

## DESIGNING MOSQUES FOR SECULAR CONGREGATIONS: TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MOSQUE AS A SOCIAL SPACE IN TURKEY

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*This study examines contemporary meanings and uses of the mosque in Turkey by arguing that productive architectural plans require understanding both the socio-historical development of the mosque and the socio-political transformations that have led to the mosque's current position in society. Mosque space is conceptualized as a physical environment that cultivates the formation and transformation of individual, social, and collective memories. The study questions whether the mosque still exhibits the qualities of a social space and whether new and innovative mosque designs reflect — programmatically, architecturally, and spatially — transformations related to their current uses and social meanings. These questions are explored through interviews, two questionnaires, and a worksheet, all of which involve a case study of Dogramacizade Mosque in Ankara. On one hand, the findings underscore the changing relationship between Muslim women and mosque space as a result of the transformation of congregations into citizens of a contemporary secular nation and suggest that spatial designs of mosques should take present-day behaviors and practices into consideration rather than ignoring this social aspect through which transformations occur. On the other hand, the collective memory of congregation members resists changing the allocation of prayer halls in the mosque. Members are in favor of continuing the traditional layout of separated spaces based on gender differences. The resistance implies that collective memory changes much slower than behaviors or lifestyles in terms of gender issues. Additionally, parallel to the findings, modernization of the mosque brings forth the idea of resurrecting the mosque's historical form as a social complex that fundamentally conflicts with secularity.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the mosque has been not only a place for religious practices but also a social space, allowing the formation of individual, social, and collective memories. Its spatial organization and central location in an urban or a rural settlement were developed to cultivate enduring practices, organize daily life, and accommodate social interactions among different socioeconomic groups. The secure position of the mosque as the center of daily life has shifted in varying degrees in different settings as a consequence of transformations in everyday life. In Turkey, these transformations present a unique opportunity to critically examine the position of the mosque as a social space in a historical context and open a discussion of its spatial development with respect to the social, cultural, and political transformations shaped by the Republican reforms. These reforms were initiated following the establishment of a secular state in 1923 that ensured the termination of the Ottoman Empire, a religious monarchy that had endured for six centuries. Arguably, productive architectural schemes require understanding the socio-historical development of the mosque as well as socio-political transformations with regard to the mosque's stance in society. How has the mosque functioned? How has it served as a social space? How has the role of the mosque as a social space changed? What are the architectural and spatial implications of the changes?

This study questions whether the current uses and meanings of the mosque still exhibit the qualities of a social space and whether new mosque designs reflect — programmatically, architecturally, and spatially — transformations related to the current state of their uses and meanings. These questions are explored through interviews, two questionnaires, and a worksheet, all of which involve a case study of Dogramacizade Mosque. The research was conducted with three different sample groups in order to chart various viewpoints and depict a comprehensive picture about expectations concerning the socio-spatial characteristics of today's mosques. First, in-depth interviews were held with a heterogeneous group to gain an overall view about the current uses and meanings of the mosque. The results from this part paved the way for the second and third phases of the research. Second, a questionnaire and worksheet were given to interior architecture students as prospective designers. This group also represented the younger generation's opinions on the subject. Third, a questionnaire was given to the congregation of Dogramacizade Mosque. As users of the mosque, their specific experiences were critical for evaluating the current use and transformation of the mosque as a social space. Dogramacizade Mosque was built in 2008 in a suburb of Ankara with the intention of breaking away from the common mosque architecture that fills the Turkish landscape. Discourse on the mosque is examined in order to frame the analysis.

The critical point of the argument suggests that the transformation of congregations into citizens of a contemporary secular nation should have consequences regarding the transformation of mosque architecture and spaces. The socio-religious character of mosque spaces has increasingly been of interest to sociologists.<sup>1</sup> However, architectural criticisms about, reviews of, and research on contemporary mosque architecture have mostly ignored the socio-spatial dynamics and mainly revolved around form (*i.e.*, breaking away from traditional architecture). Examples of this can be observed in the official periodical of the Chamber of Turkish Architects, *Mimarlık*, which dedicated a dossier to contemporary mosque architecture in 2006. For example, an article in the issue examined contemporary mosques under the following subtitles: (1) mosques covered by curvilinear roofs, (2) mosques covered by folded plate, and (3) experiments in form and mass. The article evaluated spatial compositions in terms of commercial units incorporated into mosque designs, which are intended to provide funds for the mosque's maintenance (Eyüpgiller, 2006). It also critically considered the symbolic and functional qualities of minarets and domes. The evaluations did not discuss the socio-religious dimension of the spaces. Similarly, an interview by Çiper (2006) with a famous contemporary architect focused on the formal and technological developments, as well as financial matters.

A well-known contemporary example that has been in the spotlight for responding to social and political transformations of the contemporary secular nation is the Turkish Parliament Mosque (1985-1989) in Ankara, which was designed by Behruz and Can Çinici (Al-Asad, 1999; Davidson and Serageldin, 1995; Erzen and Balamir, 1996; Holod, *et al.*, 1997). The design, which won the Aga

Khan Award for Architecture in 1995, has been widely praised for breaking with tradition by challenging symbolic qualities of architectural components of Turkish mosque design in unprecedented ways: the minaret was omitted and replaced instead with a cypress tree as a metaphor of recycling human materiality into the earth; the main prayer hall is covered with a stepped pyramid rather than a typical dome; and the *Kiblah* (the direction toward which one must face while praying in Islam) wall is dematerialized by using glass, which permits a view into a sunken and cascaded garden with a pool speckled with water lilies (Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1995).

Innovative and form-related interpretations of the Parliament Mosque that focus on spirituality are beyond the scope of this study. However, the building is significant for confronting the spatial status of women and men inside the mosque. Men and women are still separated, but the boundary between them is significantly lessened. The women's section is separated from the men's section by only a few steps and a glass banister. The absence of the traditional screen, which visually hides women, is an acknowledgment of modern life and the Turkish constitution, which recognize men and women as equals. The spatial design is intended to reflect the democratic regime and the equality of the congregation.

The Turkish Parliament Mosque, along with some others, is a historically informed and unique attempt to respond to important and controversial considerations of gender. Regrettably, the mosque is difficult to access because it is located in the secure zone of Parliament. However, the gender and socio-political considerations that the spatial composition highlights are significant in examining contemporary meanings and uses of the mosque as a social space where collective memory forms and, significantly, transforms. Focusing on these considerations enables examining transformations in social and cultural practices related to architecture as they are transmitted from one generation to another (Chevalier, 1969; Halbwachs, 1992; Le Goff, 1988).

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MOSQUES AS SOCIAL SPACES IN ANATOLIA

Traditionally located at the hub of a settlement, mosque interiors, courtyards, and subsidiary spaces are public grounds that accommodate social interaction.<sup>2</sup> Although men have used mosques more extensively, they are open to everyone, regardless of religion, class, gender, age, or ethnicity. Historically, mosques have not only been places for religious practices but have also functioned as hubs of social life, education, charitable activities, and political performances (Kuban, 1974; Kuran, 1968). Therefore, mosques offer favorable conditions for the formation and representation of collective thought (Chevalier, 1969; Halbwachs, 1992; Le Goff, 1988) and the preservation of memories (De Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1968).

The activities and rituals for men and women in mosques include special day prayers (historically separate for women and men), funerals, and Friday noon prayers (traditionally only for men). The latter are obligatory and followed by sermons (*khutbah*) on specific subjects related to ethical themes and practical matters. The spatial organization of mosques was developed to accommodate and empower these activities and rituals. Whereas earlier mosques were usually single buildings with a courtyard, later mosques included a complex of buildings (*külliye*) with different functions, such as housing for the needy, guest houses, a school, and a hospital. The function of mosques in the contexts of the Seljuk and Early and Classical Ottoman periods can be connected to the *zaviye*, a multifunctional Islamic monastery built in uninhabited locations (either strategically important or not) and, in some cases, in urban areas.

