



From Balcony to French Window: Effects of Urban Transformation on Local People of Suadiye and Bostancı Districts

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the effects of urban transformation on local people of Suadiye and Bostancı Districts in Kadıköy - İstanbul regarding people's life styles, habits, and relation with built environment. After the 17th August 1999 earthquake, the government has supported urban transformation for risky and dangerous buildings even in some cases for the whole of a district. As a result of this support, especially more profitable districts have undergone a rapid environmental change. Suadiye and Bostancı are the two examples of this situation. In this paper, general characteristics of urbanization and urban transformation and their relation with the socio-cultural sustainability in the Suadiye and Bostancı are analysed by design thinking methods. In order to understand the governmental aspects of urban transformation, at first urban transformation laws are expressed briefly. After the brief explanation, effects of urban transformation on local people are discussed. The discussion is supported by the observations, desktop research, self-experiences and literature review. The discussion is especially focused on the shift from the balcony to French windows because of implicit and explicit meanings of the balcony. Consequently, environmental stress depending on the urban transformation on local people of Suadiye and Bostancı is emphasized and concerns about the losing certain cultural values of the districts are shared.

Keywords

Urban Transformation, Environmental Stress, İstanbul

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is a continuation and evolved version of a previous study, which has been prepared within the context of Environment Behavior Theories Course, which is one of the graduate level courses of ITU Architectural Design PHD Program, for 2015-2016 Fall Semester. As part of the course, participants, including me as the author of this paper, were asked to study on the traces found on both human behaviors and environment by considering the intersection of socio-behavioral phenomena, place and people at present time. According to the given task, Suadiye and Bostancı districts have been determined as the "place", local people have been chosen as the "people", transformation of open spaces of the buildings from the form of balcony to French window has been put as the "socio-behavioral phenomena". Here, transformation of open spaces of the buildings from the form of balcony to French windows could be seen as an element related solely with the form of the buildings and its visual characteristics. However, for the determined area, for local people this spatial transformation in their home means a change in their relation with the outer environment, and thus indicates changes in their behaviors dependent upon their environment. This study aims to discuss the effects of urban transformation of the determined districts on the local people focusing on the environment and behavior relations and socio-cultural sustainability.

In order to state a clear discussion, this study has been divided into three main parts. In the first part, general characteristics of the determined place and people are mentioned with an urban transformation centered manner and urban transformation laws are briefly mentioned. In the second part, the discussion is structured around the previously expressed data and the

analysis of the current urban transformation of the districts, which is made by self-observations and application of suitable theories. In the third part, environmental transformation of the districts and behavioral change of local people will be analyzed within the context of socio-cultural sustainability.

2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF URBANIZATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN SUADIYE AND BOSTANCI

In this part, general information about the Suadiye and Bostanci districts and their inhabitants, the reasons behind the urbanization process of the area, and legislations related with the urbanization process in the area are expressed briefly.

Understanding urbanization process of the districts is important to understand the effects of urban transformation specific to them. Urban transformation is a redesign action on urban scale. Although physical dimensions of the two are very different, there are many similarities between redesigning of a product and redesigning an area. Both of them require analysis of the existing conditions, require defining the new problems, and require correct market analysis. After redesigning a product, manufacturers expect to increase sales rate and profit while preserving and pleasing their old customers. Similar to it, in urban transformation, contractors expect to increase number of apartments that they sold and their profit while preserving and pleasing the old inhabitants. After redesigning a product, loyal customers expect to experience their product in a similar way as in the previous version of the product. Similar to it, after urban transformation, local people expect to experience their environment in a similar way as in the previous version of it. Obviously, there are certain differences between redesigning the product and redesigning the environment in terms of their impact range depending the scale of the redesign act. However, these differences are ignored now to transmit the general information about the districts more comprehensively.

