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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Changes in Attachment to Place: Urban Transformation and Older People in İstanbul

Betül Duman Bay[1], **Murat Şentürk**[2]

Abstract
Although research on urban transformation is abundant, its relationships and effects on place attachment in informal areas of developing country contexts are rare. Our study focuses on the effects of these urban transformations, in situ and through relocation, on the physical and social dimensions of place attachment of older people in informal neighbourhoods of İstanbul, which has one of the highest populations of older people in Turkey. Following in-depth interviews with 30 older people, two primary categories were identified based on their orientation to the new neighbourhood: displaced and stayers. Members of a subcultural group and individuals with religious-conservative views have felt displaced and seek to recreate a similar sense of community and belonging either by returning to the old neighbourhood (returnees) or by moving to a similar sociocultural environment (movers), regardless of their experience of urban transformation with relocation and in situ. Stayers are of two types: those who are stuck in place, feel displaced and experience nostalgia for what was lost and those who have experienced positive changes in housing conditions, including improved comfort and security. These positive outcomes are mainly associated with the characteristics of the urban and political context of developing countries, including conditions such as informal settlement, economically driven urban transformation and the presence of family housing that compensates for community loss.

Keywords: Urban transformation • relocation • informal settlements • place attachment and older people

1 Betül Duman Bay, Yıldız Technical University, Humanities and Social Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye.
E-mail: betulduman@hotmail.com; bduman@yildiz.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0003-4616-0432
2 Murat Şentürk, İstanbul University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Sociology, İstanbul, Türkiye.
E-mail: murat.senturk@istanbul.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0002-9628-6300
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Addressing the expectations and needs of older people in urban transformation practises, as well as the impact of these transformations on this age group, has become a rapidly growing area of interest in the last decade within studies focused on people-place relations. (Lewicka, 2011a, p. 207). Older people are among the most vulnerable to urban transformations (Kleinhans et al., 2014) involving demolition and relocation, as they are reluctant to leave and prefer to stay compared to younger residents (Ruel et al., 2013; Pan & Connibah, 2023).

Several studies have analysed the impact of urban change on older people (Kleinhans et al., 2014); most have focused on the negative outcomes, from alienation and exclusion to loss of social ties (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008) and neighbourhood belonging and sense of place (Ekström, 1994; Phillips et al., 2005; Manzo et al., 2008; Goetz, 2010; Lager et al., 2013). As Kleinhans argued, the negative findings are predominantly derived from studies of gentrification and social mixing, with a particular focus on displacement, which easily leads to extreme generalisations (Keinhans et al., 2014; 2019). However, more recent work on displacement in developing countries has highlighted positive outcomes: they value improvements to housing and the environment, such as the renovation of dilapidated buildings lacking necessary amenities, the provision of security, and previously lacking services, and the economic gains that accompany these improvements (Li and Song, 2009; Liu et al., 2017). In addition, recent research on the impact of neighbourhood renewal on older people in Zhuanghe, China, has suggested ambivalent feelings between the desire for better living conditions and the reluctance to move due to strong place attachment in in their community when faced with relocation (Pan & Connibah, 2023). These studies highlight the importance of the local context and the heterogeneity of older people. Significant disparities emerge in terms of place change; some older people are forced to leave their homes and neighbourhoods due to demolition, while others continue to live in the same neighbourhood or house. This difference is rarely noted in the existing literature (Kleinhans et al., 2014).

Istanbul, Turkey's largest metropolitan area with a large elderly population, has undergone extensive and rapid urban change through in situ and relocation processes. State-led projects, similar to those in other developing countries, have primarily targeted large informal areas. Although several studies have analysed the state-led renewal and gentrification projects in Istanbul (e.g., Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Ünsal, 2016) and their impacts on place attachment (Kalaycı and Sütçüoğlu, 2021; İnal-Çekiç et al., 2024), older people have rarely been their focus (e.g., Yaylagul, 2016). This study examines the impact of urban transformation projects on place attachment (PA) for older people living in informal settlements in Istanbul who either relocated or remained in the changing neighbourhood.

This study emphasizes the various experiential dimensions of PA, particularly for those who relocated and those who stayed, based on the social and physical dimensions of PA.

Our findings indicate that: a) older people in informal areas have different experiences and interpretations of urban change and relocation, which calls for a re-evaluation of the literature on PA and ageing in place; b) older people belonging to subcultural groups are most affected by state-led relocation because their attachment to their neighbourhood and community is linked to their livelihoods and group identity; and c) housing satisfaction appears to be important for adaptation to the new neighbourhood, both in situ and nearby relocation. Our findings also reveal contextual factors that are crucial for adjusting to a new eighbourhood, such as the existence of family dwellings to maintain kinship contacts, poor housing conditions that motivate people to live in better and safer housing, and increasing property values.

