

# Historical, Physical, and Social Development of Odunpazarı

Fatma Kolsal and Güler Koca

**Abstract**—Odunpazarı is one of the central districts of Eskisehir which is identified with the city. The popularity that the area has is not only owing to the tourism flourished by the concept of “Odunpazarı Houses” which became a trademark by the renovation and restoration projects realized within the district, but also the significant place it always has through the historical development of Eskisehir and the continuity of the historical pattern that accomplished to survive.

The purpose of this study is to scrutinize how Odunpazarı has physically and socially been affected during the change of Eskisehir in time, in which way the patterns have developed by the effects of this change and the results of the urban planning regarding the district.

**Index Terms**—Conservation, eskisehir, historical settlement, odunpazarı.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Odunpazarı is one of the central districts of Eskisehir which is identified with the city. The popularity that the area has is not only owing to the tourism flourished by the concept of “Odunpazarı Houses” which became a trademark by the renovation and restoration projects realized within the district, but also the significant place it always has through the historical development of Eskisehir and the continuity of the historical pattern that accomplished to survive.

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## II. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ESKISEHIR

Eskisehir is a settlement dating back to the Antiquity. Due to its location on major trade routes it has been home to several settlements. Firstly, the existence of Hittite has been found in the region. However, the more detailed information about Eskisehir which was once called as Dorylaion (today’s Sarhoyuk region) through Antiquity and medieval ages come across to the period of Phrygians who constituted a great civilization at Western Anatolia. Eskisehir is accepted to be founded by Doryleos from

Eretria [1].

In the years that followed, the city was conquered by Romans and it faced the medieval ages under the dominance of Romans. During this period, prevalence of Christianity caused changes in the social structure of the city, thus the urban pattern developed around the religious architectural outputs; the churches. In later times, the city was respectively in command of Arabs and Turks, therefore they made a social and architectural mark on the city as well. After the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the region became Seljuk land, and continued to host different civilizations there on. As a result of this and continuous wars, great and irreparable damages occurred in the city [2]. In early Ottoman period, the settlement in Eskisehir seemed to be poly-centered. The Turkmen dwellings over the hillside of Odunpazarı and around the Alaaddin Mosque sprawled through the upper parts of the hill. The area turned to be completely a Turkish residential field [3]. (See Fig. 1).

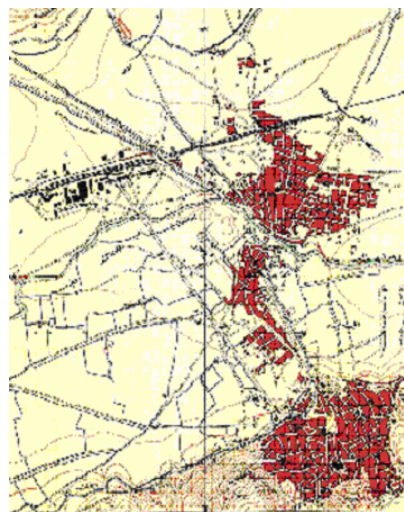


Fig. 1. The first map indicating the existing structure and settlement of Eskisehir, 1892.

When the late Ottoman Period and Early Republic period are concerned, the significant factors that affected the urban development of Eskisehir can be counted as migrations, meerschaum (lületaş) trade and the introduction of railway. After the announcement of the Republic, depending on state policies the city hosted immigrants out of the country, depending on the industrial progress, the city hosted immigrants from other cities. Consequently, the city was mainly transformed and the urban and functional character of the city was fundamentally shaped by these migrations. The variety, increase and the change of the population became more distinctive by the introduction of the two universities. This was also effective on the patterns of the settlement.

