Seats and the City: Sitting as an Idle Act in Ankara Neighbourhoods

Oturma Mekânları ve Kent: Ankara Mahallelerinde Oturma Eylemi ve Aylaklık Hali

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ABSTRACT

This paper re-evaluates the relationship between walking and idleness in evolving urban contexts, proposing that sitting can be understood as a new form of idleness in response to the accelerating speed of urban routines. Drawing on the established urban theories of walking and cultural terminologies highlighting the association between sitting and states of idleness within domestic spaces, the aim is to redefine idleness within the encounters of urban landscape and architectural elements. These encounters are understood as "glitches" where acts of sitting occupy spaces of walking, transforming the borders of exterior urban spaces into quasi-interior spaces. The study focuses on Esat, in Ankara, that were once exemplary modern residential districts but now located in the intersection of rapid urban change and architectural assets. These areas provide a compelling urban field for observing unplanned moments of idleness, where residents make informal interventions to reclaim space for stillness and leisure. This research questions the function of sitting as an idle act transforming spatial, behavioral and material conditions of the urban space. Accordingly, the study categorizes the idle acts and objects into three typologies: displaced seats for observing and waiting, nomad seats for taking breaks, and placed seats for passing by. Each typology is illustrated through a combination of field observation, photographic documentation, and diagrammatic drawing, that highlight how urban sitters repurpose elements of the urban environment to create moments of inactivity. Through a visual narrative, the paper underscores the significance of sitting as an act of idleness. Providing new insights into the interplay between mobility, space, and human behavior in cities, the aim is to reclaim the idle act of sitting as the new walking.

Keywords: Idleness, urban, Ankara, sitting, seats

ÖZ

Bu makale, değişen kentsel bağlamlarda yürüme ve aylaklık arasındaki ilişkiyi yeniden değerlendirerek, oturmanın hızlanan kentsel rutinlerde yeni bir aylaklık biçimi olarak anlaşılabileceğini öne sürmektedir. Çalışma, yürüme üzerine yerleşik kentsel teorilere dayanarak, aylaklık kavramını yeniden ele almaktadır. Oturma eylemi ile ev içi mekânlardaki aylaklık hâlleri arasındaki ilişkiyi vurgulayarak kent mekanlarına bakmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, kentsel peyzaj ve mimari öğelerle kurulan karşılaşmalar üzerinden aylaklığın yeni bir tanımı önerilmektedir. Bunlar, oturma mekanlarının yürüme alanlarını işgal ettiği ve dış mekân sınırlarını yarı-iç mekânlara dönüştürdüğü "aksaklıklar" (*glitch*) olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Çalışma, bir zamanlar örnek modern konut bölgeleri olan ancak günümüzde hızlı kentsel dönüşüm ile mimari mirasın kesiştiği bir noktada yer alan Ankara'daki Esat mahallelerine odaklanır. Bu mahalleler, sakinlerin dinginlik için mekânda yaptığı gayriresmî müdahaleler sayesinde, plansız ve gündelik aylaklık anlarını gözlemlemek için güçlü bir kentsel zemin sunar. Çalışma, aylak eylem ve nesneleri üç tipoloji altında kategorize etmektedir: gözlem ve bekleme için yerinden edilmiş oturma elemanları, mola vermek için kullanılan göçebe oturma elemanları ve yalnızca geçip gitmeye yönelik uyarlanmış oturma elemanları. Her bir tipoloji, saha gözlemi, fotoğrafik belgeleme ve diyagramatik çizimlerin birleşimiyle açıklanır ve kent sakinlerinin kentsel çevrenin öğelerini yeniden kullanarak aylaklık anları yarattığını gösterir. Günlük kent-mimarlık ilişkilerinin kesitlerini içeren görsel bir anlatı aracılığıyla, makale, oturmanın aylaklık hâli olarak önemini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, hareketlilik, mekân ve insan davranışı arasındaki etkileşime dair yeni bakış açıları sunarak, oturma eylemi üzerinden yürüme ve aylaklık ilişkisini yeniden kurmayı amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aylaklık, kent, Ankara, oturma, oturma elemanları

Introduction

In the last decades, walking has been widely acknowledged as both a research tool and a practice (Careri, 2002, Gommes & Liebe, 2024; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Piga et al, 2021, etc.) described as "a tool for exploring, situating, and actualising local cultural stories" (Piga et al., 2021). Building on this understanding, this study shifts the focus from walking to sitting, expanding the trajectory of spatial inquiry to explore how sitting, as an idle act, can generate alternative narratives and spatial experiences. This paper re-evaluates the relationship between walking and idleness in the context of evolving urban environments, proposing a shift in the understanding of sitting as a distinct form of idleness. Urban life, shaped by increasing mobility and accelerating routines, has often prioritized walking as a primary mode of engagement with the city, both physically and theoretically. Drawing on established urban theories, such as those of Michel de Certeau (1980) and Walter Benjamin (1997, 2006), which emphasize walking as a critical means of experiencing and narrating urban spaces, this study introduces an alternative perspective by focusing on sitting. Furthermore, cultural terminologies that link sitting to idleness in domestic spaces inform the theoretical framework. The paper aims to redefine idleness by exploring encounters between urban environments and architectural elements, offering new insights into how moments of stillness in public spaces challenge and complement the dynamics of urban life.