*Zaviyes* existed before Turks came to Anatolia following the Battle of Malazgirt (1071).<sup>3</sup> They became widespread social and political centers for organizing the settlement of nomadic Turkish tribes and for establishing social networks among the newly settled communities (Barkan, 1942).<sup>4</sup> Founded and run

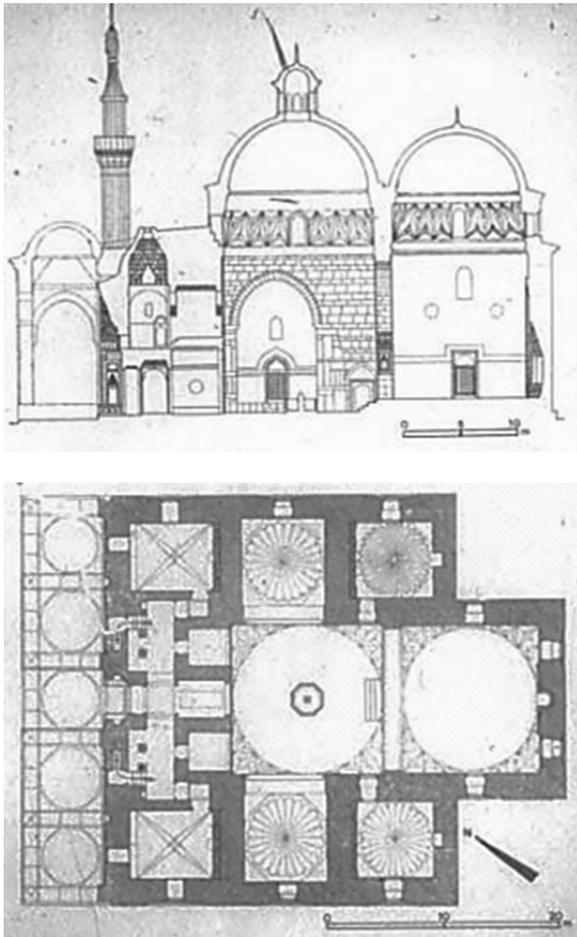


FIGURE 1. Green Mosque, Bursa (Early Ottoman, 1419).

by Dervishes — Islamic knights and missionaries who belonged to the Akhi order of Islam (*ibid.*; Gölpinarlı, 1997)<sup>5</sup> — *zaviyes* were places for teaching Islam to new believers and organizing guilds. Dervishes were active in many aspects of everyday life. They were knowledgeable about warfare, knew about agriculture and irrigation, and were able to construct buildings and mills. The *zaviyes* played significant social and political roles in building first the Seljuk and later the Ottoman states (Çetintas, 1958); Seljuk and Early Ottoman sultans were members of *zaviyes*. Spaces were allocated in the building for religious and secular needs. As the political/dynastic power switched from the Akhi order to the Sunni sect, the prayer function of the *zaviyes* was emphasized, leading to the emergence of *zaviye*-type mosques.

The plans of the *zaviye*-type mosque differed from that of the traditional mosque: the latter was designed as a single space, suitable for the congregation to pray in rows behind the imam (minister) (Çetintas, 1958; Kuran, 1980) (Figure 1). The *zaviye* looked like a housing unit, with rooms, sofas, and cupboards that were connected by corridors. As *zaviye* plans did not have a prototype, *zaviye*-type mosques were derived from plans for

*madrassas* (theological schools located in urban areas for teaching members of the Sunni sect). Toward the second half of the 14th century, a minaret was added to the design, and some revisions were made at the entrances (Kuban, 2007). Before the Akhi order gradually lost its administrative power in the Ottoman state in the 15th century, sultans would build a group of public buildings (*külliye*) with a *zaviye* as the main one.<sup>6</sup> But as the Sunni sect gained more power at the administrative level of the state, the mosque became the central building of the *külliye*. While *zaviye*-type mosques dotted the rural landscape, larger mosque complexes emerged in urban areas from the 11th through the 15th centuries (Kuban, 2002, 2007).<sup>7</sup> During the Early Ottoman period (1299-1438/1447), public buildings were constructed around the congregational mosque (Kuran, 1968). In the Classical Ottoman period (1520-1720), this cluster of buildings with the mosque in the center was disciplined into a geometrical order due to changes in power and the influences of the patronage system. Mosques were commissioned by sultans or people at the administrative level who belonged to the Sunni sect. The dominance of the geometrical layout can be observed in Mimar Sinan's (the chief architect of the Ottoman Empire from 1538-1588) designs. For example, in the Süleymaniye Mosque complex, the buildings have crystal-cut geometric relations with each other by means of an orthogonal system. The mosque is central and oriented toward *Kiblah*. Other structures are related to the mosque by a modular system derived from the diameter of the upper structural elements (*i.e.*, the domes) (Figure 2). The outer court walls of the mosque create a boundary between the buildings of the complex and the mosque. In such a composition, the

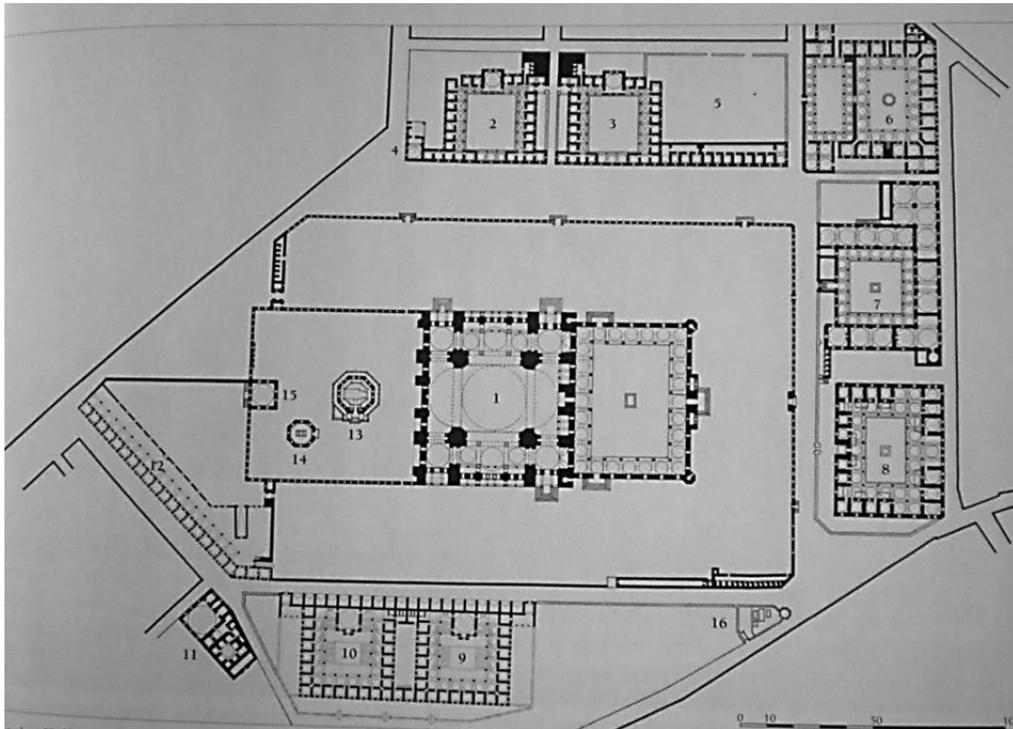


FIGURE 2. Süleymaniye Mosque complex, Istanbul, by Mimar Sinan (Classical Ottoman, 1550-1557).

biggest court belongs to the mosque and is hierarchically central to and dominates all other public spaces in the complex.