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### III. THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ODUNPAZARI AND THE CONSERVATION STUDIES

Odunpazarı which is one of the first settlements of Eskisehir, spreaded on the hillside of the southern ridge and as a result of this natural limit created a development pattern along east-west direction [4]. The street and dwelling typologies parallel to traditional Turkish lifestyle organically formed in Seljuk period and this organic structure was mainly conserved up to this time. In this structure, including one or two storeyed houses with the inner courtyards and alcoves which allows women to socialize among themselves and narrow streets between the houses, men were generally passing their time in market place where the central element was a religious building. This lifestyle continued during the Ottoman period as well and Odunpazarı hosted the local people. The people who migrated after Balkan War instead, inhabited in the one-storeyed houses around the Porsuk River [5]. By the effect of industrialization and the increase in the population, there has been a residential shortness in Republic period. Therefore, the multistoreyed apartments through the medium of cooperative developments were begun to be constructed. By the dislocation of the central axis of Eskisehir, the people living in Odunpazarı abandoned their places for the new constructed apartment buildings. After this movement to the new center of Eskisehir, the labor and immigrant class started to settle in the periphery of the city especially in the places closer to factories [1].

By the same way and by the time, the continuous increase in the population caused abandoned Odunpazarı to be preferred by the low-income groups [6]. The lack of good care and the concept of haphazard separations inside the houses owing to the fact that to be used by two or more families brought out a negative impact on the general appearance and the historical pattern of the district. Odunpazarı turned to have a slum-like image with its changing demographic character.

Odunpazarı was declared to be "conservation area" in 1978 and the buildings to be conserved were officially registered in 1981. The first conservation plan concerning the area was completed in 1988 [7]. The abandonment of Odunpazarı after the rapid industrialization instead of demolishing the houses is the most important factor of the survival of the historical pattern today. This abandonment was not a part of a conscious conservation policy, but was a spontaneous one. In 1970, on the contrary to the organic structure of the district, Seyh Sahabettin Road was completed, dividing the area into two obvious portions. It has created irreparable and unfortunate damages on the historical pattern of the district. Owing to the fact that the streets are mainly too narrow among the district, the buildings constructed up to maximum 2 storeys, thus a passive conservation was fortunately provided in the area. The second conservation plan was confirmed in 1997. The renovation and street rehabilitation projects of Eskisehir Metropolitan Municipality and Odunpazarı Municipality are having been performed in the region since 2000. While some of the registered buildings governed with new functions such as museum, exhibition, restaurant, cafe and souvenir shops, some of the damaged ones were rebuilt and brought into service as hotel, restaurant, glassblowing

museum, city museum and wax museum. Besides great contribution they made for vitalizing the tourism of the city, these new functions caused several positive and negative changes in the social pattern of Odunpazarı. When the region is functionally analysed, despite the revival of the commercial activities, it is observed that the residential pattern is still dominant.

### IV. SOCIAL PATTERN SURVEY OF ODUNPAZARI AND ITS EVALUATION

The districts which are exposed to intense tourism activities and rehabilitation studies were chosen for the survey in order to determine the social pattern of Odunpazarı and to gather information from the inhabitants about the conserved area and developing tourism. (See Fig. 2).

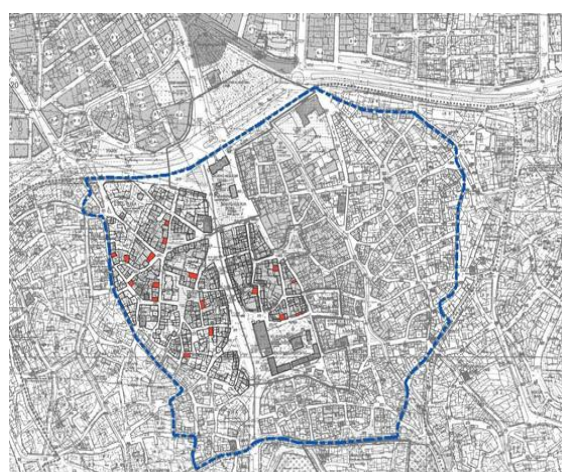


Fig. 2. The houses subjected to the survey in Odunpazarı.