Urban Transformation, Place Attachment, and Older People in Informal Areas

Urban transformation practises take different forms, ranging from redevelopment to regeneration and from renewal to gentrification (Akkar, 2006). Some types can be applied to new areas (redevelopment), while other concern already settled areas. Looking at practises in inhabited areas from the perspective of the degree of intervention, renewal and gentrification appear to be severe interventions that change the physical and social environment and property relations (Longa, 2011, p. 15). Such interventions can be market-oriented (MOT), state-led (SUT), or mixed. MOT is a process driven solely by individual decision-making and is shaped in the market through negotiations between property owners and contractors. In this type of transformation, the rental gap is large enough to attract private capital investment, and the transformation takes place in situ. SUT projects are planned and implemented by national or local governments (Lopez Morales, 2020). In this case, the state creates the rent gap, handles planning activities, determines who will be relocated, and decides on expropriation and compensation rates. Meanwhile, mixed forms of urban transformation have involved market and state actors at the same time in some areas, where the state declares the intervention site but private contractors build houses. While urban transformations provide benefits such as housing renewal and the associated comfort and security, they also cause fundamental changes in social relations and people-place relationships, exacerbating negative experiences such as displacement (see Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Ünsal, 2016). Within this scope, the most negative examples of urban transformation are observed where displacement is more common, large-scale demolitions occur, new construction processes and uncertainty persist over time, and public spaces and residential environments are more comprehensively transformed (Jones & Evans, 2012). These characteristics are typical of SUT and mixed-model urban developments in Turkey.

Place Attachment and Older People

There are some housing studies (and other built environments) is located in the context of an explanatory theory of environment-behaviour relations (Rapoport, 2001). However, this article asks how urban transformation is changing spaces, places, and relationships for older people. Studies in environmental gerontology and ageing in place have informed us that older people are among the groups most vulnerable to urban change (Kleinhans et al., 2014), and this notion is related to two fundamental factors (Fornara & Manca, 2017). First, older people spend most of their days at home and in the neighbourhood (see Bonaiuto et al., 2004); second, the surroundings of a home create a sense of continuity with the past and security and belonging (Rowles, 1993; Korpela, 2012). In this context, the World Health Organisation (WHO) supports ageing in place for older people, which is defined as "remaining at home in familiar surroundings and maintaining the relationships that are important to them" (WHO, 2020, p. 37). Ageing in place refers primarily to the physical attachment to place based on familiarity and knowledge of the place (Lawton, 1985: 508), which has made older people independent and successfully adapted to increased spatial constraints brought about by declines in functional health and psychological ease with environmental changes (Smith, 2009: 141). On the other hand, the concept of ageing in place considers the role that the wider neighbourhood environment can play as well as the social environment of a place (Pani-Harreman et al., 2021); the latter is also recognised as a key dimension in the WHO's Framework for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (2007). As Tuan (1977) noted, a space transforms into a place when familiarity, values, and meaning are provided. In this context, the transformation of space into place is central to the process of ageing in place (Rowles and Bernard, 2013). Webber et al. (2022) argued that the sense of home in later life is not fixed but is subject to being made and unmade over time because of changes in the local environment and the weakening (or disappearance) of social connections. In this context, rapid and intense urban transformation processes, including demolition and relocation, as in Turkey, may cause disruptions to older people's quality of life and impede ageing in place.

PA is typically viewed as a multidimensional concept, where "dimension" means a type of attachment or reason for attachment. Each dimension may play a different role in the attachment process. One of the most influential uses of the concept of PA within ageing-in-place research comes from Rowles' phenomenological study, which is referred to as "place insideness': Rowles (1993) suggested that older people who live in a place for a long time develop physical, social, and autobiographical attachments to that place. Residents' physical insideness relates to the accessibility, comfort, and amenities they need, while their social insideness is defined by their familiarity with the place, its faces, and their degree of integration with the community and neighbourhood. In this context, PA encompasses not only feelings and attachments to

the physical environment but also social interactions in the neighbourhood that provide security, trust, support, and participation in the community (Lewicka, 2011a, p. 214). Physical intrusions deeply affect these attachments, just as they develop identity and a sense of continuity for older people. In turn, autobiographical insideness is related to the importance of a place in one's life story as well as in one's memory, which is determined to rarely develop (Smith, 2009, p. 19).

Other studies have provided different typologies of people's PA levels. For example, Relph's (1976) typology ranges from total alienation ("objective alienation") to the existential level. On the other hand, Hummons (1992) proposes five types of PA in terms of their sense of community, ranging from attached (everyday rootedness and ideological rootedness) to nonattached (place relativity, alienation, and placeness). Revisiting Hummons' typology, Lewicka (2011b) proposes place-inherited (traditional) and place-discovered (active) types of attachment, while retaining Hummons' (1992) nonattached types. For example, people who have lived in a place for generations or longer have the highest level of what Relph (1976) calls "existential insideness" or Lewicka (2011b) calls traditional attachment, which is strongly positively related to age (Hummons, 1992). The strength of PA varies with the importance of community ties and social networks, and these types of social factors are the best predictors of PA in older people (Pretty et al., 2003). Similarly, Hay (1998) asserted that a true sense of place can only be developed by those who have grown up in the same place or have lived there for generations (ancestral and cultural).

Place attachment and urban transformations

Very few studies have addressed the impact of place change on attachment to place. In particular, the positive impacts of environmental change on PA have been largely neglected in the literature (Pan & Connibah, 2023). Existing studies have mainly investigated the negative impacts and disruptions on PA (Brown and Perkins 1992; Manzo 2014). Several studies have found that PA is responsible for the development of strong emotional and psychological responses of older people to urban transformation and the resulting changes in place (Fried, 1963; Kleit & Manzo, 2006; Manzo et al., 2008; Lewicka, 2011a). Social and physical changes in a place, especially when these changes involve demolition and relocation, affect older people's social and emotional ties to their neighbourhoods (Jones & Evans, 2012), while new people, utilities, and functions, such as stores, weaken the physical and public familiarity that forms older people's identities (Scharf & Gierveld, 2008, pp. 103-104). These changes often make it more difficult for older people to adapt to such changes.

