



PERCEPTION OF SEMI-PRIVATE/SEMI-PUBLIC, OPEN/SEMI-OPEN SPACES IN THE CENTRAL CITY HOUSING AREAS: USAGE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Sedef OzcelikGuney¹ and YurdanurDulgero luYuksel²

¹Gebze Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Cayirova, Kocaeli, Turkey

e-mail: sozcelik@gtu.edu.tr

²Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Taskisla, Istanbul, Turkey

e-mail: d.yurdanur@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Perception of open/semi-open, semi-private/semi-public spaces in the housing areas (described as ‘grey matters’ by the authors) have shifted from being only common areas to social interaction venues. Diversity in demographic patterns and daily living culture amongst educated individuals of 23-37 ages reflect such changes. This paper displays the results of the first three steps out of 6 that explore the problem through preliminary observation, quantitative data and accompanying qualitative data. The first step refers to field notes, photographic documents. The questionnaires, in step 2 and semi-open in-depth interviews conducted with the same 49 participants, step 3. The methodology bases on grounded theory by which the inquiry is extended through the data. In-depth interviews accompanied by the surveys are the core tactic, since generic surveys would neglect the unique grey matters typologies. Smaller number of surveys is superposed with the qualitative findings. The early findings reflect the demographic issues as marital status, sub-age groups, having children and daily living culture indicators as background, work-patterns in relation to urban characteristics, dwelling type and grey matters’ features. The central axe of Istanbul is focused via underground lines, due to the literature on young adults’ locational preferences. The study puts forward a rather new research area in the housing studies, because the young residents’ housing intensities are examined through social interaction in the vicinity of their dwellings. Perception, usage and supportive role in social interaction in the grey matters are thus explored.

Key words - Housing, Semi-public/semi-private open spaces, young adults, urban area

INTRODUCTION

Certain claims of the owners and limitations of the users (Madanipour, 2003) are drawn with certain lines for private and public domains. Habraken formulates these boundaries with respect to western and eastern cultures referring to USA, UK and India (1998). These borders are not always the rigid lines that separate the two areas like a razor cut; but form some sorts of ‘buffer zones’ creating hierarchical passages in the urban context. Such semi-private/semi-public, open/semi-open residential spaces are named as ‘grey matters’. The name refers to the biology terminology; ‘the greyish tissue of the brain and spinal cord’. Grey matter element enables electrical impulse exchange between brain cells; working as a space to provide connections for different activities of brain (Oxford References). As a metaphor, the semi-private/semi-public and open/semi-open spaces that provide social interaction platforms act similar to the grey matter element in the brain (Ozcelik-Guney, 2014). The examples for grey matter (GM) can be listed as; outdoor stairs linking different neighbourhood levels, entranceways leading to a group of apartments and enclosed parks, open-air sitting areas of local cafes/bars/restaurants. It is evident

that the residents may have a greater sense of identity with places in the secondary territories refers to less exclusive spaces than the private domains; representing a public availability as well as a certain level control (Altman & Chemers, 1984).

The research question is; *Do the demographics, daily living culture and available GM characteristics effect GM perception, usage and support in the social life for young adults?*

The hierarchical order of private and public domains in the residential areas formulate permeable and semi-permeable articulation. By the book definitions; semi-private and semi-public spaces maintain two layers; creating privacy level zones around the dwelling. However; the current urban structure shows that such strict separations of semi-private and semi-public are not detectable. Those two semi-domains denote a total common ground in many cases. So the 'grey matter' realm states a 'residential social interaction' platform.

The idea of residential semi-spaces has been studied under the terms; territorial depth, secondary territories, soft edges, threshold, in between spaces and collective space (Rapoport, 1969; Altman & Chemers, 1984; Gehl, 1986; Habraken, 1998; Scheerlinck, 2012). Gehl relates this to the 'liveliness' of the transition area, referring to people being present for longer intervals in the particular area (Gehl, 1986).

Due to the recent education and work trends, young adults prefer to live in the city centres. Istanbul metropolitan area, this tendency is even higher considering heavy traffic and long distances travels. Moreover; in the early stages of adulthood family responsibilities are relatively less, spending time at the city attractions is more popular. Juggling changing job opportunities and 'localising lives' is the major issue (Knorr-Siedow, 2008).

