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## Social and Cultural Centers

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**Abstract:** To bring together the individuals who are living in the metropolitan cities with high levels of education and unit them under the same roof with respect to their common areas of interest is a big issue in Turkey. Until 1960s the big cities in Turkey are taking a big migration. The new comers who are different in their social constitution and life style, have problems of adaptation to the cities. That's why it is necessary in our country to operate socio-cultural facilities to solve these two big problems. A study was carried out in İzmir the third biggest town in western part of Turkey with a population of more than two million. Two hundred fifty citizen families and two hundred fifty immigrant families were observed with a questionnaire from two socio culturally distinct sections of the city. One of the areas chosen are located and the other one was a neighboring area, Omekkooy, which is inhabited by immigrants of 1960s who have very low levels of income and education. According to the results the program schemes have been formed which is necessary for the architects to organize and design their projects.

**Key words:** Community centers, social interaction, socio-cultural corruption

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### INTRODUCTION

In our country as well as all over the world, the socio-economic and political changes brought about by industrialisation and its consequence-urbanisation have led to the development of socio-cultural environments. Technology-based education, information, shopping, entertainment recreation and communication, backed up by new media such as the television and the PC have, for the sake of the convenience of participation, inflicted intro-version and a home-oriented industry, re-shaping the definition of social environment. While the focus/center of social pursuits have shifted from community to home, the community spirit and social integrity have faced dissolution and social interactions among individuals have weakened. It is only possible through psychologically and physically fit individuals coming together that societies can resist dissolution and be preserved. A healthy society relies on a social system, sharing and creating together. Today, in our developing and EU-candidate country, social interactions among the individuals living in big cities (urban centers) have lessened as a result of moderization and peoples spiritual, physical and intellectual constitutions are blunted by individualism. Senior individuals of the society face many hardships, particularly after retirement, while trying to find a leisure activity. Along with the unemployed youth, most individuals are drawn into depression due to the psychological and physical vacuum. In those urban areas where higher living standards are observed, individuals live isolated and introvert lives-under the same roof, yet

not knowing each other; insensitive towards their environment and events and deprived of sharing, helping and socialization skills. While it is already a big issue to bring together these individuals with high levels of education and unite them under the same roof with respect to their common areas of interest, we encounter a new problem, the dilemma of rural and urban as a socio-cultural problem, in addition to the hardships of modernity. The migration from villages and small towns into big cities (urban centers) have brought together communities with as large a population and an area as those of villages within the urban area. The adversities and clashes between the urban citizens and these new-comers who are different in their social constitution, life style, behaviour and way of thinking-have, since the dawn of migrations until today, given rise to the citizens problems of adaptation to the city, which can be put down to their relatively smaller size in the urban population. The urban citizen has shut in isolating himself from the social constitution. This is why in different areas of urban centers different life styles, different cultures and different conventions prevail. Lower levels of education among the new comers widens the gap between the urban citizens and these people. The immigrants, with low income and education levels along with their difference in conventions, beliefs, habits and life styles, show a similar reaction to that of the settled urban citizens.

Man is the best example to meet the definition of a being with the ability to laugh and socialize. Sociability arises from the urge to mutually fulfill the biological and physical needs. This urge leads to the formation of

certain groups (the family, being the primary example), which consequently calls for new space as a result of the family/housing relationship<sup>[1]</sup>.

The ultimate and most binding of these centers can be defined as socio-cultural centers or, in other words, community centers. Offering various activities, these centers work to improve social interactions and to develop the spiritual, physical and intellectual constitutions of individuals of any age, race, religion, interests and skills while helping to create a healthy society. Such activity centers play an important role in developed societies. In these societies, where the gap between education levels of different social strata is not so wide as in our country, establishing socio-cultural centers is an integral component in accomplishing the goal to save members of the society from individualism and to enhance social interaction. We can encounter very sophisticated and well-established examples of these centers in almost every state in the USA.

These facilities, called community centers in the USA, first started to give service in 1915, in place of social centers. The centers have found the driving force to solve social problems concerning the community within social settlements and been supported/funded by various social schemes. Some of the facilities get support from the local government while others are funded by civic community organizations<sup>[2]</sup>. We can see hundreds of examples of these non-profit establishments all of which have the common goal of meeting recreational, educational, social and cultural needs of people; bringing people together without any discrimination of gender, language, religion or class and improving and upholding the social interactions among people. The importance attached to these facilities is clearly indicated in the fact that the urban center, Seattle, the USA, houses 24 community centers on its own.

Our observations of developed societies show the abundance of activities such as educational and developmental programs aimed at babies and children or those giving parental guidance. Starting only a few years after birth, babies are being trained, in the company of their parents, through activities that help develop their mental and physical constitutions. This not only helps child development but also aids in raising parents awareness in childcare.

The intensity is also observed in educational, cultural, artistic and recreational programs that are aimed at school-age children. Study programs, in their out-of-school hours help the youth with their schooling while offering parents the advantages of financial convenience and psychological support. Excursions

contribute to the socialization of the youth as well as to their education while they are traveling and seeing new things. Sports activities, which are also quite intensive, help build their self-esteem and team sports earns them the pleasure of co-operation<sup>[3]</sup>.