The primary purpose of this study is to conceptualize sitting as an idle act that redefines interactions with urban environments. It seeks to address how sitting, often overlooked in urban theory, can transform spaces of movement into sites of inactivity. Rather than testing a pre-existing theory, the study adopts an exploratory approach to challenge the preset relations between walking and *urbanité*. This study examines urban sitters' behaviors, typologies of idle acts and objects, and their implications for a broader understanding of urban mobility and spatial adaptation. The research examines the "glitches" where acts of sitting disrupt the rhythm of urban routines, reconfiguring exterior urban environments into quasi-interior spaces. Through representing these glitches, this research questions: How does sitting function as an idle act in urban space? What are the spatial, behavioral, and material characteristics of this idleness? Methodologically, it employs a combination of field observation, photographic documentation, and diagrammatic drawing to visually and textually map idle acts and objects in situ. The focus is specifically on Ankara-Esat neighborhoods, providing a localized yet illustrative case study. The selection of Ankara's Esat neighborhoods, Küçükesat and Büyükesat, is based on both personal proximity and spatial qualities. These neighborhoods— once prestigious modern residential zones, now caught in the friction between rapid urban transformation and remnants of mid-century architectural changes—offer a rich urban landscape for witnessing informal, unplanned moments of idleness. The choice was made not only for its accessibility but also for the various overlapping temporalities, speeds, and scales visible in its built environment.

In this layered urban context, moments of idleness emerge as spatial practices that subtly reconfigure everyday rhythms. Field observations in the Esat neighborhoods revealed recurring patterns in how individuals informally adapt architectural elements. These observations led to the identification of three typologies of idle acts and objects, each highlighting different ways that sitting alters urban space. Three typologies of idle acts and objects are identified:

1. Displaced Seats: Objects repurposed for observing and waiting, such as steps, ledges, or makeshift seating arrangements.

2. Nomad Seats: Portable or improvised seating used for brief pauses, often seen in transitional spaces like sidewalks or parks.

3. Placed Seats: Fixed elements like benches or chairs that facilitate passing moments of rest and contemplation.

These typologies highlight variations in the purpose of sitting— ranging from long, leisurely stays to short, utilitarian pauses—and the nature of improvisation, type of seat, and acts of appropriation or adaptation by the sitters. Such acts transform urban spaces, blurring the boundaries between exterior and interior environments. By creating moments of idleness, urban sitters redefine the relationship between mobility and space, emphasizing the human capacity to adapt and reinterpret the urban environment.

In conclusion, sitting as an idle act emerges not merely as an alternative to walking, but as a critical counterpoint to its theoretical predominance in urban discourse. It underscores the significance of moments of inactivity in the rapidly moving urban environment. By situating sitting as an act of spatial negotiation rather than passivity, the study calls for a renewed understanding of idleness as a transformative force in the production of urban space. This research contributes to the field by providing a framework for understanding the interplay between mobility, space, and human behavior in cities. It offers a three-partite visual glossary to capture the diverse adaptations associated with urban sitting, paving the way for further studies on idleness and spatial practices in urban contexts.

Material and Methods

Figure 1.
Process diagram of the methodology.
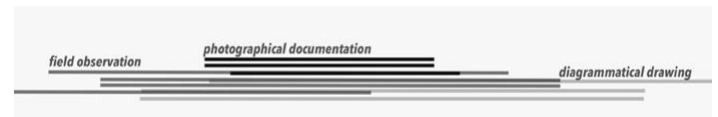
The study employs a qualitative research approach, combining field observation, photographic documentation, and diagrammatic drawing —methods that unfold non-linearly (Figure 1). As the authors of this study are also residents who experience these neighborhoods on a daily basis, the field observation forms the methodological foundation of the research and is continuous and unfolds across different times of the day. Photographic documentation involves casually capturing moments from daily life, while diagrammatic drawing, fundamental to architectural thinking and making, serves as a means to interpret and represent the observed spatial relationships. Ankara-Çankaya district Esat neighborhoods were selected as the primary sites of investigation due to their diverse urban environments and rich sociocultural dynamics. By reducing complex spatial relationships to abstract forms, the diagrams allowed for a deeper understanding of how different seating arrangements and contextual factors influence the act of sitting.

Data collection involved mapping instances of sitting in various urban settings, capturing photographic evidence, and creating abstract diagrammatical drawings to understand the variety of spatial configurations of sitting in urban environments. Photographic evidence acted as a primary tool for visual documentation, capturing images of urban sitters in their natural settings. Photos were captured at various times throughout the

day and week to highlight differences in seating habits and temporary use of space. These images are to highlight the informal, adaptive, and sometimes unintended uses of urban elements—such as steps, ledges, or barriers—as seating. The diagrammatic process included identifying recurring elements such as the proximity to pathways, edges, or shaded areas, and highlighting the interplay between the physical environment and the seatings. This method drew inspiration from Allen's Diagrams Matter (1998), emphasizing the value of diagrams in revealing underlying spatial logics and behaviors. By integrating these visual tools with field observations and textual analysis, the research provided a comprehensive framework for categorizing sitting behaviors into typologies and interpreting the socio-spatial implications of sitting in urban environments.

The analysis is framed by theories of mobility, space, and cultural practices, integrating insights from architectural and urban studies. This combination of methodological inputs ensures a multidimensional understanding, enabling the categorization of sitting behaviors into three distinct typologies: displaced seats, nomad seats, and placed seats. This approach highlights the diversity of sitting practices and reveals the adaptive strategies employed by urban sitters in response to the constraints and opportunities of their environments. These methodological inputs ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, allowing for the categorization of sitting behaviors into typologies.

Not Idle Anymore: Walking and *Flâneur*

Given today's context, where the constant flux of data and the ceaseless activity of urban life create a relentlessly busy environment, the condition of idleness has become critically important. In the fast-paced flux of news, social media updates, and the demands of a hyper-connected society, moments of idleness provide essential respite. These periods of intentional inactivity within this constant flux allow individuals to process the overwhelming amount of information they encounter daily, fostering creativity and deeper understanding. Embracing idleness in an era where speed and productivity are often prioritized, this paper aims to present urban-architectural traces of various forms of "idleness". Embracing idleness in an era where speed and productivity dominate, this paper explores urban-architectural traces of idleness by categorizing idle acts and objects into three typologies: displaced seats for observing, nomad seats for taking breaks, and placed seats for passing by. Additionally, it presents a visual glossary illustrating how the act of sitting transforms urban spaces, fostering moments of idleness. Highlighting how urban sitters repurpose the built environment to create moments of contemplation, the study underscores sitting as a meaningful act of idleness.