The GM are mostly perceived as the out-door extensions of the dwellings since most houses in the central axes lack proper open/semi open spaces in the shortest distance. Thus, the young adults use the spaces between the buildings to fulfil their need for open air. Gouldner suggests that the 'new middle class' (1979) prefers some particular GM than the others due to their 'local social status' (Hunter, 1974). The term stands for the individuals in the frame of local social structure such as usages of local facilities, length of residence or home-ownership.

This study explores emphasizes demography, daily living culture of young; as well as the unique physical features of GM. These two parameters; the dweller and the physical setting data are explored with respect to (1) perception, (2) usage and (3) supportive role for social interaction. *Demography* addresses the age sub-groups within 23-37 (23-27, 28-32, 33-37), gender and marital status of young adults. In the earlier stages of young adulthood, the tendency for GM preference is majorly connected with 'being in the social life'. That is why; crowded and lively GM are preferred. In the further years, the demand for 'peace' takes over. Having children is a major 'game changer' (Stegman, 1969; Jae-Hong et al., 2003; Karsten, 2007) since young adults prefer GM due to their children's playground. The level of income displays shifts of taste, life-style and preferences.

Daily Living Culture is a wide topic covering individual preferences, life-style tendencies, and urban life patterns. Thorild connects lifestyle phenomenon with the residential choice (2006). The personal background defines perception of GM in the socio-economic status, city or rural origins, and culture; in addition to religious beliefs, conservative behaviours, field of study and work patterns. The understanding of leisure spaces, types of activities and seasonal usage changes are coherent with daily living cultures (Featherstone, 1991).

Physical features of GM stand for the unique characteristics of the available GM as well as the physical environmental conditions. The specific locations of GM such as placing on the water-fronts, looking at a pleasant view, an accessible position considering the dwelling location can be listed as some specific characteristics. On the other hand, the available equipment, materials, shading, green element, light and temperature are the physical environmental conditions.

The paper displays the analysis of data obtained via quantitative and qualitative research strategies under the grounded theory. Descriptive statistics culminated by questionnaires make reference to the interpretative qualitative findings of 49 in-depth open-ended interviews are discussed with respect to the literature. Then observations are conducted at the case-study areas. The case-studies are selected regarding the in-depth interviews. The findings are discussed with respect to the literature.

The young adults

Noting that tastes and choices refer to education and class (Bourdieu, 1989); place is perceived as a sense of belonging, the information about where an individual lives can be connected to the social identity. Moreover; the presentation of the self may alter for the changing engagements in living (Giddens, 1991).

The new-life-style-group represents young professionals and white-collar-workers with non-traditional living patterns and GM choices. Even though various studies state different categorisations in age for young adults (Knorr-Siedow, 2008; Payne et al., 2002); the average age for completing undergraduate studies, average recruitment age, marriage and other life engagements frame the ages between 23-37 in Turkey. Often an 'individual grown-up life' after graduating from university and 'young-adulthood' continues until the age of 37. After this phase; sub-urban living, low-density house preferences, long distance travel to city centre is traded off with larger dwellings, school opportunities and housing quality (Stegman, 1969, Brown, 1975; Kim, 2006).

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The research bases on the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Glaser, 1967) in order to provide new insights where the social reality is difficult to be defined with present theories. Due to the specifics of the field; the perception, usage and social interaction characteristics of GM are deduced regarding the data obtained. Under this approach; qualitative and quantitative tactics are combined. The method creates abstraction of the collected data not to test it; but to build a new theory offering a very flexible period of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The research design consists of three main steps:

Step 1: Survey - Questionnaires conducted with 49 participants and descriptive statistics analysis are studied.

Step 2: Survey - In-depth interviews conducted in the open-ended, semi-structures.

Step 3: Observation - Via short telephone conversations, the most prominent GM for the subjects obtained.

The duration of every questionnaire was around 15 minutes, and the interviews were 45 to 90 minutes. The subjects are telephoned beforehand in order to complete interview information forms to obtain frequently used GM (Step 1). The notion of GM is studied with respect to the impressions and daily life cultures by the help of the in-depth interviews. The interviews and questionnaires are subjected to the same sample considering the unique features of each GM.

