



Social Housing as Paradoxical Space: Migrant Women's Spatial Tactics Inside Toki Uzundere Blocks

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To cite this article: Meltem Eranil & Meltem Ö. Gürel (2022) Social Housing as Paradoxical Space: Migrant Women's Spatial Tactics Inside Toki Uzundere Blocks, Home Cultures, 19:1, 23-48, DOI: [10.1080/17406315.2022.2085986](https://doi.org/10.1080/17406315.2022.2085986)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17406315.2022.2085986>



Published online: 22 Jun 2022.



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SOCIAL HOUSING AS PARADOXICAL SPACE: MIGRANT WOMEN'S SPATIAL TACTICS INSIDE TOKI UZUNDERE BLOCKS

ABSTRACT This study focuses on migrant women's experiences in TOKI Uzundere, a housing settlement built in Izmir (2009) by the Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI). It problematizes the incompatibility between the apartments' standardized layouts and the residents' spatial practices. The study argues that these interiors have become paradoxical spaces with the potential to be transformed by women struggling to fit them to their daily routines, and social and physical needs, by applying certain spatial tactics. These tactics were charted through in-depth interviews with women, observations inside their apartments, schematic drawings, and photography. Our analysis demonstrates how women's everyday practices and

spatial tactics challenge and reconfigure the assumed uses of the interiors in these social housing units.

KEYWORDS: TOKI, domestic interiors, spatial tactics, paradoxical space, migrant women, everyday practices, Turkey

INTRODUCTION



In 2009, residents were moved from their homes in the squatter housing neighborhood in Izmir's Kadifekale district into a new social housing development constructed in Uzundere by Turkey's Social Housing Development Administration (TOKI). This mostly meant relocating first- and second-generation urban migrants from an individual house in Izmir city center to an apartment unit in a high-rise block on the periphery. As an exemplary social housing project, and part of a strategy of urban renewal in Izmir, the project was proposed as a modern, sanitary housing solution. However, a number of studies have shown that its social and spatial implications caused resentment among the displaced people, who did not wish to be relocated because it was alien to their daily habits and lifestyle, they faced challenges in adapting (Demirtaş-Milz 2013: 210, Saraçoğlu and Demirtaş-Milz 2014: 183–187, Demirtaş-Milz and Saraçoğlu 2015: 185–205, Eranil Demirli et al. 2015: 141).

This was especially the case for women, who are not only assigned the role of maintaining the domestic space and carrying the housework burden in the patriarchal structure of Muslim society but also fixed as othered subjects in society due to their migrant status and economic disadvantages. The wave of rural-urban migration in Turkey has also affected Izmir, Turkey's third largest city, and led to both legal and illegal settlements in Kadifekale and its surrounding neighborhoods, known as *gecekondu*, which are close to the city's administrative and commercial center, due to insufficient urban housing supply (Erder 1997).¹ Regarding physical conditions in Kadifekale, a typical *gecekondu* household lives in a one- or two-roomed house constructed with cheap materials and roofed with corrugated metal or terracotta tiles, connected to water and electricity supplies (though usually illegally and sometimes shared with a neighbor), but with no proper sewage system (Eranil Demirli et al. 2015: 140–145). While these *gecekondu* houses may have deficiencies in their vernacular design and poor physical conditions, the TOKI Uzundere blocks are based on culturally inappropriate assumptions about the lifestyles, needs, and responses of their potential users (Chambers and Low 1989: 4).

The new TOKI Uzundere residents, particularly women, have endured a “double displacement” having first mostly migrated to Kadifekale, one of the first inner-city *gecekondu* districts, from a remote southeastern provinces (e.g. Diyarbakır and Mardin) (Saraçoğlu and Demirtaş-Milz

2014: 183, Demirtaş-Milz and Saraçoğlu 2015: 205) before being relocated to TOKI apartment blocks on Izmir's outskirts. While Kadifekale residents are generally perceived as the outsider urbanites, these women, forced to migrate once more, have become “the other of the other”. That is, they are members of a migrant group struggling to adapt to the current dynamics of urban life while also asserting their femininities despite patriarchal strains in both the public domain and home environment.

It is not our main intention to review theoretical debates around urban renewal and social/mass housing as studied by scholars at an urban scale (Reeves 2006, Musterd *et al.* 2009, Urban 2013, Hegedus *et al.* 2013, Cupers 2014, Maxim 2018). Instead, we propose an important yet relatively neglected point of entry for a socio-spatial examination of the interiors of the TOKI Uzundere Social Housing project by comparing the professionally-created living scenario with the socially-constructed space built by women according to their daily habits, routines, and behavior patterns. We aim to re-read the power balances of gender relations in the domestic space while examining how women can transform the intangible aspects of domestic interiors through tactics developed in their daily practices. In this, we draw on Michel de Certeau (1984), whose theorizing strongly emphasizes everyday practices, which is generally coupled with reading “space as a social product” (Lefebvre 1974, 1998). We also frame the TOKI Uzundere interiors as paradoxical spaces, as proposed by Gillian Rose (1993), to consider how to conceptualize these spaces of resistance and transformation. This can deepen our understanding of how space can produce social change and determine whether and, if so how, women can realize space according to their imagination despite physical constraints and socio-cultural boundaries due to gendered norms.

