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**Place Attachment among Ethnic Minorities:
In the Case of Sisli District**

**Yuzyil Nevin Aydin
Master Student
Istanbul Technical University
Turkey**

**Elmira Gur
Associate Professor
Istanbul Technical University
Turkey**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
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**Place Attachment among Ethnic Minorities:
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Yuzyil Nevin Aydin

Elmira Gur

Abstract

Istanbul has been one of the boomtowns with the dynamic social, geographical and geopolitical conditions since 7th BC. Under the favor of these features, many cultures and societies arise and grow on these lands. All these cultures and societies over-lapped in ages and form a pluralist cultural identity. Istanbul's original residents nowadays became minorities because of high migration. While Istanbul has taken 354 thousand migrated people, the original residents of the city -particularly Rum, Armenian and Jewish- minority communities have gathered significantly in Sisli. Although their new neighbors keep changing on a regular basis, these communities prefer to remain. This research attempts to clarify the relationship between the characteristics of the ethnic identity of these minorities and their place attachment variables in the case of the Sisli district.

Keywords: Ethnic minorities, Identity, Place-attachment, Sisli.

Introduction

In Istanbul, nowadays architectural typologies and their built environment is changing incrementally. It was not always like this. In the 1980s, Istanbul had family houses which reflect the needs and characteristics of the owners. After the 1980s those family houses started to transform into apartments in relation with high mobility of the house ownership. Mobility in ownership started to effect the architectural environment in this sense. The mean of ownership in this sense is not only having the act, right or state of possessing a house but also dwelling in the space and transforming it into a place according to the use, life style or needs. That is to say owning a house differs with attachment. According to Shumaker and Taylor (1983), place-attachment is interdependence or the unity between individuals and their home environments. When the meaning is given to a space, it creates a place to stay. In this sense, lack of meaning, loses the stability and results in mobility.

Identity, Place and Attachment

Identity is the expression of self-defining and positioning. It is the answer given by human to self. In this context, identity can be defined as the fullest extent of the different factors from the other individual or groups. Through this point of view, definition of identity always constitutes according to the "others" (Bilgin, 2003). Identity is the source of meaning and knowledge (De Castell & Jenson, 2006). Not only individuals but also groups and societies have identities and that collective identity not only demonstrates the individuals self but also reflects the places they want to be in. Since places and humans have a strong bond, most of the time they reflect, shape or effect each other vice versa (Ellialtıođlu, 2015). Aka (2010) states that, by the reason of cultural identities came from the past and have history, they perpetually exposed to transformation.

Place is a defined space in contrast to others as "here". To talk about a place, an individualist is necessary. The borders of the place, differentiates me from others and mine from others'. In this case place becomes somewhere individualized. (Ellialtıođlu, 2015). **Place attachment** is a complex and interdisciplinary notion and has been theorized from architecture and urban planning to psychology and sociology (Hummon, 1992). It is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as; affection, fondness, or sympathy for someone or something. Because of place attachment it has been discussed from many perspectives and many definitions have been accumulated. Most of the researchers define place attachment as a complex concept that is the effective bond or the relation between individuals and their meaningful environment (e.g. Giuliani, 2003; Low & Altman, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001) or the emotional, functional, and social ties people develop within a community to a particular place (Hummon, 1992).

Such geographers argue that a bond with a meaningful place in other words "sense of place" is an universal and affective tie that fulfills fundamental human needs (e.g. Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974), and for some

authors, that sense of place comprises of the terms place identity, place attachment, and place dependence (e.g. Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001), or includes ancestral ties, feeling like an insider/one of them and a willing to stay in the place. This attachment enables people to overcome their identity problems and gives them the stability they need in a constantly changing environment (Hay, 1998). According to Park (1967), cities and the city environments, represent the most consistent and the most successful attempt to recreate the surrounding according to the desire of their heart of the inhabited people. But, the world created by these people is also to be forced to live in after that. So implicitly, these people created themselves while created their city and their environment.

People tend to change places and these places change rapidly through these migrations. Those who migrated first find a place to stay, following to this; they move out and find a place according to their individual needs and preferences. In Istanbul, as opposed to new comers, the people who prefer to stay longer are ethnic minorities. They started living in Sisli and accumulating after. In this paper it is aimed to elucidate the relation between minorities' ethnical identity and place attachment in the case of the Sisli District. After having a wide literature review to understand the background terminology of the main concern, a survey was conducted to 85 respondents who were chosen by snowball sampling method well-proportioned with the populations of the minorities. This survey aims to find the minorities place attachment reasons and their personal point of view to the places they dwell in the case of Sisli district.

Sisli District

Sisli, Istanbul's newer settlement is located in the European side of the city and neighboring to Beyoglu from north, Besiktas from west and Kagithane from east side (Figure 1). Population in Sisli is around 350 thousand. Istanbul's only 82% is Turkish originated and the other 18% mostly dwells in the Sisli district.

