

Cultural Conflict Related to Ankara's Housing Problem

Nazan Kirci*

Gazi University Department of Architecture, Maltepe 06570 Ankara, Turkey

Abstract: This study assesses reflections of the structure of culture that is in search of integrity in the architectural and urban context and follows a number of examples from Ankara in doing so. Ankara's nomination as the capital of the country was an effort at modernization of Anatolia. Apparently slum areas in Ankara commenced during the modernization process. Contrary to hybridization effects of postmodern globalization, the gap among socio-cultural levels in Turkey is enlarged and has caused deterioration affecting architectural unity. The solution of this problems continue to be urban transformation of slum areas within removal projects or to conceal the disreputable appearance of houses. As a result of interaction between different social groups, individual needs and desires of slum dwellers have changed. Since they are belong to neither rural nor urban culture, the aspiration of low-income groups to become part of the consumption society need to be examined through interdisciplinary studies and appropriate solutions in architecture developed accordingly.

Keywords: Culture, housing problem, globalism, unification, individualism, hybridization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among different branches of arts, architecture has a very special status where the useful and the beautiful are realized together as a cultural creation. Inasmuch as architecture is a field of cultural production, the reflections of changing cultural history have been clearly seen in architectural history as well.

Undoubtedly, all cultures in the world have contributed to the development of the concept of civilization and to the practices of it. Cultural analyses have identified modern western societies as constituting a dominant global culture [1], since they were able to realized industrial evolution. In this view, Turkey can be categorized as a subordinate culture.

The formation of culture begins with the individual who is the smallest element and is based on the social groups, the society and intersocietal relationships. Difference and heterogeneity are produced through transcultural communication.

Significant advances in technology and techniques contributed to the development of means of communication. Exchange between societies is a sign of changing cultural history. For the period when the culture depended on location, a comparison of traditional house styles in different countries reflected their diverse social and cultural worlds and social structures.

It can be assumed that the architectural products of the dominant and subordinant cultures would be

different from each other. The effects of modernism and postmodernism have been seen all around the world. Thus housing area should not be considered as independent from cultural effects [2, 3, 4], the housing problem with slums in Ankara is discussed in this context.

2. MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

As being two important trends in the last century, modernism and postmodernism has based on completely different arguments. While modernism presents unity and sameness to the world, postmodernism present plurality, individualism and heterogeneity.

2.1. Unity of Modernism

While the culture had been able to be defined based on its location before the modernism, it has gone beyond the geographical boundaries with increasing communication facilities. It is now recognized that cultures are formed through the shared experience of movement across borders [5].

As stated by Cowen; the common argument that globalization destroys diversity assumes a collectivist concept of diversity. It also assumes that diversity takes the form of cultural differentiation across geographic space [6].

2.1.1. Modernity of Capital

Leaving the capital in Istanbul and Ankara's nomination as the capital of the country was not an organic process in urbanism level although. But a unification decision politically dictated by its central location. Modernism was adopted in Turkey as the

*Address correspondence to this author at the Gazi University Department of Architecture, Maltepe 06570 Ankara, Turkey; Tel: +90 312 582 36 51; Fax: +90 312 231 01 83; E-mail: nazkirci@gazi.edu.tr

ideology of the Republic, and even the arrival of the new architecture was celebrated with an official article in 1930. Considering the importance of newspapers in the making of a unified nationalist consciousness, the appearance of major feature article on modern architecture testifies to strong ideological significance attached to it by the republican regime [7]. In the architectural experience of the new republic, the 1st and 2nd national architectural periods, which had the characteristic of being a style search based on the discovery and use of the national architectural elements, prevailed until the 1950s. In this period, public buildings with modern-monumental characteristics were built and research was performed on the traditional Turkish house [8]. However, following the period in which the regional changes began to take place in modern architecture in the worldwide, the modern architecture began to become widespread in 1950's. The modernist movement coming from the West was just a fad, moreover a delayed fad, among the architects. And the problems of the architects, whose number was still inadequate, were not the problems of the common people due to the class they came from [9]. Change life! Change society! These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space [10]. This quotation from Lefebvre summarizes the reason of the spatial problems of the new republic.



Figure 1: Architect Kemalettin Bey, Foundation Apartment, Ankara, 1926-27.