This approach is based on understanding women as active agents to change, particularly as suggested by Ghannam (2002). She discusses the contemporary apartment as the objectification of the state's conception of modernity. She wonderfully depicts how the relocated residents of Cairo's al-Zawiya al-Hamra public housing units altered their “modern” apartment blocks to meet their daily requirements and habits based on their previous socio-spatial practices. The Egyptian state expressed its modernist rhetoric in the production of urban space through its forced relocation program from 1979 to 1981, with new public housing units being integrated into the urban texture as modern apartments. By constantly appropriating interiors by changing spatialities to meet physical necessities, they also add value to the meaning of space by integrating social interaction and actions that represent their own socio-cultural backgrounds.

These considerations raise the following questions. How do women challenge normative gender relationships by adapting space within a particular social context? What kinds of spatial tactics do they apply to

adapt interiors to their lifestyles? Do urban transformations provide an incentive for paradoxical spaces to emerge, including the user's appropriation of space, and the potential to alter physical and social norms?

TOKI HOUSING AS A SITE OF DISPLACEMENT

TOKI was established in 1984 to provide affordable housing for low-income groups and deal with *gecekondu*s, which first appeared in the 1940s before proliferating in the 1950s due to Turkey's rapid urbanization. Literally meaning 'built overnight', the *gecekondu* was an informal response to housing needs for rural migrants arriving in cities in search of job opportunities, in a context where the state was unable to meet their housing demands (Erman and Hatiboğlu 2018: 809). This type of informal house was illegally self-constructed with cheap materials on empty land usually owned by the state. These structures were later legitimized through populist policies and amnesty laws, which formalized their status.

In Izmir's case, the first migrants from Turkey's eastern and south-eastern regions built their informal housing on the slopes of Kadifekale hill. As the city grew and chain migration around this area expanded the city, Kadifekale became part of Izmir's central district (Baran and Çiçek 2006: 2). However, change arrived in late 2003, when, through legislative changes under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) administration, TOKI became a more effective and authoritative institution in providing affordable housing to the masses. These changes provided TOKI with power and resources to implement its controversial urban transformation projects. More specifically, on July 20th, 2006, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Council decided to expropriate the land as the urban transformation area of Kadifekale, which affected almost 20,000 residents. Demolitions started in September 2007 and the region was cleared and afforested by 2011. TOKI Uzundere was planned on an area of 469,425 m² to include 3,080 high-rise units with four different housing types (Urban transformation and development projects 2021). However, the project's contractor, TOKI, did not offer realistic conditions for tenants to purchase the new apartments, which were valued at more than the expropriation value of the *gecekondu* houses decided by Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (Demirtaş-Milz 2013: 691, Mutlu Kılıç and Göksu 2018: 206). Consequently, many rights holders were unable to pay the difference in value, which had to be paid in instalments within a prescribed period.

TOKI's housing projects aimed at lower-income have been criticized for failing to provide safer and better living environments, while also socially isolating the population to create, in effect, urban exclusion zones (Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008). For the relocated *gecekondu* dwellers, leaving their former homes to move to a generic TOKI apartment has forced them to relive their earlier displacement experiences while also destroying the long-established social and communal networks

that helped them cope with city life. TOKI's housing solutions, designed according to an assumed modern urbanity, were criticized by Erman (2016) as "sites of multiple discrepancies" and the process of reappropriating these new environments as "informality in a formal context". In their analysis of Izmir's Örnekköy and Uzundere TOKI projects, Baydar *et al.* (2018) criticized the interior arrangement of the standardized housing units and their nuanced uses by the residents while Baydar *et al.* (2019) discussed the issue of the sense of social belonging. That is, the TOKI residents both owned and disowned their houses: while appreciating the conveniences of apartment living, they were highly dissatisfied with the environments offered by TOKI. Accordingly, they spatially reproduced the given housing schemes, thereby exerting their power over their living environments. Thus, it is critical for housing developers to consider the cultural backgrounds of prospective residents. Many other studies have criticized the relocation of urban squatter settlements into mass housing estates. These urban transformation projects not only promote displacement and dispossession due to forced relocation but also impose homeownership on the urban poor through long-term mortgage loans (Mutlu 2009, Çetin 2012, Demirtas-Milz 2013, Mirioğlu 2013, Eranıl Demirli *et al.* 2015).

However, no study has focused specifically on the effects of interior spatial arrangements and inappropriate interior designs on women's spatial practices. This study, therefore, takes a unique approach to the problem by shifting the focus to domestic interiors and women's culturally specific spatial practices. It emphasizes the need for interiors to be culturally appropriate, promote gender equality, and provide flexibility to represent each resident's subjectivity while considering their rural backgrounds. Although the study is limited to one locality, its findings have implications for prospective housing projects, both nationally and internationally, and also for gender studies.