It is observed that, as seen in Fig. 3, 5% of the participants are 45-54 years old, 39% of them are over 55 years and 6% of them are 35-44 years old, whereas half of them are female and 67% of them are married. While the ratio of the participants with two children is 44 percent, the ratio with three or more children is 28. (See Fig. 4). It is beheld that major part of the houses shelter only one family whereas the number of the houses with more than one family is rather small. It is seen that the working population is lower than the non-working one due to the elder and retired inhabitants. When the income is concerned, it is observed that the families with an income between 0-1000TL have a percentage of 50. While 67% of the participants were graduated from primary school, 6% of them were from elementary school, 17% of them were from high school and 10% were from college.

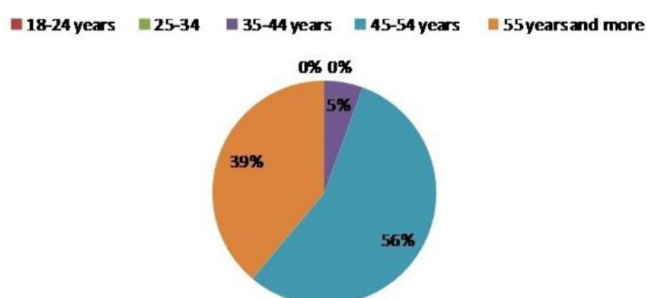


Fig. 3. The age distribution graphic.

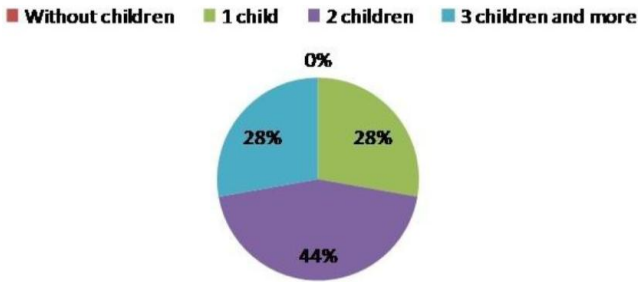


Fig. 4. The number of the children.

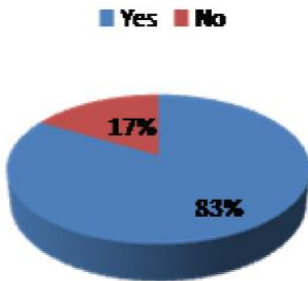


Fig. 5. Home-ownership graphic.

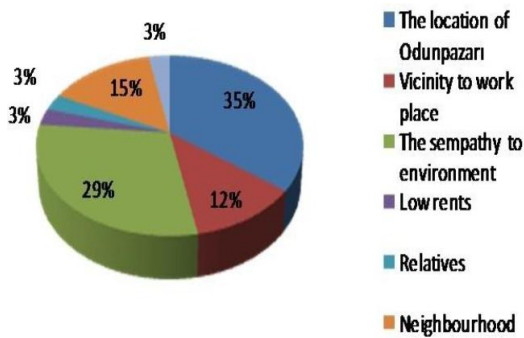


Fig. 6. The reason to prefer Odunpazarı.

It is discovered that the 89% of the participants are from Eskisehir, the 45% of them reside in Odunpazarı for more than 21 years, where 83% of the participants are homeowners and 17% of them are tenants. (See Fig. 5). 56% of the homeowners owned their house by purchase, while the remaining 44% by inheritance. When the participants are asked whether they want to move some other place or not, 67% of them say “no”, whereas the participants with “yes” answer related this respond to the inadequacy of their houses and the complains about the environmental conditions. It is seen that the amount of the rents is generally low and 2/3 of the tenants pay rents between 200-300TL. The car ownership in the region is 33% and due to the lack of private parking areas the parking is realised along the narrow streets. It is determined that the 44% of the participants were from villages before they moved to Odunpazarı, while 28% of them were from another district of Eskişehir and 28% of them were always in Odunpazarı. When the reasons for preference of Odunpazarı are ranked, the location is at the first place with a percentage of 35 which is followed by the sympathy for environment with a percentage of 29. Fig. 6. When the participants are asked whether they are content form their houses or not, 55% of them are responded as they are content. The discontent with the ratio 45, stems firstly from the inadequate heating of the house, and then from the difficulty of the maintenance of the house. 61% of the participants do not want to move from the region. The discontent of houses with a ratio 63 and the

discontent of environment with a ratio 37 are among the motivation to want to move from the area. If the participants are to move from their houses, 89% of them prefer a new house in Odunpazarı, while the others prefer an apartment flat in somewhere else with a low ratio such as 11%. (See Fig. 7). Therefore, it is not wrong to say, the inhabitants are loyal to Odunpazarı. The problems they have are not related to the environment, but to the houses they live in.