In research step 3 particular case-studies are selected considering the variety in GM typologies. Five case-studies are focused in 4 particular districts on the underground routes mentioned

below. A total of 4 sessions are conducted at each case-study GM in order to make records on weekday-weekend and morning, noon, evening usages. Field notes are taken in addition to the mappings based on the activities observed (Table 1). The durations of the sessions were around 50 minutes. Mild weather conditions are crucial for the observance sessions; they are completed between 17-26 degrees, sunny or partly cloudy conditions.

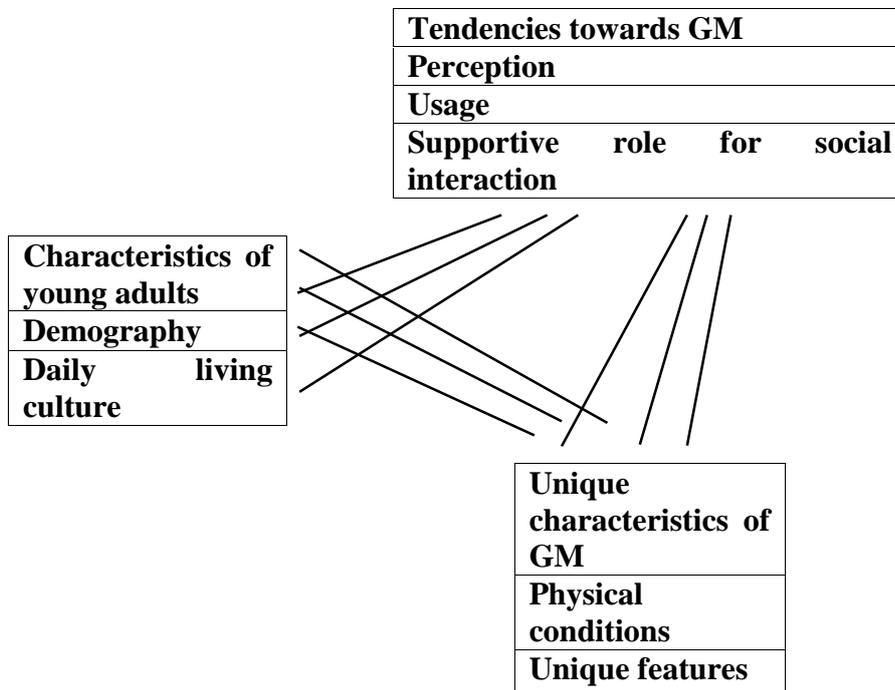


Table 1. The interrelations among GM parameters

Research Sample

Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey bearing busy ports; in addition to the finance and trading activities. This structure creates many reputable higher education institutions. The city draws the young adults. The main transportation routes on the European side of the city has developed beginning with the financial centre - Maslak on the Northern side, to Beşiktaş, Beşiktaş, Beşiktaş districts in the South. As the underground line has new popular residential quarters; some others have lost their importance (Ozgel-Agsakalli & Zeren-Gulersoy, 2015; Yardım & Hacıhasanoğlu, 2015) Fig. 1.

