

# The Effect of Social Structural Change on the Traditional Turkish Houses Becoming Unusable

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**Abstract**—The traditional Turkish houses becoming unusable are a result of the deterioration of the balanced interaction between users and house (human and house) continuing during the history. Especially depending upon the change in social structure, the houses becoming neglected do not meet the desires of the users and do not have the meaning but the shelter are becoming unusable and are being destroyed.

A conservation policy should be developed and renovations should be made in order to pass the traditional houses carrying the quality of a cultural and historical document presenting the social structure, the lifestyle and the traditions of its own age to the next generations and to keep them alive.

**Keywords**—House, social structural change, social structural, traditional Turkish houses.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TRADITIONAL houses are social and cultural elements reflecting customs, traditions, religion and lifestyles of a society. They have the opportunity of being alive by being transferred empirically from earlier generations to the next generations in the historical process. They have been shaped by the effects of social and cultural factors as well as users' needs.

The formation of the traditional Turkish houses is in a close relationship with the social and cultural society structure. Several changes happened in the lives of Turkish people who had a settled life from nomadic life. For instance, the number of people in a family having a settled life increased. This change in the social structure coming with the concept of extended family led to the fact that parents, children, daughter-in-law and son-in-law lived together. Tents set up adjacently in the nomadic life changed into the rooms around the sofa (hall) or courtyard. The social change happened with the effect of Islam reflected also to house architecture. An introverted lifestyle where privacy was protected appeared [1]. However, because of the reasons such as the development of the technology, adapting to the modern age, cultural and ethnical differences, society psychology, the effect of physical environment and so forth, the social structure has changed [2]. For instance, the concepts such as extended family or introverted lifestyle have considerably lost their meanings

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nowadays. Individualism has come into prominence and the change in the necessities has occurred.

In this study, the change occurred in the social structure and the effect of this change on the traditional Turkish houses becoming unusable will be analyzed with the aid of the literature search method. In order to keep the unusable traditional Turkish houses alive, the suggestions of solutions will be made. The traditional Turkish houses dealt with in the extent of this study was shaped by Turkish cultural covering a process of 500 and 600 years and they were the houses appeared in Rumelia and Anatolia in the borders of Ottoman Empire [3].

## II. TRADITIONAL TURKISH HOUSE

Houses are the structures used in order to lead a life in a natural and built environment and meet the needs such as eating, sleeping, protecting from the outside atmosphere conditions and feeling safe [4]. Traditional Turkish houses are the dwellings reflecting the culture and lifestyle of Turkish society, meeting the needs and formed by the cultural accumulation [5]. With the traditional Turkish houses, the house type is meant that is shaped with Turkish culture and has peculiar features (wide eaves, oriels, etc.) (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 A traditional Turkish house [3]

Local construction materials, construction technique, local traditions and the physical factors such as climate conditions,

topography, flora, soil structure, and hydrological conditions cause these houses differentiating from each other. Despite these differences, the houses have their own characteristic features such as rooms and sofas [3]. The room is the state of living unit in the tent in the house, which came from the nomadic culture [1]. It is the place where the actions such as eating, sitting, sleeping and even having shower are made. The sofa is a circulation center where the rooms open separately. In a Turkish house where different generations live, the sofa is the place where household gather, chat and entertainments are organized. The place out of the circulation is used for sitting. Although the sofa indicates difference, a typological classification can be made according to its place on the plan: the plan type without the sofa (primitive), the plan type with the outside sofa, the plan type with interior sofa, the plan type with the middle sofa [3].

Social and cultural factors such as traditions and customs, norms, regional beliefs, social relationships, ethnical origins, family structures, lifestyles, boundaries of privacy, economic structure, language, education and law besides physical and regional factors had a great role in the architectural formation of traditional Turkish houses [6]-[8]. In addition to all of these, religion can be seen to have an effect on the house formation [6]. The religion has brought an inverted life that is restricted in external relations. The design with the courtyard is the indication of this. What is more, there were "haremlik" and "selamlık" in larger houses. The women who spent their time mostly in the house lived in the part "haremlik". In this part, actions such as eating, sitting, having guests and so forth were made. As for "selamlık", it was the place where the men carried out their daily routines [1].

Because in the traditional Turkish family, the married daughters and sons lived with their spouses and their parents, rooms were their own places. Actions such as cooking, eating, sitting, having showers were made in the rooms. In order to do these in a single room whose sizes were restricted, simple portable furniture having a minimum place and being used for many reasons were preferred. For instance, floor tables for eating, mattresses for sleeping and floor cushions for sitting were used. In these arrangements being close to the ground, the fact that society worked in the fields close to the ground and when they returned to the houses they felt comfortable and relaxed could be effective [9].

