



# Squatter (*gecekondu*) Housing versus Apartment Housing: Turkish Rural-to-Urban Migrant Residents' Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the meaning of squatter (*gecekondu*) and apartment housing for rural-to-urban migrant residents and their perceptions and preferences regarding this issue in the context of Turkey. The research, conducted in Ankara in a *gecekondu* settlement, a newly developing apartment district and an established apartment district, reveals that *gecekondu* and apartment housing hold different meanings for their different types of residents. *Gecekondu* housing is perceived very positively by those rural migrants who are oriented to the rural community, particularly for the 'gecekondu-rooted' women who spend much of their time in the neighbourhood. This is so because of the way of life *gecekondu* housing provides, for example, close relationship, with neighbours and spontaneous relationships with the outside. On the other hand, the association of *gecekondu* settlements with rural migrants in the larger society creates a very negative perception of *gecekondu* housing in the case of those rural migrants who are oriented to established urban society, particularly for young women ('younger modernizers'). Low standard of housing, and inadequate services and infrastructure are major problems with squatter housing shared by all residents. On the other hand, apartment housing is perceived by its rural migrant residents as a means of becoming closer to established urban society, and hence as a means of granting them higher status. Unlike the case of *gecekondus*, this perception of apartments creates a general feeling of satisfaction and a higher degree of commitment among apartment residents, shaping their preferences for apartments. Apartments are further perceived as housing environments which offer 'clean and comfortable lives' and urban services to their residents. However, apartment residence is not preferred by those migrants, particularly women, who are oriented to rural community and who need community support and 'squatter spirit' in their lives.

Gender, time spent in the city, socio-economic status and age were found to be associated with *gecekondu*/apartment preferences of migrants. Copyright © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd

## INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Habitat II Conference was held in Istanbul, Turkey. This international event brought many statespeople, academicians and NGOs together to discuss

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problems related to housing in the 'Third World' and to come up with solutions whose realisations would be under the guarantee of governments. In this context, the perception of various types of housing held by their residents gains much significance. For professionals and politicians to create environments that are responsive to their users, they should be informed about users' needs, preferences and expectations.

Many Third World cities, including those in Turkey, are expanding rapidly towards their peripheries, and in this process many squatter settlements are transformed into apartment districts. Today, more and more squatter houses are in the process of conversion into apartment blocks, and an increasing number of people are moving from squatter houses to these apartment blocks.

However, in Turkey, what squatter and apartment housing mean for the residents, how they feel about living in the two types of housing and how they evaluate them, have not been thoroughly investigated. There has been a general assumption in society that apartment living is superior to squatter residence, and that the transformation of squatter settlements into apartment areas is beneficial to both society and their residents (economically as well as socially). Yet, there may be people for whom this process ends up being quite detrimental.

This paper investigates, in the context of Turkey, the meaning of squatter and apartment housing for diverse groups of residents, and their perceptions of and preferences for squatter and apartment environments.

### THE TURKISH CONTEXT

Since World War II, rapid social and economic changes accompanied by changes in the physical realm have been taking place in Turkey, as in other parts of the world, as the result of rapid urbanisation of the country largely due to rural-to-urban migration. The population in cities and towns, which was 24% of the total population in 1927 reached 59% in 1990 (Turkish State Institute of Statistics, 1993a). (Gilbert and Gugler (1992) give the percentages of urban population in Turkey in 1960 and 1987 as 30% and 47% respectively. The figures are 31% and 49% for Middle East and North African countries.) The trend of rapid urbanisation and its concentration in 'megacities' (Palmer and Patton, 1988) will continue in the future in Turkey, as well as in other parts of the world. By the year 2000, the percentage of urban population in Turkey is predicted to reach 66% (Turkish State Institute of Statistics, 1993b).

The development model of the post-war period, which was liberal in its orientation and which assigned a significant role to the private sector, opened the country to a market economy. In order to increase productivity in agriculture, new agricultural products and technologies were introduced. Agricultural yields began to be transported to market on the highways built during this period. This intervention in the agricultural sector, aimed at its mechanisation, disturbed its balance. Many small-scale farmers lost their land, and many sharecroppers and tenants lost their employment (Kiray, 1970). As a result, large numbers of people began to leave their villages for larger cities. On the newly-built roads, villagers flowed to cities.

When this mass migration from rural areas to larger cities started, the cities were not ready, either physically or economically, to receive migrants. Ankara, the capital, was the most vulnerable of all cities because of its almost total lack of housing for low-income people, except for the rundown houses of the citadel region (Senyapili, 1983). New migrants built their *gecekondu*s (Turkish squatter housing; meaning 'landed overnight') in the areas which were both close to the city centre and geographically undesirable (steep slopes, river beds).