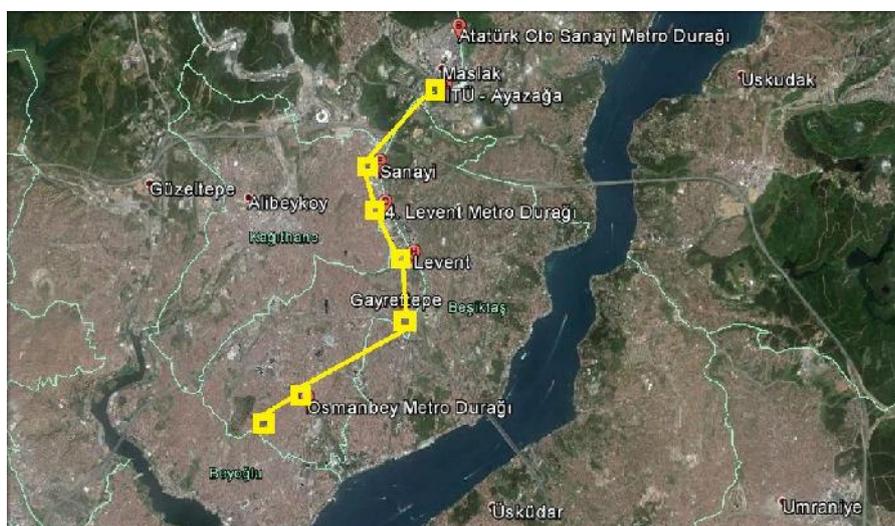


Figure 1. The underground route used for the sampling, Source: Google Maps

Due to the recent residential trends in the city, a filtration by the help of layers is applied: (1) Age (2) Location (3) Education. Layered random sampling is made in order to achieve data that had not been foreseen during research design.

A total of 49 young adults are subjected to research steps 1, 2 and 3. Four main districts are selected: Beyo lu, i li, Be ikta , Sarıyer. The addresses of the sample were obtained from various networks; referring to diverse GM types. 13-14 subjects participated from every district in order to balance the dispersion (Table 2).

CASE-STUDY DISTRICTS	BEYOGLU	SISLI	BESIKTAS	SARIYER
QUARTERS	CIHANGIR	TESVIKIYE	YILDIZ	MASLAK PASSAGEWAY
	FIRUZAGA	FER KÖY INNER PARK	MECIDIYE	
	GUMUSSUYU	OSMANBEY		
	BEREKETZADE (GALATA) COURTYARD Küçük Hendek Caddesi	BOZKURT	S NANPASA SEMI-PUBLIC SPACE MISIRLIBA HCE PARKI	
	OMERAVNI (FINDIKLI, SETÜSTÜ) SEMI- PUBLIC SPACE Fındıklı Parkı		TURKALI	
			MURADIYE	
			VISNEZADE	
			DIKILITAS	
			BALMUMCU	
		ABBASAGA		

Table 2. The districts and quarters within for the sample

FINDINGS

The descriptive analysis of the sample displays that the early stage 23-27 of age constitutes one third, and the oldest sample is represented with nearly 45%. Gender dispersion is 41 % male and 59 % female. The levels of education amongst the subjects are almost 82 % with a Bachelor, 12 % with Masters and 6 % with PhD degrees. Almost the entire sample completed their studies (98 %) and is continuing their professional lives. A majority holds the degrees of administration and economics; in addition to communications, teaching, architecture. Various fields of engineering, social sciences, law; also, arts related professions, such as photography are also present. A majority consists of single individuals (57 %); more than one third is married. The majority lives with a spouse and children, same ratio of living with parents is significant in the early stages of young-adulthood. Single living pattern is also prominent with a quarter of entire sample. Income level of the sample displays a majority earning around 1000-1500 euros per month, more than one third earns less and the highest income-level group is approximately one tenth.

DEMOGRAPHY

The main components of the demographic data are as follows:

- Age sub-group

- Gender
- Work-education status
- Profession/occupation
- Marital status
- Having children
- House sharing pattern
- Income level

The early stages of young adulthood display a higher tendency to prefer more-crowded and popular GM such as cafes and pubs:

“Usually the space (GM) is very crowded, so there is a very lively environment. It is a very nice place to chat. I would define it somewhat ‘alive’, the energy is appealing to me. That’s why (I spend time there), I suppose.” (Participant19)

Even though a direct link has not been detected between GM formation and gender, a vast majority of the female participants are with children, spending time on the play-grounds. On the other hand, a minority of women with children tend to spend a ‘personal/private time’ without their children at GM such as benches or small open-air terrace-like circulation spaces.

Married participants state that they mostly spend time on benches at regular spot, small common green spaces to ‘take some air’ in short intervals. However, single young adults prefer cafes/pubs/restaurants; unless they have “nothing better to do”. They perceive these spaces as an extension to their living rooms:

“I see it (as a part of home), (I sit there) until the evening all through the day, and I return home and go to bed, that’s all.” (P02)

The high-income levels address expensive preferences of unconstructed GM are common for this segment of the sample.

