



## **A Study on the Booming Architecture in Ankara with the Concept of "Dwelling" of Heidegger: Yeşiltepe Buildings**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the dwelling concept formed by the Modern movement in Ankara between 1950-1960 within the scope of "Yeşiltepe Buildings" and it evaluates this era with the phenomenological approach of Heidegger. This approach, as a criticism of the idea of Cartesian space, presents an approach that gives particular importance to the human being experiencing the space (as Dasein) and human perception and it also enables to question the understanding of singular space that has been introduced with Modernism. The alienation that has been imposed by Modernism has been appraised with the opinions of Heidegger in this research that has been carried out within this scope. Structured query has been limited to the "Yeşiltepe Buildings" and the new life style introduced by the new order has been analyzed via this example. The study is an area study where qualitative research techniques have been applied.

**Keywords:** Modernism, Heidegger, Yeşiltepe Buildings, Dwelling, Modern Turkish Architecture

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

It is possible to study the economic, political and sociocultural reflections of a country over the structures built within that period. In such a study, each period provides continuity between its predecessor and successor. Yet, after 1950s a disjuncture in the architectural continuity is observed in Turkey. Especially when Ankara, the capital is concerned, First and Second National Architectures have been replaced with uncommon structures that have been formed in a highly different way. A similar situation was observed all around in the period; when Modernism standardized not only the places it built, but also the lifestyles. "Phenomenology", the prominent philosophical trend of the period and Heidegger, who played an important role in its development, brought in different approaches to this new order with his opposing views and critical point of view.

"Experience" lies in the very core of Heidegger's ideas and human having the experience stands out with the concept of dasein (subject). Heidegger described an understanding of experience with human in the centre and had discourses on both object and space. In the book *Poetry, Language, Thought*, in chapter entitled *Thing*, first emphasis was put on the possibilities (technology) the period brought misleading the "nearness" perception of the people; and it was stated that the concept of nearness could not be measured with distances but determined through the interaction between the human and the object. With this approach it could be observed that the modern places, that do not touch to people; not have a foothold in the feelings and thoughts cannot approach to people. These places that have been standardized and that do not reflect a national, local or regional language create basis for people to become alienated to their own identity and self. In parallel with the opinions of Simmel, it is possible to interpret one of the consequences of this alienation as "inner borders becoming walls, created by the narrowing borders of places" (Simmel, 2015). In other words, people living in places physically "closer" to each other, broaden the borders existing within themselves and get further to each other. 'Narrowness of the space and closeness of the body make the mental distance visible.' Thus, people alienate not only to the place or environment they live in, but also to each other and becomes lonely in a world, where they become indifferent to everything.



This study reads the change in Ankara between 1950-1960 upon this basis over Yeşiltepe Buildings with the literature of Heidegger. The concepts of Heidegger has been taken as a tool in this reading and the depth content of his opinions have not been included, since a "literal Heidegger reading, requires a determined intention". His texts are not arduous novels or proses, but a texture with the rhyme and voice of a poem, through which the view of Heidegger, where an ontological stand surrenders itself to a phenomenological world semantics, that saturates to all disciplines" (Keskin, 2011). The study includes a field study independent from this texture and the concepts brought by Heidegger determine the perspective thereof.

### **Overview to the Social Structure and Impact on the Architectural Development of the Period**

It is important first to know the political and cultural structure of the period in order understand the architecture that developed in Ankara after 1950s and the Yeşiltepe Buildings, as an example of this architecture, since the architectural formation of the period is interpreted as representative and solidified values of the state of mind of the period. Within this context, the understanding of 1950s and after can be said to be developed on two basis; "one, democracy project, despite all wrong and deficient definitions; and two, economy based development, growth, improvement move (...) called active modernization"(Kahraman, 2007). In development of these two basic ideas, two-party system, appearing in 1940s, introduction of Liberalism to the country in 1950s and the economic order imposed by it play an important role. Political developments as the close relationship in that period with United States of America and Marshall Plan, promoting the foreign capital with laws, dispatching troops to Korea and accession of Turkey to NATO have been the turning points also in terms of architectural development. This political framework also triggered the structure and the needs of the society. Building broad highways provided for a different model in transportation and created the need for means of transport that did not have an alternative in domestic production. Imported tractors and various agricultural machineries resulted in a decrease in need of labour force and the population that became unemployed, migrated to cities. Provision of accommodation for the increasing population triggered the "shanty" formation that was the search of the order of the village in the city. Under these circumstances, the "law on cooperative" was introduced for the accommodation of population and that opened the way for multi-storey collective housings. The structures built in this period were to determine the lifestyle of middle class in Ankara and played a role in the "modernization" process of the society. "Public space in general terms and urban space in physical terms built in that period is a classroom; primarily the society is taught there. There is also a space for representation; people to be trained and taught would be shown and represented there" (Tanyeli, 2011)

