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# Spatial and Social Comparison of the Traditional Neighbourhood and the Modern Gated Community: Eskisehir Sample

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**Abstract.** People's expectations from the city have changed with the transformation of urban life. Urban space is not the only place where structures are formed. Urban space also consists of a combination of public spaces, semi-public spaces, and private spaces. As social and cultural phenomena, social events occur and people communicate with each other in these spaces. Therefore, streets and neighbourhoods composed of houses are not only physical spaces, but they also have important social and cultural dimensions. Modern life has brought a plethora of changes that affected the cities. Due to rapid changes today, the urban space forms in the conversion process are also designed differently. Historically, the space organization based on the streets of the semi-public life in Turkish cities has been transformed into mass housing and housing estate-style life in recent years. This transformation has been expressed differently in urban life not only physically, but also socially and culturally. The street which is regarded as a public space was a place where people communicated and social events happened in the past; but today, the streets are rife with security problems and they have become a concept evoking an image of street that is bordered with buildings. Spatial separation has emerged with middle and upper classes isolating themselves from the streets and heading towards gated communities, especially for security reasons. This social and spatial separation has begun to lead to various problems in cities. Eskisehir is an important Anatolian city located between Ankara, the capital of Turkey, and Istanbul. This research was conducted in two research sites in Eskisehir: one is a gated community where middle and upper-income groups reside, and the other is a residential neighbourhood where middle-income groups live. These groups were studied through a survey. The spatial preferences of the residents in these two areas and their relation with the neighbourhood are examined. These groups were surveyed and their relations with their relatives have been researched.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of neighbourhood has a very important place in Turkish culture. The values that constitute the home and street culture are also observed to be effective in the structure of the neighbourhood. The houses where the people of the neighbourhood meet their need for housing have an important share in the physical shaping of the streets and the development of the neighbourhood.

The social and cultural changes experienced by the societies influenced the cities and the urban life, different types of settlements appeared in the cities, and gated communities began to replace the neighbourhood-type settlements. Prestigious residential areas, also called garden-cities, gated communities, and housing estates, are areas that are separated from the outside world through private security and walls. The sales strategy of these types of houses is that they provide better security within



the framework of certain policies. Gated communities are often portrayed as a mechanism that protects the upper and middle classes from the so-called city hazards (such as pickpocketing, theft, burglary, drugs, etc.). In Turkey, while being particularly true for the metropolitan cities, such urban segregation has begun to occur in all the cities of the country.

In this study, a comparative survey was conducted between a middle and upper income level group living in a gated community and a middle-income group living in an old neighbourhood in Eskisehir, which is an Anatolian city, and people's reasons for preferring certain spatial residential and environmental qualities in these two different regions are comparatively examined in the light of their relations with their neighbourhood and the city.

## **2. The concept of neighbourhood**

As a living space, cities are defined as a place where people live, produce, and shape, as well as the houses, streets, and neighbourhoods that form this place (1). Apart from minorities and religious communities, neighbourhoods show a socially equitable settlement quality (2). The house, which is considered together with concepts such as lifestyle, status, cultural structure and values, also influences the neighbourhood with its social content (3).

People need other people to maintain their daily lives in society. People need socialization for a healthy life. Neighbourhood has a very important place in socialization besides social spaces such as family, school, work, street, and network of friends. Neighbourhood also shows the functioning of social life.

The concept of "neighbourhood" also has a significant place in Turkish culture. The prominence of neighbours for Turks is expressed in a proverb: "Don't buy a house, get a neighbour." This is because in order for a house to become a home, the neighbours around it are at least as important as the house; in fact, they are even more important than the house itself. In traditional settlements, the importance of neighbours can be seen in the arrangement of the houses. The residences in the same district respect each other, and maximum care is taken to ensure that the positioning of the houses does not interrupt the view of other neighbouring houses. This approach, which takes neighbours into account in planning the architectural structure of the neighbourhood, is in fact closely related to the importance attached to neighbours in urban culture (4).

