

**TRANSFORMATION OF OTTOMAN NEIGHBORHOODS INTO MODERN
ONES IN EDİRNE**

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Abstract

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

Today the city of Edirne is divided into eleven districts. 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 grouping: 1. The former outer neighborhoods of Edirne proper (Karaağaç, Yıldırım, Yeniimaret) 2. Edirne’s central neighborhoods (Kaleiçi, Ayşekadın, Kıyık, Çavuşbey, Sabuni, Taşlık) 3. Edirne’s new neighborhoods (Hacılarezanı, İstasyon).

During the Ottoman period, the mahalle was 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 it was in the modernizing 19th century. The perception of social environment and its self-definition in relation to their immediate surrounding were always more important than the religious/administrative network imposed upon the cityscape for purposes of control or collection of taxes.

Up until the Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century, the imam of the local mosque in the residential quarters of the Ottoman city was considered to be both a religious leader and the local headman, holding 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.

The early "19th century saw the first trends towards westernization and after the 1830s, as a result of this movement movement, *muhtars*, administrators who did not have religious duties, were appointed as local headmen. 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.

Following the establishment of the secular republic in the early twentieth century, the concept of mahalle changed totally due to the reorganization of public administration, suburbanization and rural migration. Resident identification with the neighborhoods weakened due to these neighborhood's more heterogeneous characteristics and the resulting lack of social interaction. The increase in population increase and the advent of multi-storey buildings served to break down the traditions of social interaction among neighbors. Modern living conditions, heavy working hours, cultural differences of the people coming from different provinces and the increasing 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.

1. INTRODUCTION

Edirne is important as a border city as well as a cultural and university center . It also has historic importance since it served as one of the Ottoman Empires's three

historical capital cities (along with Bursa and Istanbul). As an historical city, Edirne has undergone substantial changes to fit to the lifestyles of different cultures, administrative regimes and spatial demand of its growing population. Thus, this paper investigates the transformation of Ottoman neighborhoods into modern ones in Edirne with respect to social and physical characteristics.

Edirne was established by the Romans and despite the extensive renovations during the Byzantine period, the city had not lost its Roman character at the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1361 (Kuran, 1996). Moreover, it retained its classical features until the middle of the 19th century. The historical part of the city was surrounded by walls and this walled city was the home of administrators and artisans. Lower class people lived in the periphery of the city within orchards and fields. In the middle of the 19th century the walls were torn down, with the stones used for the new constructions.

As was true for the other Ottoman cities, during the Ottoman period the city consisted of many small, self-governing neighborhoods (Behar, 2003). The 19th century Tanzimat Reforms (1839), however, implemented a transition from informal administration whereby the imam of a neighborhood mosque would register marriages and supervise property governed by religious endowments to one where a civil servant, the muhtar who was appointed by the municipal government, would keep a more detailed reckoning of people moving in and out of the quarter, marriages, births, property transfers, and so on (Behar, 2003). Today, from these records it is possible to learn about the population of the neighborhoods, as well as changes in their economic situations.

The meanings of an Ottoman neighborhood were described comprehensively by Kivrim (2009). According to him, (i) it was a place where people with the same features lived together; (ii) it was a community of people praying in the same mosque or other religious institution and trying to solve their problems on their own; and (iii) it was a community responsible for paying taxes.

In the wake of the 15th century Ottoman conquest, the population of the certain settlements increased and Muslim neighborhoods started to develop around religious complexes which also included social facilities (Aksoy, 1968; Aktüre, 1978; Al-Hemaidi, 2001). Religious buildings have always been one of the integral components of the urban layout of the Ottoman settlement (Cerasi, 1999). A typical feature of the Ottoman neighborhood was that it comprised people of varying socio-economic backgrounds. Cybriwsky (1978) described the general characteristics of the social aspects of neighborhood change.

