The significance of neighborhood in Istanbul

E.Ümran Topçu
Asst.Prof. Dr
Bahcesehir University, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Istanbul
umrant@bahcesehir.edu.tr

Abstract
The neighborhood is prominent in contemporary urban studies. One reason for choosing neighborhood as a unit of action is that the neighborhood provides an efficient scale within which to measure any change in target population's circumstances. Neighborhood here is defined as follows: Neighborhood is the bundle of spatially based attributes associated with clusters of residences. This bundle of attributes is multidimensional consisting of everything from topography and structures and demography to social interactions. For most people, residence and the context in which it exists, that is to say neighborhood, is the largest consumption item of a lifetime. How much an individual's needs and aspirations are met by his neighborhood is a concern for researchers and planners. This study expresses a belief in the value of the concept of place as part of the neighborhood question. There are now many established ways of looking at the neighborhood, as place, as network, as image, as property and as administrative unit. These all have something to offer individually and deserve continuing attention to help counteract some of the deficiencies of our contemporary society. In this study respondents from two districts of Istanbul are asked for their subjective assessments of a set of domains associated with neighborhood satisfaction. The neighborhoods are chosen to be one traditional and one modern context. The results indicate significant differences among the residents of traditional and modern neighborhoods.

Keywords: Neighborhood satisfaction, context, subjective assessment, traditional, modern

Introduction

The neighborhood is prominent in contemporary urban studies and research. One reason for choosing neighborhood as the unit of action is that the neighborhood provides a manageable scale in which to work. It also provides an efficient scale within which to measure any change in target neighborhoods' circumstances. But the term is hard to define. A clear definition to "what the neighborhood is" is not yet achieved. All extant definitions suffer from common shortcomings (Galster, 2001). They pressume either a certain degree of spatial extent and/or social interrelations within that space and they underplay numerous other features of the local residential environment that clearly affect its quality from the perspective of residents. Neighborhood is here defined as follows: Neighborhood is the bundle of spatially based attributes associated with clusters of residences. This bundle of attributes is multidimensional consisting of everything from topography and structures and demography to social interactions. For most people, residence and the context in which it exists, that is to say neighborhood, is the largest consumption item of a life time. How much an individual's needs and aspirations are met by his neighborhood is a concern for researchers and planners.

Another question raising from the issue is "does neighborhood still matter in the 21st. Century?". Forrest says that it does, but how much it matters depends on who you are and where you are. (Forrest, 2000). Despite the innovations in communications technology, the neighborhood continues to be a salient arena of everyday life for urban dwellers. Neighborhood change is proving unpredictable and resulting in ever-wider gaps in fortune and prosperity between places within a single city. Change pattern in Istanbul is a perfect example to the case.

Literature Review

Increasing concern for the future of cities and for the well-being of city dwellers has led in recent years the emphasis given to the study of the city in many respects. Central to this development has been the growth of research into the relationship between people and their everyday urban environments. Understanding the nature of person-environment relationship is the quint-essential planning problem. In the context of the built environment this can be interpreted as a concern with the degree of congruence or

dissonance between city dwellers and their urban surroundings (Michaelson,1977; Rapaport,1985). This focus on environmental quality has emerged as a key area of research in urban planning and over recent decades considerable effort has been directed toward assessing the quality of different residential environments (Pacione,1990).

Sociologists who study urban neighborhoods have traditionally assigned a higher priority to the search of local sentiments, ties, solidarity and other manifestations of "community" (Hunter, 1979; Suttles, 1972). The reason for choosing the neighborhood as the unit of action is that the neighborhood provides a manageable scale in which to work. Working at a larger scale is often unwieldy. Concentrating on a single neighborhood may also provide an oppurtunity to focus on particular needs and particular outcomes. Neighborhood scale may allow to access to more perfect information and a better understanding of the target population. It may also provide a more manageable scale within which to measure any change in the target population's circumstances and evaluate the impact of an intervention (Chaskin, 1998).