## **3. Emergence of the gated communities**

The industrial revolution and its negative consequences have revealed themselves in the cities in the most tangible way. As the increasing population in the urban areas after the immigration from the rural areas led to housing problems, the existing residence stocks became insufficient and residential communities consisting of adjacent high rises or attached apartment buildings began to be constructed (5). From the 1980s onward, a new pattern of uniform, identical, homogenous residence has emerged in countries with different levels of development in various parts of the world. Initially, presented to the upper-class people of the city not only as being a luxurious residence but also offering a fancy living environment as distinct from other lower urban classes, the settlement style with this type of residence later became more widespread after it was made available for the urban middle class (6). In the historical process, while the basic design of spatial construction in Turkish cities used to be the street space, after the changing lifestyles and transformations due to the influence of modernism in the last quarter century, expectations and demands from the urban space have changed accordingly, and the traditional street textures have been transformed to be replaced by either spaces shaped by high rises or large green spaces (7). In particular, middle and upper class urbanites have turned their streets to gated communities for reasons such as security problems, a better regulated urban environment and class differentiation. Preferred especially for security reasons, and with an aim to escape from the heterogeneous structure of the cities and to live together with similar families, the zoning that is created by the gated communities along with the security walls by the streets have led to both visual and social segregation within cities. The phenomenon of segregation has now become a major problem for metropolitan cities. Urban

segregation, which has adversely affected the spatial and social structure of cities, has become increasingly visible, threatening urban integrity (8).

#### **4. The survey conducted in the city of Eskisehir**

This survey was conducted on selected sampling sites in Eskisehir. Results of data collected from a gated community, selected as an example and commissioned in the year 2000, and the survey results of residents living in an old neighbourhood in the city were evaluated and the results of satisfaction with the physical and social aspects of the housing districts were compared. The first part of the questionnaire includes questions that aim to determine the demographic structure, economic conditions, and educational levels of people living in the residential district.

In the next part of the questionnaire there are questions to measure the physical qualities of the spaces and to determine their sufficiency. In addition to their assessment of accessibility and satisfaction, they are also asked to assess how safe they feel in this area. In the final part, participants were asked to evaluate their social relations with their surroundings and to inquire about the level of their relationship with their neighbours and in order to assess the social usability of the area they live in.

#### **5. General information about Eskisehir**

Eskisehir is located on the northwest of the Central Anatolia Region. Today's Eskisehir province was known by its Greek name as "Dorylaion" and by its Latin name as "Dorylaeum" in the Old and Middle Ages. Architectural finds illuminating the city history of Eskisehir extend back to the Phrygian period. The fact that the settlement history of Eskisehir dates back to such early ages can be explained by the fertile plains and busy trade routes created by the Porsuk Stream (9).

In Eskisehir, which has undergone a rapid development process, there are two historical residential areas belonging to different periods and thus having different texture characteristics. Spreading out by the Porsuk River on a plain, Eskisehir's historical heritage center is called "Odunpazarı," an urban conservation area built on a hillside. Reflecting the characteristics of the traditional Turkish neighbourhood, and sprawling around the Ottoman-era social complex (*killiye*), Odunpazarı is home to narrow streets, houses, fountains, small squares, and examples of civil/cultural architecture representing the soul of the city (10). The streets, which are the most important part of the traditional Anatolian Turkish towns and the social life in the area, offer long perspectives in most areas of Odunpazarı urban conservation area, where they are transformed into dead-end streets or form small squares in some places (11).

#### **6. General description of the areas where surveys were conducted**

The neighbourhood selected for the survey is a district located in the old hill of the city adjacent to the traditional settlement area where people in the lower and middle income group live. Here, the settlement character is still maintained in the neighbourhood and street layout. The survey was conducted in four streets in the Akarbası Neighbourhood of the Odunpazarı District of Eskisehir. The settlements in this area are old settlements and are located very close to the city center. In the streets of Odunpazarı, one of the oldest settlements in Eskisehir, there are private gardens in front of the houses and these gardens open to the streets. This district is selected for analysis because the houses here have not severed their ties with the street.

The second sample area is a gated community located on the outer edge of the city, called "Yenisehir Mansions," where mostly people from the middle and upper income groups live. The housing construction for this gated community, which began in 2004, is still going on. With 620 multi-story houses in different sizes and gardens, it is located far from the city center.