With the beginning of Ottoman Westernization in the 18th century, mosque complexes maintained their function as spaces for social interaction, yet their development gradually began to change. Istanbul's Topkapi Palace (which contained a mosque) was both the traditional home of the sultans and the administrative center of the Ottoman Empire. Sultans did not go out in public. With the changes occurring first in the court and then in society, the sultan and his court began to venture openly beyond the palace walls and use public outdoor spaces. Small mosques were constructed in the city for the sultans' convenience. The spatial composition of these mosques was similar to the *zaviye* in that they included religious and secular sections, but they mixed Ottoman and eclectic European styles. Significantly, new building types, such as military schools in Istanbul, were introduced in the 19th century as part of the Ottoman Westernization process. These were followed by the School of Fine Arts (1882), the School of Civil Engineering (1884), and the School of Medicine (1903), which were built according to Western models; they were no longer a part of the traditional mosque complexes. Hence, they not only represented social and political transformations toward Western norms but were also signs of the transformation of the mosque as a social space (Aslanapa, 1986; Goodwin, 1987; Merzi, 1999).

Social space can be differentiated from physical space by a defined period of time. Physical aspects of space (spatial configurations, stylistic and formal characteristics, technical and aesthetic aspects) can be durable and static through time. Social space is placed outside of time by its social aspect (Chevalier, 1969; Halbwachs, 1992), through which it is possible to follow social transformations and changes. The physical space of mosques was preserved through the 18th and 19th centuries, but changes induced by the Westernization reforms began to bear on the social impact

of mosques. This impact, however, was less conspicuous than the impact of changes on the structure of the state because everyday relations between individuals change in a different way and at a different rate (Lefebvre, 1991). The rhythm of everyday relations between members of congregations was not largely affected by the administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Collective memory, which is sustained within a specific physical space through public activity at specific time intervals, such as the administration of Friday sermons, facilitated the preservation of the social position of mosques in Ottoman society.

## MOSQUE DESIGN AFTER THE FOUNDING OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

After the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the social, political, and physical status of mosques shifted. The new nation-state replaced the religious monarchy with a democratic and secular regime. Radical reforms launched in the 1920s included the abolition of the caliphate and Islamic law (1924). Modern Turkish institutions and government ministries, such as education, health, culture, shelter, and social solidarity for the poor, replaced the public services that had been organized around mosques. Mosques not only lost all of their subsidiary social functions, but their political objective was also taken away; they became purely places for religious services. The patronage system changed as well. Financially, the state no longer supported the construction of new mosques, but it provided initiators who wanted to build new mosques, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), religious associations, and individuals, with free land, electricity, and water.

Architecturally and with the exception of their construction technology, mosques remained true to their Classical Ottoman predecessors until the 1950s. After that, innovative forms were suggested through architectural competitions (Erzen and Balamir, 1996; Güzer, 2009). Vedat Dalokay's Kocatepe Mosque project for Ankara, which challenged the classical form, won a national competition in 1957 (Figure 3A). Construction started in 1963 but was abandoned after a year. The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA)<sup>8</sup> stated that the shell-structured prayer hall could not be built with the available technology (*Mimarlik*, 1966). Instead, Hüsrev Tayla's project, which had a classical scheme, was constructed (Figure 3B) (As, 2006; Erzen and Balamir, 1996; *Mimarlik*, 1966; Neelum, 2005). Until the Parliament Mosque was built, the interior spatial scheme and interpretation of religiously coded architectural elements repeated the classical forms. Therefore, it is not possible to find spatial echoes of transforming religious practices. The spaces of contemporary mosques are open to interpretation, and the DRA (2009) encourages new spatial proposals, but initiators of new mosques are mostly eager to only pay for traditional forms and schemes.<sup>9</sup> A willingness to pay only for traditional or conservative approaches to design may be due to various factors that are beyond the scope of this study, such as the financial circumstances, vision, understanding, and/or motivation of the sponsor(s) and social and local dynamics. New spatial proposals, however, require an understanding of the contemporary uses of the mosque and how the social practices of congregations, as citizens of a contemporary secular and democratic nation, have changed.

## CURRENT USES OF MOSQUES AS SOCIAL SPACES

Do current uses of mosques still exhibit the qualities of social spaces? How has the use of mosques as social spaces transformed? What is the relationship of mosques to the secular citizen in the current urban context in Turkey? To explore these questions, the study was conducted in three parts, which to different extents, all relate to a case study of Dogramacizade Mosque in Ankara. The main reasons for selecting this mosque are its recognition by professionals as an architectural design statement and its inclusive interpretation of space. There are a small church and a small synagogue within its precincts. The building was commissioned in 2004 by the founder of Bilkent University to be a small mosque complex in the vicinity of the university, which is 25 km (15 miles)

away from the city center. The project won the 2007-2008 Architectural Award from the Turkish Independent Architects Association (TSMD, 2008). The study relied on architectural plans and on-site observations to examine the building and its spaces. In addition, an in-depth interview was held with Erkut Sahinbas, the project's architect.

### *Part 1: The Interviews*

The interviews intended to clarify the socio-spatial qualities of mosques in general with reference to the study's argument. They were completed in Kurtulus, which is an old, established district at the center of the city. A snowball sampling method (McIntyre, 2005) was used to form the group of interviewees, which consisted of 17 people (12 women and five men) who were heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, education, profession, and hometown. All of the interviewees had resided in Ankara for more than 10 years (Table 1). The interviews were semi-structured, and the questions were open-ended.

As religious practice is mostly a private matter, the opening questions were meant to inquire about the interviewees' opinions about Dogramacizade Mosque, not their religious practices. Starting the interview by asking whether the interviewees had heard about the mosque and, if so, whether they found the inclusive program appropriate made the conversations flow well. The rest of each interview was divided into four sections. The first part asked whether the interviewees went to a mosque and, if so, with what frequency or rhythm. The second part aimed to find out about activities in mosques. The third part inquired about the significance (regarding meaning and function) of mosques in the interviewees' lives and in society. The fourth part asked about symbolic meanings of the architectural form and/or design elements.

In addition to the above interviews, in-depth interviews were conducted with an architect from the DRA and the imam of the central mosque in the Kurtulus district, where the interviews with the



FIGURE 3A. Vedat Dalokay's design for Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara won a national competition in 1957.



FIGURE 3B. Kocatepe Mosque by Hüsrev Tayla (1967) has a classical scheme.

TABLE 1. Interviewee profile of group 1.

| Int. no. | Gender | Birth year | Birthplace                            | Year of settlement in Ankara | Level of education  | Profession   |
|----------|--------|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1        | Female | 1958       | Ankara                                | 1958                         | School of Applied Technology and Management: Banking and Finance          | Inspector at TEDAS (Turkish Electric Authority)              |
| 2        | Female | 1957       | Mersin                                | 1975                         | School of Applied Technology and Management: Tourism and Trade Management | Related job in the private sector                            |
| 3        | Female | 1932       | Ünye                                  | 1950                         | Vocational high school for girls  | Retired bank employee  |
| 4        | Female | 1930       | Karamürsel/ Kocaeli                   | 1948                         | Primary school  | Housewife  |
| 5        | Male   | 1963       | Sungurlu/ Çorum                       | 1992                         | High school   | Grocer   |
| 6        | Female | 1963       | Sungurlu/ Çorum                       | 1992                         | Illiterate  | Housewife, helps her husband at the grocery                  |
| 7        | Female | 1952       | Sabanözü/ Çankiri                     | 1975                         | Illiterate  | Cleaning lady  |
| 8        | Female | 1965       | Kirklareli                            | 1984                         | University  | Teacher  |
| 9        | Female | 1953       | Kayseri                               | 1972                         | Secondary school  | Housewife  |
| 10       | Female | 1927       | Elazığ                                | 1960                         | Vocational high school for girls  | Housewife  |
| 11       | Female | 1939       | Immigrant from Bulgaria to Kirklareli | 1998                         | Primary school  | Housewife  |
| 12       | Male   | 1952       | Çankiri                               | 1973-1982; 1989-2009         | University  | Engineer   |
| 13       | Male   | 1961       | Ankara                                | 1961                         | University  | Former bank employee, now works in the financial sector      |
| 14       | Male   | 1926       | Kütahya                               | 1944                         | Technical high school (Teknik Yüksek Okulu)                               | Retired from General Directorate of State Airports Authority |
| 15       | Male   | 1964       | Erbaa/Tokat                           | 1986                         | Primary school  | Concierge  |
| 16       | Female | 1952       | Aksaray                               | 1994                         | Primary school until fourth grade   | Cleaning lady  |
| 17       | Female | 1973       | Tokat-Zile                            | 1995                         | University  | Cleaning lady  |