Especially following the war years, as in the whole world, the problem of housing emerged as a problem in Turkey as well and problems were encountered in terms of the provision of modernization of the houses. After its proclamation as the capital of the republic, Ankara, which had a community who generally had been composed of estate owners before, acquired a new community composed of mostly bureaucrats [11] and the immigrant workers employed in the reconstruction process of the city stayed in the city.

2.2. Plurality of Postmodernism

As a matter of fact, Berner has also pointed out the fact that the globalization has not caused homogenization in a worldwide scale, but, on the contrary, has created a more than ever assorted, heterogeneous and complex world [12]. The discussion about globalism tends to centre on recurring problem of localism and local identity [1]. In the areas reflecting the Western civilization, though there are relative differences reflecting the local characters, a cultural homogeneity can be spoken of as well.

According to Lewis, postmodern theories, in particular, claim that the role of function of a nation and its national culture are collapsing under the weight of transcultural communication. The consumption, appropriation and 'reinvention' of cultural artefacts necessarily hybridize culture. This hybridization is a two way process: the dominant and subordinate cultures are changing each other and re-mixing their differences [1]. So, the boundaries have been able to show a great flexibility [13], and through this process, most uncompromising opponents of hybridization have been assimilated.

2.2.1 *Emerging Slums and Plurality of Postmodernism on Ankara*

Obviously, people from different social and community backgrounds will see the world in rather different ways. The reality of the world, therefore, becomes implicated in matters of perception, symbolism and the symbolic ordering of knowledge [1]. In order to explain the relationship between various levels of culture, sociologists developed the concept of 'sub-culture' in 1960s. Their studies often conceived of the sub-culture as a 'deviation' from the larger, mainstream grouping [1].

The problem with the divisions of dominant and subordinate is that it tends to re-confirm the division which oppresses and subjugates the lower-status group. Therefore, cultural studies have developed a discourse of otherness which is more celebratory and relies less on divisions of status. Pluralism, diversity, difference and multiculturalism are terms which basically reject the notion of normality or domination, replacing it with a description of culture as fundamentally diverse. These concepts are associated with postmodern politics which insists on capacity of individual subjects to choose their lifestyles and identity [1]. How this choice is made can be an important question for sociologists. In the developing countries,

especially in the geography based on the Islamic culture, the cultural differences within the societies are increasing due to the mentioned effects. And it gets sometimes possible for the group called 'the lower status' to be dominant in cities.

Since the 50-year growth target for the city was reached only in twenty years, an organized employment opportunity that can absorb the immigration Ankara received could not provide planned accommodation. As a result of this, a dual structure serving to the rich segment and to the rural segment, i.e. the slum dwellers, emerged [11].

It is known that a transition took place in the rural areas in Turkey especially after the World War II, and, parallel to this transition, the immigration to the cities from the rural areas increased and the urbanization accelerated [14]. However, the cities, which could not get much share from the investments due to the war economy, were not ready to receive migration-based labour force. Thus, the groups immigrating to the city stayed in the margins of the city, both economically and physically [15].

The culture of planning is one that is rooted in the enlightenment values of rationality, science, and universalism. Planners are accustomed to viewing people as public citizens with equal rights, making rational decisions, and subordinating their parochial interests for the welfare of society as a whole [16]. As a result of urbanization devoid of these supports, the slum dwellers and the middle and higher layer groups have begun to live in an intermingled manner. Atkinson and Blandy remark that only the very rich and the very poor have the potential to be segregated in the strict sense that both the housing and the areas they inhabit can be physically bounded, by gates and walls, or less obvious signs of exclusivity such as parks, 'leafy lanes' [17]. However, in the particular example of Turkey, this is not completely true. It can be said that eventually the slum type settlements rapidly expanded and came up to the city centre and residential district, covering all the shoulders of the city. In the preceding years, districts without reconstruction permits were established in the areas closest to the centre but highly slopped, and in the latter years when the areas surrounding the main roads of the city were covered with districts with reconstruction permits, the plain areas surrounding these areas were also covered with districts without reconstruction permits [15]. Due to political decisions, there are slum owners who have acquired the title deeds of the plots, they had occupied without

permission and even owned a few apartments among the new and high-priced apartment buildings which have been planned and constructed by entrepreneurs in exchange for the land price within the process.