Idleness often finds its urban-architectural embodiment in the concept of the *flâneur*, a coupling common in urban discourse. This relationship, grounded in the act of walking freely, expresses an idle state of *urbanité*. The strong conceptual relation between the *flâneur*'s aimless wandering without a final destination underlines their evident connection. The scholars in the intersection of urban design, sociology and architecture benefit from the definition of the concept *flâneur* to understand relations to the city and architecture. As Boutin refers in her article, which

reviews the historical evolution of the concept of the flâneur through the readings of Baudelaire, Benjamin, and de Certeau, the flâneur has been attributed many definitions, such as "an aesthete, reporter of the city," "a detective," "a man of the crowd," or "an icon of modernity." (Boutin, 2012). Regardless of the accumulation of different layers of meanings on the concept of *flâneur*, the reputation of the word comes with the act of walking.[1]

This immediate connection between idleness and the *flâneur* stems from the very well-known identification of Charles Baudelaire as one of the French figures of the 19th century. Baudeleire's definition of *flâneur* inevitably includes idleness since the definition of the word in French -*qui paresse, qui aime à rester oisif*- includes '*oisif'* meaning 'idle' (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, 2012) and the root comes from '*flana'* meaning to wander aimlessly. Baudelaire, in his The Painter of the Modern Life relates wandering aimlessly in the city with the acts of a philosopher or a passionate observer who finds her joy in the crowd, the movement, and the multiplicities of lives (Baudelaire, 1970, p. 9). Later, he relates being a *flâneur* with "the active imagination" searching for the "quality of 'modernity'" by strolling in the city (Baudelaire, 1970, p.12). Almost a century later, Walter Benjamin in his *The Writer of the Modern Life*, adds another layer by saying that "The leisurely quality of these (Baudelaire's) descriptions fits the style of the *flâneur* who goes botanizing on the asphalt. But even in those days, it was not possible to stroll about everywhere in the city" (Benjamin, 1964/2006, p.68). He underlines the role of the detective, an urban reader of the city, instead of only strolling in a romantic way.

In another strand, in the 1980s, Michel de Certeau defines the "ordinary practitioners of the city" as "[w]alkers (*Wandersmänner*) whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it." (Certeau, 1980/2010, p.265). Certeau continues:

> "It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by." (Certeau, 1980/2010, p.265)

In Certeau's (1980) definition in the 80s urban life, walkers can experience the act of "passing by". Walkers can reflect on the existing lines of the city with their paths' lines, and their choices going this way and not that. However, in today's city, the question is whether *urbanité* could "pass by" or make choices for wandering without considering the logistical and artificial networks of the city. This idea could be regarded as reminiscent of Thoreau's perspective from more than a century ago, where he emphasized the significance of the different networks of relations that space of walking holds:

> "When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: what would become of us if we walked only in a garden or a mall?..." (Thoreau, 1914, p.8)

As an interesting parallel, much after Thoreau and just before Certeau, Walter Benjamin refers to the space of passage-ways in Paris and says that:

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[1] The relationship between walking and the city has been a central focus of urban studies. However, the main aim of this text is not to delve further into this topic. Instead, acknowledging the broad literature on walking and the city including the theory of *derivé*, Lefebre's rhythm

analysis (1992 [2004]) or Jane Jacobs' walking (1961), this section aims to briefly revisit this relationship in order to build upon it and re-think the more apparent relationship between sitting and idleness in the subsequent parts of the text.

"The arcades were a cross between a street and an interieur. If one can speak of an artistic device of the physiologies, it is the proven device of the feuilleton, namely, to turn a boulevard into an interieur. The street becomes a dwelling for the flaneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls." (Benjamin, 1997, p.37)

Benjamin's understanding of arcades as interior and a "home" of *flâneur*, when thought beyond its context's boundaries, helps us follow the theoretical strands to define a truly idle act: sitting. Due to the narrow inclusion of the term *flâneur*[2], as well as the impossibility of "*flâneuring*" in todays' urban routines, this part traces the definitions of walking to re-evaluate its relation to the idleness in this century to underline the idle act of sitting.

These definitions from very different parts of history create an interesting relation considering the speeds and spaces within the daily life routines. The definitions of walking or wandering; fields or woods or faded passage-ways are now perceived only via dromological media. In this regard, Paul Virilio's definition of city becomes a significant filter to re-evaluate walking as an idle act and re-claim sitting as the new form of idleness. Virilio said that his research focus "has shifted from topology to dromology, i.e., the study and analysis of the increasing speed of transport and communications on the development of land-use" (Virilio, 1977/2006, p.8). Accordingly, he defined city with its pluralities and in-betweens: "The city is but a stopover, a point on the synoptic path of a trajectory, the ancient military glacis, ridge road, frontier or riverbank, where the spectator's glance and the vehicle's speed of displacement were instrumentally linked" (Virilio, 1977/2006, p.31). Virilio underlined the superimposed, plural modes of the 20th-century city that has a speed defined not only by human behavior but also (maybe more) by logistical, artificial and technological patterns. In the 21st century and especially in the post-pandemic world, these relations are even more in flux with changing speeds. Although the current complexity and flux correspond to the idea of mobility in contemporary theory, the mobility of walking is perceived as a part of a larger logistical pattern that does not belong to the *urbanité*'s routines of idleness anymore. Instead, the idle act of sitting emerges at in-betweens, opposing the infinite speed of city scale.