Depending on the similarities between redesigning a product and urban transformation, 5WH method, which is an old journalism method and counted as a design thinking method, is applied to understand the general characteristics of urbanization process and urban transformation process in Suadiye and Bostanci (Table 1). Information shown in the table and summarized here is derived from the master thesis of Arıkan, who studied the urban space transformation in Feneryolu [1]. The answers of the question “when”, show the important dates in the urbanization process of the districts. There are six periods of urbanization process in Suadiye and Bostanci. These are determined according to drastic environmental and social changes, governmental regulations and separated as “Early 1900s, 1930s - 1964, 1965-1973, 1973-1985, 1985-early 2000s, 2000s-now”. The answers of the question “why”, explain why these dates are important for the urbanization process of the districts. In early 1900s period, two main roads, the railway and seaway transportation developed. In 1930s-1964 period, increasing population and parceling the large grounds occurred, new development plan law prohibited usage of wooden structure, 13.11.1952 dated, 1/2000 scaled Bostanci--Erenköy plan limited height at 12.5 meters. In 1965-1973 periods, property ownership law and related legal regulations permitted building apartments up to 12.5 meters and apartment houses has begun to emerge. In 1973-1985 period, 25.04.1973 dated, 1/5000 scaled development plan did not limit the height of the building, it determined the height by “TAKS” and “KAKS”, in other words by floor area ratio. In 1985-early 2000s period, 08.1985 KAKS was increased from 1,8 to 2,07 (higher apartments) and By 1990 regulations open and closed attachments were included into the construction field. From 2000s to now, after 1999 earthquake, urban transformation rate has increased and in 11.05.2006 dated development plan net construction square meters has been increased. The answers of the question “who” indicate the general position of the inhabitants in social strata. In Early 1900s period, inhabitants of the districts were from upper and upper middle class. In 1930s -1964 period, they were from upper middle class and middle class,. In 1965-1973; 1973-1985 and 1985-early200s periods, they were from middle class. However, this has begun to change after 2000 to upper middle class and middle class. The answers of the question “where” defines the place that people lived. From 1st to 6th period, places that people lived are in order: wooden mansions, concrete single houses, concrete 4 floored apartments, concrete 4-8 floored apartments, high rise apartments, high(er) rise apartments. The answers of the question “what”, informs us about the general properties of the residential areas. In 1st period, houses had large gardens, away from the streets and almost all of them served as summer mansions. In 2nd period, houses have smaller gardens, closer to streets and used as summer mansions and permanent residences. In 3rd period, houses had very small gardens, served for permanent living and had direct interaction with streets via balconies. In 4th period, houses had smaller gardens, backyards as car parks, and direct interaction with the street via balconies. In 5th period, houses had larger car parks, decreased balcony areas. In 6th period, houses have had bigger car parks, and lost the balconies and french window has been used to serve like a balcony. The answers of the question “how” shows us the ways of interaction between people and environment. In 1st and 2nd period, local people had spent time in gardens, beaches and gotten together in the commercial center of Kadıköy. In 3rd and 4th period, people worked in closer districts, spent time in coastal road, summer cinemas and in balconies. In 5th period, people worked in both close and further areas and spend time in coastal roads, city centers, other districts. In 6th period, people have worked in both close and further areas and spend time in both inner and outer environment with new technological devices. As mentioned, there have been certain changes between from a period to another one, in terms of general characteristics of the people, houses and lifestyles.