REFRAMING TOKI UZUNDERE INTERIORS IN THEORY AND DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR PICTURING REAL-LIFE SCENARIOS

A seminal approach to explaining space, place, and gender interplay is Doreen Massey's (1984) persuasive investigation of the dynamics between class relations and spatial organization. This approach conceptualizes space, place, and gender as inter-related, mutually constitutive forms, such that neither gender identities nor places are steady, settled, or given. As Massey put it, "social relations stretched over space" do not fundamentally lead to homogeneity; rather, they become a part of different relations of power demonstrated in everyday lives (1994: 158). The latter mentioned power relations can be connected to Gillian Rose's (1993) conceptualization of paradoxical space, in which she focuses on the possible limits of masculinity and femininity, by recognizing the difference of the other. We suggest that Rose's

conceptualization offers a valuable theoretical framework to explore migrant women's position within the conflict between different systems of values, beliefs, and norms. Rose's notion of paradoxical space enables the relationship between space and gender to be investigated in terms of its contradictions. This allows women's everyday experiences, daily routines, and behaviors to be charted, with an understanding that these can dramatically change properties and the uses of spaces in many ways. Therefore, the reconstructive texture and shifting interplay between space and gender identities highlights new possibilities in everyday life.

As the politics of paradoxical space provides a range of platforms for non-masculinist discussion positions, Rose proposes to use the term as a creative force. It refers, she argues, to space where the subject is in "two places at once" and characterized by paradoxical spatiality (Rose 1993: 140–141). Resistance is a part of this. In our case, "the rigid fixity of masculinist representation" (Desbiens 1999: 182) of the TOKI interiors are challenged by deconstructivist feminine nature. In particular, female subjectivities require private personal spaces rather than design ideologies projecting them, only and solely using the kitchen space. In addition, limited boundaries disable women's social connection that can happen in or circulate to other locations, such as when neighbors live next door or share hallways, gardens, etc. Women's agency forces fixed patriarchal environments to change by through tactical spatial operations.² As de Certeau (1984, 1992) argues, through tactics, ordinary people can transform the (urban) environment, which is initially defined by institutions and structures of power, legitimized by dominant discourse, and embodied by their actions (strategy). Erman (2011), for example, described residents' use of spatial tactics to resist a TOKI project in Ankara. In this study, we refer to these tactics specifically as a tool for showing women's agency, with the possibility to transform the space beyond its patriarchal meanings to create alternatives. This emerges from the totalizing design approach of TOKI social housing.

The interpretation of social space is dominated by hegemonic understandings that emphasize dualistic distinctions between "men" and "women" (Rose 1993) while always limiting the conceptualization of space and suppressing subversive distinctions among women. Moving on the previous study in 2015 (Ernil Demirli *et al.* 2015), we still saw a need to investigate other unresolved issues. This time, however, we focused only on the position of migrant women and their struggles within TOKI Uzundere housing units.

To investigate the relations between women and space in detail, we conducted 25 in-depth interviews with migrant women living in the TOKI Uzundere apartment blocks. As already discussed, the women were first- and second-generation migrants displaced from Izmir's Kadifekale district. Coming from lower socioeconomic levels, their education levels

varied from no formal education to high school while most were married with young children. The majority of participants in this study were stay-at-home mothers with one to three children (Appendix A). The women were chosen for interviewing by using snowball sampling method of qualitative research. All the interviews were semi-structured, face to face, and conducted in Turkish inside the women's apartments. Each interview lasted approximately two hours.

There were several advantages of conducting interviews in this way. First, while the women shared their narratives about their everyday life, habits, and the quality of their domestic space, we could also hear what their husbands thought as they were also in the room. We could also make clearer observations because the narratives portrayed the real conditions of the physical space. Our approach aimed to obtain qualitative information to gain insights about the women's household relationships, their position in the domestic space, and the spatial tactics they developed to cope with the abstract space of the blocks.

The interview questions sought to reveal the women's migration stories, first to Kadifekale and then to the TOKI Uzundere blocks. The questions asked about differences in social relations between the two contexts, as well as daily routines and gender norms. We also asked about the material space, such as the use of open and closed spaces, selection of materials, and efficiency of storage areas, etc.

To understand the spatial reciprocity of women's narratives and practices, we analyzed original architectural drawings, including plans, sections, and proposed furniture layouts. Our spatial analysis aimed to compare the TOKI's vision of the conceived space with the women's reinterpretation of it as a paradoxical space. To enrich this analysis, we drew on a literature review of news reports and articles to capture as many aspects of the chain migration story as possible. We also documented the spatial analysis and observations with photographs and analytical sketches of the narrations. The latter was a valuable tool to bring the interviewees' descriptions into reality as sensory facts. By using this method, we were able to picture real-life spatial use scenarios in detail.