17 subjects were held. We chose to hold the interviews in this district for two major reasons. First, it is an older and more established city district compared to the recently developed suburb of Bilkent, where people from higher income groups reside and which is located 25 km away from the center of Ankara. Second, it is more heterogeneous than Bilkent in terms of residents' education, age, class, and social status.

In the course of the research, the questionnaire and worksheet in Part 2 and the questionnaire in Part 3 were prepared in light of the interviews in Part 1.

### ***Part 2: The Questionnaire and the Worksheet***

A questionnaire and a worksheet were given to 20 undergraduate students (five men and 15 women in their early 20s) in Bilkent University's Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design. The students were enrolled in a senior-level elective course that focused on current issues in spatial design. The questionnaire inquired about the individuals' understanding of and relationship to mosques in general by asking (1) what activities the person associated with mosques; (2) how the individual used mosques; and (3) what spaces, architectural elements, and objects the person most associated with mosques. It also inquired about the students' views on the idea of creating a spatial composition that services different religions. To complete the worksheet, the students visited Dogramacizade Mosque and analyzed its interior and exterior spaces. This analysis required the students to examine and compare the women's and men's spaces (such as prayer halls and ablution rooms) in terms of spatial qualities such as allocation, organization, importance, size, vision, and relation to the imam. Students responded to a series of questions to evaluate the results of their comparison in depth. Finally, they were asked if and how they would reconsider or transform the spatial design of the mosque in terms of gender.

### ***Part 3: The Questionnaire***

A questionnaire was given to 68 people (16 women and 52 men) who are part of the congregation of Dogramacizade Mosque. It was completed following noon and afternoon prayers in two weeks in November 2010. Following a section asking the individual's age, sex, education, profession, and number of years residing in Ankara, the questionnaire had two main parts. The first part, a modified version of the questionnaire used in Part 2, inquired about the individual's understanding of and relationship to the mosque in general by asking how he or she used the mosque, what activities the person associated with the mosque, and which spaces and architectural elements the person most associated with the mosque. Five of the architectural elements — the minaret, courtyard, form of the roof, size of the building, and others specified by the interviewees — were selected from the detailed list in the Part 2 questionnaire. One question inquired about the individual's association of the courtyard with certain activities. Questions concerning associations with the spatial qualities of major spaces (*e.g.*, men's and women's prayer halls, ablution rooms, the latecomers' place, room(s) for religious education) were asked with contrasting adjective couplets (*e.g.*, big or small, spacious or stuffy, luminous or dim, clean or dirty, beautiful or ugly).

The second part, which is specific to Dogramacizade Mosque, first inquired about the congregation members' views on the idea of creating a spatial composition that services different religions. Then it asked what the congregation members liked and disliked most about the mosque (*e.g.*, architecture, prayer halls, inclusive program, location, construction and other materials, courtyard, view, other options specified by the interviewees). The spatial quality questions were the same as the general questions used in the Part 2 questionnaire but were specific to Dogramacizade Mosque. Next, the questionnaire asked a series of questions regarding the congregation's views on the separation of men's and women's prayer halls. Last, the members stated why they liked being part of the congregation of Dogramacizade Mosque.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Analyzing Dogramacizade Mosque***

The Dogramacizade Mosque complex has the unique feature of accommodating activities of three major religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism (Figure 4). Since its opening in December 2008, there has been much debate about the idea of housing the three religions in one complex (Kahramankaptan, 2008; Tanyeli, 2008). The architect has stated that this was not the original intention but was developed during the design process (Sahinbas, 2009); he derived the idea from

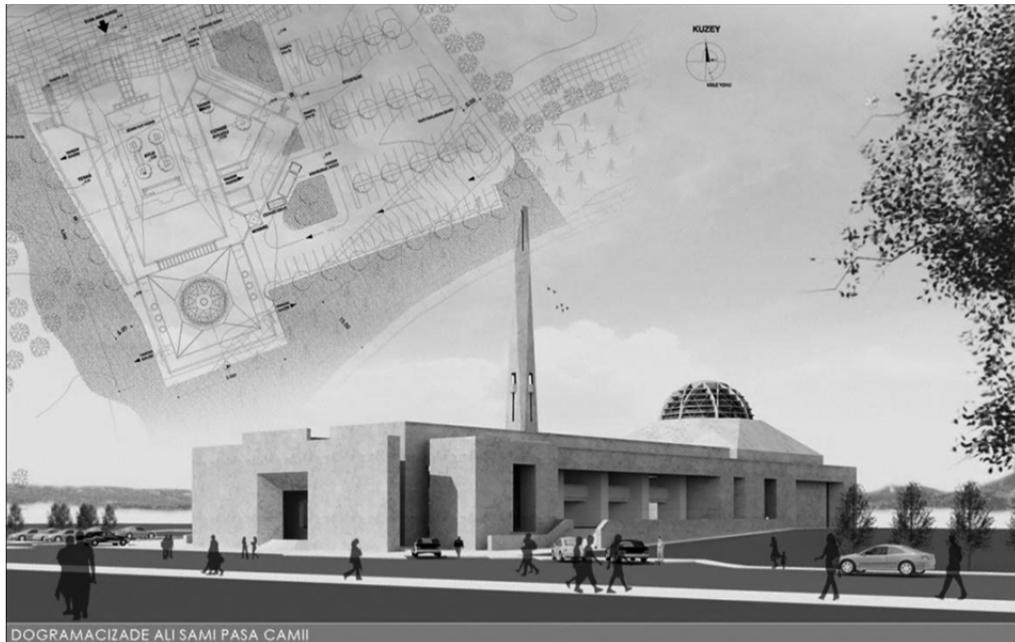


FIGURE 4. The Dogramacizade Mosque complex, Ankara, by Erkut Sahinbas (2004-2008).



FIGURE 5. The courtyard of Dogramacizade Mosque.

historical examples in Anatolia. The complex's spatial layout includes subsidiary spaces, such as conference rooms; this inclusion of both secular and religious activities recalls a *zaviye*.

The complex reads as a mosque because the mosque is the main and largest building, serving the largest mass of people. The church and the synagogue, on the other hand, are designed as small multipurpose rooms that accommodate smaller groups. They share the same courtyard with the mosque (Figure 5) but are tucked under the conference rooms. They have no individual character and are secondary to the mosque in terms of

scale, architectural and decorative elaboration, function, and occupation. While this status and the generic character of the church and synagogue may be questioned, the fact that they were built in the complex at all is a reflection of the intention of inclusion and tolerance. This intention may also be read in other applications. The design pays respect to the Alawite sect of Islam (the second major religious order in Turkey) by inscribing the names of 12 Alawite imams inside the mosque. According to the architect, this is the first time that the names of any Alawite imams have been included in a Sunni mosque in Turkey.