In today's urban routines, instead of the non-existent subject of *flâneur*, we can find more sitters, sittings, and seatings as acts, subjects, and objects of idleness that emerge at in-betweens, and clashes between indoor and outdoor, as an opposition to the infinite speed of cities.

The discussion of speed also resonates with contemporary thinking in the digital age. In contemporary discourse, there is an extensive discussion about the space of the digital screen and human experience, with introductory definitions aiming to clarify their relationship. Among these, Beatriz Colomina's (2001) interpretation of the relationship between wandering in the city and sitting in front of a screen is an appropriate reference to look at sitting as a timeless idle act highlighting distraction and fixation:

"The state of distraction in the metropolis, described so eloquently by Walter Benjamin early in the twentieth century,

seems to have been replaced by a new form of distraction, which is to say a new form of attention. Rather than wandering cinematically through the city, we now look in one direction and see many juxtaposed moving images, more than we can possibly synthesize or reduce to a single impression. We sit in front of our computers on our ergonomically perfected chairs, staring with a fixed gaze at many simultaneously "open" windows through which different kinds of information stream toward us." (Colomina, 2001, p.7)

According to Colomina (2001), the sitting act is defined through its relation to the screens and digital media. However, sitting is a truly idle act for *urbanité* not only to swipe through the screens, but also to escape from any mobility including walking, and finding an "interior" to wander (without feet) in today's city. Similar to the early 21st century, today's city routines with multilayered pace and mobility are transformed into a screen that an observer can interact with to a certain degree. It is possible to say that experiencing a city in the manner of the 19th-century *flâneur* becomes synonymous with sitting at a certain standpoint—fixed yet allowing multilayered observance. This observance is akin to viewing almost digital windows opening and closing simultaneously among the different scenes of the city, which might only be possible through the act of sitting. Therefore, sitting is the new walking.

Idle Act/s: Sitting is the (Old)-New Walking

The aforementioned reading that emphasizes digital developments and the increasing speed as its inevitable outcome reveals the fact that we are simultaneously exposed to numerous moving images without having the need to wander. Therefore, considering the accelerating speed of urban life, what Benjamin (1970) describes as the joy of the *flâneur*, that is, the juxtaposition of the multiplicities, is possible to be experienced by sitting in front of a frame showing the movement of the city. While the accelerating speed of urban life makes us question the current relationship between walking and idleness, we suggest the inactivity of sitting opens a caesura within the city for being idle by simply doing nothing.

The concept of idleness in architectural discourses has always been understood by the interpretations prioritizing urban-theoretical definitions, overshadowing spatial and material relations. These spatial and material relations stand for the spaces and objects within urban scenes that make the act of idleness apparent. Considering the initial claim of this text—sitting is the new walking—it is claimed that the spaces and the objects of idle acts yield rather complex relations at the architectural scale, as opposed to the urban, upper-scale conditions. The architectural scale illustrates a fundamental relationship between idleness and sitting, and it also highlights the rich history of the already established relationship between them. Thinking of idleness on an architectural scale, therefore, enables us to expand the states of idleness and reinterpret its various relationships within today's context. The aim is first to reveal the historical relationship between sitting and idleness as embedded in daily routines, then to illustrate how this relationship continues in urban settings through spatial behaviors, material configurations, and architectural notations. By exploring the spatial forms and cultural codes associated with sitting, the research aims to develop a broader understanding of idleness that

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[2] Although Walter Benjamin (1970) defines *flâneur* as "an oppositional figure disconnected from the crowd" and recognized both of "the itinerant street vendor of the boulevards to the dandy in the foyer of the

opera-house", the definition of *flâneur* was mostly *elité*, was never a woman *flâneuse*, or a worker, or a literal idle.

encompasses both domestic and urban contexts. To ground this exploration historically, it is crucial to analyze visual representations that document how sitting has been framed and situated over time.

Figure 2.
The Turkish Girl Drinking Coffee on the Sofa by Jean Baptiste Vanmour.

Fille Turque
prenant le Caffé sur le Sopha.

One such representation appears in the depictions of Ottoman interiors by orientalist painters, which offer rich—albeit contested—fragments of visual culture. [3] These images not only reflect historical attitudes toward leisure and stillness but also highlight the spatial and material culture of sitting. Among these, The Turkish Girl Drinking Coffee on the Sofa, from Jean-Baptiste Vanmour's 18th-century collection portraying everyday scenes from the Ottoman Empire, serves as an instructive visual reference (Figure 2). The collection presents diverse portraits and spaces showing various routines of daily life such as resting, embroidering, smoking, and playing the *tehegour* or *mangala*.

This specific one above, as the title indicates, represents one of these routines, and the "*sofa*" that is defined as "the notable furniture of the Turkish rooms wrapping the borders of the space" together (Arda Onar, 2017: p.221). This specific sitting object, "*sofa*", visible in almost every interior depiction of leisure time activities in Vanmour's collection, highlights the close relationship between sitting (idle act), and *sofa* (idle object) framed by leisure time. Despite the obvious urban association of idleness mentioned at the beginning of this text, with this painting, sitting manifests itself in domestic space as the reflection of idleness on an architectural scale. This specific depiction is noteworthy not only because its title includes the word "*sofa*," but also because it briefly illustrates a state of idleness—specifically, drinking coffee—alongside its associated object, the *sofa*, within an interior space commonly referred to as a "*sofa*" in Turkish houses. This nuanced term, referenced in the depictions of Vanmour, applies to both the space and the object of sitting. Interestingly, Sedad Hakkı Eldem has written a book dedicated solely to understanding this concept within the context of Turkish houses and interior space compositions.[4] For Eldem, the term sofa holds particular significance as it not only shapes the spatial configuration but also designates the associated typologies. Used interchangeably with the terms *divanhane*, *sergi*, *sergah*, or *hayat*, which translates to "life" in English, the *sofa* is defined as the space for "sitting" and "living" together, acknowledging that domestic life includes a certain level of idleness associated with sitting.[5]