This characteristic of mixed backgrounds also gradually changed during the modern period. In Edirne, it was observed that the more wealthy families moved away from their poorer neighbors, choosing to move into modern housing projects that were built in the city suburbs (Erdoğan, et al, 2007). This paper investigates the changes in the physical, demographic and social conditions of Edirne and the cultural and economic development that have contributed to the transformations of neighborhoods and their adjustment to the modernization of lifestyles in this city.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section two describes the physical, social and administrative characteristics of the historical neighborhoods of Edirne, while section three is devoted to a description of the urban structure, social, administrative and demographic characteristics of the modern neighborhoods of Edirne. The final section includes a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

2. EDIRNE'S OLD NEIGHBORHOODS

In Ottoman settlement patterns, the city and towns are based on clusters of neighborhood units. When the Ottomans first moved into the former Roman lands of European Thrace, the religious leaders—sheiks, dervishes, and canonists – who accompanied the conquerors founded neighborhoods bearing their own names in Edirne. It was in these neighborhoods that various personages established religious lodges and other religious institutions. In addition, the development of the

Ottoman city was significantly boosted by construction and improvements ordered by the successive sultans, who ranked in the city's first-degree position, and by high-ranking state officials of second and third degree positions.

The primary method of development was a direct result of the construction of charitable institution administered by a charitable foundation. *“Wakfs (charitable foundations) played an important role in the process of transition to stable settlement both in Anatolia and Rumelia. This highly organized institution of the Ottoman Turks was not found in other Islamic countries”* (Yenen,1992). These charitable institutions played major roles in the establishment and development of Edirne. Kazancıgil (1991) tells us that during the first two hundred years following the conquest of the city by the Turks, the city took on the appearance of a highly developed city with new neighborhoods and districts occupied by Ottoman civil servants.

The neighborhood constituted the smallest unit in the highly organized Ottoman Empire, but while it was small, it also provided its residents with religious, social, cultural, and medical benefits and served as a source of identity. *Neighborhoods constitute the basic settlement units in urban and small towns in the Turkish traditional housing pattern. There is a mosque in the centre of each neighborhood, functioning as a social unit as well as physical unit (Kuban, 1978).* A neighborhood usually developed either with residents belonging to the same religious opinion or sect, or a nomadic tribe gathering around the vicinity of the mosque or hospice. The neighborhood generally was homogenous in its reflection of religious belief and ethnic roots.

Most of Edirne's earliest residents of Edirne were villagers who had migrated to the city but who were still involved in agricultural pursuits. These villagers settled in the far corners of the city where they built their houses on large sized lots. The settlement patterns in the city center were organized and generally made up of row-houses with blank side walls. Because each ethnic group had its

own neighborhood, the Turkish Moslems lived in the Turkish neighborhood while the non-Moslems lived in their own separate neighborhoods.

At its founding, Edirne reflected two basic types of core plans. The first was the grid plan that came from the West. Dating from the Hadrian period, this grid plan (Hippopotamas, Hadrian Plan) had been used as a form of urban architecture in Roman colonial settlements and this plan was also utilized in the sixth century in Edirne's Kaleiçi (inner citadel) and its Karaağaç districts. The second urban plan conception was borrowed from the East and constitutes a plan where distinct neighborhoods formulate the core of the urban space. This form was utilized in the city's districts of Yeniimaret, Yıldırım, Kiyık, Taşlık, Sabuni, Ayşekadın, and Çavuşbey.

Today the old neighborhoods of each district have merged together to form new neighborhoods. The cores of the old neighborhoods in the nine districts, cores made up of soup kitchen, mosque, bathhouse, foundation, streets and homes, still exist in some form in various neighborhoods while they have completely disappeared in others.

As stated earlier, Edirne was established according to the norm of having a mosque in the center of the neighborhood and with the neighborhood functioning as both a physical, as well as a social unit; this type of settlement was implemented in practically all neighborhoods. Thus, in this work original foundation-based complexes (mosque, bath, fountain, soup kitchens, etc) and settlement layout were plotted on maps. Original establishments and houses shown on maps were used to determine the positions of such places whose remains can be found; further detail was provided by photographs taken. For the purpose of this article, the map covering the districts of Kiyık, Taşlık, and Sabuni was taken as an example with original establishments and neighborhood displayed on it.

3. MODERN NEIGHBORHOODS OF EDİRNE

Today the city of Edirne is divided into eleven districts (Figure 1). 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 grouping: 1. The former outer neighborhoods of Edirne proper (Karaağaç, Yıldırım, Yeniimaret) 2. Edirne’s central neighborhoods (Kaleiçi, Ayşekadın, Kıyık, Çavuşbey, Sabuni, Taşlık) 3. Edirne’s new neighborhoods (Hacılarezanı, İstasyon).