Sahinbas respected tradition in his design for the mosque, but his design also includes architectural elements that break away from conventional forms. For example, the traditional element of the

dome, which defines the prayer hall, is used in a dematerialized manner: it is made of colored glass (Figure 6). The minaret is re-formed; to some it looks like a rocket, and to many it recalls a bell tower (Figure 7). Some other elements are more conventional. The mosque's monumental entrance door has strong traditional connotations. In the courtyard, water is used as a symbolic element, and the calligraphic work is related to descriptions of water in the Koran. Decorative references are mostly derived from Seljuk architecture because Sahinbas considers this architecture pure and easily interpreted into a modern design language. According to him, designing a mosque is one of the most difficult tasks in architecture because changing symbolic elements may make people feel alienated.



FIGURE 6. The glass dome of Dogramacizade Mosque.

While the form and decorative elements of Dogramacizade Mosque playfully try to balance the traditional and the contemporary, the spatial program is notably static in terms of tradition. The prayer halls of the mosque are designed to accommodate older

and disabled people, but accessibility is not considered in terms of gender. The main prayer hall for men and women not only follows traditional design rules and spatial allocation but arguably overlooks transformations in women's uses of the mosque space. The findings of Parts 1-3 below expose these transformations and the need to reconsider spatial design in terms of gender.

### ***Part 1: Evaluating the Interviews: Interviewees' Thoughts on Mosques as Social Spaces***

The DRA plays an active role in transforming mosques as social spaces. Although the state does not subsidize mosque construction, according to the DRA (2009) circular concerning mosque complexes, it advises NGOs initiating construction through the DRA's Department of Technical Affairs, and permission for technical controlling procedures is given by architects in the same department (DRA architect, 2009). The architect at the DRA who was interviewed for this study stated her concern about physical deficiencies in mosques (such as poorly ventilated underground spaces), which often affect women, as well as the need for additional areas to be designed for women and children (*ibid.*). The circular (DRA, 2009) suggests including spaces such as tea rooms, playgrounds, sports facilities, health clinics, libraries or reading rooms, Turkish-Islamic culture and art education studios, exhibition rooms, bookstores, conference rooms, offices, and soup kitchens, in addition to the standard spaces of a congregational mosque in a city. Parallel to these suggestions, the Kurtulus Central Mosque imam (2009) suggested having a subsidiary space for the homeless.

Interviewees' responses to the first group of questions show how men and women use mosques: four men attend regularly, daily, or once a week; one man sometimes attends to pray; two women attended daily for morning prayers when they were young; seven women currently



FIGURE 7. The minaret of Dogramacizade Mosque.

attend to pray; and the rest attend mosques irregularly. Responses to the second group of questions indicate that seven women prefer to attend mosques for night prayers (*teravi namazlari*) during Ramadan.

Among the women, three listen to *khutbah* on TV or the radio (because of old age, they say), two attend Koran courses at the district mosque (Kurtulus Central Mosque), one wishes to attend Koran courses, two like to listen to *mevli*<sup>10</sup> at mosques, and four attend the religious sessions and discussions on day-to-day matters on Thursdays, which are specifically organized by the DRA with a female preacher (*vaize*) for

women at district or central mosques. All female and male interviewees feel that *khutbah* should be a sort of adult education, not only on religious matters but also on subjects that are of importance to society and the country (DRA, 2008), on the condition that the texts delivered by the imam should be prepared by the DRA. Female interviewees generally prefer to attend the central mosques (e.g., Kocatepe Mosque, Hacibayram Mosque) rather than district mosques.

All of the interviewees attend mosques for funerals, except three women who sustain the tradition of staying at home with their close family and friends for the traditional preparations of accepting condolences after the funeral. For the funeral of an acquaintance (i.e., not a close friend), they would visit the family's home. Traditionally, women did not participate in funeral prayers, but this practice has changed in big cities; many women now choose to attend the ceremonies at mosques. The interviewees believe that funeral ceremonies at mosques create a social platform on which to share commonalities and even to settle personal conflicts. An individual may not follow or practice the standard procedures of Muslim rituals, but attending funerals is a traditional activity in society, regardless of religious differences, social class, and age.

Responses to the third group of questions show the interviewees feel that praying with the congregation in district mosques or attending Koran courses organized by the DRA helps form sincere friendships. They believe that mosques unify individuals and create a platform for social solidarity. Three men and one woman feel at peace in a mosque. Four men and four women feel that being at a mosque reminds them of being subjects in relation to God, reinforcing the feeling of equality between subjects. The concept of equality between believers is important to both male and female interviewees.

Responses to the fourth group of questions show that architectural design is regarded as an important aspect of mosques. Most interviewees feel that the minaret has a more symbolic meaning than the dome because of its connection to the call for prayer. Only one man said that he had no idea about a mosque's form. The interviewees care about the cleanliness of a mosque's interior, and those who had had a chance to pray in Dogramacizade Mosque praised it for its cleanliness. All of the interviewees feel that including the two other major religions is a suitable idea, but they have concerns about how it might work.

As the interviews were semi-structured and the questions were open-ended, we obtained other results about the use of subsidiary mosque spaces, namely courtyards, although we did not ask specific questions about them. The imam and the interviewees feel that children use mosque courtyards as playgrounds in areas where the urban fabric is dense. They are places to rest for

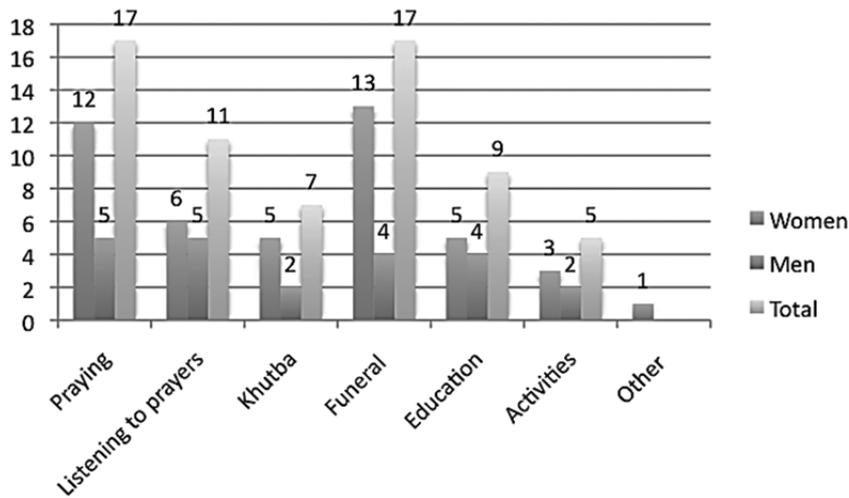


FIGURE 8. Chart 1 showing the activities that the students most associate with mosques.

people (men and women) on their way home with heavy bags in hand after shopping around the district. In small towns, mosque courtyards are places to read a newspaper, drink tea, gossip, and for aged men, pass the time in summer. In a hot and arid climate, traditional stone mosque buildings and arcaded courtyards are places to keep cool, and courtyards are gathering places to exchange information and follow daily news. The interviewees consider courtyards important spatial elements. For the majority, services for the deceased and the social encounters of religious events make mosques and their courtyards part of the urban and rural culture of Turkey.