Structures built between 1950-1960 forms a breaking point both in physical and sociological terms. As stated by Tapan, it is not possible to find a positive approach in these structures, since the architecture of the period demonstrates an inconsistency with the chronological point of view. Facade applications on public places were simple and rational reflecting international style in 1950s, while it had used to be a model in 2nd National Architecture Trend before. Plans and shape analysis of structures are prismatic and rectangular as well as squares are dominant in settlement plan. Grid system is common on the facades (Tapan, 2005). This understanding, as stated by Tapan, can be interpreted as an approach that is not national and does not contain regional values for a country like Turkey, which is a mosaic of cultures. Each housing within this perspective also serves for this purpose and plays a determinant role on the daily life of the society. With the impact of artificial abundance that comes along with the liberal understanding, the housing as well do not touch to the culture and understanding of the society and impose a foreign order. The international architectural language in the public places has appeared in the housing typology of the period and multi-storey buildings have been built as housing.

For the purposes of a better reading of the changing housing typology, it is necessary to study the housing approaches and productions before 1950s. As indicated by Tankut, who



analysed this process, the population of Ankara exceeded 100.000 in 1932 and the population could not fit in the urban environment. Daily newspapers of the time show that only 1/20 of the need for housing could be covered. According to the statements of Tankut, the discussion on the concept of apartment blocks and conflict between apartment blocks and houses with garden appeared for the first time in 1933, in this period. The people of the time thought that the apartment blocks would not suit to Ankara and the city would lose its meaning. According to a survey carried out by Ulus newspaper, public accepted the houses with garden and did not want the apartment blocks (Tankut, 1993). Within and after that period, low storey apartment blocks were built, but those were harmonized with the urban fabric in terms of architectural perspective. First difference in this tendency was the Saracoglu neighbourhood, which was the first collective housing project of Republic of Turkey and was built with the governmental initiative. This building, too, referred to traditional Turkish housing with features as wide eaves and facade overhangs; and maintains the architectural continuity confirming with the general structure of Second National Architecture Style.

Along the process, after 1950s, it can be seen that apartment blocks became the dominant housing type and the 3-4 storey apartment blocks were replaced with those, which are higher and with more storeys and in an order that is disconnected from the local language. In this understanding the place is nothing more than a material structure involving quantitative measures within Cartesian context and generating a certain geometrical order. Defined goal was to answer the need for housing in a quicker and international method, and ignoring the architectural continuity and the outlook of the city. This goal imposed to the individuals an undefined, standardized life that did not belong to the society, through the city. In this kind of life, "uni-dimensionality on the things modern people produce is balanced with multidimensionality of the things they consume"(Simmel, 2015). People creating a standard structure culture within this balance and ignoring all structure norms of their own and the society they belong to; and consume their own identity and memory in the "universe of metas". Public places built with such an understanding pose a threat for the loss of social identity and memory and the private places, that is the living spaces create an obstacle for subjective identity, and the autonomy of existence. And according to Heidegger (cited by Aydınli), place that is the object of traditional architecture gains existence as a reality dependent on human and based on a view of world in depth. Abstract existence of place, perception of place, language of place, cultural and social dimension of place explain the ontological wholeness of space formation (Aydınli, 2004). Reflection of lifestyle to the space makes it transform it into a "place", where there is life. Space that comes into forth as an object of consumption in the architecture of today has gradually been transformed into an understanding that contains superficiality and homogeneity.