Over the years, as demand for cheap labour in industry increased, migrants

became an indispensable element in the economy and their *gecekondu* a permanent part of the city. Many *gecekondu* settlements received services and infrastructure, including roads and bus transportation to sites, city water and electricity inside houses. During the period from 1960 to 1970, the role of migrants as consumers in the economy gained significance when migrants started to participate in the consumption field as the economy showed the need for new domestic markets (Senyapili, 1977). In the 1970s, land speculation in *gecekondu* settlements became a significant issue. *Gecekondus*, once praised for their self-help, spontaneity and responsiveness to their residents (Turner, 1976; Turner and Fichter, 1972; Turan, 1974), became a commodity in the hands of *gecekondu* brokers and speculators, informal yet organised interest groups in the *gecekondu* market. They bought land in the outer areas of the city (or rather enclosed it) and parcelled it into plots for prospective *gecekondu* owners (Payne, 1982). They also bought *gecekondus*, replacing them with apartment blocks (Aksoy, 1987; Bektore, 1986). Today, there are *gecekondu* settlements which have multi-storey apartment buildings located within them. They too have the status of a *gecekondu*, that is, they are illegal: They have shared titles and no construction permits. On the other hand, there are modern housing complexes built in a *gecekondu* settlement which are legal. They are likely to be the agents of 'gentrification' in *gecekondu* settlements. As the city sprawls out, those *gecekondu* settlements that are closer to the city disappear: they go through transformation into apartment areas after their master plans are completed. In this process, *gecekondus* are bought by contractors to be replaced by apartment blocks, and owners receive titles to several apartments in the buildings replacing *gecekondus*. On the other hand, new *gecekondus* are constantly built in the outer parts of the city (see Drakakis-Smith (1990) for differences between older and newer *gecekondu* settlements in Ankara).

There has been a further recent housing trend in metropolitan cities of Turkey since the 1980s. Those higher-income groups who want to live in socio-economically homogeneous housing are increasingly moving to 'satellite towns' (Ayata and Ayata, 1993). As a result, as Ayata and Ayata (1993, p. 20) observe, "apartment housing (which dominates middle-class districts) can turn to some extent into one or two-storey single family housing".

## METHODOLOGY

The findings of this paper are part of a larger project carried out for the author's doctoral dissertation in Cukurca, a *gecekondu* area in Ankara, Bagcilar, a newly developing apartment area in transition from a *gecekondu* settlement, and Esat, a middle-class apartment area. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with the residents of the three sites. Observations which she systematically recorded in a journal were also made by the author during her 5-month stay in Cukurca and her frequent visits to the apartment sites. After the main data collection period was over, further information was obtained on visits to the research sites in the following years.

During the research the formal interviews were tape-recorded, except for only a few cases when the respondents objected, and they were later transcribed. Notes were taken following informal interviews. The content of the journal was analysed during and after the research in terms of the emerging themes which guided further research. The data was also analysed statistically upon the suggestion of a statistician, who affirmed that the number of respondents was large enough for such an analysis. Minitab software program was used to calculate Chi-square and *P* values. For the statistical analysis of the data, the responses of 130 participants were utilised, since they were the ones with complete answers regarding the questions analysed for the paper.

The interview questions analysed specifically for this paper are about the *gecekondu*/apartment preferences of the respondents and the reasons they stated for their preferences.

### *Research sites*

(i) *The gecekondu site of the research: Cukurca.* Cukurca, a *gecekondu* settlement established in the 1960s, lies on the slopes of a hill in the south of the city. It faces the high-rise apartment blocks of GOP, an upper-middle class district, creating a marked contrast between the two.

Cukurca differs from older *gecekondu* settlements in Ankara which were built on steep slopes next to the old city centre and which are densely populated today. It also differs from recently established *gecekondu* settlements in neighbourhoods which lack electricity and water and where services and institutions (transportation, education, health, etc) are minimal.

All houses have electricity, and most of them have running water inside the house. Cukurca received electricity in 1981 and city water in 1984. There is no sewage system in the area. Organic waste materials are collected in cesspools dug at the back of the houses. Drainage is also a problem. Although there are garbage containers distributed by the Municipality, garbage is not collected on a regular basis. People dispose of their garbage at a place reasonably far away from the houses.

There is an asphalt road in the settlement that connects it to the rest of the city. The other roads inside the settlement are in poor condition — they get muddy or frosty in the winter and dusty in the summer. There are several stores in the settlement, including grocery stores, a photographic laboratory, a real estate office, an all-men coffee house and a barber; and there are some public institutions — an elementary school, two mosques and a health clinic. In 1989, an open market place was established.

Buses and *dolmus* (a taxi or minibus operating as a bus) operate frequently, although they fall short during rush hours.

The houses in Cukurca are scattered, with paths connecting them. They are generally free-standing one-storey houses, with the exception of a few two- or three-storey ones that were built in the last decade. Since the houses are generally built on slopes without adequate insulation, dampness is a big problem inside many of them.

The environment has a rural appearance, with turkeys and sometimes cows around. Many houses have gardens, mostly small, but a few of them are large enough to grow various kinds of vegetables.

The residents are rural-to-urban migrants. Some of them have been living there for a long time (over 20 years), whereas others are newcomers who either built their own *gecekondus* or rented the houses from people who had moved out to apartments.

(ii) *The apartment sites of the research: Bagcilar and Esat.* Bagcilar lies in the southeast of the city. It is 20 minutes' walking distance away from Cukurca. It is a mix of apartment blocks and *gecekondus*, and the construction of more apartment blocks is under way. The apartment blocks usually have three storeys from the entrance level, and in the case of those which are built on a steep slope, this means five or six storeys without an elevator. Construction quality is rather poor when compared to the buildings in the more established parts of the city.

The roads and infrastructure are under construction. Some roads are in poor condition, especially when they are used as part of construction sites. There is a frequent bus service to the area. Many commercial places exist, especially supermarkets of various sizes.