### Part 2a: Evaluating the Questionnaire: Students' Understanding of and Relationship to Mosques

The questionnaire showed that the students, all of whom are Muslim, mostly associate mosques with praying (85%) and funerals (85%). Eleven of the 20 students (55%) also associate mosques with listening to prayers; nine (45%) associate them with religious, social, or cultural education; seven (35%) associate them with *khutbah*; and five (25%) associate them with social, cultural, or economic activities. One student associated them with tourist visits (Figure 8). Responses to the question about how the individual used mosques indicated that none attended a mosque regularly. All of the male and 13 female students (87%) used mosques for funerals (Figure 9). Two female students stated that they followed the tradition of staying home. A funeral service was the most important activity that the students related to mosques. The spaces, architectural elements, and objects that the students most associated with mosques were the courtyard (17), the dome (16), the minaret (14), the main prayer hall (13), ablution spaces (13), and the women's section (11) (Figure 10). The courtyard was associated with social and religious activities for funeral services, funeral prayers (*namaz*), and listening to *khutbah* and sermons. Among the spaces of a mosque, the courtyard was most associated with social activities and gatherings.

### Part 2b: Students' Spatial Analyses of Dogramacizade Mosque

Bilkent University has many international students and staff; thus, different religions coexist in the university community. A unique design element of Dogramacizade Mosque is the subsidiary spaces to accommodate services for two other major religions. The majority of the design students (19) felt that this was an innovative idea that brought a new interpretation to mosque design in Turkey. All considered the mosque to be a good example of contemporary architecture; however, the students were very critical about its contemporariness when asked to analyze the space in

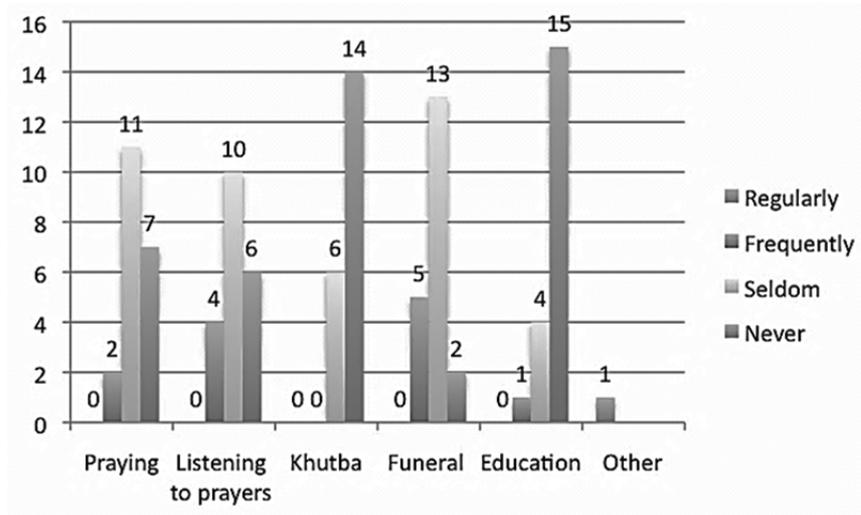


FIGURE 9. Chart 2 showing how the students use mosques.

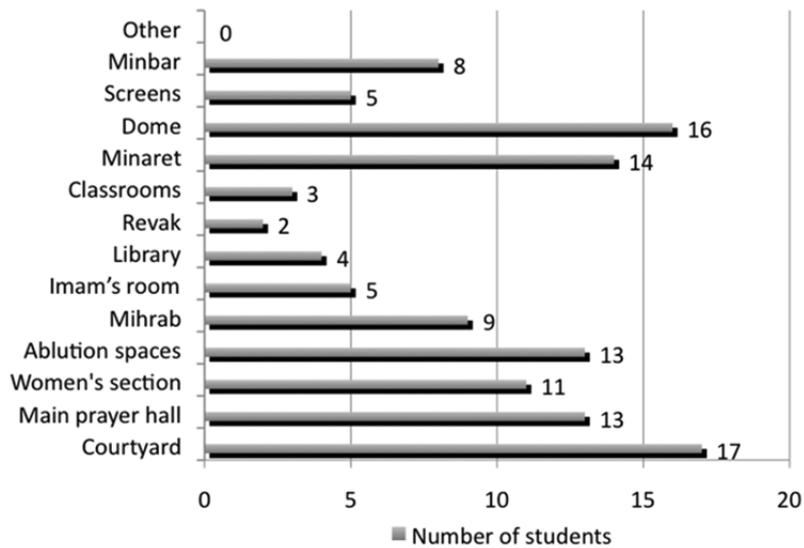


FIGURE 10. Chart 3 showing the spaces, architectural elements, and objects that the students most associate with mosques.

terms of gender. In their spatial analysis, students questioned the size, location, and organization of the mosque design.

In line with tradition, the architect designed the women's section as a smaller area (than the men's section) on the mezzanine level. The difference in size is related to Islamic requirements with respect to gender: it is obligatory for men to pray in the congregation, whereas women may prefer to pray at home. The women's section is located behind lattices, which are designed to be opened by rotating them. While they hide the women from men's gazes, the lattices provide a view to the men's prayer



FIGURE 11A. The women's section of Dogramacizade Mosque.

hall, giving women a choice about the level of visual connection to the main area. However, in places, this connection is interrupted by load-bearing columns, and from their area, women cannot see the glass dome, which is considered a unique design element that elevates spirituality (Figures 11A-B).

Much of the students' criticism concerned this lack of visual connection to the dome and the imam; these restrictions were interpreted as gender discrimination. The students also considered the design of the entrance to the women's section discriminatory. The main door, which leads to the men's section, is placed on the same axis as the courtyard and the main entryway to the complex, whereas women have to enter from the side doors. A similar situation exists with the ablution rooms. The women's ablution rooms are located in the basement, while the men's rooms are located closer to the main prayer hall.

Sixteen design students (80%) felt that the spatial allocation of the mosque with regard to gender needs to be reconsidered. Nine of these students opposed separating the men's and women's sections and felt that both sexes should pray together. In their view, gender segregation has no place in the 21st century. One student stated, "Men and women are not considered equal in mosques, even though they are equals in Islam." Others argue that even if there needs to be a separation between the women's and men's prayer sections according to religious beliefs, this separation should be gentle and democratic in terms of space. For different reasons, four students (two male and two female) felt that the spaces did not need to be reconsidered. One student stated that locating the women's section on the upper level increases spirituality. Another student suggested that a radical reinterpretation of the women's section might have been odd or intimidating to people.

Finally, 19 of the 20 design students stated that they would reconsider spatial design in terms of gender if they were hired to design a new mosque. In general, the students feel that Dogramacizade Mosque is a creative, contemporary building with innovative ideas and design elements, such as its glass dome, its form, and its sculptural minaret, and that it challenges traditional forms and introduces a radical concept of accommodating different religions. Nonetheless, the spatial design failed to break away from tradition in terms of gender and space. Rather, it preserved the status quo of women's secondary status in mosque design.



FIGURE 11B. Looking into the main/men's prayer hall from the women's section of Dogramacizade Mosque.

### ***Part 3a: Evaluating the Questionnaire: Congregation Members' Understanding of and Relationship to the Mosque***

The congregation members' responses to the questionnaire indicate that 40% of the members go to the mosque every day for prayers, 65% go for Friday prayers, 30% go for Friday *khutbah* and prayers, 50% go for *bayram* (religious holiday) prayers, 34% go for night prayers (*teravi namazlari*) during Ramadan, 31% go for funerals, 6% go for religious education, and 13% go from time to time for various reasons (e.g., for visits, to find peace, on members' special days, whenever the member feels it is necessary). The individuals associate the mosque with more than the above activities; 57 of the 68 members (83%) go to the mosque for relief, which is a psychological outcome; 10 (15%) go to make friends; and 15 (22%) go to be part of social and cultural activities. Responses to how the members identify a mosque indicate that the minaret was the most specific architectural element. Sixty members (88%) would identify a mosque by its minaret, 15 (22%) by its courtyard, 13 (19%) by its dome, two (3%) by its size, and three (4%) by other elements (e.g., greenery, signs, architecture). The activities associated with the courtyard were gathering (40 people, 59%), resting (12 people, 18%), chatting (10 people, 15%), as a playground for children (one person, 1%), passing the time (two people, 3%), and other activities (12 people, 18%) (e.g., preparation for prayer, being a congregation, a funeral ceremony, a place that makes the believer feel at peace). Nine people (13%) did not associate the mosque's courtyard with any kind of activity.