### III. SOCIAL STRUCTURE CHANGES

Social structure is a thing shaped according to the framework the society draw and where social relations and events occur, and groups exist [10]. The oldest and basic unit of the society forming the social structure is the family [10], [11]. The family including two or more people is a social institute where the individuals connect to each other through kindredness, marriage or adoption and where they live together [10]-[13]. According to their sizes, families can be divided into a nuclear and extended family [11].

Extended family is a family institute especially seen in the societies who are observant of traditions and where grandparents, parents, daughters, sons and their spouses

related to each other live together [11], [14], [16]. Nuclear family (modern family) is a small family unit where parents and only single daughters and sons, and whose relationships are weak [11], [15]. The family like other institutions of society has been affected by industrialization, urbanization and the technological developments and changed. This change has turned the extended family into nuclear family (modern family). Although nuclear family exist in almost each period, that it adapts itself to the demands of industrial society affects the fact that it is seen to belong to the modern age. Furthermore, the attraction of industrialization and the migration from the rural areas to the urban areas have a great role in this change [11], [15]. Although the rural population who is observant of traditions has tried to continue their culture in the cities they migrate for a while, they have adapted to the social structure change. One of the reasons of family structure change is the desire of minimizing the family [15].

With the development of individualism, traditional extended family has begun to separate [15]. The relations among family members have changed. The family types where family members support each other have turned into the family types where individual conflicts are superior [11].

The factors such as industrialization, urbanization, technology, migration, economy have affected not only the family but also the social structure change. Traditions and customs have been seen to be old and instead of this, the idea of putting "secular, humane and mental" in the center has been developed [11], [15]. As for postmodern era, as well as secular and humane it has come "individual pleasure" into prominence [17].

### IV. THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL CHANGE ON THE TRADITIONAL TURKISH HOUSES BECOMING UNUSABLE

The social structure of the society changes. The change in social relations, social events, groups, institutions and population is continuous. This change will continue in the future as it continued from the past till today.

As a result of continuous change of structural change, because the users abandon the houses willingly or unwillingly or the houses mean nothing but shelters for them, the neglected houses become unusable and they are destroyed over time.

The main social changes causing the traditional house to become unusable:

- Large families' turning into small families
- The preference change of houses according to income
- The change of expectancy of houses depending upon the age
- That inheritors do not compromise and the processes of transition prolongs
- The need of privatized places instead of multipurpose places and the need of new place
- Heading for modern life tools
- Migration

#### *A. Large Families' Turning into Small Families*

Turkish society turned into an extended traditional family model where grandparents, sons, daughters, daughter-in-laws, son-in-laws and grandsons live together from the era when the lifestyle as a colony dominated. As for today, family concept has changed and the extended family where many generations lived together is separated and the nuclear family is formed. Even it can be said that individual lifestyle has begun to appear. For this reason, traditional houses built according to the crowded family are not appropriate for today's conditions. Whereas places are very much and unnecessary for one who accepts to live individually, those who prefer today's nuclear family structure face some problems such as being far from the comfort conditions, insufficiency of the place. Traditional houses do not have the flexibility like separating, addition, removing walls because of their plan schemas and their being cultural assets needing to be conserved [8].

#### *B. The Preference of Houses According to Income State*

A few changes occur in the lives of families whose income increase. Different needs exist in the process ranging from the change of individual status to social environment in accordance with the opportunities. As a result of this, more luxurious and comfortable buildings have begun to be preferred as houses and traditional houses have been doomed to be abandoned.

Only a part of traditional houses abandoned by real owners has the opportunity to have new users. These are who come from the migration from the rural or have low incomes. They have preferred traditional houses because they are appropriate for their economic level and their own lifestyles. The changes they make in order to make the houses suitable for their lifestyles cause the houses to deteriorate physically and lose their peculiarities. The maintenance of the traditional houses decreases and the houses are damaged consciously or unconsciously because of the people's financial insufficiencies and insufficient knowledge about conservation.

#### *C. The Change of Expectancy of Houses Depending upon the Age*

Traditional houses have become unusable because of the effects such as reducing or ending working capability in accordance with the age, depending on this, having difficulty in the maintenance and cleaning of the house, some legal restrictions made to repair and restoration processes to conserve these houses which most of them are registered and the old people's lack of power to deal with these procedures, the formation of unnecessary spaces as a result of the married daughters or sons' isolation from the family. Therefore, comfortable and cozy new houses, nursing and rehabilitation centers that are appropriate sizes in accordance with the needs do not need continuous maintenance and ease life are preferred.

#### *D. The Fact That Inheritors Do Not Compromise and the Processes of Transition Prolongs*

It is generally seen that traditional houses that are abandoned because of the disagreement of the inheritors after

the owner died are exposed to each kind of destroying effect as a result of lack of maintenance. The attempts made for restoration are mostly late. In addition to this, many buildings are destroyed because the legal process prolongs and economic problems are added (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 A house about to collapse Karaagac – Edirne

#### *E. The Need of Privatized Places Instead of Multipurpose Places and the Need of New Place*

Whereas the sofa in the traditional Turkish house is a place for gathering, the room is a place that is multipurpose where actions like for eating, sitting, sleeping, having showers are made [3], [9]. Depending upon the changes in the social structure, these actions reveal the necessity of a new place. These places planned private, semiprivate or outward form the parts of service, living and sleeping of the house [18].