The area received electricity in 1966 when it was a *gecekondu* settlement. An

asphalt road was built in 1970 and city water was supplied in 1978–1979. The master plan of the area was completed in 1980.

The apartment buildings are generally inhabited by lower–middle income people, mostly rural-to-urban migrants. The *gecekondu*s that still survive in the neighbourhood are occupied by migrants.

Esat is one of the established residential areas of the city with services, commercial and public facilities and infrastructure, as in many other established neighbourhoods. It is located in the southeast of Ankara next to Bağcılar. Its residents are mostly longer-established urban people, with some rural–urban migrants.

### *Participants*

The participants were male and female rural-to-urban migrants who lived either in *gecekondu*s or apartments. There were 144 participants: 105 women and 39 men, 108 in *gecekondu*s and 36 in apartments. All but three apartment residents once lived in *gecekondu*s. Except for nine participants, all of those who lived in apartments were owners, and of those who lived in *gecekondu*s, 35 were tenants and 73 were owners. These numbers reflect general tendencies in society: there are more rural migrants in *gecekondu*s than in apartments; Turkish people tend to own houses rather than rent them, which is not surprising if we think of the prevailing trends in the housing market (Ayata and Ayata, (1993) found in their research conducted in Ankara that the majority of respondents (57.2%) were homeowners). The fact that women are more available and easier to approach, especially if the researcher is a woman, increased the number of women in the study.

## FINDINGS

In this section, the social and physical characteristics of the two housing environments which shaped the preferences of the residents for *gecekondu*s or apartments are presented.

*Squatter (gecekondu) housing: environments for intimate social relations and community support; apartment housing: environments for formal social relations and individual privacy*

In the case of housewives, particularly young ones, older people and women newcomers to the city (with the exception of those who moved to the city with already established orientations to urban society, expecting to live a similar life to an established urbanite), it was the intimate social relations with neighbours that made *gecekondu* areas attractive for their residents. These women spent a great deal of their time in the neighbourhood and their relations with the rest of the city were limited. They easily gathered inside or in front of houses. Those who had moved to the city recently did not feel lonely in the presence of their neighbours who spent their time with them. And those who had been living in the *gecekondu* settlements for many years shared a common history and enjoyed the respect and recognition they received from their neighbours. The *gecekondu* community supported their self-esteem: they felt respected and loved. This is evident in the words of an older *gecekondu* woman:

I don't remember myself carrying my bags on my way home from the market. Anybody who sees me with the bags takes them from me and carries them for me. They really like me very much. I have never beaten my rugs. When my neighbours see my rugs outside, they come and beat them for me. God bless my neighbours.

The close and informal relations among neighbours prevented them from feeling isolated and, in the case of older people, from feeling to be unwanted elderly. An elderly woman commented on this as follows, "I prefer *gecekondu*. Why? Because it is very nice to sit like this with neighbours. We make jokes, enjoy ourselves and have a good time".

In their responses, these women emphasised the 'community spirit' in the *gecekondu* settlement which meant mutual help and sharing. For example, a woman who had been living in the same *gecekondu* settlement for 25 years said:

Here we share what we have. I get an onion from my neighbour, and she gets something else from me. In this way, instead of having one dish on the table, we have two or three. If I run out of black olives for breakfast, I get them from a neighbour, and that neighbour gets cheese from me. This is how we live here. I don't think this can happen in apartment districts.

In addition to the *gecekondu* residents who preferred to live in a *gecekondu* for its intimate neighbourly relations and community support, there were several women in apartments who also preferred *gecekondu* areas for the same reason. They had moved to apartments from *gecekondus*, and they deeply missed their previous neighbours and the fun they had with them. They were highly frustrated with their present apartment neighbours who, they said, did not care about them.

On the other hand, it was again the same aspect of *gecekondu* environments that drove away some other migrants. They were mostly young women who were oriented to urban society and middle-aged women who wanted to have some privacy and 'peace of mind' in this stage of their lives which they could not have in a *gecekondu* area where there was much intervention by neighbours. They complained about the 'too intimate' relations in the *gecekondu* community and about the gossip and fights among neighbours. Young women, especially, regarded the *gecekondu* environment as repressive and felt that they could not behave as they would like to because of the social control exercised by their neighbours. Thus, they preferred to live in apartments where formal neighbourly relations prevailed: "Relations among apartment neighbours are formal, they visit each other with arrangements made in advance. And this is good, you accept a neighbour's invitation if it suits you".

*Squatter (gecekondu) housing: residential environments for rural migrants;  
apartment housing: residential environments for urbanites*

Among the participants there was a tendency to regard *gecekondu* areas as the places for rural migrants. This made some, and they were exclusively *gecekondu* residents, prefer *gecekondus*: "We are villagers. *Gecekondus* are better for us. We don't want apartments". They said that *gecekondu* areas responded well to the way of life of migrants, whereas "apartments are for the high society". They spoke of *gecekondu* areas as enabling them to carry out rural kind of tasks, such as baking bread in outdoor ovens, and rural kinds of activities, such as keeping livestock, growing vegetables and holding rural kinds of wedding celebrations during which drums and pipes were played and folk dances were performed. Some stated that, since they grew up in a village, they were used to spending much time outdoors, and *gecekondu* settlements gave them this chance.