During the Republican period (which began in the first quarter of the 20th century), Edirne lost considerable population due to the impacts of the earlier wars and the growing influence of the cold war and the neighboring Eastern Bloc. However, in the late 1960s, its population started to increase due to rural migration, refugees pouring in from Balkan countries, and the impact of the university and the international highway on development (Table-1). During this period, the surface area of Edirne totaled 600 hectares with a population density of 77 persons/ h.

Table-1 Population Growth according to the years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Growth rate %</u>
1960	39.410	3.7
1965	46.091	3.4
1970	53.806	3.4
1975	63.001	3.4
1980	71.914	2.8
1985	86.909	4.2
1990	102.000	3.8
1997	108.000	0.8
2008	153.199	3.1

While Edirne's population growth rate lagged behind Turkey's overall growth rate until 1960, after that date, it increased to 3.7%, which was greater than Turkey's average population growth rate.

Today Edirne's wealth of historical and cultural legacy makes it a center for tourism, while its university and high number of educational facilities also make it a center of knowledge.

In the 1970s, the rapid population growth of Edirne propelled the construction activities in the vicinity of the city center and in the periphery, as well as in the citadel area, which constituted the most prestigious neighborhood at that time.

The destructive elements that were inherent in the 1967 zoning plan had an impact on many areas of the city, especially that of the inner citadel, while the decisions of this same zoning plan led to the development of multi-storied structures along the Istanbul direction corridor of what was then the trans-European highway, E-5. This multi-storied development changed the silhouette of the cityscape and the view of the exquisite Selimiye Mosque was altogether blocked on the approach from Istanbul.

Hundreds of examples of civil architecture in the citadel disappeared altogether as they were replaced by multi-storied structures that reflected modern architectural styles and materials. In an effort to prevent further destruction, the High Board of Valuable Structures and Monuments began registering those structures that needed preservation within the city and began efforts to prepare a new zoning plan that would replace the plan in force at the time, but despite these efforts they were not able to halt the construction of multi-story buildings (Sanrı, 1987).

In the early 1980s the construction along the Istanbul road in Edirne's westernmost side gradually began to grow in a planned fashion that was parallel to the city's linear development scheme. Witnessed in those years was a very rapid construction that developed from the outer limits of the city's inner commercial center and the core of the old city and then spread out to the district of Ayşekadin

and as far as the campus of the medical school. In the new millennium the city's linear development came to a halt at the campus of the University of Thrace and then began to spread in a northerly fashion towards the New Trans-European Highway (TEM). During the 2006-2007 period, TOKI (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) built 784 low-income housing units in an area lying north of the district of Kıyık.

This area had been included in the zoning plan, which determined the building features to be allowed. The allowance was for buildings of 3-5 stories. While the original plan called for no more than three stories, over time the city changed the zoning law and increased the limits to five stories. The plan was designed on a single parcel basis or a parcel as large as 3-5 dönüm (1 dönüm = approximately 1000 m²), a plan that caused quite a bit of confusion. The restrictions on the construction were based on the distances of front and side yards. The permits were far from being interested in the kind of construction and took no heed of spatial configurations. The architecture design was based on the kinds of lots on which the 10-apartment buildings were to be built. The property designs that resulted from Article 18 (referred to as the "dough law" as it permitted various mutations of the zoning laws) strongly affected the construction, resulting in a disorganization of housing plan and, instead of obtaining urban areas that are conducive to providing solutions, the end result was 3-5 story blocks of buildings that completely ignored basic elements of city planning rules that affect how we live, such as direction, topography and view.

Parallel to the increase in population in Edirne's new neighborhoods and the resulting need for housing, the new districts listed below gradually began to be opened for construction (Figure 2):

1. **Binevler** (1000 Houses): Established in 1975, this settlement was planned as Edirne's first cooperative housing site (Figure 3, 3a,3b,3c,3d). Because the number of members was so great, and thus the number of housing to be built also significant, and because this large a project needed careful planning and organization and also represented the first of such projects to

be undertaken in Edirne, the cooperative took a long time to complete and it was only in 1986 that the residents began to obtain their inhabitation permits. Known as the “1000 House Project,” during the first stage of the construction some construction and spatial conceptualizations that accorded with a certain aesthetic were imposed. The plan called for narrow pedestrian paths and did not permit vehicle traffic to approach the housing. The 2nd and 3rd stages of the settlement were adjacent to the E-5 Highway and parallel roads were built in the classic style. While the total site provides shelter to approximately 5000 persons, only the 1st stage was planned and constructed in a manner that considered community interrelationships. Also, while the settlement is large enough to support a primary school of its own, there is no school in the settlement. The need for schools is met with schools that were built on plots suggested in the city zoning plan. In addition, in terms of these schools’ relationships with the settlement itself and other housing in the district, no claims of safe passage to and from the settlement to the schools can be made.