New actions coming out nowadays lead to the necessity of new places. For instance, the actions such as doing the laundry, drying and so forth require a laundry room and the room where exercising is made require a sport room, taking up a hobby requires a hobby room or working requires a work room. The functions of the parts of the houses used for multipurpose and equipment have changed and turned into privatized places (bedroom, sitting room, kid's room, kitchen, bathroom, etc.). Traditional houses cannot meet the needs of privatized places in a flexible way because of both physical insufficiencies and the aims of conserving the historical features. The house which do not meet the needs lose their users over time.

#### *F. Heading for the Modern Life*

When internal furnishing elements of traditional Turkish houses are usually analyzed, it is observed that it consists of just a simple ottoman and built-in wardrobe. All the necessary equipment is put in the wardrobe they are taken out when necessary. For instance, mattresses are laid out before going to sleep in the evening. The next morning it is folded again and removed into built-in wardrobe. Because of occupying a small place in the room folding, curving furnishing elements created enough living space. There was the idea of saving in this culture came from nomadism [18].

However, in parallel with the change in the social structure, changes have been seen in furnishing and equipment in the usage of places as a result of development of ego and new

needs. For instance, the tradition of sitting closely to the ground has been replaced by sitting high from the ground as a necessity of the era. Thus, changing living conditions has led to the need for new furniture [9]. That some folded and removed internal furnishing elements have become fixed has caused increasing the sizes of the room. Changing the actions are not only sitting. Eating on the floor, working on the floor, sleeping on the floor, lying on mattresses etc. actions have gone through the changes as needed in this era. In order to achieve a better standard of living, appropriate furniture, as well as automatic household tools and technological tools such as the ones making life easier tools began to be preferred.

In addition to the requirements of the modern age, the heating system, electrical installation, plumbing, internet, telephone etc. installations are needed. However, the interventions made to the traditional Turkish houses that are lack of this equipment can damage the historical quality of the building; this includes the long legal procedures and also requires financial sources to reorganize the installations. For these reasons, renewal works in traditional houses are not made.

According to the research made on the people living in Alaaddin Street and around it which is the traditional texture in Beypazari, Ankara, 35% of the building users are not satisfied about "physical features"; for instance, they find them too small or big, too old and having many stories. 65% of them are not satisfied about "the comfort conditions" such as their lack of wet place as a modern necessity. What is more, these participants think the traditional houses are not safe and not heated enough. The need for sheltering is the human's basic right; therefore the necessities of the traditional houses and their environment are expected to be met [19].

The traditional houses that do not adapt to today's world have been abandoned because their users claim they do not adapt to the modern era and they have the difficulty of using.

#### G. Migration

The causes of migration is as old as human history and they are invasions, wars, exiles, ecological impositions, obligatory state authorities and the desire of utilization undistributed equal economic and social opportunities. The factors such as security, job opportunities, food supply, transportation, sanitation, education, health, religion services are limited or absent caused the voluntary migration. The causes such as wars, invasions, exiles, reassignments, expropriation and so forth gave way to the forced migration [20], [21].

The migration from rural area to urban area has been effective in the abandonment of the traditional houses in the rural area. The development of industrialization, the narrowing of agricultural land by inheritance in rural areas, the agricultural workforce reduction because of increasing mechanization and its resulting in unemployment, terrorism, failure education and health services, bad climatic conditions, earthquake, fire, flood disasters, better transportation facilities in urban areas, all kinds of services and developed industry sector, urban attraction caused the migration [21]. Because of these reasons many rural settlements conserving their

traditional texture were abandoned and traditional houses began to be destroyed.



Fig. 3 A house abandoned by the effect of migration Eskihisar Village - Mugla

#### V. CONCLUSION

The change in the social structure of the society indicates continuity nowadays as in the past. In this era when the conditions, values and socioeconomic structures change and the society structure shows new shapes and arrangements, traditional houses are the bridge from the past to the future.

However, it is clearly seen that traditional houses that do not adapt the changes in a flexible way do not have users. For this to happen, traditional houses should be kept alive in their original function as a foresight of the sustainable conservation understanding and they need to be renewed according to the modern living conditions to meet the needs of the necessity of houses. Thus, the historical, cultural and ethnographical values that traditional houses carry can be transferred to the next generations. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that these renewal works are interventions. Protecting the document value of the building and its original value should be based upon. Conservation policies, supports and encouragements should be developed all over the country in order to conserve these buildings reflecting the family structure, social, economic, cultural understanding, and lifestyle in short, of the society who lived in a particular era.

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