## **2. YEŞİLTEPE BUILDINGS (1955)**

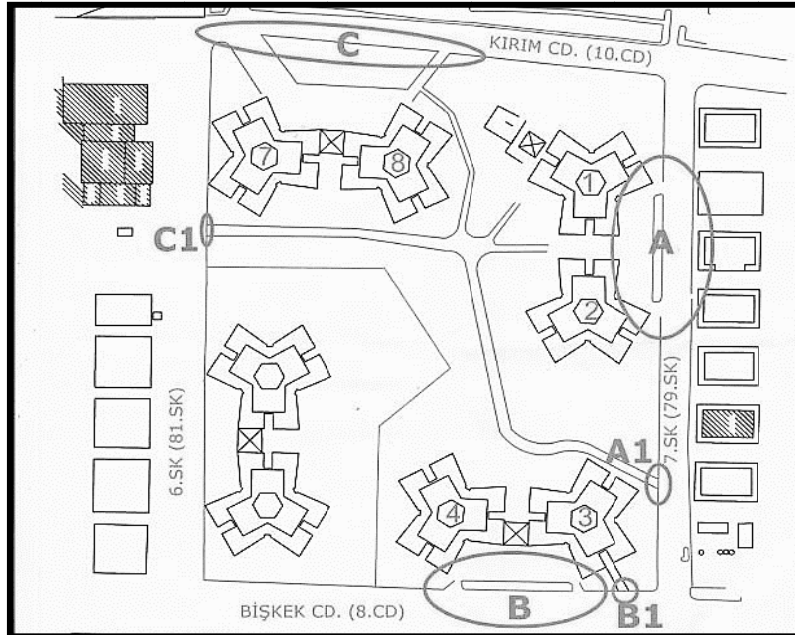
Main reason for the Yeşiltepe Buildings to be selected as the place of study is that this structure has been aimed to change the lifestyle that does not belong to the society with the formal features it contains. The structure represents an apartment block typology that is an example of modern approach of the period with its both positive and negative features, when analysed in a phenomenological point of view. Yeşiltepe Buildings, also known as Yeşiltepe Cooperative, consists of 6 blocks of 9 storeys; and is located in Emek district of Ankara. "Yeşiltepe Buildings were designed by graduates of Academy of State Fine Arts, Rahmi Bediz and Demirtaş Kamçıl in 1955 and the building process started by firms from Israel-Italy in the following years" (Url-1).

Yeşiltepe Buildings has brought an unusual prospect to the city with its multi-storey structure. It drew a vertical line to the architecture of the period, which broadened on a horizontal level. This created a different experience for the urban people, who could not give up on the culture of houses with garden. This change demonstrates a contrary situation to the views of Heidegger. As cited by Sharr from Heidegger, a building should be built according to the features of the place and the residing people... shape of a building reflects the value and belief system of those people. Because dwelling in the place, where



the people identified and built a connection with is the natural manner of human existence. The basis of building structures is that it makes dwelling possible. It is the only way for people to gain a place (Sharr, 2010). From this perspective, it can be seen that the Yeşiltepe Buildings did not qualify as a dwelling for the people of the period. Because it could not reply to the needs of the people of the period; and it served to a utopia with its physical features as terrace, servant room and multiple storeys. Yet considering today, when the structures built within and after that period are concerned, it could be seen that Yeşiltepe Buildings was in an effort to maintain some traditional concepts, though it was built for modern people. It could be seen that free spaces were left for the utilization of the user in the design of the structure. These buildings located on a broad and green field draws an open, spacious, connecting earth and sky and encapsulating view.

Yeşiltepe Buildings consists of 3 pieces spread in the field of apartment blocks. Each piece is formed of two masses, reminding of a star connected to each other. As seen in Picture 1, different planning scheme and the establishment on a wide field of the apartment block is remarkable. Establishment of the blocks on a green field, definition of a space with the structures sided that can be experienced, is an "extensio" with the approach of Heidegger. Within this context, people can find an outer space, which can be experienced, through narrow paths around the structures and sporadically placed sitting elements. This situation can be deemed as a reflection in the modern life of the "street culture" that belongs to the former lifestyle of the society and the feeling to exist within a whole. Therefore, as thought during the designing process, it can be seen that these areas are effectively used today. It is also possible to read a similar extension within the structures. There is a hexagon traverse space in the middle of each of the structures, resembling a three-stranded star, illuminating the storeys of the apartment block in the plan (Picture 2). This space has not been covered with any roof and has been left open. Space within this relation, in connection with the outer environment, transfers the outer atmosphere to each floor; and has become an intermediary to live all atmospheric events not only in exterior of the structure but also in the interiors. Snow or rain outside can also be felt in the interior traverse and the residents can live the atmosphere out also in the interiors. This space also is an interim space that carries the neighbourhood from within the floors to between the floors, as a common basis, where 6 apartments meet. Efforts to be included in the daily flow of life can still be read today. As can be seen in Picture 4 and 5, residents in the block maintain the effort to settle to these places without even realizing it, by personalizing these interim spaces with sitting elements, coffee tables and plants. These places qualify as a bridge between the house as interior and exterior as they are in the "middle". These interim places are possible to be found in the concept of "front the house" in the traditional lifestyle. Hisarlıgil and Uluoğlu, state the "creating" effect of the "interims" in the establishment of spatio-temporal continuity; and describe the trace of interim spaces by "front the houses" metaphor in the traditional dwellings. According to Hisarlıgil and Uluoğlu, interims described as front the houses are places that "provide possibilities within the daily life and gathers the thing before it together instead of formations that are preformed (designed), impose a specific function and draw sharp lines". "Being in the middle" with this approach is being neither home nor out (Hisarlıgil and Uluoğlu, 2008).