A recent post-displacement study (Watt, 2022) of social housing residents returning to London after demolition found that the most positive PA developed at the household scale, while PA at the block and neighbourhood scale was characterised by widespread

and intense disruption and loss. Few recent studies on relocation have found positive outcomes, such as improved housing conditions and neighbourhood environments that provide a sense of "personal improvement" (Kleinhans & Kearns, 2013: 168) and housing satisfaction (Wu 2004a, 2004b), which stimulate PA development.

The literature on how urban change affects poor older people in deprived inner city areas is inconclusive. One view is that poorer-aged people are disproportionately affected by urban change because of their strong PA. Fried (2000: 197) asserted that older people living in poorer neighbourhoods develop even stronger PA by cooperating and strengthening ties with their neighbours to overcome feelings of stigmatisation. Evidence suggests that social networks and ties can serve as buffers against adverse neighbourhood conditions such as poverty and despair (Cattell and Evans, 1999). However, there are also studies that do not support these findings, claiming instead that people living in poorer neighbourhoods experience low social ties and security (Livingston et al., 2010, Bailey et al., 2012, pp. 216-217; Putnam, 2007) or feel low PA because they have no option to move elsewhere (Phillipson et al., 2000).

In this context, Kleinhans (2019) cautions scholars about the findings that have largely come from market-led gentrification and social mix studies in an Anglo-American context. Restructuring (type of intervention), institutional context, pre-renovation housing, environmental conditions, perspectives on change, and housing satisfaction are the various factors that influence place-people relations (Kleinhans, 2019; Kleinhans and Keins, 2013: 168). Accordingly, existing studies show that experiences vary as older people are affected differently by urban transformation: some are displaced by demolition projects, some are "stuck in place," while others continue to live in the same neighbourhood or even in the same house. This distinction is rarely highlighted in the literature (Kleinhans et al., 2014). Treating "older people" as a homogeneous category fails to adequately recognise the diversity of needs and impacts of urban change (Wiles et al., 2012).

Local Policy and Urban Context: Istanbul

Istanbul was chosen as a case study for two main reasons: First, Istanbul has undergone extensive and rapid urban transformation, and older people are particularly vulnerable to such changes. Istanbul is home to 14.4% of the total number of older people in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute [TurkStat], 2022). Few studies have analysed the impact of state-led renewal and gentrification projects in Istanbul on PA (e.g., Kalaycı and Sütçüoğlu, 2021; İnal-Çekiç et al., 2024). In this particular setting, how older people experience urban transformation and how this has changed their PA has received little attention from scholars and policymakers (Özmete & Dinç, 2020); the only exception is Yaylagul's (2016) study in the Ankara context.

Neoliberal restructuring has primarily driven the Turkish economy through the construction industry since 2000. Flagship projects and residential-oriented SUT projects serve as the industry's main pillars, and urban areas have become new sites for capital accumulation. Since SUT initiatives are driven primarily by economic considerations, the goal of capital owners and the state to extract more urban rents has been the driving force behind their actions; moreover, lay people expect that these projects will increase their share of urban rents. Another factor-shaping motivations is the need for safe buildings against disasters, especially earthquakes. Combining the catastrophic collapse of the 1999 earthquake with the current vulnerability of the existing housing stock to future seismic threats, the AKP government has approached urban transformation with a mood of urgency and mobilisation. SUT programmes mandate the demolition and relocation of buildings, implying that extreme intervention is inevitably the only way to transform urban areas due to risky buildings. The government's political discourse has generated supportive public opinion to the extent that, according to field research (Duman, 2015), the need for safe and earthquake-resistant buildings is the main factor motivating people to support intensive urban transformation. SUT projects mostly focus on informal settlements, which are characterised by substandard living conditions, disregard for building codes, unstable tenancies, high urban density, inadequate infrastructure, and sometimes exclusion (Samper et al., 2020). Initially built on the basis of family ties and neighbourhood solidarity networks, these networks have been transformed into dwellings since the 1980s through a series of amnesty laws, the most recent of which was implemented in 2022 thanks to clienteles policies, the imposition of urban rents, and the provision of public services, while surprisingly maintaining their non-compliance with building regulations, thus increasing the share of titleholders in urban rents and weakening neighbourhood solidarity. Since 2000, informal areas have been subject to territorial stigmatisation due to their unsafe environment, lack of amenities, or ethnic and poor inhabitants; state-led transformation projects have emerged as a way to physically and socially renew these areas.

Top-down decision-making is typical in SUT projects, as in other developing country contexts, disregarding the needs and expectations of local residents and excluding opportunities for participation (Duman, 2015; Türkün, 2014). In these projects, central authorities oversee the demarcation of the site, planning, expropriation, and compensation, as well as determining who will be resettled and relocated. Different legislation has been implemented in SUT areas: disaster-prone areas, urban renewal areas, mass housing areas, and squatter mitigation areas. Two basic bodies serve as the basis for the governance model of urban transformation in disaster-prone areas (Law No. 6306), squatter-mitigation areas (Law No. 775), urban renewal areas (Law No. 5366), and mass housing areas (Law No. 2985): the Mass Housing Authority and the Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning, and Climate Change. Austerity

programmes and the need for private investment leave SUT projects to the influence of capital owners; therefore, decisions on housing layout, zoning, and development rights have been made without consultation with residents; in fact, communities and people affected by the implementation have been notified through a belated legal notice. Lengthy processes prevail despite the use of aggressive implementation tactics, such as urgent expropriation, to shorten the process.