RETHINKING WOMEN AND DOMESTIC LABOR

Employment is a problematic issue for women, who need money yet have limited access to paid employment. Women's involvement in waged labor empowers them in both public life and everyday domestic space, however this is not always valued by all commentators. Women have challenged traditional assumptions and gender roles in many ways, to the extent of prompting the criticism that "home [was being] turned upside down" (Hall 1982: 17 cited Bondi and Davidson 2005: 18). The long-established traditional pattern was for women to stay at home as unpaid domestic workers while men were the dominant

wage-earner. In the TOKI community, this has seriously incapacitated women's role in public life relative to men since most are not able to find outside work. One interviewee explained the situation as follows:

"I just started working, for the first time, in the last six months. I have never worked before. I go to work once a week, or once every ten days. If they (the neighbors) ask me where I am going, I reply instantly that I have a job to do or I'm going to my mom or make some excuse like that. Our Eastern ways are different; they do things a little bit differently; when women work, they look at it from a different perspective. They are used to wondering and asking each other where the woman is going right now. I think a woman should stand as a being. In this case, we had very bad days with my husband. (He suggested to me) not to work and (said) things like that... But I need to work for my three children."

This comment suggests two reasons why it is difficult for women to find employment opportunities. First, TOKI Uzundere's remote location makes it very hard to reach the city center or other parts of the city where cleaning jobs are available. Based on Ghannam's work, we can account for the numerous possibilities afforded by urban mobilities. Although mobility limitations can be a stimulate questioning of inequities, it can also breed social inequalities and distinctions (Ghannam 2011: 797). Second, women cannot sell homemade produce because it is illegal to use the flats for commercial purposes whereas in Kadifekale, many women worked either outside the home (facilitated by the neighborhood's central location) or in relatively regular income-generating activities within the home. For example, balconies and gardens served as small shops for women to sell their products, such as homemade food or knitted garments (Ernil Demirli *et al.* 2015: 146). Thus, although the majority of the migrant women in Kadifekale were culturally expected to staying at home, they found ways to contribute to the family budget, for instance by breeding livestock, growing vegetables in their gardens, or working in small neighborhood shops close to their homes.

Employment is one of the most sensitive issues in terms of how women manage their relationships within and outside the home. More specifically, women struggle to balance their responsibilities because of a conflict between full-time work and family life demands, given that they usually take sole responsibility for domestic work like childcare, cooking, and shopping (Hardill 2002: 2). According to Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Giddens (1991 cited Hardill 2002: 6), one member of the household, generally woman, sacrifices her career interests to invest in a 'family' collective project. Analysis of how women spend their days

and fulfil their obligations makes clear the intensely social nature of housework (Shami 1996: 20). In TOKI Uzundere, men of the household, even the supposedly “good” ones, do not chose to share their earnings with their wives or mothers while some merely give them a tiny allowance as “cigarette money”. While men are expected to earn the family income, women’s family position is diminished to household chores.

PHYSICAL INEFFICIENCIES IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Even if women work outside the home their childcare and other domestic responsibilities do not generally change, forcing them to juggle paid labor with unpaid housework. In Turkey’s patriarchal family culture, females are expected to do all domestic chores (Kandiyoti 1988: 277). However, a closer examination of housework arrangements help to reveal the changing influence of these gender expectations on the rural-urban migrant wives in TOKI Uzundere.

As part of their domestic responsibilities, women alter their living room interiors to suit a variety of needs and work. One major intervention is setting up a floor table in the middle of the living room in front of the TV as a workspace to prepare food. Sometimes, they cover it with a tablecloth to do shared tasks with close acquaintances, such as neighbors and extended family members. This enables women to watch their favorite TV programs while working. As one interviewee noted,

“I cook in the kitchen, for example, while I am watching my TV in the living room. I am satisfied with using both spaces (open kitchen and living room). When a guest comes, I can chat, cook the meal, prepare my tea and set my table all at the same time. At least she (the visitor) is not alone anymore.”

The anecdote reveals that women strongly value social engagement with their neighbors and friends. The kitchen becomes “a place imagined in order to articulate a troubled relation to the hegemonic discourses of masculism” (Rose 1993: 159). That is, the kitchen becomes a paradoxical space to satisfy their desire for socialization, and a transition space between its role as a kitchen and the living room. Women recreate the space and explore its potential as a paradoxical space by appropriating socio-cultural habits, such as welcoming a female visitor, while doing daily chores. When other family members are occupying the living room, women may even use a moveable table and chairs located in the transition space between the kitchen and the living room by closing or opening the curtains that divide the spaces (Figures 5, 6, and 7).

Just as kitchens can be recreated to suit the residents’ needs, living rooms have multiple roles. For example, children need a study space, so they usually use a table to do their homework since the bedrooms

are too small for a study desk. The furniture arrangements may also change during the day, and we observed that these differed from the professionals' intended layouts. In the technical drawings, the living room interiors were equipped with standard living room and dining room furniture. However, our observations showed that the residents prefer sitting on carpets and cushions instead of standard sofas and chairs. They also convert the squat toilets into storage areas to compensate for the lack of space (Figure 1).