Table 1. 5WH of urbanization in Suadiye and Bostancı

WHEN	Early 1900s (1900s-1930s)	1930s-1964	1965-1973	1973-1985	1985-early 2000s	2000s- now
WHY	Two main roads, the railway and seaway transportation developed	*Increasing population and parceling the large grounds *New development plan law prohibited usage of wooden structure *13.11.1952 dated, 1/2000 scaled Bostancı-Erenköy plan limited height at 12.5 meters	*Property ownership law and related legal regulations permit building apartments up to 12.5 meters *Emergence of apartment houses	*25.04.1973 dated, 1/5000 scaled development plan does not limit the height of the building, it determines the height by "TAKS" and "KAKS", in other words by floor area ratio	*08.1985 KAKS is increased from 1,8 to 2,07 (higher apartments) *By 1990 regulations open and closed attachments are included into the construction field	*1999 earthquake *in 11.05.2006 dated development plan net construction square meters is increased.
WHO	*Upper middle class *Upper class	*Upper middle class *Middle class	*Middle class	*Middle class	*Middle class	*Upper middle class *Upper class
WHERE	Wooden mansion	Concrete single house	Concrete, 4 floor apartment houses	*Concrete, 4-8 floor apartments	*High rise apartments	*High(er) rise apartments
WHAT	*Large gardens *Summer mansions *Away from the streets	*Smaller gardens *Summer mansions and permanent houses *Closer to streets	*Very small gardens *Permanent houses *Direct interaction with the street via balconies	*Smaller gardens *Backyards as car park *Direct interaction with the street via balconies	*Bigger carparks *Decreased balcony areas	*The Biggest car parks *French windows, absence of balconies
HOW	*Spend time in gardens, beaches *Get together in the commercial center of Kadıköy	*Spend time in gardens, beaches *Get together in the center of Kadıköy and local cafes	*Work in closer districts *Spend time in coastal road, summer cinemas *Spend time in balconies	*Work in close districts *Spend time in coastal road, summer cinemas *Spend time in balconies	*Work in both close and further areas *Spend time in coastal roads, city centers, other districts	*Work in both close and further areas *Spend time in both inner and outer environment with new technological devices

The below elevations (Figure1) [1], belonging to the Feneryolu districts, can be helpful to demonstrate the urbanization process of Suadiye and Bostancı.

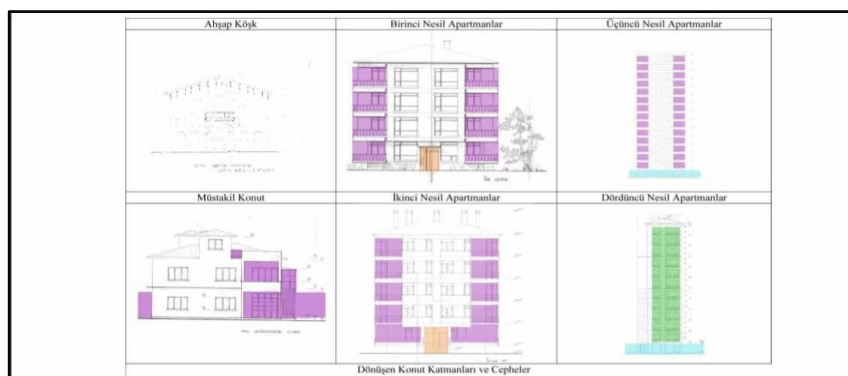


Figure 1. Transformation in facades of houses in coastal districts of the Kadıköy

3. EFFECTS OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION ON LOCAL PEOPLE OF SUADIYE AND BOSTANCI

This discussion part is separated into two parts. In the first part, effects of current urban transformation in the Suadiye and Bostancı are tried to be analyzed based on the self-observation of the author. In the second part, findings and observations of the author is evaluated based on the environment-behavior theories and socio-cultural sustainability.

3.1. Traces of Urban Transformation

To find the traces of urban transformation in Suadiye and Bostancı districts, as being an inhabitant, the author has searched the area on foot. The author has chosen to study this issue based on her experiences. In that sense, this study is a reflection of her awareness with the surrounding environment. The study begins with the quest for her neighbor.

When the building opposite of the author's apartment dealt with a constructor and the new building has arisen, the author realizes that there is not any balcony in the new building. (Figure2) Old building was an apartment with two floors and two large balconies at facade. House owners were two siblings and had owned the house from its first construction. So, they were well adapted to the environment, their daily life in home had been shaped according to their house. They were prone to live in their balconies in a Mediterranean way for every season. Thus, new form of the transformed building has not fit the old habits of the neighbor. They could not find a chance to sustain their daily routine, their way of communication in the new apartment.