3. CULTURAL CONFLICT BETWEEN HIGH AND LOW CULTURE

Waters has no doubt that popular culture is commodified and consumption-oriented. Contemporary consumption is profligate and focused on the display of conspicuous consumption. Waters also stated that consumption has become a critical maker of identity and inequality [18]. Nock explains the implications of this adaptation or inclusion situation for the urban organisms like that: Globalization has brought about the increase of the urban characters in the rural areas, and the increase of the rural characters in the urban areas by increasing the movements of humans, goods, services, information, news, products and money [19, 20]. Because, while, on one hand, an environment in which the data of the Western civilization is adopted is emerging, on the other hand the efforts are made for the conversion of the consumption pattern to the Western ones with the influence of the attraction of the economic, technologic products of the Western culture. The notion of hybridization within national boundaries could be viewed from the aspirations of low culture groups to possess the visual likes of elements of the high culture.

The reconstruction in the Cigdem district in Ankara is presented in Figure 2 as an example to the situation that the slum region is adjacent to and intermingled with the middle class housing area and the housing units for the academic staff of Middle East Technical University. These are examples of unplanned development. In a survey carried out on 129 houses in a slum area, the results of which are presented in Figure 3, it was found out that the rate of use was 94.57 % for refrigerators, 86.04 % for electric ovens, and 45.51 % for dishwashers. The fact that while the rate of the houses having a telephone line was found to be 65.89 %, the rate of mobile phone use was found to be 79.06 % was observed as a notable element regarding the consumption habits. Though there is an emulative attitude in slum regions in terms of consumption, it is observed that the lifestyle and values regarding the arts areas are maintained to be rural. Considering that the total population in the 129 houses included in the survey comprised 669 people, it was calculated that the average population per household was 5.18 and the average space number except the

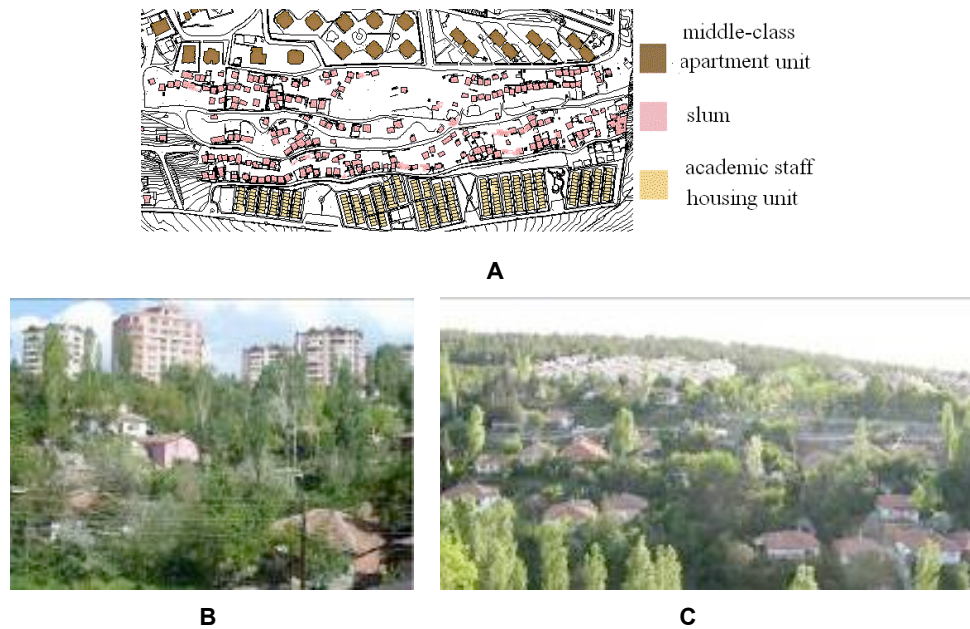


Figure 2: A. Cigdem district B. Neighbourhood of slum area – middle class apartment blocks C. Neighbourhood of academic staff housing units – slum area. Source: Photos by author

sanitary spaces was 2.57. Accordingly, it was determined that the average number of people who have to share the same room was found to be 2. Only 31.78 % of these houses had living rooms. The question “Would you use it if you had a living room with suitable size?” was answered positively by 24.03 % of the subjects. Thus, it was understood that the subjects tended to maintain their rurally originated traditions of using the living rooms only when guests come in spite of the population density. 52.71 % of the participants gave positive answer to the question “Would you accept if an apartment is given instead of your present house?”

