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Situations of elderly people on urban renewal process in Ankara

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Abstract

In big cities, old settlements are in central part of the cities and their establishment dates are quite old. Also the residents of these neighborhoods are mostly elderly people. They live in these places for several years. They have experiences (informal learning matters) about urban life and “their living places”. In this research, elderly people who are living in Ankara Bahcelievler and Emek neighborhoods confronting the urban renewal process are in the focus. How can they adapt to a new life? Whether they have thought about developing new strategies to adapt new conditions? In depth interviews were conducted with these elderly people (N=8) and some real estate consultants (N= 3) and mukthars (N=2). Elderly people are worried about their homes which they lived at least for 40 years. They have questions about adaptations and also they don't want any problems because they do not have extra income other than their pensions. Their income insufficiency is a very important problem in their lives. Despite the suffering in reconstruction process they still want to stay in their own homes.

Keywords: urban renewal; elderly; aging; rebuilding; lifelong learning;

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 20th century people are living increasingly in urban areas. Population of the cities increases with births and mostly migration from rural to urban areas. The cities are alive with their population and their living places. In the beginning of the century urban population consisted of young adults and elderly people were mostly living in rural areas. The ratio of elderly in the world population is rising rapidly after the second part of 20th century (www.who.org). Today in developed countries most of elderly people are living in big cities. Also in Turkey more than %70 of the population is living in urban places. Turkey's population is 77,695,904 and in this overall population 65+ population is 6,192,962. It means that the ratio of elderly population is % 8 in Turkey. According to projections ratio of 65+ ages tends to increase rapidly (TUIK, 2015).

While cities are developing with new settlements by their peripheries, the center of the city needs renovation of buildings. Because of developing new technology and functionality, living places in city centers are forced to this renewal process. Urban renewal process can be defined as, improving specific areas of a city that are poorly developed or underdeveloped. These areas may have old deteriorated buildings and bad environments or the areas may lack streets and utilities altogether (www.unesco.org). In big cities, old settlements are in central part of the city and their establishment dates are quite old. Also residents of these old neighborhoods are mostly elderly people (Chui 2001). They live in the same houses for several decades (Phillipson, 2010). They have experiences (informal learning matters) about urban life and "their living places".

Renovation brings some positive and negative changes to lives of residents of neighborhoods. Mostly, young residents have a chance to go to other neighborhoods or they can stay at their places. But especially old age owners of these neighborhoods are faced with problem to leave their apartments and they are in a difficult situation. Not only they have to leave their houses, but they are also separated from their neighbors and their familiar environments. There are problems posed by urban renewal where gentrification usually results in displacements of elderly residents, thus threatening "aging in place" (Chui 2008).

Urban renovation gives some people a chance to live in new buildings, but for other people it is eviction from their houses, from neighborhood and from social ties (Korkmaz, 2012). It is a gentrification process for elderly people, because they are vulnerable to be a member of disadvantaged group. Most of them are women, their health is poor and also their income is not sufficient. This is the triple jeopardy for elderly.

In both situations elderly people go through the lifelong learning process. If their situation is "aging in place" means that they live and aged in the same house and neighborhood they feel secure, but on the other side although they live in their places at least their neighbors might change that means new people and new relationships. It may not be easy for elderly people to adapt to new conditions.

The aim of this study is to understand the situations of elderly people who are in the middle of the rebuilding process; t whether they are disquieted by the renewal processes, how can they adapt to a new life and house, whether they have any thoughts about developing new strategies to adapt new conditions?

The important point in this study is that the living places (Bahcelievler and Emek mahallesi) were not slum areas in past and present. The history of settlements goes back to 75 years ago and they were planned as garden city neighborhoods (Kansu 2009). These two neighborhoods side by side are upper middle class settlements in the center of Ankara. People living in this region are in the upper middle income level. But several elderly people have been living these settlements for at least 40 years. They have had flats that were purchased with their retirement premiums and so far they have lived in their flats with their retirement pensions. There is no problem in their lives related to their

apartments although they are old. But other apartment owners in the building are younger than 65+ adults who want to renew their apartments. They don't want to live these old houses.