On the other hand, it made some others, and they were those who tended to separate themselves from rural people and to become a part of the established urban society, dislike *gecekondu* areas: they regarded *gecekondu* areas as places for the "uneducated" and the "ill-mannered", for the "ignorant people from rural areas". This included both apartment and *gecekondu* residents.

Among both *gecekondu* and apartment residents, the positive perception of apartment areas as places for the "cultured" and "better-off urbanites" was common. Especially young female *gecekondu* residents, who preferred apartments and were

unhappy to live in a *gecekondu* settlement, emphasised this point. They said that they would like to live in an apartment in order to learn from urbanites. Many participants, both women and men, regarded apartment areas as more suitable places for raising children than *gecekondu* settlements. On the other hand, for some young second-generation migrants who were leftist in orientation, *gecekondus* represented solidarity and sharing, whereas apartments were the places of the “alienated and individualistic people of the city”.

In addition to the social dimension of the two housing environments mentioned above, there are physical characteristics that make people prefer or not prefer them, as shown by the data presented in the following section.

*Squatter (gecekondu) housing: ‘permissive’ environments; apartment housing: ‘restrictive’ environments*

This perception of *gecekondu* settlements as permissive environments was widely held by both women and men participants who preferred to live in *gecekondus*. The fact that freestanding single-family houses dominated *gecekondu* settlements and that they were scattered, providing outdoor spaces away from traffic, were the two aspects mentioned about it.

*(i) Living in a freestanding single-family house as opposed to sharing a building with others*

This was the most frequently mentioned aspect in favour of *gecekondus* and against apartments. Many *gecekondu* residents said that residents were in charge of their actions in *gecekondus*, whereas in apartments they had to be careful all the time about their behaviour in order not to disturb neighbours. They put into words this perception of theirs about the life in apartments as follows: “In apartments you have to play the radio or TV softly. Otherwise neighbours complain”; “In apartments you cannot beat a rug or anything like that. There are days reserved for beating rugs. You are not free in your actions”. A young woman expressed her deep concern saying, “You cannot even dance freely in an apartment”. Thus, they preferred to live in *gecekondus* because “I make a lot of noise. A *gecekondu* is good for me”. There were several apartment residents who missed the freedom they enjoyed when they lived in *gecekondus*. For example, a man talked with nostalgia about his time in a *gecekondu* area as follows:

When I lived in my *gecekondu*, I entertained many guests in my house, including my villagers visiting me. We would sing and dance loudly. We were free to do all this. But in apartments one has to be careful not to disturb others. Soon it becomes boring to live in an apartment.

There was a concern, again mostly on the part of the *gecekondu* residents, that living in an apartment could become very disturbing if residents failed to pay attention to the restrictions of apartment life. Disturbance by noise, in particular, was seen as a real problem: “There is always noise in apartments. When a child stops screaming, another starts”. Here it should be pointed out that while *gecekondu* residents brought out this issue frequently, apartment residents tended not to stress this point. There were only a few who complained about the noise in their apartments, and they were mostly older residents who had spent their middle-age years in *gecekondus*.

On the other hand, many *gecekondu* residents described their houses as quiet and peaceful places “where one can rest after a hard day’s work”.

The perception of apartment environments as fight-inducing was common among the *gecekondu* residents. They said that frequent fights could occur in apartment buildings, since many families lived under one roof (“too close for comfort”), and

now and then they had to act collectively (collecting money for common expenses, hiring an apartment caretaker, etc.). On the other hand, apartment residents tended not to mention this as a problem. However, in an empirical research carried out in Ankara (Ayata and Ayata, 1993), the use of common areas in buildings was found to be a serious problem in apartment districts that were mostly inhabited by those who once lived in *gecekondu*s. The psychological principle that people are likely to feel positive about what they have may be operating in this case. In the same research, it was further found out that intimate social relations, as well as the undefined nature of the physical environment (e.g. trespassing upon somebody's garden) caused fights among *gecekondu* residents. Yet, disputes in the *gecekondu* settlement were not stated by the majority of the *gecekondu* residents in this study, and only the group of women who were unhappy to live in the *gecekondu* settlement stressed this aspect. Again, the same psychological principle may be behind this.

Very few participants talked about the advantages of sharing a building with others. For example, a young woman said that apartment life provided the residents "the chance to get to know many people".

*(ii) Living in an environment of scattered freestanding houses as opposed to living in an environment of apartment blocks along streets*

Many female *gecekondu* residents who spent most of their time in the *gecekondu* settlement talked about apartment environments as restricting the behaviour of residents, not only inside the house, but also in the neighbourhood: one could sit outside freely in a *gecekondu* area, whereas one could not do it in an apartment area. Thus, "apartments are modern jails" "living in an apartment is like being a bird in a cage". Especially young housewives from conservative families, and older women, stressed this aspect of *gecekondu* environments: "I am not bored. Life here is like living in a village—you can use the outdoors freely"; "here I go outside and sit in front of my door. Soon my neighbours join me. I like it very much"; "in apartments you stay inside all day long. Here you can sit outside without being disturbed by the traffic or strangers".