Eldem defines this space/object as "a place where all members of the family gather and relax as part of their daily life routines." (Eldem, 1968: p.16). As a space, the sofa serves as a communal leisure area where circulation flows to the various rooms of the house. Eldem further connects this space to the streets or squares at the urban scale. He considers the sofa to be an extension of the exterior space, serving as a connecting element between the rooms of the house and the garden (Özbil, 2002: p.236). Considering Eldem's initial evaluation of Turkish houses regarding their solid connection to exterior spaces, the sofa can also be interpreted as existing neither entirely in the exterior nor in the interior. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of passageways that connect a street to an *interieur*, which the modern *flâneur* navigates, the sofa and these passageways may be reinterpreted as parallels of one another at different scales. Both serve as leisure spaces and share an ambiguous character, functioning as neither purely interior nor purely exterior elements.[6]

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[3] It is important to note that orientalist paintings often reflect the biased and romanticized perceptions of Western artists and may not accurately represent Ottoman culture or practices. However, our interest is in the representative quality of Vanmour's documentation, highlighting the repetition of the same element, "sofa", to describe the interiors and the leisure activities of daily life. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour et al., *Recueil de Cent Estampes Representant Differentes Nations Du Levant, Tirées Sur Les Tableaux Peints d'après Nature En 1707. ET 1708. Par Les Ordres de M. de Ferriol Ambassadeur Du Roi a La Porte. et Gravées En 1712. ET 1713. Par Les Soins de Mr. Le Hay* (A Paris Chez Basan Graveur, 1714), 48.

[4] Sedad Hakkı Eldem, a prominent architect who lived from 1908 to 1988 and is renowned for his contributions to the history of Turkish architecture, examined traditional Turkish houses and conducted a typological study.4 In his book, "Typology of Turkish Houses," he documents the architectural elements, spatial configurations, cultural significance, and, most importantly, the various plan types of these houses. This documentation is the result of an extensive in-situ survey of both the rare intact examples and those that are nearly in a state of ruin, spanning from the 15th to the 19th centuries.4 According to his definition,

the term "Turkish houses" refers to "the distinctive type of dwelling that developed and thrived for approximately 500 years in regions historically associated with the Ottoman Empire, including areas now known as the Balkans and Anatolia, and is characterized by its unique architectural features."4 Although Turkish houses are associated with the Ottoman Empire, the use of the adjective "Turkish" in the categorical title can be seen as parallel to efforts in constructing a national identity.The term Turkish houses is used in reference to Sedad Hakkı Eldem's definition. We believe beyond the national denotations of the categorical title, this term can refer to a certain types of houses built in certain geographies as it is stated in Eldem's definition.

[5] The original text: "Avrupai olduğu zannedilen bir yaşama tarzı ve bilhassa, kübik ev sevdası, bahçe ve tabiatten uzaklaşma, büyük bir hastalık gibi oturma ve yaşama kültürümüzü kemirmiş ve şimdiki neticeyi vermiştir."

[6] For further information on Turkish house types, see Sedad Hakkı Eldem, *Türk Evi Plan Tipleri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, Mimarlık Fakültesi, 1968).

As a continuation to the brief historical reference of sitting and the daily routines in the architectural scale, today's "living room," or "*oturma odası*" in Turkish, directly translates as "sitting room," indicating a space specifically designated for idleness and relaxation. Unlike English, which has multiple terms to describe the space, in the Turkey context, the term "*oturma odası*" is primarily used in contemporary houses. Although the evolution of the "sitting room" and the culture of sitting requires in-depth research that is beyond the scope of this text, it is important to highlight that the terms used for the common gathering space, "*oturma odası*" are all related to the act and objects of sitting. The term "*oturma*" not only means "sitting" but also implies "concentrating on something or being in the process of doing something," suggesting a sense of preparation and incubation. Additionally, it signifies an in-between condition, implying a situation that is about to happen. The other definitions of "*oturmak*" are to "spend time idly without doing any work" highlights the connection of idleness and sitting, and "staying permanently in one place" further captures a sense of enduring idleness (Keskin, 2018, p.992). This diverse set of meanings associated with "*oturmak*" reflects the varied name conventions of "*oturma odası*".

Together, these historical and cultural references underscore the ways in which sitting, as both an act and a spatial practice, transcends specific contexts to reveal a deeper relationship with idleness. All in all, considering the pace and uneven relations of contemporary urban life, the variety of domestic acts and objects related to sitting define unexpected encounters in the daily routines of today's *urbanité*. One can also read these encounters as "glitches" that can be defined as an expansion of the renowned interior idleness to urban context. These glitches present themselves as "sitting" acts that occupy the space of walking in urban experience; and as objects, "sofas on streets" by creating an illusion that makes the exterior urban space a quasi-interior space.[7]

Discussion

Ankara and Idle Object/s: Seats and The City

For this research, Ankara—specifically the Çankaya district and Esat area—served as the primary case study, providing a basis for developing a visual glossary centered on the concepts of sitting and idleness. To understand the Çankaya district and the Esat area within the context of Ankara's geographical conditions and urban development, a brief examination of their history is essential.