2. ***Kooperatif evleri (Cooperative Housing)***: This district is comprised of buildings built by various housing cooperatives. This new settlement is not only closest to Edirne’s city center, it also benefits from the utility and transportation lines that extend from the environs of the Ayşekadın Neighborhood and the old inter-city bus terminal and go as far as the campus of Trakya University (Figure 4, 4a).
3. ***Beyüzevler (500 Houses)***: The bulk of this new neighborhood consists of housing planned and provided for government workers from various state agencies.
4. ***Fatih Sultan Mehmet Kooperatifler Birliği (Union of Cooperatives) (EFAS)***: This large cooperative was formed in 1985 on a single large parcel of land. Comprised of 740 housing units, the cooperative began to receive its inhabitation permits in 1989. Known by the acronym EFAS, the

11,000 m² housing settlement consists of 27 different registered cooperatives of 20-50 members each that have united into one formal entity, but with each maintaining their own construction and contractors. The land was re-subdivided into “islands,” making it perhaps the first of its kind in Turkey to solve a mass organization with “island divisions.” In its original form, the design was based on known principles, with vehicle traffic kept at a certain distance and pedestrian lanes separated from the streets. Adequate land was reserved for various functions, including a primary school, mosque, post office, park, and children’s playground. The housing clusters are of various dimensions, but retain inter-relationships with outer spaces that adjoin one another. While these are positive elements, unfortunately the needs for commercial spaces were ignored and no provisions were made for the shopping needs of the 3750-4000 people who reside in the settlement. Because of this, some of the ground/basement floors of housing in the settlement have begun to be transformed into “informal” shops. On the other hand, once the housing began to be used, the shape of the original utilization plans also began to change. When the residents assumed the basic costs, the tampon areas that separated vehicle and pedestrian traffic began to be misused and the “island organization” was ignored such that vehicles began to freely move between all of the buildings.

5. *Avrupa Kent kooperatifi yerleşmeleri* (Europe City Cooperative Settlement): Ranking as Edirne’s latest large housing project, this 150 housing unit settlement is located quite far away from the city center and the construction permit was granted according to the out-of-city zoning plan. The principle of the settlement is based on individual houses built on separate lots. Located ten kilometers from the city center, the settlement does not benefit from city utility lines and services. The plan also does not take into account such basic needs as a primary school.

4. Conclusion

According to DIE (Government Statistics Institute) figures how that the population growth rate of Edirne, 3.7 % annually, is higher than the county average. This growth is not due to inter-city migration as in the rest of the country, but rather due to population shifting from the rural areas to the inner city districts. This can be observed in all districts of the city. As it is, this fact is not resulting from demand on jobs, rather it stems from the desire to be a city dweller. People who still live in their village houses usually have a second house in the city. Thus the number of multi-story buildings in the city increased, and having a house in the city has come to mean having a flat in an apartment building. As a result, multi-story buildings are being constructed on narrow pieces of land and urban textures have meshed with one another. This has undermined the existing traditional fabric and has led to chaotic urbanization.

To evaluate and implement this process in the field of design and planning it is evident that the continued viability of the historic fabric requires many mutually reinforcing activities that can help stimulate economic growth, alleviate poverty, and improve the urban environment. The city's historic fabric is still disappearing because the historic fabrics of districts of the Edirne inner city have not been taken into consideration in the preparation of Edirne's master plan. The preservation of historic fabric should be considered in such a way as to protect and preserve. The cultural heritage approach can thus be of value in this context.

As a result, in order to preserve the cultural heritage of the city center, new settlements have to be developed and thus ensure that the historical center does not become overly populated. Without damaging the current fabric of the city center, the number of districts in this area may be increased to more than six and a new multi-storied residential district could be established in the northern area of the city. New neighborhoods could be established in the old city at a determined distance from the European Transit Express Highway (TEM) that passes through the northern end of

the city. The author proposes that a model settlement based on plans such as these that would attract such residents as writers and students to a new settlement within the old city (Erdoğan, 2002).