Figure 1. Sisli District in Istanbul



The oldest part of the Sisli neighborhood Tatabla has been settled down in the 16th century (Figure 2). In 1793, it is enacted that only Rum Orthodox people can move into Sisli. On these days, the area was mentioned by the church's name Aya Dimitri. With the Tatabla-Beyoglu tram, transportation was eased and population was started to increase incrementally (Sisli Municipality, 2016). This neighborhood is always full of people from different ethnic identities and the culture reflects this multilayered environment. Edmondo de Amicis, a traveler, wrote in his book *Constantinople 1874*, "We climb up to another hill and found ourselves in another suburb called Aya Dimitri. All the folks here are Rums. Calm looking grandsires, slim lads are filling the air with their melodic speeches and braiding haired women, the shrewd children playing with wandering pigs and chickens" (Johnson, 1922). For another traveler Marion Crawford there's no such place where many different people gathered and live also with other foreigners together. Hall (1990) explains these unities, acting together and sharing the same values as being one person. Sisli still has a multilayered environment that consists of Rum, Armenian, Jewish and Turkish people. The social and physical environments develop by the conjunction of these ethnical identities.

Figure 2. *Tatabla in 1913*



The physical environment in this district reflects the multi-cultural social environment. They controversially feed and enrich each other. To fully understand the neighborhood environment the relation of social and physical attributes must be comprehended. Dwellers of the Sisli neighborhood are much more engaged to their living spaces. During the study, a survey is conducted with 80 respondents to construe the bond between people and the environment. The reasons behind their place attachment are evaluated with the questions that are shaped around two main parts. First, through their lifecycle flow in which period they preferred

living in Sisli is examined. Second, the major reasons of their preference to live in Sisli is tried to find out.