#### **7. Results and discussions (Analysis of the surveys)**

Spatial and social comparative surveys of the neighbourhood and gated community experience were randomly conducted with the residents of both settlements. The people who reside in the Akarbası Neighbourhood are older than those living in the gated community of Yenisehir Mansions. In the

Yenisehir Mansions, the proportion of the 40-49 age group is 32%, and the 50-65 age group accounts for 23%, whereas in the neighbourhood this ratio is 13% and 34%, respectively.

Gated community seems to be preferred by crowded families because 43% of the families consist of four people, while this rate is 11% in the neighbourhood. The proportion of those who live alone is 9% in the neighbourhood and 3% in the gated community. This suggests that the neighbourhood near the city center is preferred by those living alone. The rates of home ownership are close in both settlements, with 77% and 80%.

Regarding monthly income, 14% of the residents in the neighbourhood reported that they earn between 5000 and 10000 TL, 11% between 10000 TL and above, while 27% of the respondents living in the gated community reported making 5000 - 10000 TL, and 50% of them reported earning 10000 TL and above. This shows that in the gated community there is a more homogeneous population of residents, and the income groups in the neighbourhood are more varied (e.g. middle-to-lower, middle-to-upper). Since the Akarbası Neighbourhood has a more heterogeneous resident population, its residents' income status also varies.

According to car ownership rates, 43% of the neighbourhood inhabitants are not car owners, 47% of them have one car, whereas 7% of those living in the gated community do not own a car, and 60% have one car. This can be explained by income status and the proximity of the neighbourhood to the city center.

When educational status is examined, 70% of those living in the gated community are found to be university graduates, while 39% of those in the neighbourhood are university graduates. The effects of the heterogeneous structure of the neighbourhood also lead to differences in education. The answers to the questions about safety reveal that 82% of the people living in the gated community feel safe, while in the neighbourhood this falls to 18%. In modern urban life, security is one of the most important reasons for people to leave neighbourhood settlements and opt for housing estates instead. The changing urban life has led to streets becoming insecure places in people's opinion. That is why people think that, to provide safer life, their living spaces need to be segregated from streets with high walls.

In terms of accessibility to the city center, the satisfaction level of those living in the gated community is 18% while this rate is 82% in the neighbourhood.

In terms of public transport facilities, the satisfaction level in the neighbourhood near the center is 70% while the rate in the gated community is 30%. However, in terms of the adequacy of the parking lots and distance to the residential area, this situation is reversed, with the satisfaction level being 71% in the gated communities and 29% in the neighbourhood.

Satisfaction about the relationships with neighbours was reported as "very satisfied" by 43% of the neighbourhood residents, while in the gated community this figure dropped to 16% (table 1). For the question: "Do you greet your neighbours?" 27% of those living in the neighbourhood said "often", while in the gated community this rate dropped to 13% (table 2). Concerning the question of socialization with the neighbours, much higher percentage of those living in the neighbourhood responded positively to this than those living in the gated community. The responses to the question about children's communication with each other reveals that the children living in the gated community have better communication among themselves compared to those living in the neighbourhood. It is clear that the availability of playgrounds in the gated community space plays a role in such a result (table 3).

As for their reason for preferring the gated community, 65% of the gated community residents cited "quality," while 14% cited the surroundings of the community, and 11% pointed to the green areas allocated for the use of the community residents (table 4). 53% of the neighbourhood residents cited transportation, and 26% pointed to house quality as the reason for their preference for living in the neighbourhood.

To the question of whether or not they wanted to move from their residential area to another one, 90% of the residents of the gated community responded negatively, and 70% of the neighbourhood residents responded positively.

Regarding the question about their preference for housing if they had the opportunity to move, 60% of the gated community residents said that they would rather have a detached house with a garden, while

50% of the neighbourhood residents reported that they would prefer a gated community (table 5). Although 20% of those who live in the gated community would like to move into an apartment in the city center, 30% of those who live in the neighbourhood stated that they would prefer to move into a detached house with a garden.