On the other hand, only a few apartment residents, all housewives, complained about the limited use of the outdoor space in apartment districts for socialising with neighbours. Yet, this seems to be a serious problem for these women: they felt they were confined to the house and were very much disturbed by it. On the other hand, for those women apartment residents who spent time outside the neighbourhood, working or visiting relatives and friends, this issue was much less significant. Moreover, the fact that Bağcılar is an apartment district in transformation from a *gecekondu* area, and hence it is still possible for some of the residents to use the outdoors for sitting and socialising, may have decreased complaints about this dimension.

*Squatter (gecekondu) housing: environments that have green areas; apartment housing: environments dominated by concrete buildings*

Living in a *gecekondu* area was also seen as an advantage because of its closeness to nature, and many residents mentioned *gecekondu* areas as environments that enabled close contacts with nature. Some apartment residents complained about "the domination of the grey concrete apartment blocks over the scarce green traces of nature" in their neighbourhood. They missed the gardens of their *gecekondus* where "we would have breakfast. The fresh air and flowers around would sharpen our appetite". The quality of air was another related issue. While some apartment residents complained about air pollution in their area, some *gecekondu* residents talked about the clean air in their settlement as a positive aspect.

Despite all these physical qualities that make the *gecekondu* settlement attractive for many of its residents, there are serious problems with *gecekondu* areas regarding



infrastructure and services, as well as the quality of housing. The following section expands on this issue.

*(i) Squatter (gecekondu) housing: environments with poor services and infrastructure; apartment housing: environments with good services and infrastructure*

Many participants regarded *gecekondu* areas as environments without adequate services and infrastructure, and apartment areas as environments adequately served. *Gecekondu* residents complained about the lack of a sewerage system and the poor conditions of roads in the settlement. They expressed their concern about the sewage water running in the open, which posed a serious threat to health. Some said they would live in an apartment area just because of its adequate services and infrastructure.

Many apartment residents also mentioned this aspect as one of the reasons for their apartment preferences. Although some of the roads in Bagcilar are not yet asphalted, and there are frequent power failures and water cuts, the residents are hopeful that infrastructure and services will improve in the near future, as the area develops more.

*(ii) Squatter houses (gecekondus): poorly-built, unhealthy places that are difficult to keep clean; apartments: clean, well-built and comfortable places equipped with modern appliances*

This was the most frequently mentioned aspect in favour of apartments and against *gecekondus*. Many apartment residents said that they were happy to live in apartments because apartments were clean and well-built; they were easily heated. Many of those *gecekondu* residents who preferred apartments wanted to live in them because they believed that their lives would be much more comfortable and their homes much cleaner and warmer. Women, in particular, were concerned about this issue: "I want to enjoy some comfort in an apartment that has a central heating system. Here my hands freeze when I work in the kitchen in wintertime". "Those apartments heated by stoves are like ones with central heating systems: once heated, they stay warm for a long time"; "There is always dust or dirt inside *gecekondus*. You cannot keep them clean. You sweep and wipe the floor one day and the next day it is dirty again". Both *gecekondu* and apartment residents mentioned the threat to health in some *gecekondus*, especially if there was dampness inside the house due to substandard construction.

Among the reasons for the poor quality of construction of the *gecekondus* in this research, we can mention the threat of demolition, as well as the fact that many were built by the owners and their household members under the supervision of a foreman who probably lacked adequate technical knowledge. However, for the residents, participation in the construction of their houses can create emotional ties to them. Some participants, particularly women, expressed their attachments to their houses in the following words: "I will be very upset if I have to move out of this house. I love my house. I am the one who built it. I worked very hard to make it the way it is today"; "I don't know if I can ever leave this house. It is such pleasure to sit in the garden, it is full of trees. I grew those trees". Furthermore, building *gecekondus* together can create a sense of solidarity among residents. A young woman mentioned this fact as follows: "When my family built this house, there were 25 other families. They would all come together and build the houses collectively. So there is much solidarity in *gecekondu* areas".

The flexible nature of *gecekondus* mentioned in the literature (Turan, 1974; Turner and Fichter, 1972) which makes them responsive to the economic changes in the lives of migrants (Senyapili, 1977) was not mentioned by the participants in this research. This may be due to the fact that the settlement was built in the 1960s and became established over the years.

As a final point, it is interesting to note that some residents did not limit their preferences to *gecekondus* and apartments. Some young, second-generation migrants mentioned single-family duplex housing as their preferences, which they believed to be a good solution to the problems of *gecekondu* housing (inadequate infrastructure and services, inferior image) and those of apartment housing (disturbance by noise, restriction on behaviour). This type of housing is increasing in number in the recently developing satellite towns of the upper class.

## DISCUSSION

This research reveals that there is no unanimous agreement on the preference for apartments over *gecekondus*, as wrongly assumed by politicians and professionals. Those who preferred apartments and those who preferred *gecekondus* were almost equal in number (70 and 74, respectively). And not all *gecekondus* residents preferred *gecekondus* and not all apartment residents preferred apartments (59% and 83% of the *gecekondu* and apartment residents, respectively, preferred their own housing environments). Although the tendency of people to evaluate positively what they have was apparent in some cases (e.g. apartment residents disregarding noise and fights in apartment buildings, and *gecekondu* residents disregarding gossip and fights in *gecekondu* settlements), it was not evident in other cases (e.g. *gecekondu* residents stressing problems with inadequate services and infrastructure in the *gecekondu* settlement). Accordingly, it is necessary to discuss which qualities of the two housing environments meant what for their different types of residents, shaping their preferences.