As a result, a total of 1106.25 ha of residential areas in Istanbul have been designated as disaster risk areas by the Cabinet or by Presidential Decree upon the proposal of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation in accordance with Law No. 6306 (2012). The disaster-prone areas extend from the TEM to the E5 roads, two major transportation corridors along Istanbul's east-west axis, and are characterised by dense concentrations of squatted apartments and social housing where private investment is not viable due to the low rent differential. Elderly people with low socioeconomic status, mostly from rural areas and other provinces, populate these neighbourhoods. In disaster-prone areas, the Mass Housing Authority (TOKI), a central organisation, has built mass housing on or off-site for right holders, excluding tenants. In addition, large areas have been designated as urban renewal areas under Law No. 5366, which specifically targets cultural heritage sites such as Sulukule (Emlak Kulisi, 2014). Located in the city centre, these historic neighbourhoods are stigmatised by their ethnic residents (such as the Roma) and squatter houses with gardens. These sites have been demolished and reconstructed by TOKI, including Roma's relocation residents to the outskirts of the city. Meanwhile, we can point to "squatter mitigation areas" and "mass housing areas" developed by TOKI where the land is cheap, according to Law No. 775 and Law No. 2985 (such as Ayazma, Tepeüstü, Bezirganbahçe and Kayaşehir). TOKI has offered a rare option as these cleared areas have been used for resource generation through the reconstruction of shopping malls or Olympic stadiums. Therefore, there is no room left to relocate or to remain outside the system of rights holders by selling property rights to TOKI. Some of these areas (e.g. Kayabaşı, Taşoluk) have been designated for relocations during transformation processes.

Apart from SUT, we could find examples of the mixed model, in which the state supervised demarcation and planning, but private contractors were in charge of the construction. Kadıkoy-Fikirtepe, as an example of the mixed model, is a typical informal settlement that emerged from rural migration in the 1950s, and some squatter settlements were transformed into high-rise apartments with the successive enactment of amnesty laws. In addition, MOTs are more common in areas with a significant population of educated, middle-class white-collar workers and local wealth, where in situ transformations have taken place based on individual choices.

Squatters, multi-title holders, and owners have benefited from squatter amnesties, and tenants live in SUT areas. For this reason, the lack of security of tenure, the reduction of services, and the uncertainty about the criteria for being a title holder in SUT projects spread fear and led to property transfers. In SUT projects, compensation rates are typically low, right holders are indebted, and real estate production exceeds the number of right holders. For this reason, overcrowding, newcomers, and indebtedness are the main concerns of the elderly. This type of transformation, whether realised in situ or relocated, led to a certain degree of displacement, so older people experienced even more of the negative effects of the newly developed socio-spatial configuration (Duman-Bay et al., 2020).

Method

Scholars emphasise that PA is a complex and multifaceted concept, yet empirical studies often use quantitative measures of PA and factors that influence attachments to differentiated places. This research is based on a case study approach using qualitative research methods to explore residents' deep and holistic experiences in a post-transformed neighbourhood. Qualitative methods allow for an understanding of PA and insights into how attachments change (Lewicka, 2011a). We centered our study on the experiences of long-term residents residing in informal areas, identifying differences in how urban transformation has impacted their PA. Most empirical studies distinguish between the physical and social dimensions of PA. The best predictor of PA is length of residence (Lewicka, 2011a). Among social predictors, the strength of community ties has consistently been found to have a positive relationship with PA. In addition, social capital and social support (Cattell & Evans, 1999; Putnam, 2007) and safety are important factors in attachment to place (Lewicka, 2011a). Physical characteristics are difficult to describe and quantify, but as mentioned in Lewicka's literature review (2011a), PA varies depending on characteristics such as housing satisfaction (size, type, etc.) and accessibility to services, as well as the availability of open space. In this context, changes in the physical and social dimensions of PA at the housing and neighbourhood scales, as well as changes in place, were the focus of our research.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) changes in location or type of urban transformation (SUT-Mixed Model/MOT; the districts and neighbourhoods of planned displacement, relocation, and in situ transformation); b) long-term residency. The minimum residency duration was 15 years, and 10 participants had lived in the same neighbourhood for more than 60 years. In forming the study group, we used maximum diversity sampling as our strategy (see Table 1).

Table 1
Basic Indicators of the Qualitative Research Study Group

Characteristics	Variations	No. of participants
Age	60-64 yrs.	3
	65-74 yrs.	21
	75-84 yrses.	6
Sex	Female	10
	Male	20
Intervention type	Market-oriented	10
	State-led	12
	Mixed	8
Moving situation	Moving	12
	Staying	15
	Returning	3
Perceived socioeconomic group	Lower class	8
	Lower-middle class	6
	Middle class	16
Residency	15-30 years	4
	31-45 years	5
	46-60 years	11
	More than 60 years	10

Two-person teams, consisting of one researcher and one scholar, collected data through face-to-face interviews over the course of two months (June-July 2019). The in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format with three main themes: (1) personal characteristics, (2) types of transformation, (3) physical and social changes experienced after the urban transformation, and (4) perspectives and interpretations of the urban transformation. Participants were recruited through neighbourhood sheikhs (mukhtars), local government offices, and neighbourhood associations. We interviewed 30 older people, 12 from SUT, 8 from mixed models, and 10 from MOT project areas. Of the 30 interviews, 15 were conducted with displaced persons. Interviews were generally conducted in the older people's homes and/or gardens, while meetings occurred in association buildings and mosque courtyards. All but two interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interviews lasted 45-75 minutes. All participants were given numbers to protect their anonymity.