Neighborhood satisfaction is a complex cognitive construct. Researchers from disciplines have approached the topic from their point of views but their theoretical underpinning have been rather similar. Galster (1987), says that satisfaction measures the differences between actual and desired neighborhood situations. Satisfaction is the absence of complaints and indicates a high congruence between actual and desired situations. On the other hand, incongruence leads to dissatisfaction.

Most of the studies have focused on different determinants of satisfaction, such as life cycle stage, tenure, income, length of stay and housing quality. Some of the results obtained by researchers were as follows: Having a high income, being at a later stage of life, having a smaller household membership were related to satisfaction with housing and neighborhood (Campbell et al., 1976; Galster and Hesser, 1981). Home owners are found to be more satisfied with their neighborhoods (Rohe and Basolo, 1997).Much activity is focused on measuring quality of life via the development and implementation of subjevtive and objective indicators. According to Michalos, a life that is qualitatively good may be measured in

quantitative terms with statistical data broadly referred to as social, economic and environmental indicators (Michalos, 2007).

The research on the perceived quality of residential environments is restricted to western experiences. Little research has been done in the developing countries. Istanbul with 12 million inhabitants (Census 2007) is a very special city that happens to belong to the developing world. This paper attempts to be a contribution to the relevant literature. The urban environments referred to in this paper are place-based with diverse geographical and cultural components. It seems that people sharing the same place would have common interest. A basic definition of a place-based community would be a network of people sharing some common place. Besiktas and Umraniye neighborhoods of Istanbul are the study areas for this paper.

Method
During the winter of 2009, a questionnaire containing 30 neighborhood satisfaction items, was administered to a sample of Istanbul residents from 2 districts of Istanbul, so as to be one from the Anatolian side and the other one from the European side. The items included the standard questionnaire (Table I) used by Topcu and Dökmeci (2003). All item responses were in the form of a traditional five-point Likert-type format ranging from "very true" to "definitely untrue" with a midpoint of "undecided". Respondents were drawn from random starts with a total of (N:200) for each district, by "People and Environment Course" students of Bahcesehir University, Faculty of Architecture and Design. Items were scaled consistent with Topcu and Dökmeci's previous works. 13 items scale resulted. (Marked with asterix* on Table I) They were subjected to descriptive analysis.

About the study areas
The first sample is drawn from a traditional district namely Besiktas. Besiktas is an old waterfront district of Istanbul located on the west coast of the Bosphorus. It has 8 375 m. Long coast line to the Bosphorus. Besiktas was a small settlement when Istanbul was conqured. It developed due to its connections with the ottoman Navy. In Sulaiman thes Magnificent's reign (1526-1566) Admiral barbaros Hayreddin lived in a waterfront house in Besiktas. He had a mosque and set of schools, from elementary to higher education,

built in Besiktas. He is buried in Besiktas as well. His residence and the importance he attributed to his district contributed to the formation of a tradition in Besiktas. All the admirals resided in Besiktas after him. Since the 16th. century, Besiktas has served as a center with its well built environment and respectable residents.

In the 19th. century, House of Throne moved Besiktas waterfront palaces from Topkapı Palace. A new era opened for Besiktas, untill the fall of Ottoman empire. Besiktas has been a privileged district of Istanbul due to Royalty and Higher stately officers residing there. A well kept and clean district. Some of the 19th. century residential buildings still exist. The first Bosphorus Pier was built in besiktas before World war I. After 1957, as with the opening of Barbaros Boulevard and expansion of Besiktas Street, historical texture of Besiktas has been ruined. An Armenian and greek population traditionally lived in Besiktas and had their religious facilities.

Today, Besiktas is a dense residential and commercial district with lots of high rise buildings and a number of Universities such as the Bosphorus University, Yıldız Technical University, Bahcesehir University and Galatasaray University. Besiktas is also a very central point in conjunction with Uskudar, Kadikoy and whole Bosphorus.