It also deserves attention that programs engaging adults in sports, artistic or excursion activities are quite numerous due to the high level of education in the society.

There is a shortage of such facilities in our country. Although Halkevleri (literally translated Public Homes), which opened in 1932, might show a slight resemblance, after they closed or changed their content of activities in 1950, these centers could no longer meet societies needs<sup>[4]</sup>. It is, however, of vital importance that similar facilities operate and gain extent in our country, when we regard two significant criteria. These socio-cultural community centers should be established in order to, firstly, bring together the well-educated individuals under the same roof with respect to their common areas of interest and secondly, to help raise the economic and education levels of those living in shanty towns through mainly vocational programs and close the gap between these two sections of the society.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Our country is troubled by two distinct problems. One of these is that social interactions among urban citizens are weakening as a result of modernization. Individualism and privacy are constantly dissolving peoples spiritual, physical and intellectual constitutions. Consequently, individuals who are insensitive towards their environment and lack the skills to interact keep growing in number, even to the extent of threatening the health of the society.

The other problem is the difficulty of adaptation to socio-cultural life of the big city and the new environment of the immigrants from villages, who have very low levels of income and education and different ways of thinking and behaviour. These hardships not only cause misunderstandings in the new environment, psychological depressions and unhappiness but also generate risk elements for the social constitution.

The need for a comprehensive study has long been felt in our country to determine the quality of socio-cultural centers, which can lessen the above mentioned problems and the nature of activities to be offered by them, which would be tailored in view of peoples needs, be easily reached by all social strata and help develop the Turkish society. All these aspects considered, a study was carried out in the urban center of İzmir with the aim of



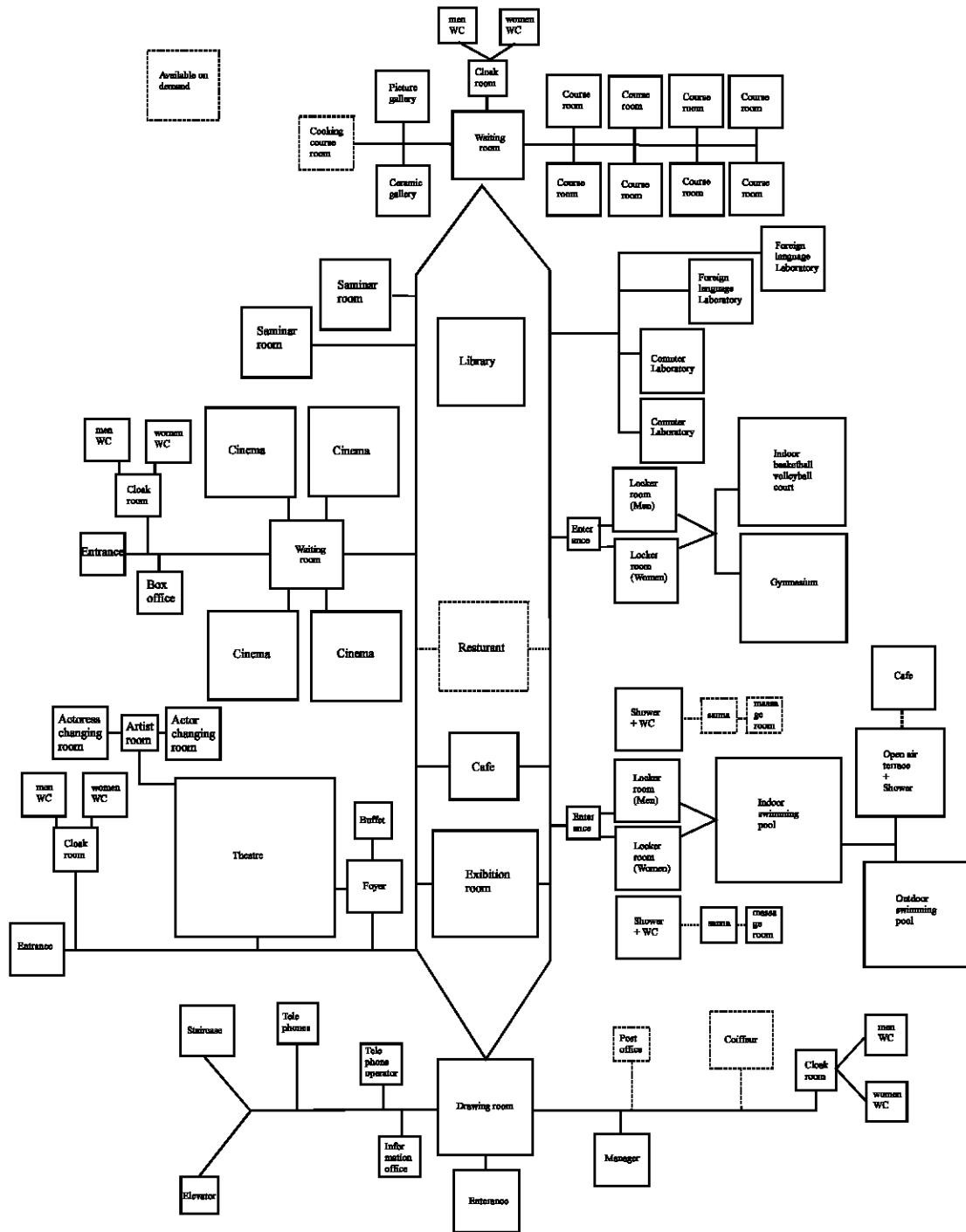


Fig. 2: Spatial Relations in Community Centers for Sociocultural Under Developed Communities