“If there were a pantry for storage, it would be good to put all the necessary bits and pieces of utilities there. The kitchen is not big enough. I covered the thing (squat toilet) and made it like a pantry. I mostly do ironing in the living room, and sometimes in her (the grandchild's) room. There is nothing to do; what can I do?”

This reluctance to buy the expected utilities and furniture for a “modern” apartment, and preference to use it differently to the intended use is hardly surprising. As Bourdieu puts in *Algeria*, it “appears as a sort of scandalous absurdity; it objectively testifies to the occupant's incapacity to take real possession of the space available, an inability to adopt the modern lifestyle which such housing offers” (1979: 83). Instead, the residents create their own spatial solutions by transforming the designer's abstract space into their own home through various spatial interventions and tactics, depending on the necessities of their domestic lifestyles (Figure 2). For example, the room size does not allow placing a six-seater dining table as the designers ignored the tendency to live with the extended family and the preference of the migrant residents for sitting on floor cushions. Sometimes they prefer to use a small, portable table in the transition space between the kitchen and living room.

Figure 1. While the nuclear family arrangement (with 3 to 4 people) is strongly promoted by the authority, the number of people in a household is higher than assumed. As a result, storage is a major problem.



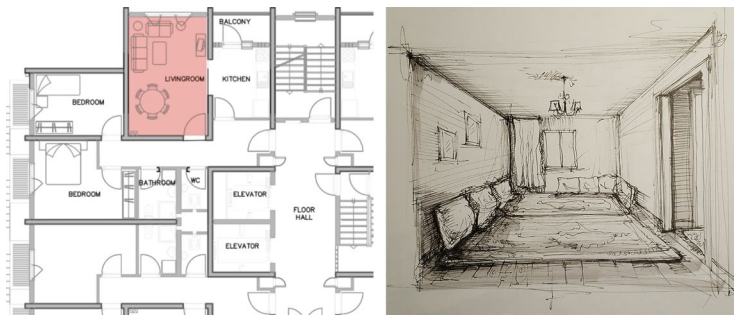


Figure 2. Despite the attempts of TOKI professionals to create a “modern lifestyle”, spatial tactics of residents overcome the defects in physical conditions, caused by culturally inappropriate assumptions about their lifestyles and needs.

Because the kitchen is often the center of their domestic activities and the place they spend most time, many women expressed a desire for a bigger and better equipped kitchen. They, therefore, use various tactics to redefine and enlarge it.

“I wish the kitchen was larger, but our budget was only enough for this social housing unit. Still, thank God, at least we have a roof above our heads. (...) I am glad that the kitchen is open. Earlier, there was a door, but I removed it. I thought there was no need for two doors side by side. I said both kitchen cabinets should be wider. I did it that way”.

Removing the second door and adding an L-shaped counter are clear examples of efforts to enlarge kitchens and to extend the designed counter space in order to increase the working space. Another example is exploring the spatial possibilities of the balconies. Like Baydar *et al.* (2018), we observed that the lack of balcony storage space was a problem because residents frequently used balconies for storage, especially for drying vegetables for winter. However, this in turn, created another problem for some residents as it deprived them of an outdoor space for entertaining guests:

“Even though our house has 3 rooms and a kitchen, it is not sufficient for us. They didn’t make a separate pantry for storage. They made a single balcony. This is really a problem. I wish there was one more balcony. When a guest comes, we can sit more comfortably. [At the moment, the balcony is entered from the kitchen], if the kitchen is in an inappropriate condition, I hesitate to welcome anyone (to the balcony); I am embarrassed to.”

Despite their small size and heavy use, the balconies are often filled with plants. Indeed, the presence of plants both on the balconies and in the living rooms was striking (Figure 3) because they indicate

a desire for greenery, outdoor spaces, and specifically nostalgia for the *gecekondu* gardens. They also show that, the TOKI Uzundere residents developed tactics to continue the outdoor practices of their old neighborhood while ruralizing the new community's "modern" setting. Their efforts included converting an outdoor space next to a block into a simple garden by using a simple wire mesh for fencing to grow vegetables and to raise poultry (Figure 4). All of these appear to be efforts to bring nature from their old neighborhood in Kadifekale to counteract the effects of TOKI Uzundere's overwhelmingly concrete environment.

SPATIAL TACTICS IN PRODUCING SOCIAL SPACE

The multiple uses of spaces have implications for privacy as rooms can simultaneously be public and private spaces. In recent literature, the right to privacy has been considered increasingly essential to the dynamics of all social relationships (Roessler and Mokrosinska 2013: 771). At times, TOKI Uzundere units lack privacy, which is considered as the ability to shield oneself from the gaze of others, despite the aim of enabling a "modern" family life, in which each person has a separate bedroom. Similar to the modern apartments in Cairo (Ghannam 2002), TOKI planners intended that each room would have a specific function, such as a kitchen for preparing food, a bathroom for personal hygiene, a living room for social activities, and a bedroom for sleeping. However, as the number of people per unit surpassed expectations, rooms are used for varied functions by different members of

Figure 3. TOKI residents appear to miss the rural feeling of Kadifekale. Therefore, they commonly chose to grow plants on their balconies and even in their living rooms.