In the Republican period, Besiktas has shown a pattern of increase in population, except for 1985-1990 period. Younger population diminates in Besiktas. Before 1980 there was a domination of male population, which was equalized then after. Females dominate when it comes to the group over 30 years of age. Another special feature in besiktas is that, literacy ic 95.2 % in the age group over 6 years. This is higher than Istanbul average, which happens to be 90.2 %. 89.5% of the literates have attended formal schooling. The percentile distribution of educational levels are such as, 37.7 % has completed primary education, 15.7 % has completed secondary education, 26.9 % has completed lycee or equivalent and 19.7% has completed higher education.

Population at work, age 12 years and over, represents 45.9 % of the districts' total population. The remaining are veterans, hosewives and students who are not involved in work circles. Besiktas shows an urban pattern all over the district with very modern and elegant

neighborhoods as Levent, Etiler and Bebek where living standards are much higher than Istanbul average. It has a total of 21 urban neighborhoods.

As for the cultural heritage, Dolmabahçe Palace, Yıldız Palace, Ihlamur Palace, Yıldız Park and its Chalets, Maritime Museum, Paintings and Sculptors Museum are in Besiktas. Some 5 star hotels and numerous health facilities are located in Besiktas (Avci, S. 1994).

The second sample area is Umraniye, located on the eastern half of Istanbul. It is surrounded by kartal, Maltepe, uskudar and Atasehir districts. It is one of the districts of Istanbul that has no connection to the sea.

Umraniye has both urban and rural neighborhoods. 4 of its 18 urban neighborhoods are rather new, which have been settled in 1994. Sarigazi rural area is known to be the oldest neighborhood in Umraniye. According to some records it had been a settlement since the time Istanbul was conquered. Founder of the neighborhood had joined the conquering forces. For a long period the neighborhood stayed as a silent agricultural area. Since 1950s whole district received enormous rural migration. The central neighborhoods of Umraniye district are not as old as sarıgazi neighborhood. After the 1877-1878 Ottoman–Russian war, the district was settled by some of the migrants from the Balkans. The oldest building in the district is Cevher Aga Mosque built in 1897.

Umraniye had a population of around 1000 people in 1950s. In the following decade the population multiplied itself to 7000. being close to the new higways and important junctions made umraniye a catchment area for new migrants. It happened to be a rural area of Uskudar until 1980s. It became an independant district within easy reach to the rest of Istanbul by way of the Bosphorus bridge and its circular roads. Majority of the new migrants chose this district for settlement due to the existence of their fellow villagers. With the opening of the second bridge on the Bosphorus, the district proliferated. The circular roads almost cut the central area of the district in half in north-south direction. This makes it easy for the settlers of the district to go to work in other districts.

Literacy is 87.9 % and is below Istanbul average. 81.3 % of the literates have attended formal schooling. The percentile distribution of educational levels are such as, 73 5 has completed primary education, 12.8 % has completed secondary education, 11.2 % has completed lycee or equivalent and 3 % has completed higher education.

In 1990, those living in the central neighborhoods were 33 % born in Istanbul. Majority of the migrants are from eastern Middle Anatolia and migrants from mid Black sea regions follow. Some parts of the district are covered in forrests. Existence of water springs and picnic areas attracts Istanbul residents' attention on holidays (Aksel, A.1994).

Results

There are more in Umraniye (17%) who think that **it is hard to find a real friend in this neighborhood** than in Besiktas (13%).

More people in Besiktas (43%) think that **there are no leaders in this neighborhood,** than Umraniye (22%).

54% of the people in Besiktas think they do not **give you a bad name if you insist on being different,** while 28% think the same in Umraniye.

More people think that **few people make enough money here in Umraniye** (80%), than in Besiktas (40%).

More people in Umraniye (50%) think they **belong to this neighborhood** than Besiktas (38%).

More people in Besiktas (54%) neighborhoods disagree that **parents let their children do whatever they like as long as they are out of the way** than Umraniye (44%).