Qualitative data were analysed using MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software with thematic analysis techniques (Creswell, 2017). A coding book based on the conceptual framework (dimensions and scales of PA), changes in place and process (relocation-in-situ), and characteristics of people was prepared, and data were coded by two researchers. After the encoding process, the researchers evaluated all the codes

individually, tried to find significant relationships and patterns, and sorted the critical themes in relation to the research questions. Ethical permissions required for the study were obtained from Istanbul University Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Date: 26.12.2016). And informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Findings

Both state-led and mixed urban transformation models result in some degree of displacement. Looking at the reasons why participants experienced displacement, the most prominent reasons were eviction due to planned relocation, increased rents or housing bills, small house sizes, and the inappropriate design of new houses for the culture of living. However, some relocated older people who had to stay because they had lost their social and cultural milieu in the new neighbourhood are accepted as being socially and culturally displaced. These displaced people were mostly elderly from Fikirtepe (Kadıköy), Küçükçekmece (Ayazma-Tepeüstü-Bezirganbahçe), Başıbüyük (Maltepe), and Sulukule (Fatih).

Displaced people living in poor neighbourhoods feel nostalgia for their old neighbourhood and neighbourhood relations, while they feel strong resentment and alienation in their new neighbourhood. They had neighbourly relations before the urban transformation and described these relations using kinship-related idioms, thus emphasising their kinship and express their longing for their neighbours.

In neighbourhoods located in or near the centre of Istanbul (Sulukule neighbourhood in Fatih district, Fikirtepe in Kadıköy, and Başıbüyük in Maltepe), neighbourhood life ceases to exist after the transformation for the elderly displaced by state-led or mixed-model urban transformation. This implies that a post-transformation environment is incapable of generating a sense of community, or, in Yuan's (1977) terms, it is no longer a place.

The Displaced: Sub-Cultural Group

The PA of one relocated Roma subcultural group was the most disrupted. The majority of Romani residents of Sulukule (P#28), a SUT area who were evicted and relocated to mass housing in Taşoluk, returned to their old neighbourhood because they felt excluded and ostracised in the new neighbourhood because their living culture did not match. Consistent with Smith's (2009: 137) findings, it is not surprising that those whose emotional connection was in another neighbourhood had a desire to move, usually back to the neighbourhood to which they were attached. This type of PA goes beyond personal psychological processes because it is also a collective experience that sustains the identity of a group. One feeling emerged: collective sadness. They perceived urban change negatively and their position as "losers".

We're miserable. Our family has fallen apart. Everyone pursued their own interests. Beautiful community life is gone. The culture is destroyed. The entire history has been destroyed. What else can I say, brother?

An older man (P#12) who had moved to Taşoluk due to the state's planned resettlement in the Sulukule project and who felt alienated and excluded in the new neighbourhood discussed the change in this way:

The people there are not like the people here [by here he means Sulukule]. Here, if you are hungry, a neighbour will let you in. Everyone is like a relative. There [meaning Taşoluk, where he moved after the transformation], everyone is a stranger. You knock on the door, and the door is locked with 10 locks. There, everyone just visited each other. The neighbours there are part of me; everyone is related. Even if we lived in 40 square metres, my relatives and people were there. There is a huge difference between the two neighbourhoods. We were neighbours. Even if you fought, you would make up for it after 10 min. Taşoluk is full of foreigners. Our accents and ways of life do not match.

Very few Romani people who stayed after being relocated to new settlements 40 km from the city centre feel as alienated as the returnees. They are stuck to place and stress that they have lost not only their local culture but also their mobility and access to familiar services.

We miss that life very much. That life had the neighbourhood, motherhood, and fatherhood; being like older brothers and sisters; and being like aunts and uncles. (P#28)

In the event of birth or death, the entire neighborhood would gather. We would help each other in times of need. In Taşoluk, a neighbour had a car. If I told him to drop me off somewhere, he would, but it is not like that here. (P#12)

Because the evictees previously lived in a poor and stigmatised neighbourhood with people of similar socioeconomic status or ethnicity, creating a cohesive community, forcing them to move to the new mass housing seemed to create resentment and a sense of displacement. For them, nostalgia along with the stuck-in-place or desire to return to the old neighbourhood is obvious, as neighbourly relationships enable them to counteract the negative effects of exclusion and discrimination, and community solidarity makes their lives more secure. Fried (2000) noted that older people who live in poorer neighbourhoods and feel stigmatised develop an even stronger attachment to place by cooperating and strengthening ties with their neighbours. Similarly, Kirkness (2014: 1285) argues that stigmatisation 'creates a network of solidarity and a deepening attachment to place'. Therefore, the elderly displaced by the SUT clearly suffered from the loss of their social and cultural ties, which provided them with a more secure and necessary life through daily visits, attending weddings, and helping by knocking on the door in times of economic hardship. In addition, the neighbourhood has an existential status in which the shared meaning and value of the group are produced and reproduced. In our case, it is clear that the neighbourhood experience of subcultural

elders provided a "safe heaven" (Scannell and Gifford, 2014) where they could be protected from threats, solve everyday problems, and find emotional relief. However, when disrupted, they experienced distress and grief, as found in Fried's study of displaced Boston residents (1963). The function of safe heaven is particularly important for marginalised groups and individuals who must cope with numerous stressors in their daily lives (Fried, 2000; Scannel and Gillford, 2014).