DAILY LIVING CULTURE

Daily living culture is a very broad area with various components listed as:

- Work/Life preferences
- Socialisation tendencies
- Residence preferences
- Tendencies of interaction in the neighbourhood
- Tendencies for spending time in the GM

Moreover; the life-style tendencies indicate certain group memberships or coherences (Heijs et al., 2009) at trendy neighbourhoods: Galata, Cihangir or Maslak. For instance Cihangir constitute of membership bonds (Oztel-Agsakalli& Zeren-Gulersoy, 2015).

Despite non-smokers majority in the sample (60 %), the findings point out preferences towards smoking. Moreover, coffee/tea consumption was not taken as a subject matter in the questionnaires; nevertheless it shows a strong impact on GM preferences:

“As I said, I like drinking coffee very much. And most of my friends smoke, when I go there with them; it is appealing to me as well as to them since there is open space for smoking. That’s why I prefer there.” (P19)

The habits of the adolescents draw GM preferences. One subject addresses the place he grew up and links his unconstructed GM usage on the Bosphorus sea-fronts close to Cihangir-Galata neighbourhood:

“(My family background is relevant to GM preference) because I was born and raised in another sea-front district, Uskudar. I am accustomed to the sea-side. Very accustomed to the Bosphorus. I had been going to the university by travelling across Bosphorus for years. It is impossible for me to live somewhere without Bosphorus. ...” (P14)

Social interaction in the residential area is related to the daily living patterns of the dwellers as well as the individual living culture. The majority of the sample perceives the frequently used GM as a part of their private living area, an extension to their house or the open-air living room. It is not necessarily interaction with the neighbourhood, but with the friends/family living in the walking distance (Cuba & Hummon, 1993):

“I see (GM as an extension to my house) ... Because every time I wake up, I see it. I work across to it.” (P25)

Even though the residential preferences are not directly connected to the GM interaction potentials, residents experience strong ties with the community and possibilities to spend time in the residential area:

“Actually I chose (my house) because of its location. ... (the cultural/social possibilities) did not effect, I discovered after moving to here.” (K06)

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Very large spaces are not preferred as GM:

“... The space (GM) is already large enough for me and my friend to sit together with other people around. Very beneficial socially.” (P23)

The physical features reflect usage motivations. So accessibility or a few trees providing shades constitute simple reasons for preference of a particular GM:

“(The reason for me to prefer this GM) is its location under the trees; being within the trees in the city centre, gives me the feeling of being in the nature. Moreover it is on my way home. Very close.” (P47)

On the other hand, the GM selections are connected with a unique characteristic such as the sea-view, sea-front position. Some districts and quarters content unique and ‘nice’ neighbourhoods with ‘indefinite ingredients’ (Heijs et al., 2009):

“... in terms of socio-cultural layer ... I do not consider the open-air space as Fındıklı (a small park with a few very moderate kiosks serving tea/coffee with chairs and tables) ... rather as a part of Cihangir because it is very close. ... I perceive them as a whole quarter together. Until Karakoy, the similar character is maintained, because it is in the walking distance. This is also important, very rare in Istanbul, one of the quarters that you can join social life by walking...also more residential.”

The dense urban morphology is a major problem. Most gardens are turned either into parking lots, rented by commercial uses or closed by private users. The sidewalks are very narrow. So it

is very difficult to find a hierarchy in public/private usage; that the sidewalk becomes a new type of semi-public domain.

CASE-STUDIES

The types of activities are crucial suggesting the term 'at-homeness' due to existence, affiliations and locus (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Thus, the social attachment via activities is evident. Due to the rather mild climate conditions in Istanbul, the GM formation category is not directly related. The usage continues for all four seasons except for extreme weather conditions. The five particular behaviour maps reflect types of activities and potentials for social interactions reflecting the diverse GM types (Table 3).

Preferred GM type	%
Café	34.7
Park	26.5
Café/park	18.4
Courtyard/garden	10.2
Terrace/porch	8.2
Sidewalks	2.0
Total	100

Table 3. The dispersion of preferred GM typologies within the sample.