Both in Besiktas (50%) and Umraniye (50%) people think that their **houses are good enough for their needs.**

More people in Umraniye (46%) think that their **present house is better than the ones they lived before,** whereas 42% in Besiktas**.**

While 30% of the people in Umraniye say that **life is boring here,** only 12 % in Besiktas has a similar perception.

While 16% of the people in Besiktas think they would **rather live somewhere else,** 28% of Umraniye residents think they would **rather live somewhere else.**

More people in Besiktas (30%) think **there are no neighbors** than Umraniye (16%).

While 56% of the people in Besiktas think **there are excellent shopping facilities in their neighborhood,** 30% think the same for Umraniye.

More people in Besiktas (45%) think that **medical facilies provide all sorts of treatments** than in Umraniye (40%).

More people in Besiktas (48%) think that **there is less crime in the neighborhood** than Umraniye (26%).

While only 12% of the people in Besiktas think that **there will be good job oppurtunities for everyone in the future in this neighborhood**, 28% think the same in Umraniye.

More people in Umraniye (45%) think that **nobody rents their houses to singles in this neighborhood**, while only 10% think the same in Besiktas.

In Umraniye 38% think that that **the elderly are well looked after here,** while 42 % think the same in Besiktas.

More people in Umraniye (57%) **prefer to live in this neighborhood due to the existence of relatives**, while only 18% in Besiktas.

More people are **satisfied with their neighborhood** in Besiktas (64%) than in Umraniye (43%). While there is not a single respondent who says **I am not at all satisfied with my neighborhood** in besiktas, there happens to be 8% in Umraniye **who are not at all satisfied with their neighborhood**.

Conclusions

This study compares the satisfaction in modern and traditional neighborhoods in Istanbul. The results from the series of analysis of 2 different neighborhoods provide a picture of the move towards modernization. The results also proved to be consistent with the previous work done by Topcu and Dökmeci (2003).

Items such as **"I feel that I belong to this neighborhood", "This house is good enough for my needs", "Medical facilies here provide all sorts of tratments", "Elderly here are well looked after", "Less crime takes place here"** have got more positive responses in both neighborhoods, whicg suggests an overall satisfaction with the quality of life in the sample neighborhoods.

Items such as, **"This neighborhood lacks real leaders", "few people here make enough money", "There will be good job oppurtunities for everyone in the future in this neighborhood"** have got more negative responses in both neighborhoodsi which apparently is an indication of dissatisfaction.

Item 4. that proved to be significant in previous works done by (Topcu and Dokmeci, 2005) and (Topcu and Evcil, 2007), **"People give you a bad name if you insist on being different"** is apparently loosing its significance. It got more positive responses so as to indicate that heterogenity was not tolerated. According to thid study, degree of tolerance is growing towards positive.

"Being close to relatives" is still a reason for choosing to live in that neighborhood, in Umraniye. People living in Besiktas do not seem to be interested in the existence of their relatives in choosing to live in a neighborhood. Thus, this study suggests that satisfaction from family ties is particularistid dependent upon the cultural milleu of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood question is one which will continue to interest all those concerned with the realities of life in modern cities. It will also remain of central interest because it raises many of the conceptual issues which are linked with urbanization and urbanism. Neighborhood is concept that is multidimensional and does mean different things to different people. Its meaning will vary from time

to time and from place to place, even within the lifetime of an individual.

This study expresses a belief in the value of the concept of place as part of the neighborhood question. There are now many established ways of looking at the neighborhood, as place, as network, as image, as property and as administrative unit. These all have something to offer individually and deserve continuing attention to help counteract some of the deficiencies of our contemporary society.

References

Aksel, A. (1994) Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, Vol.7. Ümraniye İlçesi Bölümü. Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı ortak yayını. Istanbul, 1994. Anabasım A.Ş.

Avcı, S. (1994) Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, Vol.2. Beşiktaş İlçesi Bölümü. Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı ortak yayını. Istanbul, 1994. Anabasım A.Ş.