Figure 4. Some inhabitants converted the space between the blocks into gardens and chicken runs for which women are responsible in addition to their domestic household chores.



the household simultaneously throughout the day. In this respect, TOKI units felt short of improving the quality of life in terms of privacy. Some parents, for example, reported sleeping together with their children or that the children frequently shared one bedroom or slept on a mat on the living room floor, sometimes curtained off from the rest of the room to give some privacy.

Privacy remains a problem in TOKI Uzundere because the project only considered the family's composition rather than how it operates. In Kadifekale, residents could expand their houses to accommodate extended families. In TOKI Uzundere, however, married sons are assumed to live in separate flats; this has encouraged the division of extended households. The number of bedrooms in TOKI Uzundere are insufficient as it was the case in Kadifekale gecekondu houses. Therefore, families living with grandparents or caring for sick family members are left to use the living room mostly as a bedroom. Similarly, families with several children have to use the living room for sleeping and eating when they host hometown visitors (Figure 5). Thus, based on its use, the living room represents an intersection of private and public life: a public place for all family members during the day but a private place when used as a bedroom at night. One interviewee commented on the limited number of rooms as follows:

“Usually we all sit here (in the living room as informal room used by family members), and it turns into a *salon* (i.e., a formal room when the guests arrive), and sometimes it becomes a bedroom for the girls where they use bunk beds when we have visitors sleeping over. The youngest does not have his own room. He also sleeps in this living room. (Laughter) Mohammed (his son) asks why he does not have his own room; he feels left out.”

The design of the flats leads to another concern related to privacy and gender inequality regarding women's roles. According to Wearing (1998), nurturing and doing chores are delegated to women as their “natural” duty, thereby reducing women's value to being mothers, wives, and grandmothers. In the interviews, women described spending most of their time by carrying out household chores in the open-kitchen



Figure 5. Women change the furniture layout of the living room during family visits in order to maximize the capacity of the room.

and explained how they became uneasy (instinctively covering their heads) when a male visitor is hosted in the living room because they could be seen. Because of this uncomfortable feeling, they prefer a separate kitchen with a minimal opening to the living room (Figure 6). In some units, residents separated the kitchen space from visitors in the living room by adding a physical barrier to create a comfortable working zone in the kitchen. On the other hand, women talked about comfort in doing chores in kitchens, when men of the family leave the home to work. Women report that they even find a chance to better control their lives at those times, and temporarily escape from the men. The wives' leisure and meal preparation activities changed dramatically depending on the presence of their husbands. Thus, during the regular busy mornings, they quickly set a floor table for breakfast in the kitchen. Yet, women explained, once male family members had gone out, how they enjoyed to invite their neighbors, in those *men-free* mornings, for more leisurely meals and chose to set the table in the living room (Figure 7).

Celebrations hold an important place in the lives of these people, and women prefer to celebrate special days together, as they used to in Kadifekale. For them, the concepts of home and neighborhood are almost inseparable. Through these celebratory events, they engage in social interaction, which brings people together, and with it, the transfer of information and knowledge.

Apart from the celebration times, women groups in TOKI frequently meet in the hallways of TOKI blocks during the ordinary days. Since,

Figure 6. A tactical solution, developed by women to create a more private space in the kitchen involves the use of a curtain as a separator.





Figure 7. The images show the potential of the paradoxical space, which shows a conflict between the planners' idea of the use of the "modern" apartment and its actual use by residents. Women prefer to sit on the floor around a traditional floor table instead of sitting on the sofa while enjoying their time together.

cooking, washing clothes, and drying herbs were often done in outdoor areas in Kadifekale, this reciprocity has continued between occupants of the same floor in TOKI blocks. As proximity is the main factor for intense socialization, the hallways become a meeting spot for groups of women cooperating around a specific task, such as preparing traditional winter food products or rolling out traditional bread dough (Figure 8). As one interviewee noted,

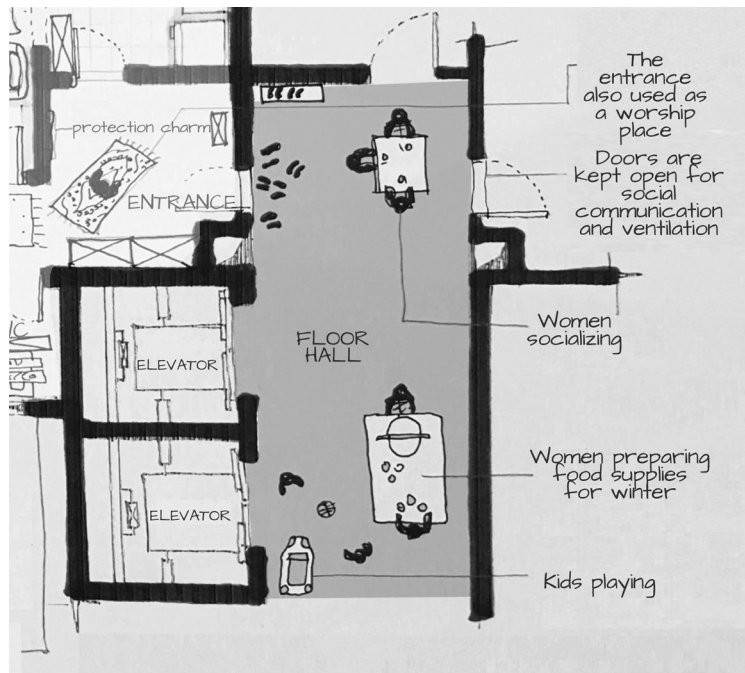
"There are not many children here (in the hallway). There are women who sit and roll the dough. For example, my neighbor and I came together, rolled out the dough, and baked it together. (...) We used to do it in the garden when we were in Kale (Kadifekale)."