2. Method

In this research elderly people who are living in Ankara Bahcelievler and Emek neighborhoods confronting the urban renewal process are in the focus. Three open-ended questions were asked to elderly people. What do they think about renovation? How can they adapt to new life? Whether they have thought about developing new strategies to adapt new conditions? In-depth interviews were made these with elderly people (3 men and 5 women) among neighborhood residents and some real estate consultants (3 men) in neighborhood and mukthars of two neighborhoods (2 men). Real estate consultants have the role as negotiators between owners and building constructors. Mukthars are also residents and know their problems in their own neighborhoods.

3. Findings

N.H. spoke with a tearful voice and was very sad.

"...I think rest of my life is not very long, moving from my home is difficult for me. Also I don't have money to give for building construction. How can I find so much money(at least 100 thousands TRY). Estates are sold from the cheapest prices. I have memories in my home also I have my furniture, our memories with my husband. I'm afraid of becoming homeless..." (N.H. woman, age of 82, widow, lives alone)

They don't want a renovation. They say:

"...other apartment owners want to renovate but I want they can demolish after my death". (E.C. woman, age of 84, widow, lives alone)

"dying is well for me and neighbors, in this building, I know anymore insufficient but I have no power, no money to renovate ". (A.T. woman, age of 91, single)

These elderly women do not have strategies to adapt to new conditions, but the other woman (S.K. age of 71) says:

"O.K. I want to live in a new apartment, new bath and kitchen but I don't trust building constructors if the majority want and decide.... I have to comply... I'm glad to live here since my marriage (47 years) ...my husband died 15 years ago...I think my daughters help me. Also I have many friends and neighbors..." (S.K. woman, age of 71, widow, lives alone)

"People say the value of our apartments will increase after renovation, yes I know but all people will move to other places and then new people... (new-riches) will settle to renovated buildings. This means environment will change. Real estate agent says... value of your apartment will increase.. but I don't decide. My sons say don't worry... We can find a solution. There is no family as neighbour in this building; residents are students, hairdresser, advocate, tourism agent. Young people want to live in comfortable places. Our building is nearly 55 years. All my children were born in this apartment. My wife says about kitchen and bathroom aren't wide enough..." (A. C. man, 77years old, married)

On the other side real estate agent says:

"Land prices are high in this district but buildings are very old and don't meet the needs and they are insufficient as per technological equipment, their looks are not good. Rebuilding is a good solution in this area. But older people don't want demolition of their buildings. There are a lot of home alone elderly people in this region. In this case only university students could rent, young families want more comfortable apartments..."(H.S. male, age 55, married).

Real estate agent wants to do business and to overcome difficulties but according to him it is not easy for this neighbourhood because of home owners' ages. In many other rather new places in Ankara renovation is not difficult; especially in slum areas.

Mukhtar says :

"Old and vacant buildings are very dangerous for our neighbourhood, so far we are watching them. Most of the residents are elderly in our neighbourhood. If they want any help, we try to give support. They want to feel secure. One of my residents went to her son (Cayyolu Settlement) but she was not happy and she called me to find an apartment for rent from her old street. She is used to this environment. Another elderly moved to the same building with her daughter and adapted easily to the new place... Adaptation may change from person to person. But generally it is difficult in those ages."

4. Conclusion

Elderly people are worried about their homes which they lived at least for 40 years. They have questions about adaptations also they don't want any problems because of they do not have extra income other than their pensions. Their income insufficiency is a very important problem in their life. Also they don't have physical power to overcome the burden. Most of them have chronic illnesses. Their memories are important to their lives. Urban renovation brings different effects to the elderly citizens. They are reduced to adapt to the new life. Although they have the capacity to learn new life styles it can not be easy for elderly.

This renovation process is not same with gentrification but some conditions are very similar. Gentrification brings new neighbors and the function of residential area changes from family life areas to commercial offices. New neighbours come with their own life styles and most of the time ignore elderly people even in face to face contact in buildings.

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