The formation of the capital city, Ankara, began with the establishment of the Republic in 1923. Due to its geographical position, Ankara has always been a significant node for previous civilizations in the ancient history of Anatolia. Consequently, it possesses a unique antiquity that is revealed through archaeological findings. The foundation of the Republic was a turning point for Ankara, leading to the interaction and development of these antiquities and fragmented villages through "new" ideas in the built environment. The first plan, the 1924-1925 Lörcher Plan, was ultimately not implemented, as the capital city was growing rapidly and the planning was deemed inefficient and unsatisfactory (Özdil et al., 2019). To design the capital city, a new competition was held, and Hermann Jansen's

plan won. Jansen incorporated Lörcher's garden city idea and prioritized the distinction between the old city and the new city, aiming to protect the traditional pattern and expand the new city in a more controlled manner. In their thorough research, Özdil et. al, explained that Jansen's plan designated Ulus as the city center and aimed to preserve the traditional urban pattern surrounding the Citadel, with some improvements. The Citadel itself was maintained as an aesthetic feature, with streets and squares strategically positioned to allow visual contact with it. Jansen's proposal included the design of Ataturk Boulevard to link the northern and southern parts of the city, and a secondary line running parallel to the railroad, connecting the east and west (Çınar Özdil et al., 2019).

Figure 3.
Diagram illustrating the main axes of the Ankara City. Re-drawn by authors, the original diagram in Renata Holod, Ahmet Evin, Süha Özkan, eds. Modern Turkish Architecture, 1984.
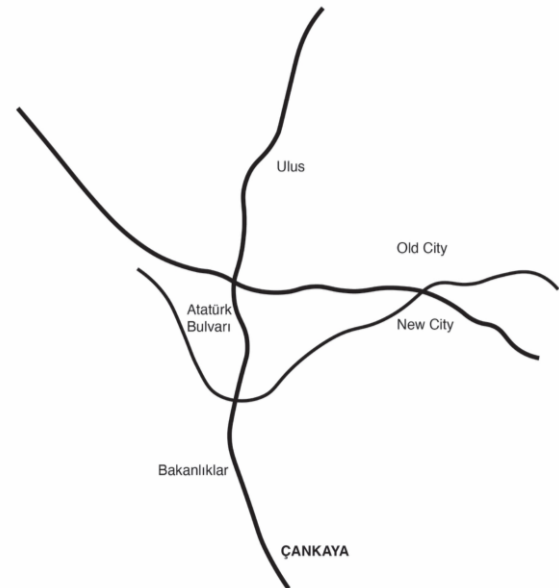

Figure 3 shows the main axes proposed by Hermann Jansen in an abstract manner. The simple representation of these axes clearly illustrates the urban skeleton, independent of changes, and distinctly shows the physical relations between the new and old parts of the city. Naturally, other plans and updates have also been implemented since the first plan of the capital. The distinction between the old city and the new city has blurred due to rapid changes, which could be a focal point for another study. A closer examination of this abstract map of early modern Ankara shows that "Çankaya," which is positioned on the left bottom edge of the "crossroads," has been one of the earliest residential zones of the capital. With Ankara becoming the capital, new residential areas were rapidly developed in many parts of the city to meet the significant housing demand. Originally a vineyard, Çankaya was connected to Yenişehir (new city) through new city planning and "became the most prestigious area of the capital city when one of the vineyard houses here was transformed into the President's House" (Avcı Hosanlı and Altan, 2018). This paper focuses on two neighborhoods in Çankaya: Büyükesat and Küçükesat (translating to big and small Esat, indicating two parts of the residential region), as the two prominent neighborhoods of

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[7] Acknowledging the renowned image of Renaissance urban sitting, where designed borders between streets and building blocks (e.g. Palazzo Rucellai, Palazzo Medici) were prominent, this brief paper explores the

conditions when these borders are not designed, focusing on how sitters claim their seats within their urban routines.

the new city. Throughout the foundation of the new city, when the old vineyards gave way to residential areas, these two separate neighborhoods emerged, which are still referred to by the same names today: Küçükesat and Büyükesat. Although they are two separate neighborhoods, it is difficult to definitively determine their boundaries and where one begins and the other ends, as they have developed in an intertwined manner (Tuncer, 2014, pp.211-212).

Within today's context, Çankaya (and therefore Esat) can be defined as the "older" residential part of the new city, as the expansion of residential zones has primarily occurred on the outer edges through gated communities. The high-rise residential buildings in these gated communities on the outskirts starkly contrast with the low-rise, three- to four-story apartments that dominate Çankaya.

Throughout the years, neighborhoods in Çankaya have been part of many significant architectural interventions, including "designed" apartment blocks by several renowned architects of the era. As Çankaya is situated between significant roads and green areas, it was one of the best spots to be an *urbanité*. Residents of these neighborhoods had the opportunity to experience the interplay of city, green spaces, and leisure within their surroundings. However, with the rapid expansion of Ankara, especially after the 1990s, this balance began to change. Increasing vehicle traffic and the accelerating pace of city development started to dismantle the qualities of architecture and spatial experience. Currently, there is a growing trend of demolishing old apartments to build new, taller ones that encroach upon existing open spaces meant for relaxation and leisure. This shift has led to small interventions by current residents, which are the focus of this part of the paper. These interventions are seen as "glitches" between urban and architectural scales, resulting from the differing paces of urban life and leisure that occupy spaces meant for sitting and doing nothing.