## 8. Conclusions

Recent developments in technology and globalization have affected cities in various ways. It is observed that the changing living conditions have changed the housing preferences, especially for the middle and upper income groups. The inadequate infrastructural facilities of the existing housing estates have been condemned to abandonment and disuse because they cannot match the physical and social facilities provided by the new residential spaces. These abandoned settlements have mostly become places of preference for low income groups.

**Table 1.** Satisfaction of Relations.

	User's Satisfaction of Neighborhood Relations				
	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very Good
Gated Community	%17	%34	%23	%20	%16
Neighborhood	%10	%13	%17	%27	%43

**Table 2.** User's Greeting Level.

	User's Greetings Level				
	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very Good
Gated Community	%30	%27	%23	%13	%7
Neighborhood	%17	%17	%31	%27	%19

In this context, it is aimed to compare these settlements in terms of social and physical possibilities and to evaluate the results in the comparison of two residential settlements. The results of the survey conducted at a neighbourhood, which is one of the oldest settlements of Eskisehir, and at a gated community far from the city center can be summarized as follows:

It can be seen that those preferring the gated community are younger, better educated, and with higher income compared to the residents of the neighbourhood, the old settlement unit. Therefore, it is possible to say that the members of the gated community make up a more homogeneous group. Furthermore, the family size of those preferring the gated community is larger than those living in the neighbourhood, which can be taken as an indication that due to their better physical infrastructure and better security, gated community-type housing arrangements are preferred more often by families with children. Due to its proximity to the downtown, the neighbourhood settlement is preferred by professionals living alone who vary greatly by their income and education levels.

When the responses regarding the relationships with the neighbours are analysed, overall, the relationships with neighbours seem to be better in the neighbourhood-type settlement. However, it can be said that the children of the families living in the gated community are in better communication with each other due to the presence of the playgrounds planned for them.

**Table 3.** Communication Level of Children.

	Communication Level of Children in Housing Zone				
	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Very Good
Gated Community	%10	%17	%10	%27	%36
Neighborhood	%19	%22	%15	%25	%19

**Table 4.** Reasons to Choose Housing Types.

	Reasons to Choose Housing Type					
	Quality of House	Accessibility	Environment	Green Areas	Social Relations	Car Parking
Gated Community	65%	5%	14%	11%	0%	5%
Neighborhood	26%	51%	13%	0%	10%	0%

The gated community residents who are asked about the reason for their preference of this settlement firstly cite the quality of the residence and secondly point out the environment. The neighbourhood residents' first preference is for transportation, and the second is for housing quality. The results reveal that most of the people living in the gated community do not want to move elsewhere, but if they had to move, they would prefer a detached house with a garden, while the majority of those living in the neighbourhood want to move and would rather live in a gated community.

In summary, it is seen that of the urban dwellers especially those belonging to the more educated, middle and upper income groups prefer settlements that are isolated and remote from the city, which are better and more secure than the urban settlements in the city center in terms of infrastructure facilities and spatial quality. The gated community, which promises a 'sterile' lifestyle in addition to the residential quality, is the reason for preference of the users, with both the arranged environment and the possibilities offered.

This lifestyle that is isolated from the city is not healthy for the urbanites' social and cultural interactions. The gated communities, which divide the borders within the city by sharp lines from one to another and create zonation in the city, lead to rapid social change in the city, resulting in socio-cultural and spatial divisions. This situation, which alienates those outside of the wall, can cause the deepening of this dangerous segregation. However, this spatial and social organization was shaped in the most egalitarian way in the traditional Turkish settlement. The street and neighbourhood in this arrangement form a heterogeneous structure that offers equal opportunities for everyone. In this type of neighbourhood unit, different income groups live together and can engage in social communication without being exposed

to any sort of segregation. This suggests that there is a need for new settlements in the city where instead of ignoring social communication it is fostered, and at the same time the urban spatial quality is improved by preventing segregations and exclusions.

**Table 5.** The Ratio of User's Housing preferences

	User's Housing preferences			
	Detached House with Garden	Flat in Low-Rise Apartment	Flat in City Center	Gated Community
Gated Community	60%	20%	20%	0%
Neighborhood	15%	30%	5%	50%

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