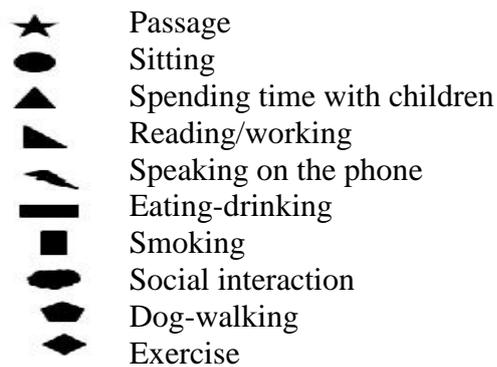


Figure 2. Behavioural mapping legend



Figure 3. Park Findikli, behavioural mapping

Park Findikli-Cafe, Public Space / Session number 4

May, 2016, weekday

13.45 / noon – session duration of 40 min

18 Degrees, partly cloudy, windy

The venue reflects a semi-public character in a dense housing area. The fourth session out of a total four sessions displays a local usage compared to weekend and evening sessions. Lunch breaks, coffee and tea consumption is relatively higher. Young adults are also observed sitting on the benches and eating the food they had brought. The majority consists of young people who reach to GM on foot. No child is observed on the play-ground. The parents spend mostly their weekends at the GM with their children. Moreover, weekday afternoon is also time for children to be at school. The seating designed not on the bench but at stools scattered on the waterfront reflects the findings of Sommer (1969). The clothes and items that young adults own reflect a certain life-style associated with civic intellectuality (Fig. 3).

Beyoglu District, Galata Quarter



Figure 4. Salti Passage, behavioural mapping

SALTI Passage, Inner courtyard

May, 2016, weekend

14.35 / noon – session duration of 40 min

28 Degrees, sunny, warm

Second session out of 4 sessions is displayed on the map. The fencing around the green area may have reduced the possibilities for level ground activities. Strangers are not welcome in the territory. An introvert attitude is observed for new faces. Most windows are left open and indoors/outdoors life reflects a certain level of connection. Silence in the courtyard is noticeable. Most interaction continues between the windows between the tenants. However; the level ground is not effectively used. The locked gates restrict uninvited entry and create a semi-private character (Fig. 4).

Sisli District, Ferikoy Quarter

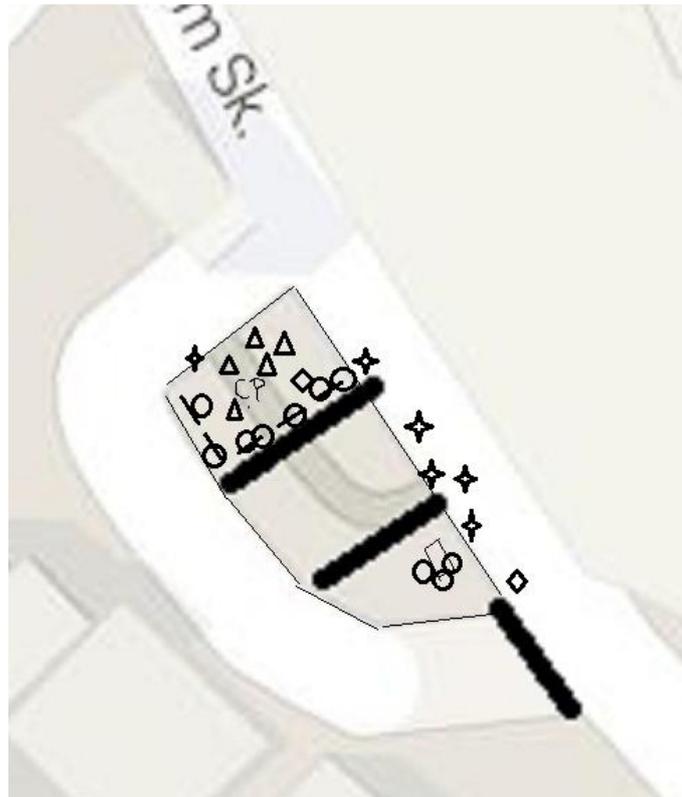


Figure 5. A small green area in Ferikoy, behavioural mapping

A small common garden with a play-ground
 May, 2016, weekend
 14.00 / noon – session duration of 55 min
 23 Degrees, sunny, warm

The findings display the observance session number 3 out of four. This space is a small green area between the dense street texture and the apartment blocks. It has a semi-private character with locked gates both at play-ground and the sitting area with a table and 8 chairs. A very narrow alley provides passage to the apartment blocks. Riding bikes, sitting at the entrances of the buildings are observed. The majority of social interaction takes place on the playground among parents. Not only women; but man flexible working hours also chat, drink beverages and play with their children. At the other end of the garden the table and chairs are used by a smaller group without children. Long duration of sitting, bringing coffee and tea are observed (Fig. 5).