The responses to the questions inquiring about the spatial quality of mosque spaces indicate that a very small percentage of men associated the men's sections with negative qualities (three as small, two as suffocating, one as dim, one as dirty, one as ugly); the rest (both men's and women's responses) associated men's sections in general with positive spatial qualities (big, spacious, luminous, clean, beautiful). Seven of the 16 women found women's prayer halls small, three found them suffocating, and three found them dim. Two women complained about their being located on the upper floor, and one noted that the men's sections were always located in the most beautiful places in the mosque. However, for the rest of the questions, the women associated the women's sections with positive spacious qualities (big, spacious, luminous, clean, beautiful). The number of

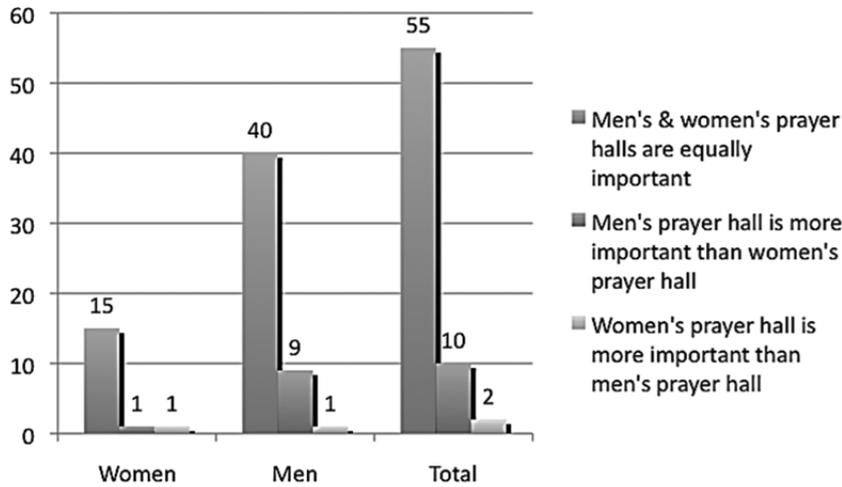


FIGURE 12. Chart 4 comparing the importance of men's and women's prayer halls according to Dogramacizade Mosque congregation members.

men's responses about the women's sections was small because they only see the spaces if they visit them specifically. Except for 10 people who associated the women's section with a small, dim place, the rest associated it with the positive spatial qualities listed above. Three people (one woman and two men) did not associate the women's prayer hall with anything.

For the ablution rooms, half of the responses had negative spatial associations (small, suffocating, dim, dirty, "sometimes clean, sometimes dirty," ugly), and the other half had positive spatial associations (big, spacious, luminous, clean, beautiful). Of those who chose "other," one person made a direct association with the room's function (preparation for prayer), and the other emphasized it being a wet place. For the latecomers' place, 39% of respondents marked "other" but specified nothing; the rest had positive spatial associations. Similar responses were obtained for the spatial qualities of the religious education rooms.

### ***Part 3b: Congregation Members' Evaluations of Dogramacizade Mosque***

Eighty-four percent of the survey takers approved the inclusive program of Dogramacizade Mosque for the three religions, while 13% disapproved, and the rest had no idea. Responses to the question about which part of the mosque people liked best were as follows: 52 of the 68 members liked its architecture, 35 liked its inclusive program, 34 liked its location, 40 liked its prayer areas, 37 liked its materials, 31 liked its courtyard, and 21 liked its view. Six people marked "other" and specified "different from the ones we are used to," "its warm water in ablution places," and "a decent, beautiful, clean, nice, spacious place." Only 6% of the respondents expressed negative feelings about the mosque, which were related to its inclusive program, location, courtyard, view, and minaret.

To evaluate the comparison of the four main spaces specifically designed for men and women (two prayer halls and two ablution rooms), we asked three questions similar to those in the first part of the questionnaire. Except for the size of the women's prayer hall (half of the women found it small), 80% of the survey takers found both prayer halls to be decent, beautiful, clean, nice, and spacious places. Those who chose "other" described the prayer halls as "modern," "different from what we are used to," and "otherworldly." Only one-third of the female members answered the question about the spatial quality of the ablution rooms. According to the responses, these places were considered big, spacious, luminous, clean, comfortable, and beautiful. Two women expressed a

major criticism about the location of the women's ablution space, which is underground: "Nobody was there. I got frightened and turned back."

Following the comparison part, five questions asked the congregation members to evaluate the separation of the men's and women's prayer areas. The first question had three statements: (a) "The prayer spaces for men and women have equal importance," (b) "The men's section is more important than the women's," and (c) "The women's section is more important than the men's." Fifty-five of the 68 people (15 women and 40 men) chose "a," 10 (one woman and nine men) chose "b," and two (one woman and one man) chose "c" (Figure 12). The next question inquired about the reason for the individual's selection. Some of the survey takers did not provide an explanation for their selection, but of those who marked "a," 39 people (10 women and 29 men) responded that men and women are equal, and they both have the right to pray in well-designed and well-situated places. Others who chose "a" provided the following reasons: "As the number of women who participate in social life increases, they use mosques more often," "For both sexes, the mosque has to be an equally attractive place," "The importance of both spaces does not change but sizes may change," and "Praying is a religious duty required for all Muslims." Eight of the people (two women and six men) who chose "b" mostly felt that praying at a mosque is a religious duty that is only required for Muslim men; one opinion was that praying at home is better for women. Two people (one woman and one man) chose "c" because they thought that women should be comfortable and at peace in the mosque.

The congregation members had various responses about who they thought the decision maker(s) were regarding spatial allocation and the separation of the men's and women's prayer areas: the architect and Dogramaci (23), traditions (nine), the DRA (eight), and no idea (five). For the question inquiring about the reason for the separation, six members indicated that it was based on tradition, 32 thought it had a religious basis, and 10 (five men and five women) thought it was better for women's privacy. The number of people who found the separation appropriate (62 people: 15 women and 47 men) is surprising compared with the number of people (55) who thought that both women's and men's prayer areas are equally important because men and women are equal. Only four people (two women and two men) found the separation inappropriate. The same question was asked in another form: If the individual was the commissioner, would he or she allocate the same prayer hall for men and women? Fifty-eight people (13 women and 45 men) chose "no," seven (three women and four men) chose "yes," and one had no idea.

Finally, the members explained why they liked being a congregation member of Dogramacizade Mosque. Sixty-one of the 68 members preferred it for its comfortable conditions and found the mosque to be calm, clean, and different from what they were used to (implying its architectural quality). Thirty-six members liked its parking lot, and 36 members liked it for other practical reasons (e.g., proximity to his or her work place, home, or the shopping mall).

## CONCLUSION

The profile of the interviewees and survey takers in terms of education level must be taken into account to properly evaluate the findings. The interviewees' education level is heterogeneous, varying between those who are illiterate and those who are university graduates. The congregation members of Dogramacizade Mosque, on the other hand, are 60% university and 20% high school graduates. This high level of education is related to the location of Dogramacizade Mosque. It is not in the hub of an old district but is near a mall and a university campus 25 km away from the center of the city, a newly developed residential area that was primarily developed because of the university itself. There is no need to analyze the education level of the student group; they will be young professionals in less than a year.