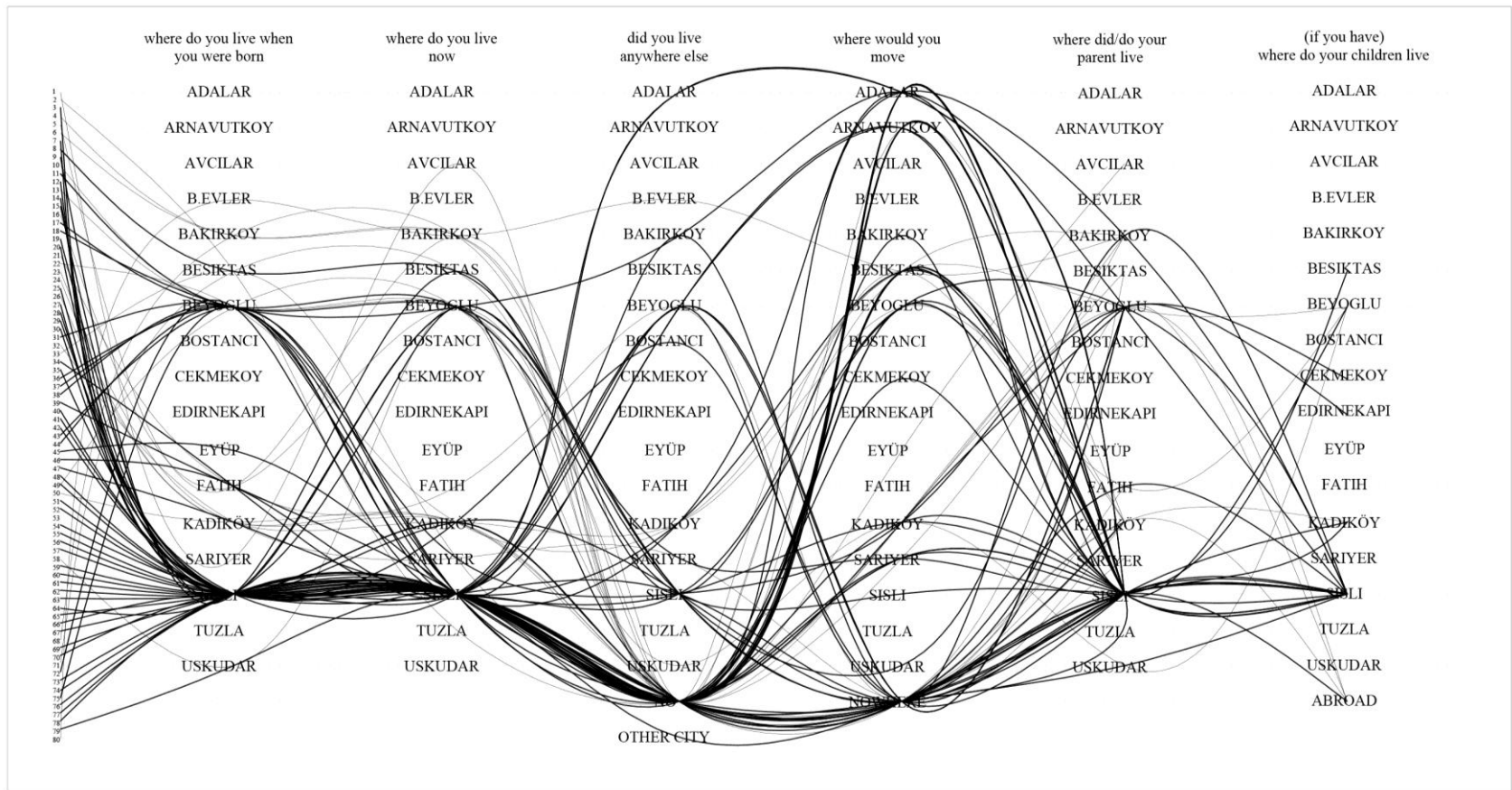
Survey

The survey conducted within the study, has 80 ethnic minority respondents. Those respondents are selected by a snowball sampling method. Ethnic backgrounds of the respondents' 38% are Armenian, 48% are Rum and 14% are Jewish. 45% of the respondents are men and 55% of them are women. Out of the 80 respondents number 10 is 10-19, 25 is 20-29, 15 is 30-39, 10 is 40-49, 11 is 50-59 and 9 is more than 60 years old. The respondents' education status is also examined. Only 4% of them are primary school graduates. 36% of them are high school graduates, 47% of them are university graduates and 13% of them are master's degree graduates.

Following questions are tried to clarify where the respondents live through their life cycle. Through the gathered data, route of settlement is confected. When the route of each respondent is indicated, significant tendencies and dense flows can be perceived saliently. By the way of these flows, the preferences of the respondents can be understood (Table 1). In which neighborhoods they were born, where do and did they live, where their parents did/do live, (if they have) where their children live is asked to comprehend their route of settlement.

According to the survey, 58% of the respondents now live in Sisli, 52% of respondents were born in Sisli. 73% of the respondents' part of their lives has passed in Sisli. 81% of the respondents, who live in Sisli, currently, say that they feel they belong to their immediate vicinity. Being the place of where they born and raised, having their history developed in this neighborhood, being close to the most crowded aggregation of minorities in Istanbul are the main reasons why they feel they belong as they stated. Respondents who currently live in Sisli define the neighborhood as; central, crowded, sincere, safe-zone and multilayered.

Table 1. Route of Settlement



The time people have been living in a place contributes to their bond with that place and increases their attachment with the place (Hernandez et al., 2007). To understand the relation of the minorities' attachment and long-term accommodation various questions were asked. To the question have you ever lived somewhere else, 99% of respondents said "no". In Sisli residents, the ratio is 99%. 60% of the respondents live in the same neighborhood more than 20 years and 23% of the respondents live in the same neighborhood 11-20 years. In Sisli, long-term accommodation increases. 75% of the dwellers live in the same neighborhood more than 20 years and 15% of them live in the same neighborhood 11-20 years. Only 10% of them live for less than 10 years.

Table 2. Reasons to Live in Sisli Prioritization

<i>Reasons to live in Sisli</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>
Closeness to Center	3	4	6	1	7	3	7	4	4	2	5
Closeness to Family	4	7	6	7	3	7	6	3	1	1	1
Closeness to Relatives	6	7	7	9	5	5	3	4	0	0	0
Closeness to School/Workplace	3	5	5	3	3	5	5	4	4	5	4
Ethnic Tendency	8	7	6	3	1	9	4	0	3	1	4
Long-term Accommodation of the Family	16	8	1	4	6	2	2	1	0	2	4
Neighborhood Culture	2	3	4	5	6	1	3	5	7	5	5
Neighborhood Relations	0	1	8	2	2	5	5	3	8	9	3
Neighborhood Safety	3	1	0	0	2	8	3	8	6	8	7
Social Opportunities	1	2	3	6	7	5	5	7	3	5	2

The respondents are asked to prioritize the reasons why they prefer to live in their current neighborhood. 52% of the respondents who live in Sisli put "long term accommodation of the family" in the first two. 45% of the respondents who live in Sisli's "ethnic tendency" were in their first three reasons. Closeness to relatives and closeness to family is also very affective in their preference (Table 2).

Conclusions

The district became the settlement of this overlapping demographic structure and was exposed to this factor while growing. As it is understood from the responds, ethnic minorities prefer living in Sisli and hesitate on moving out. Social bonds among them and long-term accommodations lead to attachment. What is highlighted here is the districts historical background and high community commitment.

It is an undeniable fact that the ethnical stratification in Sisli has a great affect on the physical environment as much as the social sphere. Through these

survey studies, a wider comprehension of minorities, place attachment reasoning within the Sisli district is anticipated. Whether they feel Sisli is home or not, it is certain that they prefer to stay.

Lack of information in minority communities and their housing environments in Sisli district leads to random decisions and inaccurate anticipation by the relevant authorities. By fully understanding the reasoning of their aggregation, the obtained data can be used in the future housing designs, cultural policies and settlement decisions in the district.

This study is a beginning to acknowledge the fact that these minorities are the main constituents of the Sisli district today and the new residents have adapted their lifestyles to existing physical and cultural conditions to create the current environment. Without blinking the fact, those minorities are the main constituents of the district and the components superimposed on them whether they are settlements, populations or policies must take their variables in consideration.

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