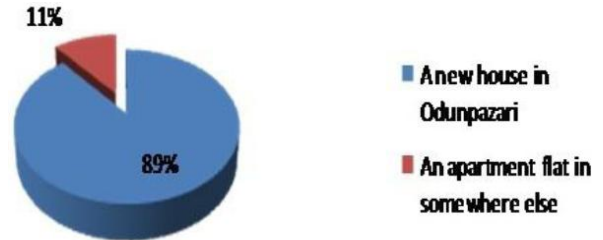


Fig. 7. The preference for the new house in case a move.

The effects of the tourism to their lives are asked to the participants in order to observe their attitudes towards the tourism in the region. 61% of them think that the environment revitalized, 28% responded as traffic problem occurred and the remaining said several things such as job opportunity is provided, noise problem occurred and tourism did not affect me. (See Fig. 8). Hence, it can be concluded that there is a positive attitude towards tourism in the region. To understand at which degree the participants are interested in the activities held in the area by means of tourism, they are asked if they join the facilities or not. Half of them said yes, half of them said no. It is observed that the ones with “yes” answer are mostly going to exhibitions, whereas they are rarely participating workshops. (See Fig. 9).



Fig. 8. The attitude towards tourism.

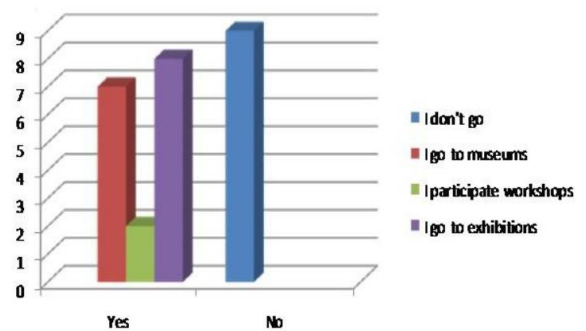


Fig. 9. The participation to the activities.



## V. CONCLUSION

When all the data gathered from the survey is evaluated, some general results can be obtained about physical and social problems in Odunpazarı. The most striking conclusion is that the participants have a deep sympathy for Odunpazarı despite the negative environmental conditions and they are satisfied with their lives, relationships with neighbours and the social environment they have in Odunpazarı. Indeed, they do not want to live in another house unless they have to. When it is concerned that an important part of the house ownerships are due to inheritance, it will not be incorrect to say that this loyalty to the district is from generation to generation.

Besides its positive consequences, the long-term effects of the tourism in the region should be thoroughly discussed. It is very important to consider the conservation of this invaluable historical pattern of the area which has succeeded to be protected passively or actively through centuries as it deserves. When the income levels of the inhabitants are considered, although they have a positive contribution to the budgets of the families and the revival of the area, both the conservation and rehabilitation and the consequent tourism activities has a potential to damage the specific and intimate and deep rooted social identity of the region. The social environment which dates back to the establishment of the settlement in the region should not be deteriorated for the sake of conservation of physical pattern. It should not be neglected that this area whose speciality and uniqueness should continue, owes this quality not only to its physical structure but also to its social character. Therefore, if one of those physical or social qualities is negatively affected, the other will be so.

In conclusion, the conservation activities which are directed to preserve the physical environment and are not at the same time to cherish the social life and focused only on the tourism will result in an area without fascination. An environment without the inhabitants, soul and vitality, but with restored empty streets and houses will obviously lose the attraction for tourism as well. Under the light of these evaluations, it appears that Odunpazarı is a place which is alive and exists with its inhabitants and its importance can be conserved only with the life styles of the inhabitants are preserved too by transferring the cultural heritage and its value to the next generations.

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