Building on the earlier discussion of urban development in the Esat neighborhoods, this section shifts focus to the everyday spatial encounters that occur at the intersection of urban and architectural scales. Here, the research zooms in to trace how moments of idleness—emerging between buildings, sidewalks, thresholds, and leftover spaces—materialize through informal seating arrangements and bodily gestures. This part of the paper offers a visual glossary and textual mapping of these encounters, drawing from field observations, photographic documentation, and abstract diagrammatic drawings. The visual glossary serves as a conceptual and representational tool that categorizes the recurring configurations of sitting practices observed in situ. In doing so, it reveals how sitters (subjects), sittings (acts), and seatings (objects) articulate a form of spatial negotiation in the in-betweens of interior and exterior space. These idle configurations are organized under three typologies:

Idles 1: Displaced Seats – observing and waiting

Idles 2: Nomad Seats – taking a break

Idles 3: Placed Seats – passing by

Although the above categorization of sitting/seating is neither fixed nor unique and does not necessarily exhibit clear distinctions, it provides a foundational framework for understanding the relationships between idle acts and objects. Defined according to these relationships, each typology fits within the glitches that interrupt the borders of quasi-urban contexts, such as the in-betweens of an apartment block, a street, a car

road, a tree, a market, and a motorcycle parking spot (Figures 4-12). Seats, as idle objects, are categorized as displaced, nomad, and placed, based on their relationship with the environment. The acts of observing-waiting, taking a break, and passing by are defined by the relationship between sitting and the changing speeds of human and urban movement.

idles 1: displaced seats, observing-waiting

The first typology is displaced seats, which are familiar sofas from the *oturma odası*, permanently recontextualized between building blocks, streets, and car roads. In Figure 4, depicting a scene from a central residential region in Ankara, we see three different, non-matching sofas displaced to the borders of an apartment block. In the other photograph, Figure 5, from the parallel street, we see a sofa and folding beach chairs similarly disrupting the borders between the building block and the street. The urban sitters, who are the residents of the buildings, use these seats to observe the street and its daily urban patterns. The act of sitting on these displaced seats is often combined with other idle acts: observing while eating, drinking, talking, and even sleeping. In Figure 6, we see a commercial street and a car road. This specific location is in front of a series of busy restaurants, where food carriers with motorcycles occupy the space between the pedestrian pavement and the car road. The act of waiting, an inevitable result of urban logistics, creates a need for sitting that necessitates a familiar idle object: the sofa. This sofa, located between the sequence of motorcycles, combines the act of sitting with idle acts of waiting, eating, talking, and, once again, even sleeping. Figure 7 illustrates a setting in which a sofa transforms the street into an almost domestic environment. The displaced seat is again located on a very busy street as an extension of a buffet. Positioned between the high density of pedestrian and vehicle movement and the calmer pace of customer traffic at the buffet, this sofa serves as a transitional space that allows for screening and observing the city. Accompanied by its umbrella, this quasi-urban spot created by the sofa becomes a leisure area that is relatively insulated from the fast pace of the street.

Figure 4.
Non-matching sofas as displaced seats in quasi-urban environment for observing-waiting. Captured by the authors.
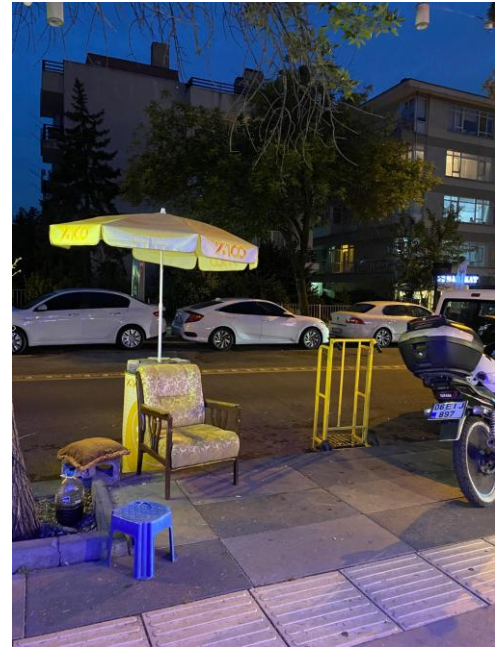
Figure 5.
Folding beach chairs and a sofa as displaced seats in the quasi-urban environment for observing. Captured by the authors.

Figure 6.
Sofa as displaced seats on a busy street for waiting. Captured by the authors.

Figure 7.
Sofa as displaced seats on a busy street for watching the street. Captured by the authors.

idles 2: nomad seats, taking a break

The second typology, nomad seats, differs from the first in their ability to change their relationship with the quasi-urban context through the temporal interventions of urban sitters. Urban sitters use these every day, contextless objects to take breaks between stops in their urban routines. In Figure 8, beer crates from the market are used as seats for a stopover. We see an elderly woman with shopping bags taking a break between different stops in her daily routine. The photograph reveals the beer crates' ephemeral and varied relationship with different urban lines, such as the shop front, the border of the pedestrian walkway, and the edge of the vehicle road. The crates are placed outside the pedestrian walkway, next to it, or adjacent to the building's exterior wall. Each positioning denotes a different state of idleness, altering the perception of speed. Additionally, on the left, another woman uses a beer crate to display greens for sale, highlighting the nomad seats' multiple and ever-changing character. In Figure 9, a different condition is illustrated, which is not commercial but quasi-domestic, showing an object for sitting, possibly used for longer stopovers. Unlike the portable beer crates, this wooden seat structure is less portable but shares the same nomad properties of being temporary and ephemeral. In Figure 10, we see another nomad seat that is created by collecting excess pavement stones and a variety of cushions. This DIY seat is situated near a tree at the entrance of an open-air parking lot. The individuals working in the parking lot use this seat to take breaks. Like the previous examples of nomad seats, this one possesses an ephemeral quality, both in terms of its location and the materials used to construct it.

Figure 8.
Beer crates as nomad seats in various positions in front of a shop for taking a break. Captured by the authors.

Figure 9.
A former divan deconstructed and reused as nomad seat in a quasi-urban environment for a longer stopover. Captured by the authors.