Figure 2. Neighbor of the author with their new house

Before the transformation, the author used to see her neighbors almost any time when she comes and goes to her apartment. She interacted with them and involved in their lives via their balconies. However, after transformation, she realized she had never seen her or talked with her. The author has realized that her neighbors were trying to follow their old habits coming from their balconies in front of the French windows. Putting flowerpots, hanging laundries, two chair and one coffee table in front of the window to see the street can be counted as the old traces in the new building. Thus, author has begun to search for the meanings of balconies in old apartments, tried to identify if the transformed buildings supply any places to transfer the meanings of the balconies. Below pictures exemplifies the different functions and attributed meanings of the buildings with balconies (Figure3).



Figure 3. Different functions of balconies in Suadiye and Bostancı districts

As shown in Figure3, balconies are used for eating, cooking, hanging laundry, storage, mobility and they are also used for reflecting self-identity, shaping interaction between inside and outside. So, balcony becomes a cultural medium for its owner. It gives clues on daily routine of the owner and his/her way of thinking and living. However, the author realizes that old inhabitants could not find a place for continuing their old habits linked with the balconies (Figure4).



Figure 4. Buildings after urban transformation

3.2. Meaning of Traces

If we are to examine the topic of this study, we see that transformation of balconies to French windows is specifically emphasized. The reason behind it that, balconies are the intersections of home and the surrounding environment. Thus so, it becomes an interface for reflecting the self-identity of the house owner to the environment and an interface for environment and society to the house owner. However, extinction of the balconies in new high-rise apartments causes a system failure in this interface. In terms of environment and behavior studies, this situation originates sudden changes in behavioral settings, person-environment fit, and identity. All of these aspects cause cultural change for the inhabitants.

As it mentioned before, houses in Suadiye and Bostancı districts have characteristics of the summer resorts with respect to its historical roots and being a coastal region. These characteristics have been adapted to the buildings from the different stages of urbanization process in Suadiye and Bostancı till now. Since the urbanization process of the districts is young and construction of the first multiple floor apartments is younger, Mediterranean way of life is inherited from the older urbanization stages. Populations of the house owners are constructors and alive witnesses of the urbanization process in the districts. So they developed certain behavior settings in balconies. Based on the Barker's [2] definition of behavior settings as its being a medium for achieving multiplicity of satisfactions, we can say that new buildings make the old house owners unsatisfied because of losing a behavior setting. At that point, operations related with the balconies are tried to run in front of the French windows or in houses or similar to it emotional attachments to balconies are tried to be made with the new house, and so person-environment fit ratio changes. If we apply PE fit theory that Caplan [3] explained, when the old house owner contact with a new apartment, which is designed for the future inhabitants, degree of adjustment of the old house owner should be expected at a lower level comparing to his/her old house.

As it has been seen in the figures, people are using their balconies to reflect their ideas, they hang flags, put posters or objects to express themselves, etc. As the dwellings and domestic objects cast implicit, non-verbal meanings about the owner's identity or social group [4], balconies function as a medium for expression of one's self to the surrounding environment. So, in new houses, this medium has been broken. So, sustainability of the local culture has been interrupted. To conclude, traces found with observations, indicate negative trends in environment and behavior relation and cultural sustainability of the old inhabitants of the Suadiye and Bostancı.

4. CONCLUSION

This study is generally structured on the tacit knowledge and observations of the author and tried to be supported by basic theoretical works in the immense field of environment and behavior studies. Effects of urban transformation in Suadiye and Bostancı districts on local people are discussed by focusing on the transformation of balconies. Loss of personal identity reflected through the balconies, not fitting the new environment, tension in behavior patterns are asserted as the possible negative impacts which are highly related with the cultural sustainability of the local people. However, this study should be continued with a comprehensive fieldwork and enriched in terms of theoretical background.

As a result, although this study is a sketch of a comprehensive research, highlighting the reckless urban transformation in the districts is valuable.

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