Thus, these women form relationships that are different from and independent of those between the male heads of their respective households. This is clear from the interviews when women mention how often they meet female neighbors in hallways, as these environments become zones in which men's pervasive oppression is no longer normative. Thus, it is crucial to understand the new conceptualization of the hallways as having meanings that exceed their physical limits and designed function of allowing inhabitants to pass through. Rather, these "alternative" spaces become more liberating for women, free from hierarchical influences.

The hallways are thus key to social relationships between TOKI Uzundere between women and other families. Because they function as meeting spots and transition spaces, hallways can be better described as alternative spaces that enable a more intimate culture, full of local identity and activities constituted in the domestic space. Religious and ethnic gatherings are performed in hallways, which to extend the limited physical entities of housing units to hallways (Figure 9). During religious festivals, such as *bayrams*, *kina*, and wakes, experience and emotion happen in the hallways that create a paradoxical space with emancipatory potential.

The importance of socializing and house visits have implications for the women's readiness to accept visitors and make the home appear attractive. Erman (2001a: 123) explains that women in *gecekondu*

Figure 8. Details of the hallway showing the activities of women, and the social transformation of the space.



settlements made a point of keeping their homes clean and tidy in case of spontaneous visits by neighbors. We detected a similar attitude in the interviews. Women appear to promote their own good reputation and domestic pride by hanging newly-washed clothes in visible spots like balconies and semi-private hallways. These act as a display area for women to show off their domestic skills and the economic status of the family. Hanging clothes in the hallways can also be used to signal recent developments in the family's life, such as the birth of a child or the marriage of a daughter.

WOMEN'S NEED FOR A ROOM OF THEIR OWN

As already discussed, balconies play an important role in TOKI Uzundere as multifunctional, semi-open or enclosed spaces. Some residents enclose their balconies with glass to extend the kitchen space. However, women spend less time on the balconies than men. Enclosed balconies provide a personal space for men to spend time during the day while women work in the kitchen. We went on to ask whether balconies were used by women as personal space during their leisure time.³ The responses showed that the balcony functions as an extra living room for the men of the household. Whereas men used to spend time in their gardens in Kadifekale or socialize in public in coffeehouses (Eranil Demirli *et al.* 2015: 153–157), they now prefer to sit in their balconies watching the outside world or watching TV, reading newspapers,

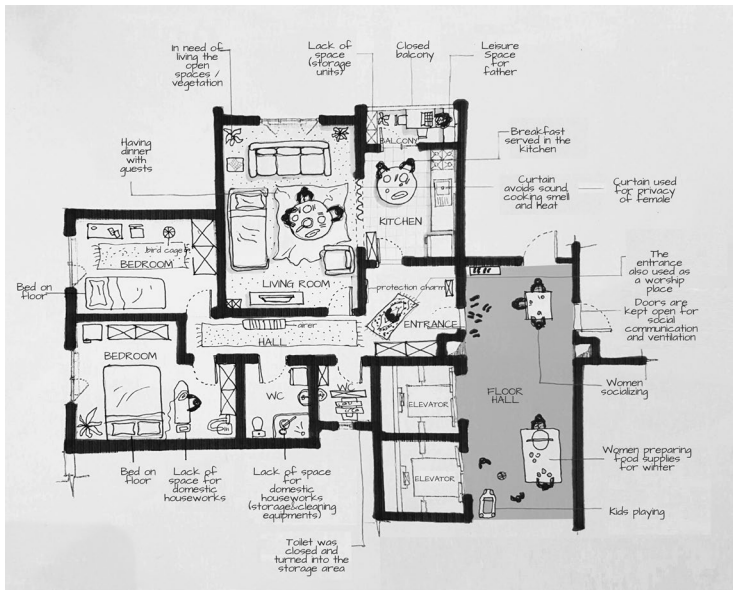


Figure 9. The floor plan showing the interiors used by women during the day time, expressing the enrichment of the space via socio-cultural activities and spatial tactics.

or playing backgammon with visitors. Men appreciate having their own space apart from the family, so balconies provide a place for them to engage in their own pleasures, hobbies, and interests (Figure 10).