### *The gecekondu environment: different types of residents, different preferences*

*Gecekondu* settlements are places where sharing and support is the rule (Ayata and Ayata, 1993). This plays a significant role in the lives of those migrants in the city who need outside help and support which the existing institutions fail to provide. Although this aspect of *gecekondu* settlements may decline as they become more diverse (*gecekondu* owners moving out to apartments and tenants from various parts of the country moving in), and as *gecekondu* neighbours become more competitive and less dependent on each other, *gecekondu* settlements continue to be supportive of the lives of their residents in many ways. On the other hand, this support of the *gecekondu* community goes hand in hand with the social control exercised over *gecekondu* residents, who are expected to conform to its rules and values.

*Gecekondu* settlements are also places where informal and close relations among neighbours prevail. This is vital in the lives of those migrant women who are practically confined to the neighbourhood (not working outside the home, no permission to leave the neighbourhood unless escorted). *Gecekondu* areas are 'female environments' where there is a special concern on the part of *gecekondu* men not to disturb neighbourhood women who are free to spend time outside with their neighbours. This freedom of *gecekondu* women inside the *Gecekondu* settlement is also true in the case of teenage girls, who are free to travel around by themselves in the neighbourhood where familiar people live. Yet, paradoxically, this freedom of women in the neighbourhood is the result of the social control exercised over women by the *gecekondu* community. Ayata (1989) describes *gecekondu* settlements as housing environments which act as a control mechanism exercised by women on women, and which serves the interests of men. Male relatives, who remain responsible for the honour of their women in the Islamic tradition, do not have to worry when they leave women back home during the time spent at work. This is a major reason for the preferences of those migrant men who want to live in *gecekondus*.

Most of the *gecekondu* areas are also 'green environments', where residents grow vegetables and fruit trees, and this is a luxury in a city where concrete blocks keep replacing greenery. Moreover, *gecekondu*s enable their residents to act without any concern about disturbing neighbours upstairs or downstairs, and not being disturbed by them. On the other hand, the village-like atmosphere of *gecekondu* settlements creates the perception that they are the housing environments of rural-to-urban migrants, which further fosters an inferior image of *gecekondu*s.

Furthermore, participation in the construction of their *gecekondu*s, now and then taking a firm stand against authorities to keep them, helps develop people's emotional ties to their houses. On the other hand, this practice usually ends up with poorly built houses.

All these features of *gecekondu* settlements make some of the residents attached to their neighbourhood, while at the same time making others repulsed by it. *Gecekondu*s are strongly preferred by some groups (namely, rural migrants with community orientations, particularly those who spend most of their time in the neighbourhood, including young housewives, elderly people and newcomers to the city, which can be termed as 'gecekondu-rooted'). On the other hand, they are strongly rejected by those migrants who are ideologically oriented to modern urban society and who prefer their privacy and autonomy over the support and co-operation of the *gecekondu* community. Ayata and Ayata (1993) mention the presence of *gecekondu* residents who are uncomfortable with the social control and conflict arising from intimate social relations and who want to live in housing environments where neighbours do not interfere in each other's lives. The young women in this study who were unhappy to live in the *gecekondu* community ('younger discontented modernizers') are a good example. The social control exercised by neighbours and the compulsory nature of neighbourliness for *gecekondu* women who are mostly uneducated and do not work outside the home (Ayata and Ayata, 1993) I believe, have made the *gecekondu* neighbourhood quite oppressive for them. Furthermore, the perception of *gecekondu* settlements as places for rural migrants negatively affected these women, who had a strong desire to belong to the group of modern urbanites, and it created hostility for their neighbours.

In brief, for the community-oriented and 'gecekondu-rooted' migrants, *gecekondu* housing means sharing, support, close neighbourly relations, residing together with people who have similar origins (i.e. rural-to-urban migrants) in an environment which resembles the environment in their past lives (i.e. the village) and which thereby enables them to carry out similar tasks to those in the village. On the other hand, for those migrants with more individualistic and modern-society orientations, the same housing environment means repression, invasion of privacy, social control and sharing an environment with those people from whom they want to distance themselves. Thus, while the former group prefers *gecekondu*s, the latter does not.

#### *The gecekondu environment: different types of residents, same problems*

The 'gecekondu problem' that is shared by all *gecekondu* residents, despite their different perceptions of the *gecekondu* housing, lies mainly with low-standard housing and inadequate services and infrastructure in *gecekondu* areas, as well as the inferior image attached to its residents by the larger society. In this study, the most frequently mentioned reason for apartment preference, including many *gecekondu* residents, was the higher standards of living in apartment areas. This is supported by the empirical research carried out by Gokce (1993) and her research team in *gecekondu* settlements in 23 Turkish cities. In Gokce's research, the majority of those who said they would like to live in the same district with urban elites (70.9%) stated as their reason that they, too, deserved a good life. Moreover, Ayata

and Ayata (1993) found in their research conducted in Ankara with various groups living in the city centre, satellite towns, districts in transition from a *gecekondu* to an apartment area and *gecekondu* settlements, that it was *gecekondu* residents who complained most about their districts regarding services and infrastructure.