Undoubtedly, the cultural characteristics of the slum dwellers have partially changed in their efforts to adapt to the city, which are different from the traditions of the places from which they had come, and their dwellings reflect neither the architectural characteristics of the modern city nor the regional characteristics of the geographies they have come. The effect of the organization of the culture and the shared values and meanings in a relative way [21] has also been reflected on various sociological and historical studies on houses which have emphasized that the layout of a house expresses the cultural values and norms and limits the possible space use options [22, 23, 24]. Clearly, such shared meanings at the level of national groups are heterogeneous, with many sub-groups of, for example, gender, class and different social settings [25]. Difference and heterogeneity are produced through

greater cultural sharing. The interaction of cultural elements produces new ideas, cultural products and cultural symbols. This is the politics of postmodern hybridization [1]. The unity destroyed by the social level differentiation is trying to be formed through obligation. Though not easy, it is not impossible for the defined hybridization, shared meanings, and solidarity to occur in developing countries. Increase in the level of education and improvements in the economic conditions will serve as a determining factor shortening the Nowadays, there is discussion, in Turkey whether the fact that two groups with different living conditions live together in cities and that one group establishes dominance over the other is a problem or not [26]. A cultural change of this type causes conflict between the rural culture and urban culture [27] and will bring about developments in the direction of reorganization and reconstruction of the relations between the classes [26]. According to Akay’s definition, cities are becoming the conflict area of the differentiation between the high and low cultures [27].

3.1. Slum Clearance

An up-to-date example which is in accordance with the definition of Akay is the route of the Esenboga Airport, which is also known as the protocol way of Ankara. Since the view of this slum area where people from rural areas live has been considered unsuitable for the image it creates during the entrance to the capital city, it has been decided that the area should be reorganized in a manner worthy to a capital.



Figure 3: A. Slum area the demolition of which has begun. B. Urban renewal area. Source: Photos by author.

Two methods were applied to attain this goal.

- The first method used by the municipal administration for the image of the capital is demolishment and urban transformation,
- The second method is the visual improvement.

Within the framework of the first method, the affected slums were pulled down by the Municipality of Altindag within the scope of the urban transformation project and multi-storey buildings similar to the ones in the other regions of the city were built instead. Figure 3 shows a slum clearance and urban renewal example from Altindag.

These people were forced to live in multi-storey buildings without this data is interpreted to give suggestions regarding the new living space. But it is not known whether the people living in Altindag area exhibited willingness for the move. In this method implemented by the municipal administration, how these people, who had been accustomed to living in garden houses, would adapt to living in such multi-storey buildings and how could maintain their former habits had not been taken into consideration.

Just as in Ankara, in many places all around the world such removal programs have come under attack in recent years as it has become obvious that the

removed population seldom relish their new accommodation and that reasons for the removal are often motivated less by interest in conditions of the poor than in clearing land for prestige building [28]. While the place of the problem is changed, this may bring along new problems. In spite of these objections, in the implementers' opinion the entrance to the capital has been cleaned and a view compatible with the central areas of the city has been obtained. Sometimes demolition is to discourage migration into the city. Too often the new housing has been unsuitable owing to its distance from work places [28]. Policies of social mix may be politically and economically expedient forms of contemporary slum clearance, but from a theoretical perspective at least, attempting to merge two structurally different manifestations of community seems unlikely to produce the social outcomes anticipated [29].

In the second method, the facades of the buildings seeing the main road on the route of airport-city centre are covered with new materials in the region of Aydinlikevler, where the low-income people live (see in Figure 4). This arrangement has been carried out with the aim of making the urban identity of Ankara suitable with its other regions and in unity within itself, though in a manner of make up. However, in this procedure, which was applied in a way reminiscent of the Turkish 'miniature art' ¹ that can be defined as picture without



Figure 4: Facade make up in the region of Aydinlikevler. Source: Photos by author.

perspective, the side facade views appearing when the road curves were ignored. It can be said that the covering material was used as a kind of ornament in this camouflage-oriented application which was far from producing a real solution to the problem.

4. CONCLUSION

Before the globalization effect, the elements of almost all cultures tend to unite, or pretend to unite [30]. Inevitably, blurring border of culture have been reflected in the field of architecture by globalisation.