Figure 10.
A DIY - edge created by excess pavement stones and cushions that can change its location. A nomad seat in a quasi-urban environment for taking a break. Captured by the authors.

idles 3: placed seats, passing by

The third typology, placed seats, consists of existing and permanent as-is details within the urban landscape. These as-is components, like nomad seats, do not have sitting as their primary function, but their use is temporarily altered by urban sitters' routines. In Figure 11, we see a wall bordering the garden of a building block and the street. An elderly man, passing by, uses the wall parapet as a seat to stop, make a phone call, and rest his feet simultaneously. In another photograph, we see one of the busiest streets in Ankara, with car and pedestrian traffic (Figure 12). One of the few trees on the street has a surrounding component composed of a fence enveloping the tree, with a wooden addition likely added later by urban sitters. These photographs illustrate how existing urban surfaces are repurposed by passers-by. In this typology, the physical characteristics of these urban elements are not altered, but their purpose is glitched, transforming inert borders (such as the parapet and tree fence) into active surfaces for sitting and slowing down.

Figure 11.
An as-is urban surface, parapet, for stopovers while passing-by.
Captured by the authors.

Figure 12.
An as-is urban surface, combination of fence and a wooden element, for stopovers while passing-by. Captured by the authors.

Conclusion

As a synopsis, this brief paper aims to re-evaluate the relationship between walking and idleness with the changing urban conditions. Considering the fast-paced contemporary urban life, sitting has become an idle act to escape mobility, including walking, and to explore an "interior" experience in today's city without physically moving. This escape highlights how sitting has challenged walking as an idle urban act resulting in unexpected encounters. These encounters are defined as "glitches," characterized by the act of sitting occupying the space of walking in urban routines, and by objects creating an illusion that

transforms exterior urban spaces into quasi-interior spaces, thus blurring the borders in between.

As part of the synoptic notes, additional diagrams illustrating the "glitches" on the borders and the relationship between idle acts and objects are presented (Figure 13 and 14). In these synoptic diagrams, the acts, clearly influenced by the pace of the city, and the seats, as idle objects, creating an in-between cavity within urban and domestic life, are abstracted as lines with varying qualities and are drawn to express the diverse densities of city life.

In Figure 13, the three diagrams stand for the changing objects and acts of sitting respectively, squares representing the displaced, nomad and placed seats, dashed lines representing the changing speeds of urban life.

The first one shows a seat from an architectural scale - dis/placed within the urban environment. The rhythm of the surroundings has a rather orderly quality. The displaced seat is often situated at the same location within this predictable rhythm. This specific diagram can be considered as a synoptic representation of displaced seats that are mostly associated with the acts of observing-waiting. The second diagram shows a more unpredictable rhythm in terms of urban environment. The seats and the act of sitting are both "nomad" in this case, that could be situated in plural locations. This specific diagram can be considered as a synoptic representation of nomad seats that are mostly associated with the act of taking a break. The third diagram shows a more busy but orderly environment in terms of urban pace. The seats in this case are part of the urban setting, even though they are not designed for sitting; rather, residents have intervened to use them as such. This specific diagram can be considered as a synoptic representation of placed seats that are mostly associated with the act of passing by. Figure 14, the final diagram, represents an imaginary abstract scene from a fragment of a city through various lines and their relationships. It encompasses the types defined earlier: displaced, nomad, and placed seats. This diagram illustrates the connections between different forms of sitting and urban surfaces, such as the exterior façade of a building, the shop front, the edge of the pedestrian walkway, and the boundary of the vehicle road. These lines vary in terms of their border conditions. The exterior line of the shop front and the façade of a building serve as relatively loose boundaries, allowing for relational diversity and multiple forms of glitches that emerge on the surfaces through urban idleness. In contrast, considering the high speed of movement, the boundary between the pedestrian walkway and the shop front is much tighter, permitting more defined forms of sitting. Together, these different idle objects and acts of sitting create glitches in the varied "thick and thin lines" of the urban map (Figure 13) (Certeau, 1980, p.265).

All in all, this paper first explores idle acts and objects when borders are not designed, focusing on how sitters claim their seats within their urban routines. Second, it proposes a tripartite categorization: displaced seats for observing and waiting, nomad seats for taking a break, and placed seats for passing by.

Figure 13.
Diagrams showing the objects and acts of sitting respectively, squares representing the displaced, nomad and placed seats, dashed lines representing the changing speeds of urban life. Drawn by the authors.
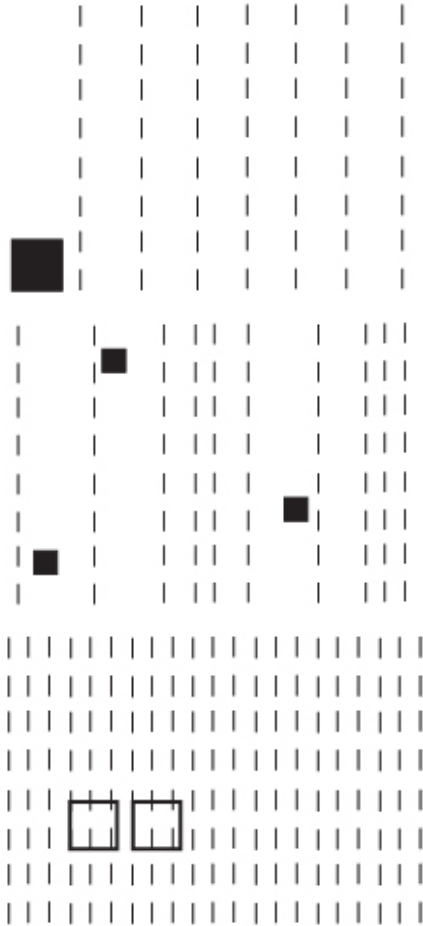
Figure 14.
Diagrams showing the objects and acts of sitting respectively, squares representing the displaced, nomad and placed seats, dashed lines representing the changing speeds of urban life. Drawn by the authors.

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