Furthermore, low status attached to *gecekondu* settlements in society negatively affects *gecekondu* residents. Karpas (1976) writes about the reasons stated by his respondents for their embarrassment of their *gecekondu* residences as follows: "Those who were embarrassed to say that they resided in the *gecekondu* attributed it to the fact that the city dwellers still considered them inferior".

*The apartment environment: similar types of residents, similar preferences?*

The migrants in apartments were all found to be proud of their apartment residences. Many felt that it was time for them to move to an apartment, since "one shouldn't stay behind one's time", and since they preferred to socialise with "educated and cultured people" and "to learn from them". They felt that they had come closer to becoming a part of the established urban society and had improved their social status. Here it should be stated that apartment housing in the context of Ankara represents urbanised and native urban groups (Ayata and Ayata, 1993). In general, the apartment residents expressed their satisfaction about living in apartments which were "well-built" and "comfortable" places, "easy to heat and clean" with "proper infrastructure and services".

When compared to *gecekondus*, these relatively more unanimous positive feelings of apartment residents for apartments may be explained in the following ways. First, moving to apartments from *gecekondus* is an important decision and a big commitment on the part of migrants (both economically and socially), and it represents an upward social mobility for the migrant family. This may create a tendency to evaluate their lives in apartments in a more positive light than they would do if they were fully 'rational'. Secondly, the migrant population in apartments is less heterogeneous than in *gecekondus* in terms of economic standing, namely, mostly better-off migrants live in apartments, whereas *gecekondus* accommodate both the poor and the relatively better-off. Furthermore, although some migrants may start their lives in the city by living in apartments, many move from *gecekondus* to apartments in later years as they improve their financial situations. That is, the time spent in the city is usually longer for migrants in apartments, whereas in *gecekondus* live both newcomers and long-term migrants. Finally, apartment housing does not have the stigma of *gecekondu* housing and it has (relatively) adequate infrastructure and urban services, the two important problems with *gecekondu* housing stated commonly by its residents.

Despite these general positive feelings about living in apartments, there were some complaints. For example, men who moved to apartments in the later part of life tended to complain about the lack of nature, disturbance by noise and restraints on behaviour. Also, some middle-aged housewives complained about the lack of nature in apartment districts. In addition, for a few, and they were mostly women who did not work outside the home, moving to apartments had become a highly frustrating experience, particularly because of living isolated lives away from their closely-knit *gecekondu* community. Since apartment neighbourliness is not inclusive but selective and is not intimate but distant, segregated relations and neighbourly groups that act in opposition to one another can appear (Ayata and Ayata, 1993).

In brief, while the presence of different groups in the *gecekondu* settlement (namely, rural- and urban-oriented, recent and long-term, poor and relatively better-off migrants) has led to varying responses regarding the preferences of residents and different meanings attached to it, ending up with stronger feelings for

or against *gecekondu* housing, in the apartment district a general feeling of satisfaction and pride of residents with their apartments has been obtained, despite some problems expressed about apartment residence.

In the following section, some of the characteristics of migrant residents that distinguish those who prefer *gecekondus* from those who prefer apartments are identified.

*Some characteristics of migrants that are related with gecekondu/apartment preferences*

Gender is an important factor that is associated with *gecekondu*/apartment preferences (see Table 1). More women than men preferred apartments, and the reason behind this was, in particular, the relatively well-built nature of apartments compared to *gecekondus* which made women's household duties less burdensome. However, the positive role the *gecekondu* housing plays in the lives of those *gecekondu* women who are oriented to rural society, as well as those whose movements are restricted to the neighbourhood (particularly young housewives and newcomers whose families are conservative) cannot be denied.

The social dimension of the housing environment plays a significant role in women's preferences. The majority of men spend most of their time out of the neighbourhood, and when they are at home, they tend to spend time inside their houses. What is most important to men about living in a *gecekondu* is to rest at home without being disturbed by noise, to be free from the obligation of being careful about one's actions in order not to disturb neighbours, and to enjoy their gardens. On the other hand, what is most important to women about living in a *gecekondu* settlement is close and informal relations, and sharing and support among neighbours, as well as using the outdoors freely, often sitting outside with neighbours. In a study, it was found that while for men economic concern was the most significant factor in their housing preferences (50%), for women it was social relations (34.5%) (Ayata and Ayata, 1993). Especially in *gecekondu* settlements and among women with low educational levels, good neighbourly relations were found to be very important (Ayata and Ayata, 1993). Paradoxically, what is most disturbing to women about living in a *gecekondu* area is the "too close" neighbourly relations.

The difference between men and women in the latter's emphasis on the social dimension in the housing environment is also true in the case of the apartment residents in this study. For those women who are frustrated with their apartments, the reason is related to the social dimension, that is, the formal and distant relations among apartment neighbours. On the other hand, men are usually frustrated with the noise inside their apartments and the obligation to be careful not to disturb their neighbours with noise. Whereas for women this frustration with apartment neighbours may become very disturbing, for men, irritations such as the noise in their apartments, are not so overwhelming as to make them unhappy with their lives.

The time spent in the city, age and socio-economic status were also found to be

Table 1. Gender and gecekondu/apartment preferences

Gender	Gecekondu/apartment preferences			
	Gecekondu	Both	Apartment	Total
Female	50	9	33	92
Male	14	0	24	38
Total	64	9	57	130

Chi-Square: 9.959 with df.: 2. P-value: 0.006877.