Turkey has not experienced the industrial revolution, modernism and post modernism experienced in the West concurrently and completely. Thus, the homogeneity of modernism, the heterogeneity of postmodernism and the hybridization brought about by interaction are not concepts the references of which exist for all groups in Turkey. Declaration of the republic highlighted modernization as an official ideology. However, this has led to the fact that the rural population set up their slum areas in urban areas even though industry- and economy- driven employment failed to flourish as necessary. Interaction takes places among both societies and groups in an individual society. The processes of the cultural change and the reflections of these processes to the city differ among themselves as well. The relation between the urban populations and migrants from rural areas could be considered in this respect. Since the consumption culture spreads the things of latest fashion by means of the communication channels, it is normal for the preferences of the educated or uneducated people have changed. It is also a sign of changing individual needs and desires. Groups usually change each other and re-mixing their differences in a hybridization process. However, hybridization can not occur when there is no balance of power between groups. As yet, hybridization is apparently not fully balanced internally in Turkey. Although groups are physically close to one another, the division and lack of harmony is visible. Consequently, consumption desire has been the most easily transferred element of interaction as a result of the neighborhood relationship between sanctioned settlement areas and slums. The individuals emulate the lives of the group having a higher economic and social status though it is limited to the image level, and a remarkably high rate of slum dwellers wish to live in apartments, though they are not accustomed to this, and a great many of the middle-income group living in apartments wish to live in their own villas. This kind of

aspirational goal is an impetus to any social stratum or individual to betterment. Just as in the experience of Le Corbusier in the Pessac houses, it can be seen that the former lifestyle patterns are maintained in the new houses chosen as the stage of the emulated lives.

Concepts nestled in culture today such as integrity, individualism and hybridization are in conflict with one another. The primary local policy to eliminate the divisions has been to knock down slum areas first and then urge inhabitants to move into high-rises whereas such a lifestyle is convenient for these people who are, by origin, accustomed to living in close relationship with ground. As a result of the transition process these rural migrants have gone through, neither the lifestyle they have left behind nor today's seemingly urban lifestyle in apartment buildings is suitable anymore. Whereas, Hanson had defined that houses are a complex expression of the social and individual worlds of their occupants, in which social structure and convention seems inextricably bound up with the idiosyncratic, whimsical, arbitrary or even chaotic circumstances of people's everyday lives [31].

It would be a defective description to study the housing culture in their place of origin and simply replicate it in the urban environment. Thus assessing the needs and desires of people living in slum areas instead of conducting post occupancy evaluations might be more effective.

Another method local authorities employ is to mask building facades in order to erase traces of disrepair in the appearance of houses which are indicative of the situation of low-income inhabitants. Ankara has a dramatic example of this solution . Masking only one side of a building resembles a movie set construction which has no back, as if every scene will be viewed from only one side before it is dismantled for the new one. In this example, the urge to conceal differences could possibly be explained with the effect of the unification tend of culture.

As a result, it would be wrong to regard destruction and make up as a means of eliminating the divisions across various segments of the society. The unhealthy, kitsch and inappropriate buildings lacking plans are the consequence of construction without architects. This is a cultural and social rather than a design problem and seeking the solution in architectural design alone would mean that some of the elements in defining the problem are missing.

The architectural design has to respond to the user's physical and psychological needs that are influenced by the socio-cultural values of the society to which human beings belong. Therefore an architect ought to understand the nature of individual changing behavioural pattern and desires. In cities, it is often a fact that architects fall under the influence of the popular culture, emulate buildings created by popular architects and cannot resist the comfort of replicating commonly accepted styles and concepts. Moreover, they often have very little time to design and finalize projects for a given customer profile. Architecture is a kind of communication style in different rule systems. Different participants of Architecture are engineering, culture, philosophy, arts, history, anthropology, psychology, technology, natural science. It is expected from architecture that become a connector cultural heritage-realizing and respecting crucial differences.

Consequently, it is obvious that undergoing social projects with multivariable user profiles would be burdensome for them. Therefore, these projects should be designed and developed in collaboration with sociologists and policy makers.