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Figure 1. City of Edirne (Source:Google Eart)



Figure 2. Edirne's new neighborhoods

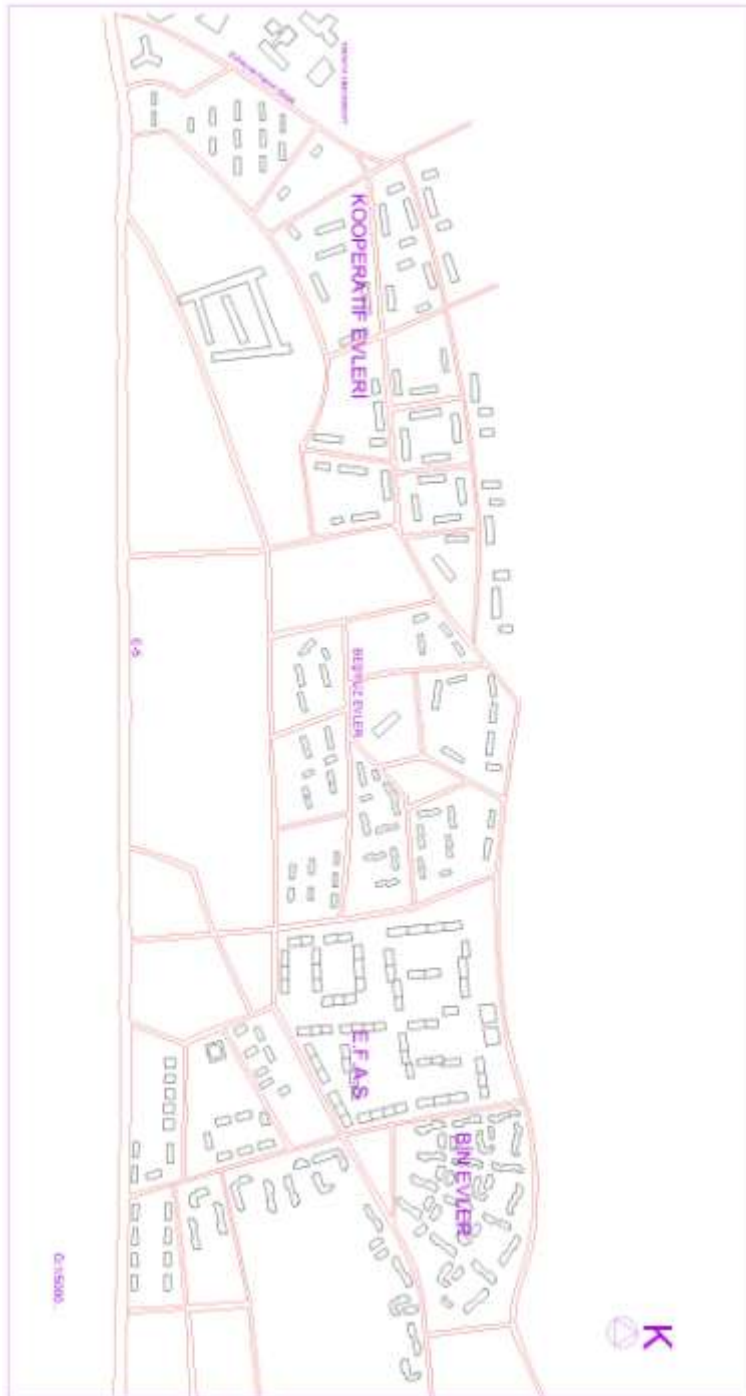




Figure 3. Binevler (Fatih District) from Modern Neighborhoods of Edirne

(Source: Google Earth)

Figure 3a. View from 1 number of Binevler (Google Earth)



Figure 3b. View from 2 number of Binevler (Google Earth)



Figure 3c. View from 3 number of Binevler (Google Earth)



Figure 3d. View from 4 number of Binevler (Google Earth)



Figure 4. Kooperatif evleri (I.Murat District) from Modern Neighborhoods of Edirne (Google Earth)



Figure 4a. View of Koopertifevleri (Google Earth)