In the interviewee group, we found that women mostly attend mosque during Ramadan for night prayers, and they prefer central mosques rather than district mosques. This finding can be inter-

preted in two ways: either women wish to free themselves from the district mosque congregation or women's prayer halls and ablution rooms in the central mosques are more comfortable than those in the district mosques. The finding that three elderly women watch *khutbah* on TV made the authors of this study think about virtual religious spaces at home. The interviewees' requests for the centralization of *khutbah* texts by the DRA could indicate that people are distrustful of *khutbah* texts prepared by imams. They seem to place more trust in a religious committee whose members have more education than district mosque imams.

Both the interviewees and the Dogramacizade Mosque congregation members feel at peace when they go to a mosque. At a mosque, interviewees make friendships, forget their social status, and remember the idea of equality between believers; its courtyard creates a platform for social solidarity. Congregation members alluded to the fact that believers are equal in Islam. These findings can be interpreted as that the mosque's interior space and its courtyard create surplus value in the interviewees' and survey takers' daily lives; it is an urban and social space in addition to being a religious space.

The minaret is the most important symbolical architectural element of a mosque for the interviewees and the members of Dogramacizade Mosque; for the students, however, it is the courtyard. This difference is related to the students' perceptions of mosque spaces and how they use mosques. The prevalence of attendance at funerals in mosque courtyards is a notable finding, not only for the students but also for the interviewees and congregation members, considering that women traditionally did not participate in funeral ceremonies performed at mosques. This result shows the transforming use of mosques with regard to gender. Significantly, the results of the interviews and questionnaires indicated that funerals are perceived as a social activity as much as a religious service and are connected to a mosque's courtyard. Additionally, the courtyard is seen as a gathering place for most Dogramacizade Mosque congregation members, and in nice weather, it is a place to visit with people. Therefore, for this demographic, the courtyard maintains its social aspect. Women's appropriation of public space during funerals at mosques indicates a shift in the traditional use of mosques; women have transgressed the boundaries of male space and created a space for themselves. Similarly, women's attendance at congregational Friday noon sermons and *khutbah*, even though they are only obligatory for men, suggests the dissolution of another boundary. Female Dogramacizade Mosque congregation members filled out the questionnaire before or after a Friday *khutbah* and prayer. The preferences indicated in the survey emphasize individuality, distinct from being a member of a specific religious community. This feeling of liberty enables women to practice religion (if and when they choose to) with their own interpretation.

In terms of gender inclusion, the Dogramacizade Mosque questionnaire findings indicated that the congregation members (the majority of which are university graduates) approved the quality of equally important men's and women's prayer halls but disapproved of their being in the same place. The students' criticism of spatial allocation and gender segregation, on the other hand, does not parallel the congregation members' views. Students' responses represent a professional view, and the students themselves represent the present-day generation. Through the current space allocation, the collective memory of the congregation is reproduced every time the members attend prayers, but this is not approved by the young designers. Changes to individual and social memories occur more slowly than changes to behaviors and lifestyles. Collective memory is taught to individuals through state or civic institutions, educational systems, traditions, religions, etc. Therefore, organizing mosque spaces as the students propose may help change collective memories and quicken the transformation process.

Both Parliament Mosque and Dogramacizade Mosque are comparable in terms of prestige. However, while Parliament Mosque, in addition to its innovative formal interpretations, is innovative in terms of gender issues, the spatial design of Dogramacizade Mosque fails to break away from tradition in terms of gender and space. Instead, it has preserved the status quo of women's secondary position in mosque design.

Uses of mosque spaces in Turkey have transformed according to political changes, social transformations, and the necessities of everyday life instigated by the establishment of a secular state. Although, since the founding of the Republic, the mosque has lost its power in terms of organizing the daily lives of citizens, it still embodies a social space, which suggests that practices are carried from one generation to another with only gradual transformations.

The processes of transformation in Muslim communities have followed their own routes in different countries (Göle, 1999; see also Orhun, 2010). One significant result of these processes is the contextual changes in women's social positions in religious spaces (Bhimji, 2009; Cesari, 2005; Jamal, 2005; Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2001; Predelli, 2008; Sechzer, 2004; Wadud, 2003). From a gender point of view, this study reveals ways in which Turkish Muslim women engage with the contemporary mosque and how the processes of transformation embodied in this engagement allow them to feel empowered. Contemporary architectural mosque designs do not embrace these notions of liberty and transformation. Even a mosque design that is considered innovative for challenging traditional architectural forms and conceptualizing inclusion embraces tradition when it comes to inclusion and accessibility in terms of gender. The findings suggest that spatial designs of contemporary mosques should take into consideration contemporary behavior and practices rather than ignoring an aspect through which social transformations and changes are possible. A recognition of this transformation can be observed in the DRA's proposed architectural program, which suggests modernizing the spatial use of mosque complexes. Their proposal has an additional implication, however, which potentially resurrects the historical form of the mosque as a social complex. In this regard, the following question arises: Does this idea fundamentally conflict with secularity? Understanding this socio-political intricacy as well as recognizing the mosque as a (transforming) social space is significant in generating new mosque designs.

## NOTES

1. For example, a symposium entitled "The Kocatepe Mosque: Neighboring Differences and Negotiating Tensions" was presented by the METU Graduate Program in Social Anthropology in Ankara in 2009.
2. Everyday relations between people take place in a physical environment that creates a context for individual, social, and collective memories (Chevalier, 1969; Halbwachs, 1992; Lefebvre, 1968).
3. The battle, which was fought between the Byzantine Empire and Seljuk forces, resulted in the defeat of the former. This defeat played an important role in paving the way for Turkish settlement in Anatolia.
4. Colonizing Turkish Dervishes practiced their customs, traditions, and religions in their new country, using their knowledge to serve sultans. Sheikhs accepted sultans in the *zaviyes* and gave them advice. Dervishes lived among semi-nomadic Turkish tribes and inspired and advised them. They continually settled on uninhabited land in the countryside but remained separate from the state. The Dervishes either came as soldiers invading the region or were simply immigrants (Barkan, 1942).
5. The Akhi order was born as a consequence of religious belief in the economic field. Artisanal or trade communities accepted a master, and a sheikh represented these professional groups in every city. In Turkish settlements and cities, the representative of all sheikhs is called "Father Akhi." In the final years of Seljuk rule, it became a tradition that Father Akhi represented the state in his region in the absence of an official state representative until another one had been assigned (Gölpınarlı, 1997). Akhi organizations were urban and rural. Rural *zaviyes* were good for public works, religious propaganda, and organizing the area or region into a cultural and *tariqah* (a Dervish order) center (*ibid.*).
6. Bayezid I (1388-1402) simultaneously ordered the construction of a *zaviye* outside of Bursa and a congregational mosque in the city. As Kuban (2007:51) points out, this "policy of the sultan can be accepted as an indication of the Sunni sect taking over the power at the administration level."
7. The building program of the Seljuks (11th century to the beginning of the 13th century) consisted of *madrassas* for imams, soup kitchens for sheikhs, palaces for emirs, inns located inside towns for tradesmen, and *caravanserai*s (inns where travelers could rest) for travelers. According to Kuban (2002, 2007), mosques did not feature in this list because mosques belong to everybody. During Orhan Bey's reign (1324-1389) in the Early Ottoman period (14th and 15th centuries), the building program of the state included soup kitchens, convents (*madrassas*, *zaviye*, and Dervish lodges), public baths, inns, mausoleums (*türbe*), and mosques.

8. The DRA is an official organization that regulates and provides services regarding religious issues. It was founded by “the Turkish Senate on the ground of fundamental principles of the republican regime, during the War of Independence” (Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, n.d.).
9. According to a DRA architect (2009), “Religious associations and foundations usually do not want to pay the fee for architectural work.”
10. *Mevlit* is a poem by Süleyman Çelebi that celebrates the birth of the prophet Muhammad.

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