms to my children. I wanted to move to an apartment for that reason. I hoped that all the family would gather in the ‘saloon’ and watch TV together. The day we moved to our new apartment, children retired to their rooms. My husband and I were so lonely in the big ‘saloon’. I was extremely sorry and I cried. 29

Similarly, most of my interviewees complained about this issue just like the woman Özbay interviewed. One example from the interviewees said that,

We are being separated. In the old house, we used to come together in the same place eventually. Now corridors are built, everyone goes to her/his room and we do not see each other. You cannot realize others’ existence even you live in the same house for five days. But, I believe that life in those old houses were better. Because everybody in a house either he wants or not used to get together in the same place, since you were living in a smaller area. Relationships were closer and interaction was more. For example, I sometimes not go to my son’s room for months. 30

This lack of interaction between parents and children and also between parents leads to disturbances in social relations of the family to each other and to other people.

27 Özbay, Ferhunde “Houses, Wives, Housewives” Housing Question of the Others Ankara, Chamber of Architects of Turkey, 1996, p.55

28 Ibid, p.55

29 Ibid, p.55

Conclusion

Together with the changing physical environment, Yenimahalle faced with a rapid transformation process in terms of socio-cultural life. With the alteration of the original fabric and rapid construction of apartment blocks, instead Yenimahalle inhabitants came across with insufficient urban environment and an increasing population. The homogeneity of Yenimahalle inhabitants disturbed with the changing population. These factors affected the neighbourly ties and family relations in Yenimahalle as tried to be explained during the text. As a unique example of housing history, the impacts of this hasty transformation process were harsh in the lives of the inhabitants. In this paper, it is tried to emphasize the importance of this alteration for the inhabitants’ neighbourly ties and family relation.

Figure 11 - Figure 12: General views showing the current situation of Yenimahalle. (Photo taken by: Övgü Pelen, 2006)

The built up/open space ratio of the new constructions rises to 3/2 from 2/3 in the original fabric, and their number of stories changes between 4 and 6 according to the slope (Önen 1995)
Figure 13: General views of the initial situation of Yenimahalle. (Source: http://farm3.static.flickr.com)

Figure 14: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)
Figure 15: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)

Figure 16: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)
Figure 17: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)

Figure 18: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)
Figure 19: General views showing the old and the new fabric (Photo: taken by Övgü Pelen, 2006)
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