NOTE

In miniature, contrary to painting, the light-shadow effect is not sought. The figures are placed side-by-side, in a way that they do not block each other, and the remaining figures are drawn on the upper part of the paper. The size and place of the human figures are determined based on their importance; distance of the images can not be understood. The details of the figures are elaborately shown.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lewis J. Cultural Studies The Basics Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Sage Publications, The Cromwell Press Ltd. 2002; pp. 26,43,30, 334, 351, 355.
- [2] Rapoport A. House Form and Culture, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall 1969.
- [3] Duncan SJ. House As a Symbol Of Social Structure, Altman, Werner Editors, Home Environments. New York: Plenum 1985.
- [4] Bourdieu P. The Logic of Practice. trans. Richard Nice, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1990.
- [5] Couldry N. Inside Culture Re-Imagining the Method of Cultural Studies. Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Sage Publication, The Cromwell Press Ltd. 2000; p. 96.
- [6] Cowen T. Creative Destruction How Globalization is Changing the World's Culture. USA: Princeton University Press 2002; pp. 129-130.
- [7] Bozdogan S. Modernizm and Nation Building Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic Singapore, University of Washington Press 2001; pp. 153.
- [8] Sozen M. Republic Term Turkish Architecture (1923-1983), Turkiye Is Bank Culture Publishing : 246, Republic Series: 9, Ankara: Tisa Press 1984; pp. 27-273
- [9] Bektaş C. Republic of Our Architecture, Izmir, Izmir Branch of the Chamber of Architects 2000; p. 36.
- [10] Lefebvre H. The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith Cambridge: Blackwell 1974; p. 59
- [11] Tekeli I. Urbanization Reviews on Turkey, Ankara, Turhan Publishing, Scientific Works Series 13. Economic and Social Research 1982; 3: pp. 55, 69
- [12] Berner E. Opportunities and insecurities: Globalisation, localities and the struggle for urban land in Manila. The European Journal of Development Research 1997; 9(1): 167-182.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09578819708426682>
- [13] Jay M. Dialectic Imagination Frankfurt School and Historic and Social Researches Institute. trans. Oskay U., 1923-1950, Istanbul, Ara Edition, Philosophy Series 7, 1989; pp. 7,8.
- [14] Tekeli I. Transformation Term in Countryside and Town: Dependant Urbanization, The Chamber of Architects Publishing: 18, Ankara, Nuve Press 1977.
- [15] Senyapılı T. Slum Evaluation in Ankara (1923-1960) Batikent Housing Construction Union, Ankara: Ozgun Press 1985; pp. 74, 79, 115.
- [16] Burayidi AM. The Multicultural City as Planners' Enigma. Planning Theory & Practice 2003; (4:3): 259 -273.
- [17] Atkinson R, Blandy S. Introduction: International Perspectives on the New Enclavism and the Rise of Gated Communities, Housing Studies 2005; (20): 177-186.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0267303042000331718>
- [18] Waters M. Modernity Critical Concept, Volume IV After Modernity, Padstow: Cornwall, Routledge, T.J.I Digital 2003; p. 4.
- [19] Nock M. The Mexican Peasantry and the Ejido in the Neo-liberal Period, (ed) Bryceson, Kay and Mooij. Disappearing Peasantries? Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America, London 2000.
- [20] Davis M. Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Working Class. trans: Gürol Koca, Istanbul: Metis Publishing Ltd. 2006.
- [21] Geertz C. The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essay. New York: Basic Books 1973.
- [22] Jordanova L. Sexual Visions London: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1989.
- [23] Mumford L. The Culture of Cities. Westport: Greenwood Press 1970.
- [24] Rapoport The Meaning of the Built Environment, A nonverbal Communication Approach, Tucson, USA: The University of Arizona Press 1982.
- [25] Ozaki R. Housing as a Reflection of Culture: Privatised Living and Privacy in England and Japan. Housing Studies 2002; 17(2): 209-227.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02673030220123199>
- [26] Ankara Branch of the Chamber of Architects, Urbanization Committee in Turkey, Urbanization in Turkey, Ankara, GIM Guzel Istanbul Press 1971; p. 56.
- [27] Akay A. Capitalism and Pop Culture, Ankara: Baglam Press 2002; 190: p. 43.
- [28] Gilbert A, Gugler J. Cities, Poverty and Development Urbanization in the Third World, Second Edition, Great Britain: Oxford University Press 1996; p. 136.

- [29] Gwyther G. The Doctrine of Social Mix in the Mobile Society: A Theoretical Perspective. *Housing, Theory and Society* 2009; 2(26): 143 -156.
- [30] Guvenc B. ABC of Culture Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Edition. 1997; p. 85, 87.
- [31] Hanson J. *Decoding Homes and Houses* UK: Cambridge University Press 1998; pp. 61-72.

Received on 27-10-2014

Accepted on 05-11-2014

Published on 20-11-2014

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15377/2409-9821.2014.01.01.3>

© 2014 Nazan Kirci; Avanti Publishers.

This is an open access article licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>) which permits unrestricted, non-commercial use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the work is properly cited.