



Transformation of Ottoman Neighborhoods into Modern Ones in Edirne

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The concept of neighborhood has been changed greatly from the Ottoman to modern periods. During the Ottoman period, the mahalle was an economic and social identity which, as far as as the daily lives of its inhabitants were concerned, delineated their primary cultural milieu (families, religious communities, etc.). However, modern mahalles were defined only by the administrative boundaries. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the characteristic differences between Ottoman and modern neighborhoods in Edirne.

The city of Edirne is divided into eleven districts on today. These districts are further broken down administratively into 24 neighborhoods (mahalle) that are overseen by neighborhood administrators called "Muhtar". The neighborhood is generally classified according to three separate groupings. 1. The former outer neighborhoods of Edirne proper (Karaağaç, Yıldırım, Yeniimaret) 2. Edirne's central neighborhoods (Kaleiçi, Ayşekadın, Kırıyık, Çavuşbey, Sabuni, Taşlık) 3. Edirne's new neighborhoods (Hacılarezanı, İstasyon)

During the Ottoman period, the mahalle was always both a basic urban administrative unit and a social and economic entity. However, these two meanings never completely overlapped. The centrally determined administrative network of Ottoman Edirne and the web of local identities did not necessarily coincide. This situation was the same in the 15th and 16th centuries as well as in the modernizing 19th century. The perception of social environment and their self-definition in relation to their immediate surrounding was always more important than the religious/administrative network imposed upon the cityscape for purposes of control or collection of taxes.

In the residential quarters of the Ottoman city, the imam of the local mosque was considered up until the Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century, as a local headman. He had both administrative and religious powers and duties. He also acted as a guarantor for every local inhabitant. Any newcomer who wanted to build a house in the mahalle had to have the imam's approval, provide a guarantor, and also produce proof of his solvency. Therefore, the mosque was the social core of the mahalle. After the 1830s, muhtars were appointed as local headmen as a result of westernization movement. The process of transformation of authority was generally smooth and a good example of this transfer can be observed in the historical neighborhoods of Edirne.

During the modern times, the concept of mahalle has changed totally due to suburbanization and rural migration. Identification with the neighborhoods weakened due to their heterogeneous characteristics and lack of social interaction. Population increase and multi-storey buildings break the social interaction among the individuals. Modern living conditions, heavy working hours, cultural differences of the people coming from different provinces and increasing the gap between the different socio-economic groups interrupted the social interaction among individuals. Thus, changes in physical, social, economic, cultural and demographic conditions have contributed to the transformation of neighborhoods in Edirne.

KEY WORDS: Transformation, neighborhoods, social interactions, Edirne.