The Displaced: Religious-Conservative Outlook

The other displaced group consists of movers who moved to a different but similar religious and cultural environment from their previous neighbourhood during the mixed-model, in situ urban transformation. The movers reported low housing satisfaction due to the size and design of the new houses. House design factors, such as layout and size, are important elements that contribute to PA design (Eijkelenboom, Verbeek, Felix, & van Hoof, 2017). In addition, migrants found that the changing neighbourhoods were not suitable for their lifestyles.

One of the male respondents moved to Ataşehir seven years ago, immediately after his building in Fikirtepe (mixed model) was demolished. Since he was given a 1+1 apartment that was too small for his family and his new modern life with newcomers did not fit their conservative religious life, he moved to a new neighbourhood in Ataşehir.

> *The buildings are very luxurious; people like us cannot live comfortably in them. Our spouses are pious people who do not neglect their prayers. No, I am not saying this because I am against dressing sparingly. These are more for people who enjoy themselves. There is a sauna and a pool, and now there is no point in living there if my spouse does not use the pool. That's why I sold my studio there. (P#24)*

Besides, the apartment life does not fit his lifestyle, as it is clear from his statement that he misses house life in the old neighbourhood the most. "My uncles and I lived side by side in a two-story independent house. Our wives enjoy tea together in our little garden where we used to slaughter our sacrifices and wash the carpet" (P#24). According to his accounts, since he socialises mainly in mosques, the newly moved neighbourhood is identified for him with its "hemşeri" relations and "conservative-religious life". According to him, these were the social characteristics that were lost in Fikirtepe after the demolition. He is nostalgics about life in Fikirtepe and describes the emotional state of older people as follows:

> *Although it was a disadvantaged neighbourhood, lacking public services, the residents had a socially cohesive life. Older people would ask, "What I am going to do with this money and this luxurious apartment after this time?" He feels like he was born and raised there because when he visits the mosque, he recognises the entire congregation, and when he visits the "kahvehane," he recognises the young people, the shopkeepers, and everyone else. Since it has been there for 40, 45, and 50*

years, many children have been born and raised there. There is nothing else to feel. (P#24)

A female migrant from Fikirtepe to Ferahevler in Ataşehir who lost her husband in the demolition and lived with her daughter and son expressed her dissatisfaction with the new apartment and the loss of her neighbours. For her, the new apartment was a 1+1 with an open kitchen (American type), which was not suitable for her family and her daily routine. She spends most of her time in her kitchen, which is 209 square metres with 4 rooms, but the new one is only 53 square metres. She missed her balcony, where she had used to eat breakfast with her family and chat with neighbours. "We enjoyed living there; during Ramadan, we went to pray with the neighbours and when we came back, we sat in the garden and talked; unfortunately, we have no neighbours here, but it was faith and God's will" (P#25). She said, "Your home was falling apart, and the state did this to us.

What the two movers shared is their religious outlook, which appeared to help them cope with the stress of moving and adjusting to a new place. People with strong religious identification invest in God to find meaning in difficulties and effectively cope with emotional change (Aten et al., 2019). In addition, despite their nostalgia for the old days and their neighbourhood life, movers emphasised the benefits of urban transformation as they sold their old homes and bought new apartments in desirable locations to stay close to their children and grandchildren.

A young, older female respondent who moved from Fikirtepe to the Örnek neighbourhood in Ataşehir expressed that "I felt like a guest, and I went back to Fikirtepe in the evening; our home was there; but life goes on". Her move is bearable because she goes to the bazaar in Fikirtepe every week and occasionally sees her neighbours who have left; however, she does not see herself staying in Fikirtepe (P#14).

More interestingly, all the participants' social relations were almost limited to their closest circle (children and grandchildren), and if they had resources and opportunities, they would live in a house with a garden next to their children.

Individual Stayers

The literature has identified stayers based on their long-term residency and unwillingness to move (Stockdale and Haartsen, 2018). In our study, the stayers included older people who remained in the neighborhood after the transformation.

When examining the reasons why older people stayed in their current neighbourhood after the transformation, a significant proportion cited the argument of "being used to the place." Those who had stayed in their neighbourhoods emphasised points such as "being born in the neighbourhood" (P#8), "having lived in one place for a long time and experiencing it thoroughly" (P#13, 21), and "not

wanting to lose neighbours" (P#6, 11). In the accounts of stayers who have what Lewicka (2011b) calls "traditional place attachment," we can see traces of "autobiographic insideness" (Rowles, 1993).

> *I've been a child of this neighbourhood for about 50 years. I remember when everything was made of wood; the building I bought before the urban transformation was a white mansion. There was a fig tree; when I was a kid, we would throw stones at it. I spent my whole childhood here. (P#20)*

Some stayers become stuck in the sense that they want to move but cannot. They have negative feelings about their current neighbourhood and try to keep their past alive. They are non-attached, as discussed in Lewicka's (2011b) study in Poland. Non-attachment was found in three different forms: alienation, which implies negativity towards the current place of residence; place relativity, which means provisional acceptance; and placeness, which is a general indifference to place.

A 79-year-old man who moved near an old house in Başıbüyük (Maltepe) expressed his loyalty to the ruling party and was satisfied with SUT taking his deeds because he had a land allocation certificate before. However, he is struggling to cope with the radical change that the SUT has brought to his daily habits and vitality.

> *I had a garden there where I grew vegetables and had chickens and goats for my daily needs. We used to gather in the garden with the neighbours. After the demolition, some neighbours went to cheaper places; some went to Yalova, Kartal, and Pendik. Here, we don't have neighbourly relations, not even greetings. There are 150 households in 6 blocks and I do not even know the neighbours. (P#17)*

His expenses increased after he moved because he had to buy everything in the marketplace. In addition, his overcrowding with unknown faces and most women dressed in modern clothes made him feel uncomfortable in the new block. He planted a linden tree in front of the block and collected linden seeds in spring so that he would feel relieved and at home.