settlement (1300 in population) was 464 for the same age group and same number of house holds. The survey aimed to determine through questionnaires the socio-cultural structures of both groups and peoples

expectations regarding education, sports and cultural activities-which has helped us develop a program scheme concerning what the Community Centers should be like in Turkey.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained as a result of this survey has shown that half the population in Ornekkoy have only completed primary education, are unemployed and in economic hardships and that their sociocultural expectations involve vocational courses for job/skill acquirement, informative courses in health awareness and educational ones. In Mavisehir, however, as opposed to Ornekkoy, more than half the population are made up of individuals who have higher-education qualifications and therefore, higher employment rates and income levels. Their expectations involve leisure activities and/or programs which offer health information. Community center program scheme which has been formed, in the light of the obtained data and public demand, to meet the needs of our society (Fig. 1 and 2).

According to the results of the questionnaires, the demands from both sides have complied with our estimates. The program schemes have been formed regarding the large number of needs revealed by questionnaires. In the schemes, the number of spaces for public courses designed for communities with low sociocultural standards is accordingly larger whereas such spaces are reduced in number in socioculturally privileged communities, to be taken up by additional spaces for seminars and conferences, which is the general demand. By keeping other spaces fixed in the scheme, it has been considered that the adaptation of the immigrants to the city will be faster and smoother.

## CONCLUSIONS

The general aim of this study concerns is to present spatial design using quantitative statements while the specific aim is to define socio-cultural spaces within the frame of coherent, rational and valid acceptances/confirmations and also to state in quantitative terms the socio-cultural economic indicators exposed by questionnaires.

In the survey, it was considered that the time-period spanning 1980 through today would suffice to observe the socio-economic and cultural changes. The questionnaire, which complemented our study, consisted of 4 different parts. The 1st question of Part I revealed the number of people living the household. The 2nd and 3rd questions aimed at determining the ages and genders, which would later be helpful to the classification of following parts. The questions 4 through 9 found out about individuals marital status, education level and accordingly, job security, place of employment and

monthly income of the household in order to determine the social structure of families. In Part II of the questionnaire carried out in Ornekkoy, it was intended to determine which places of origin the immigrants mostly came from and the status of these places/locations with respect to administrative divisions. In this way, it was demonstrated which regions Izmir received most of its immigrants from and what percentage of the new-comers were rural-urban immigrants.

It was also aimed to determine the percentages of the people with urban or rural origin among the inhabitants of Mavisehir Housing Estate and whether Izmir received migrants from other cities and if so, in which quantities.

In the third part of the survey, the determinants were the residence ownership, type of residence and usable areas, inside the residence, which are all solid cultural indicators of social structure and change as well as social status.

The aim in the third part was to obtain the measurable data which were suitable for testing the method. It is however, a fact that the contents and the quantity of indicators which can elucidate the lifestyles, behaviour, social and cultural structures of a group of people go beyond what has been designed here. Our aim is to gather information about the social structure by means of exemplifying several determinants. This determinant is the socio-cultural structure, the content of which comprises education, culture and sports.

In the example of Ornekkoy, one of the sub determinants with educational content targeted to clarify the issue of education, which is an effective component in the lives of those who have experienced migration. The fact that urbanization and modernization processes imply a raise in socio-economic status particularly in developing countries will lead to a gradual increase of the educational needs of the youth who have grown up among those demographic sections that have been effected by such processes.

On these grounds, the part with educational content was concerned with expectations of the individuals according to the age groups and aims at finding out about their deprivations, wishes and the type of educational activities they need.

Classification was based on the beginning of school age and comprises four different age groups :

Children	aged 6-13
Teenagers	aged 13-22 (post- secondary school to university graduation)
Adults	aged 22-50
Seniors	aged 50 and over

In the example of Mavisehir, it was aimed to reveal the degree of the needs of both young people as to educational activities that would give an update on technological advances and of seniors as to leisure activities, or to find out whether or not they needed activities at all.

The second sub-determinant was concerned with recreational activities, which reflect the cultural structure and deals with the presence or absence of these and the demands in this domain.

Sports activities, which are indispensable for both spiritual and physical development of individuals and crime prevention among the youth made up the third sub-determinant.

The difference between rural and urban sports activities was determined as well as the sport activities that could be or were wished to be performed by people of rural origin.

The first part of the questionnaire designed for both socio-culturally developed and underdeveloped societies aimed at defining the social and cultural structures in the society. The second part, on the other hand, revealed the expectations and demands as to the domains of education, culture and sports of these groups, which had previously been determined.

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