Campbell, K.E., et al. (1976) The Quality of American Life:Perception, Evaluation and Satisfaction. Russel Sage Publication, New York.

Chaskin, R. J. (1998) Neighborhood as a Unit of Planning and action: A Heuristic Approach. Journal of planning Literature 11, 11–30. Sage Publications.

Forrest, R. (2000) Does neighborhood still matter in a globalised world? Occasional paper series No. 5 Center for Comparative Public Management and Social policy, City University of Hong Kong.

Hunter, A. (1979) The urban neighborhood. İts analytical and social contexts, Urban Affairs Quarterly, 14, pp.267-288.

Galster,G.C. & G.W. Hesser, (1981) Residential Satisfaction: Composition and Contextual Correlates. Environment and Behavior, 13(6), 735-758.

Galster, G, (1987) Homeownwers and Neighborhood Reinvestment, Durham, N.C. Duke University Press.

Galster, G, (2001) On the Nature of Neighborhood, Urban Studies. Vol 38. No.12 , 2111-2124.

Hunter, A. (1979) The urban neighborhood. Its analytical and social contexts, Urban Affairs Quarterly, 14, 267-288.

Michalos, A.C.(2007) Statistics, Knowledge and Policy 2007: Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies. OECD Conference. Seoul. Chapter 10: Connecting Communities with Community Indicators. 134-145

Michealson, W. (1977) Environmental Choice, Human Behavior and Residential Satisfaction, New York: Oxford University Press.

Pacione, M. (1990) "Urban Livability:A Review", Urban Geography, 11(1), 1-30.

Rapoport, A. (1985) "Thinking about home environments" In I. Altman and C. Werner, Eds., Human Behavior and Environment, Vol.8, New York:Plenum Press, 255-286

Rohe,W.M & V.Basolo, (1997) Long term effects of homeownership on self-esteem, perceived control and life satisfaction of low income people. Journal of American Planning association 60(2), 173-184

Suttles, G. (1972) The Social Construction of Communities. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Topcu, U. & V. Dökmeci, (2005) Comparison of satisfaction in different neighborhoods in Istanbul . ITU Dergisi/a Vol.4 (1), 126-134

Topcu, U. & N.Evcil. (2007) The Significance of Neighborhood. Livenarch III International Congress. 5-7 July 2007. KTU Trabzon Turkey. Proceedings Vol.II, 589-595.

Table I

Items of the Questionnaire

1. It is hard to find real friends in this neighborhood.
2. This neighborhood is peaceful and orderly.
3. This neighborhood lacks real friends
4. People give you a bad name if you insist on being different.*
5. Few people here make enough money.
6. I feel that I belong to this neighborhood. *
7. Nobody here seems to care about how the neighborhood looks. *
8. Parents let the children do whatever they want, if they are out of their way.
9. Municipality serves this neighborhood poorly.
10. There is not enough going on here to keep me busy. *
11. This house is good enough for my needs.
12. This house is better than the ones I've lived before.
13. Buildings in this neighborhood don't look as good as the ones where I lived before.
14. Job opportunities in this neighborhood is the same as elsewhere.
15. Life in this neighborhood is dull. *
16. I would rather live in a different neighborhood. This one is not the place for me. *
17. This is a good place to live. *
18. The green areas make this neighborhood a nice place to live.
19. I would rather have more neighbors around. Neighbors are far away here.
20. Shopping facilities are perfect around here compared to other neighborhoods. *
21. Medical facilities here provide all sorts of treatments. *
22. Public facilities here are well maintained. *
23. Less crime takes place here compared to other neighborhoods. *
24. Everybody will have enough job opportunities.
25. Nobody cares about the neighborhoods' opinion.
26. Nobody here rents their houses to singles.
27. Elderly here are well looked after.
28. People in this neighborhood don't take care of their gardens
29. I like this neighborhood because it is close to relatives. *
30. **I am satisfied with my neighborhood**.*