Another participant who remained in Fikirtepe after the transformation described the new block life as a "dungeon. He lived in a 30-story building with a gym and a swimming pool, but no green space. He used to have good relationships with his neighbours, but now he knows almost no one because some of his neighbours have sold or rented their apartments, and even the familiar shopkeepers have left. Because he was given a one+1 room apartment, he had to separate from his daughter (p#26). He no longer feels at home, but he has no means or options to change his place of residence. Another elderly man expressed his confinement to his house, indicating that renovated apartments are not enough for attachment.

> *Here, there are no neighbourly ties. You don't know anyone in this 10-story, 40-apartment building. It was better in the slums; you said hello to everyone. But here, the only time you greet someone*

is when you pass them in the elevator. You don't see anybody outside. I have no idea whether the people are good or bad, but the building and the surrounding area are nice (P#22).

There was evidence of disruption of traditional place attachments and a strong desire to recapture the "good old days" with neighbours, but some neighbours were displaced, some moved out, and newcomers arrived in the newly built area. Once the wounds heal, the older people trapped to place are left with only memories of the past.

Other residents expressed satisfaction with their housing, but some were concerned about the changing face of the neighbourhood. It is clear that the elderly who moved close to their old neighbourhood enjoyed greater housing comfort. Higher housing satisfaction is also associated with family housing created as a result of chain migration; people who moved into housing complexes with their families and relatives after the urban transformation were able to maintain similar social ties.

By God, life in an apartment complex is beautiful. The beauty of it is that, let us say, in other complexes, everybody comes from different places; I mean, they all come from different places. Nobody knows anybody. But all the people in our complex came from one village in Erzurum. At some point, they settled in Ayazma. They came here as a group. I mean, from every place, a group of people, a group of relatives, I don't know, village groups, and so on, came like this. In other settlements, you cannot see three people sitting together. (P#5)

People who chose to stay in the same neighbourhood after the urban transformation have found it difficult to establish new neighbourhood relationships. The loss of intimacy, which is related not only to the loss of one's current neighbours but also to the change or departure of shopkeepers, emerges as a factor that hampers adaptation. In addition, new people moving in as a result of urban transformation can lead to an increase and densification of the population, as well as the loss of acquaintances and familiar surroundings (P#4, 12, 14, 26). The lack of shared public spaces reduces the frequency of contact and does not develop into social interactions that could replace old neighbourhood ties.

For stayers, since SUTs are economically driven and rent-generating projects, economic gains in exchange for transformations in informal areas and inner cities, through which they acquire property security, appear to be a recurring theme, indicating, in short, that they feel themselves to be the winners of the necessary urban transformation. The emotional shift during the transformation is so paradoxical that, even though residents miss their neighbors and lose familiarity with their surroundings, the economic benefits of urban transformation could be claim to compensate for the loss. For example, one participant said that "the transformation is a blessing for us. (P#5).

However, the participants who drew attention to the physical dimension of belonging to a neighbourhood were mainly older people who remained in their place after the transformation. When discussing neighbourhood life, one should consider more than

just neighbours and acquaintances. It is also about physical rootedness and satisfaction with one's immediate surroundings and physical amenities.

The majority of residents in SUT and mixed-model transformed areas stated that life in post-urban transformation housing complexes is better. The most important factor here is the security of the home, the security of the elderly and their children and grandchildren, as well as the presence of a physical and spatial environment that provides quality and constant care (P#10, 11, 22). Another dimension of security is the unsafe environment of informal areas. The state has stigmatized these areas due to their high crime rates.

> *Apartment living is good if you can afford the cost. In an apartment complex, you can live safely even if the windows and doors are unlocked; there are cameras everywhere. You are protected, I mean. (P#22)*

However, the counterargument of one displaced is worth noting. For him, it was not surprising that participants generally complained about the safety of their old neighbourhood; however, both the physical familiarity of the neighbourhood, i.e., knowing the safe and unsafe places in the place, and the social familiarity, i.e., knowing who was familiar and reliable and who was not in the neighbourhood, along with mutual support, kept them and their children safe from threats (P#24). In this particular context, he emphasised the vitality of knowing the place and the neighbours and the familiarity with a sense of security that was present in the old neighbourhood.

Participants perceived changes in housing and its environment as "personal improvement" and seem satisfied with a clean and safe environment. This is related to their experiences prior to relocation: One of the relocated participants talked about how hard it is to live in squatter areas because of the lack of roads and public transportation, as well as water and electricity cuts every 2-3 days (P#5). Urban transformation was an opportunity for them to improve their living conditions. After moving from Ayazma (Tepeüstü) to Bezirganbahçe, one of the participants described the new housing as modern and "living like an Istanbulite" (P#5). Regarding the improvement of housing and the environment, almost all residents expressed the following thoughts: they are cleaner, better organised, safer, and have better infrastructure.

> *Here it is like this: This is not about an old house or a new house. There are many positive things about the old house that are still there. Why? The dirt's gone. I mean the neighbourhood, the air, the stuff, the kids. We now have security. Before, there was no security. Before there was the road; before it was a narrow road; before there were no roads like this. (P#9)*

Similarly, an older man who stayed in Esenler after the SUT project explained why he enjoyed staying:

We now have gate security; everything is in place and operational. They pick up trash. Okay, so our balcony may not be that big, but it is. It's really good. The people downstairs are the same; go through gate number two and the parking lot; there's a park nearby; go sit there; we have everything, really. What did we have before? Real nothing. The cars were moving by, creating dust, so we could not leave the house. You had nothing; the building across the street gave you shade. (P#10)

The emphasis on safety also relates to at-risk building stock and the imminent threat of earthquakes. The 1999 earthquake led to devastating collapses, and "resilient buildings", regardless of age, were found to be the primary reason for public support for urban transformation policies (Duman, 2015).