Table 2. Time in the city and gecekondul/apartment preferences

	Preference according to time spent in the city (years)			
	Born in Ankara	11–35	2–10	<2
Gecekondul	4	6	43	11
Both	0	1	3	5
Apartment	2	7	42	6
Total	6	14	88	22

Chi-square: 12.367 with df.: 6. *P*-value: 0.054175.

Table 3. Age and gecekondul/apartment preferences

Age (years)	Gecekondul/apartment preferences			
	Gecekondul	Both	Apartment	Total
Younger (15–29)	34	7	18	59
Middle-aged (30–49)	25	1	14	40
Older (≥50)	5	1	25	31
Total	64	9	57	130

Chi-square 25.680 with df.: 4. *P*-value: 0.000037.

Table 4. SES and gecekondul/apartment preferences

SES	Gecekondul/apartment preferences			
	Gecekondul	Both	Apartment	Total
Lower income	35	8	42	85
Middle income	16	1	15	32
Higher income	13	0	0	13
Total	64	9	57	130

Chi-square: 16.625 with df.: 4. *P*-value: 0.002286.

associated with *gecekondul*/apartment preferences (See Tables 2, 3 and 4, respectively). Although there were long-term migrants who preferred *gecekondul*, and newcomers who preferred apartments, the general tendency was that as the years in the city increased, more migrants preferred apartments. Regarding age, while elderly migrants, especially those who moved to the city in their old age when they were too old to live on their own or those who spent summers in the village and winters in the city, preferred to live in *gecekondul*s and became bored in apartments, those women in the *gecekondul* area who definitely wanted to live in apartments were all young. However, being young does not automatically bring out apartment preferences: some young people, including second-generation migrants, preferred *gecekondul*s because they believed that they would be confined to the home if they lived in an apartment. Furthermore, preference for apartments increased as the socio-economic status of the person increased. In brief, there is a general tendency that while those migrants who have improved their economic conditions, those who have spent many years in the city and younger people (including those newcomers who are oriented to modern urban society even when they lived in the village) prefer apartments, those migrants who are older, those who have moved to the city recently and those who have limited financial situations prefer *gecekondul*s.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This research demonstrates the need to recognise the diversity among rural-to-urban migrants, particularly among those in *gecekondul*s. Policy makers, in their attempt to solve the '*gecekondul* problem', should be responsive both to the needs and

preferences of women and men, rural- and urban-society oriented migrants, older and younger residents, and the relatively better-off and the poor. They should be aware that one solution cannot be good for all. Replacing *gecekondus* with apartment buildings can destroy the '*gecekundu* spirit' and create 'grief' for some of its residents. Many empirical studies in the squatter settlements in the Third World (see, e.g. Lobo, 1982; Karpas, 1976; Peattie, 1970) show the attachment of people to their communities and the existence of social networks which operate as "social and economic welfare in an environment otherwise uncertain in the extreme" (Peattie, 1970, p. 51). In addition, studies about the community attachment of 'minority groups' in the United States, as well as in other western countries whose populations have a significant number of immigrants, show that people who belong to 'minority groups' (Blacks, Hasidic Jews, American Italians, among others), are attached to their communities (Hunter, 1974; Rivlin, 1982) and experience 'grief' when they are forced to move out, despite the 'improved' housing in their new location (Fried, 1963; Young and Wilmott, 1957). The consequences of this forced relocation can be much more severe on women whose sense of identity is disturbed. In Fried's (1963) study, women were found to suffer severe depression for a long time (6 months to 2 years or more) as the result of living in the new housing which lacked the community support and active social life of the old neighbourhood. On the other hand, men, who were less dependent on the home and its immediate environment, suffered less.

Another but not-so-unexpected finding of this research for policy makers is the need to provide technical help to *gecekundu* owners who build their houses or participate in their construction. Turner (Turner, 1976; Turner and Fichter, 1972) has been stressing this point since the mid 1960s. Furthermore, recent pieces of research, drawing upon Turner's approach (e.g. Sastrosasmita and Amin, 1990), demonstrates that as migrants become more established in the city, first tenure and then modern housing standards become significant housing priorities. Thus, upon acknowledging the different stages of migrants in the city, transitional housing (rental) should be provided to newcomers, while home ownership should be available to established migrants (distributing title deeds to *gecekundu* owners, not for political gains but to respond to migrants' needs, may be one way). Moreover, modern housing should be available to 'status seekers'.

One point to stress here is that preferring a particular type of housing does not necessarily mean that the person will decide to live in such an housing environment. Issues other than individual preferences can be relevant. For example, some *gecekundu* residents may prefer to live in their *gecekondus*. Yet, they may decide to sell them to contractors in return for apartments for economic gains or to provide housing for their children. In this process, women may be disadvantaged, since the husband as the 'head of the family' is usually the one who makes the decisions of whether to sell or to keep the *gecekundu*. In an empirical research carried out with various socio-economic groups in Ankara (Ayata and Ayata, 1993) it was found that men had the final word about such matters as property ownership. Thus, policy makers should take into consideration the gender dimension of the preference (attitude) and action (behaviour) relationship, and they should be more gender conscious in their proposed solutions. As stressed in Habitat II, gender is a significant aspect of 'human' settlements, and both women and men should be able to convert their attitudes into behaviour in the context of housing.

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