Besiktas District, Sinanpasa Quarter



Figure 6. A courtyard in Besiktas, behavioural mapping

Park Misirlibahce, a wide courtyard with a play-ground and a road with light traffic

May, 2016, weekend

14.30 / noon – session duration of 50 min

25 Degrees, cloudy, warm

This particular GM characterises smaller version of an urban park that works as a semi-public garden for the tenants. The morphology of the districts represents attached apartment buildings with 5 meters wide facades and no gardens. The entrances face the courtyard. In the last session of a series of 4 sessions conducted at the GM, the weekly local bazaar is detected around the corner, on the street. The frequency of usage was much higher accordingly. Young adults are observed to sit at the courtyard, greeting familiar faces besides each other on the benches after weekly grocery shopping and chatting. Female young adults were prominent. It can be deduced that friendship and being neighbours have been blended among the users of this GM (Fig. 6).

Sariyer District, Maslak Quarter

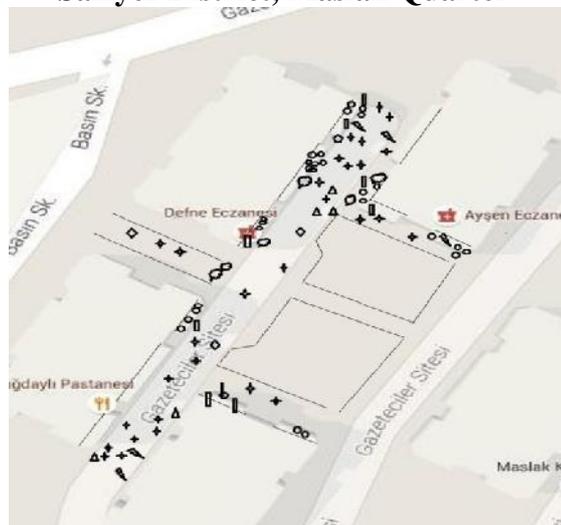


Figure 7. A courtyard in Gazeteciler Housing Blocks, behavioural mapping

Gazeteciler Housing Blocks courtyard with shops
 May, 2016, weekend
 10.30 / morning – session duration of 45 min
 21 Degrees, sunny, warm

This behavioural mapping formulates the first session of a total four observances in series. This particular GM is a semi-private space initially designed to fulfil basic needs of the tenants. Nevertheless the shops are visited by attached neighbourhoods since the number of shops available is limited. The main motivation for usage is daily grocery shopping, a small canteen selling breakfast, home-cooked lunch and pastries. Moreover there are three pharmacies that draw most individuals. Having breakfast is observed for young adults at the canteen very frequently. The green spaces are restricted by bushes thus the circulation takes place on the hard ground. A few tables scattered on the passageway serve very effectively. Short conversations, greeting and chatting are very distinct activities besides eating, speaking on the phone, cycling and smoking (Fig. 7).

CONCLUSION

In terms of *demographical aspects*, sub-age groups have impact on types of activities and weekly usage. Parenting is prominent in the late young adults due to child-care and playground usages. The house sharing patterns refer to variations in GM perceptions; single dwellers mostly perceive GM as a tool for social interaction. On the other hand; young adults sharing apartments use GM for ‘taking some fresh air’, dog walking or meeting. In terms of *Daily living culture* the family background, the profession and work patterns divert the GM preferences. Moreover life-style tendencies such as being prone to popular activities, eating/drinking/entertainment behaviours modify the GM interactions.

It is evident that public spaces are lacking in Istanbul. On the other hand, outdoor activities and residential social interaction area are still demanded. However; traditional neighbourhood patterns are diminishing. Physical features reflect unique characters that draw young adults to those particular GM. The sea-view, sea-fronts very close to districts and steep topography creating long open-air vertical circulation can be taken as GM for young adults.

Moreover, GM addresses changing activity patterns. The case studies reflect the motivations for usage lead to social interactions with respect to daily living cultures.

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