Conclusion

Understanding how urban change affects older adults requires an understanding of PA. The degree to which an older person is attached to his or her neighbourhood has a direct impact on how change is experienced and perceived because the immediate environment becomes more important as people age.

With regard to the impact of Istanbul's urban transformation on the PA of older people living in informal neighbourhoods, this study provides some answers. The results of our research show that state-led and mixed-model urban transformations in Istanbul cause different experiential PAs, although ongoing demolition and resettlement cause displacement. Our research has shown a clear difference in older people's place attachment to the new neighbourhood, from nonattached to partially attached. Older people with strong community attachment were identified as having a way of life. In this context, the subcultural group (i.e., Romani people living in Sulukule) that relies on its local networks for social support and resources and that has remained in the previous neighbourhood for generations feels the most negative effects of SUT-induced relocation. As Roma face alienation and exclusion in their new housing environment, most returned to neighbourhoods close to or adjacent to the previous neighbourhood, where they chose to live with a similar ethnic and cultural group. Put simply, "personal relocation" appears to be a response to the subcultural group of older people. However, very few residents had to stay in the new neighbourhood; they felt trapped, retreated to their homes, and became nostalgic for their former neighbourhood and culture. It is worth noting here that the PA of a cultural group is not based solely on a house; rather, a variety of neighbourhood-scale interconnections form their real-life universe.

Due to the incompatibility of houses with family life and changing neighbourhoods to religious life, the displaced moved to places suitable for their religious-cultural life, where they stayed with their close circles (children and grandchildren). Their conservative religious outlook helped them move and cope with challenges (Smith, 2009). Among the stayers, we discovered another detached category. Their response

to urban change is to keep the past alive by retreating into the house and meaning making in the garden of the housing complex, for example, by planting trees.

However, for those with traditional PA who remained in the new neighbourhood, the outcome was more likely to be provisional acceptance and adjustment to a new life. According to our findings, a significant number of relocated older people enjoyed the process of obtaining legal deeds, appreciated improvements in housing comfort, the provision of security, previously lacking services, and the associated economic gains. The stayers' accounts indicate that the SUT provides them with an opportunity to enhance their quality of life, and they appear to evaluate/view the post-transformation area in comparison to their previous living conditions. The stayers' accounts corroborate the findings of previous studies in this regard (Kleinhans & Kearns, 2013).

Recent research on urban restructuring and relocation suggests that place-based experiences after renewal are more complex than the predominantly negative charge attached to the displacement concept used in the context of gentrification (Kleinhans & Kearns, 2013; Kleinhans et al., 2014). For example, research on displacement has produced contradictory results. While some studies have shown that relocated residents perceive improvements in their living conditions and housing satisfaction (Li & Song, 2009; Yu et al., 2020), other studies have shown a decline in social ties and a sense of neighbourhood cohesion (Liu et al., 2017). The results of our study can be interpreted for stayers using the research of Liu et al. (2017), which indicates that resident satisfaction has a greater impact on PA than social interaction after relocation. Similarly, Pan and Connibah's (2023) study contributed to the conclusion that, in the face of urban transformation, residents need to reconcile their need for improved living conditions with their attachment to their neighbourhood. The results of the Istanbul case study highlight the need for a balanced view to evaluate the outcomes of SUT projects in informal neighbourhoods.

In fact, these findings should also be discussed in light of the specificity of urban transformation in the context of developing countries. At the macro level, urban transformation in Turkey is associated with modernisation and developmentalist on the one hand, and "quick and urgent" evictions to reduce disaster risk on the other. Therefore, people living in informal areas are willing to accept demolition and eviction as a cost of modernisation, and living in a renovated apartment has become a symbol of urban life, as in other developing country contexts (Ley and Teo, 2013). Resilience and safety have become high priorities for the SUT since the devastating 1999 earthquake. More importantly, the SUT provides rent-sharing opportunities and has created a polity organised around the material gains of urban development, which means that, as Lopez-Morales mentions in the Latin American case (2015, p. 571), urban rent-seeking shapes not only the behaviour of state and private investors but

also that of laypeople. In short, these factors influence perceptions and interpretations of urban changes and relocation experiences. Older people, in particular, see a renewed house as a legacy for their descendants. As noted above, another contextual issue is that a significant proportion of older people live in family housing, which provides a neighbourhood environment with well-maintained social networks.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the impact of urban transformation on the PA of elderly individuals residing in informal areas is contingent upon the variation in their PA. Regarding this matter, while we observed a decline in PA at the neighbourhood level for most individuals, the PA of a subcultural group appears essential and warrants further exploration. It appears that their way of life revolves around the interconnectedness within the area, rather than being confined to their own homes. Moreover, the stayers' perspective highlights the need to re-evaluate the literature on place attachment and ageing in place, especially from the perspective of poor older people living in disadvantaged areas. Third, "in situ" transformations and participatory policy processes, rather than relocation and top-down decisions, are more likely to achieve positive outcomes for older people. Therefore, needs and impact analyses should become integral to policymaking at the household and neighbourhood levels.

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