**Picture 1.** Apartment Block Planning of Yeşiltepe Buildings (Url-1).



**Picture 2.**Yeşiltepe Buildings(Personal Archive).



**Picture 3.** Well of Yeşiltepe Buildings (Personal Archive).



**Picture 4.** Well of Yeşiltepe Buildings (Personal Archive).



**Picture 5.** Well of Yeşiltepe Buildings (Personal Archive).

On the last floor of the structure, there is a terrace designed to reply to the need of socializing of the society of the period. Based on this feature it can be said that the terrace is only one of the design decisions to reflect the transition-threshold of the period the best. Because the people, who detached off a single house lifestyle and dived into the rush of modern work life, faced with different sociocultural problems with the apartment typology spreading. People have tried to overcome these problems more with activities of socializing



or gathering and have forgotten the longing for the old neighbourhood, relatives and friendships with these gatherings. Kamçıl and Bediz provided the concept of terrace to the apartment typology in Turkey, to gain these gatherings. Through terraces, people would be able to spend time together and the relationship between neighbours in the traditional culture would not get lost. This solution brought by architects via this approach, describes the concept of "gathering" from Heidegger, rather than resembling to it. Terrace is in reality up, "in the sky". However with the new solution, terrace is "earth" for people. It merges the "earth" and the "sky" and makes them neighbouring to each other. Terrace brings the 'mortal' in the 'sky', around the 'earth' together. Terrace has a phenomenological meaning far more important and beyond the technical details or analysis. Terrace is not very high above the ground also in mathematical terms. Or on the contrary, the earth is not very lower to the terrace. However, when people experience terrace, the distance of high or low becomes a part of life. The same way as in the "bridge" example of Heidegger; terrace "stops" the person. It freezes the picture the daily life and detachment off the ground brings. Within this context, terrace freezes and frames the negativity of daily life even if for a short while. As it can be seen, Kamçıl and Bediz are one of the rare designers, who could envisage this picture in that transition period. They have created places that make the dwelling possible in the structures, which they did not want the individuals to perceive only as a "shelter". Because "places comes into existence only by the "place" perceived with existence, not by the "space" perceived mathematically" (Heidegger, 1971). As a result of this experience, if the people can see the invisible and feel the inexistent with the "building of the place", "dwelling" can be deemed as completed. Within this context, Yeşiltepe Buildings as well has been settled by experience and has become a dwelling.

## **CONCLUSION**

Place in a Cartesian thinking is accepted in its material existence and its semantic value is deferred. Yet, adequacy of this approach is a topic of discussion on a level, where the human, the creator of semantic world, exists. When the ideas of Heidegger are taken into account within this perspective, it can be seen that he sought for this subject in the concept of "dwelling", where the place gains a meaning. First two questions the philosopher asks in the book entitled Poetry, Language, Thought, on chapter Building, Dwelling, Thinking are; "What is dwelling?" "How does a structure become a part of the dwelling concept?". The philosopher sought for the answers of these questions throughout the chapter; and stated that the dwelling could be possible through the meanings of structures. Thought and meaning of the structures do not appear through construction techniques or rules, but through what is left behind, and the impact behind. Therefore, not all structures have the qualification of a dwelling.

Lack of housing occurred due to the increase in population in Ankara has led to a transposition from houses with gardens to high, multi-storey apartment blocks. However, this change can be summarized as a break in the usual order and living in a structure, where no attachment could be set for the people of the period. This reminds the discourses of Heidegger on dwelling deficiency. Heidegger states that "the most important deficiency in the modern world is the broken relationship between building and dwelling rather than the housing production" ... because "building should not be perceived as a mere object of admiration or product of a building management process. Actually, building is primarily a part of the continuing building and dwelling experience of human" (Sharr, 2010). In this study, changing housing typology in Ankara between years 1950-1960 has been emphasized; and Yeşiltepe Buildings has been given as an example to this typology. Within this context, the inclusion of Yeşiltepe Buildings as a dwelling to the world of experience of human has been analysed through some formal variables. The green field designed in the general block planning of the structure, empty extension with an hexagon shape created in each structure and the terrace on the last floor of the structure are each a "possibility" opened to the experience of people. These creations demonstrate that the concept of "togetherness" can exist in a modern housing as well, and dwelling with this concept can be realized.





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