Balconies thus symbolize gender relations. While women only use the balcony when their husbands are out, they can still instinctively create their personal space within the home boundaries. Women therefore experience radical otherness in space, exemplifying the paradoxical spatial potentialities. Women use balconies to host other women. These mid-day gatherings involve eating, talking, drinking Turkish coffee and tea, preparing food, knitting, and playing cards. The proximity of the balcony to the kitchen makes it easy to serve snacks. According to Wearing (1998: 145–146) leisure becomes a “heterotopia” where women can resist domination and give themselves some space to self-expand. Foucault (1966), who introduced the term, argued that spaces have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than those apparent at the first glance. As Charlotte Dunn (2022) puts it, heterotopias are “worlds within worlds inside us, the worlds that work to keep us alive, the worlds within our bodies”. Thus, as leisure spaces, the balconies in TOKI Uzundere resemble heterotopias by enabling women to interact with their friends. This certainly motivates them to socialize and gives them the pleasure of feeling alive. Here, women can reconstruct their femininities free from the gravity of masculinities: “Women are challenging the construction of their subjectivities as ‘other’ to and inferior to dominant forms of masculinity” (Wearing 1998: 157). The balcony provides a mental space between repetitive household activities.

Figure 10. The transformed balconies are used mostly by male members of the family during the day as an alternative location for their leisure time activities.



Balconies are associated with leisure, an opportunity to escape the confining and inferiorizing construction of femininity and dominant modes of masculinity, and to engage in self-expanding and empowering subjectivities. Women also prefer to spend time outdoors around the apartment blocks. As one of the interviewees noted, “we go to those green areas and sit around the power distribution unit to cool off. We drink tea, we bring our homemade *kısır* (a home-made food of boiled wheat, various greens, and spices) to eat together.” Another interviewee said,

“We spend a lot of time [outside] during summer (...) these park evenings are full of people. People barbecue, children play. Not only the people of our place, but also those who come from below do the barbecue. There are people who cannot stay inside their homes because of the heat and stay here until 2 o’clock at night, until 1, 2, 3 o’clock. During Ramadan, the folks sit there until the drummer comes [to wake people so that they can eat before sunrise and the start of the new fasting day].”

Many participants emphasized the role of leisure. Because the interior leisure spaces are monotonous, women prefer to gather in outdoor green areas although there is no equipment to provide quality time, such as seating, restrooms, or water supply. These picnics encourage friendships, knowledge exchange, and enjoyment (Figure 11). Thus, women discuss their spouses and their marital relations, thereby patriarchy in a small way.⁴ Through these everyday conversations, they share information. This is crucial for women’s independence as they empower themselves and give strength to each other.



Figure 11. As well as women, other family members also enjoy the outdoor spaces in TOKI.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on overarching themes of architecture and gender studies, this study addressed a number of issues. These included the interconnections between rural-to-urban and squatter-to-mass housing migration policies in Turkey, the state's limited provision of neoliberal mass housing designs and the reconfiguration of the poor, nuclear, male breadwinner, migrant family model. The paper focused on the experiences of poor migrant women in relation to the politics of space and their resilience when faced with extremely limited mobility in their lives and interactions. Focusing on the relocation of Kadifekale residents to TOKI social housing units in Uzundere, we showed that migrant groups with rural backgrounds from Kadifekale resist urban practices and preserve their daily routines and cultural values in their new, high-rise domestic environment.

We took great care to avoid casting these women as victims. Instead, we addressed their lives and identities, and relationship with their communities and homes. This analysis showed how gender boundaries are formed in the domestic space, and how male and female subjectivities are defined by childcare, marital relations, domestic life, and household responsibilities. The aim was to reveal the gender power balance, and dominant cultural perceptions, stereotypes, and assumptions while examining the spatial tactics of women who reinterpret the potentials of space that does not meet their needs despite being professionally designed.

In the past 10 years, the spatial changes resulting from women's tactics and their effects on the social life of these relocated people have become clear. Our analysis showed how the use of certain places in Uzundere's social housing units, and the tactics developed by their residents are aligned with their needs, and how these specific spaces differ from each other. Most women did not completely dismiss the TOKI interiors as unliveable spaces because they found ways to make life more comfortable. Overall, the plans ignored the residents' accustomed lifestyles, thereby creating a strong sense of displacement. The analysis showed how women used everyday tactics to cope with these problems and appropriate their new domestic environments or abstract spaces. That is, it demonstrated the women's agency in transforming and revitalizing the domestic interior by revaluing the abstract

space and refunctioning the existing spatial conditions. Thus, the efforts of these positively provocative women led to spatial changes that countered the presumed gender norms.

Initially, the housing project could have become a patriarchal space by limiting the women's everyday routines and restricting their social activities. The planners had ignored circulation between different areas within and outside the flats because the politics of such interiors offered women no personal space to use. For example, the housing project limited women's access to balconies or neighbors' homes for visits, the usage of shared hallways, and the personal time in gardens. The hidden design strategy made these spaces empty voids, with no room for personality, relationships, or history. That is, they were spaces in which isolation is experienced as a "burdening or emptying of individuality" (Augé 1995: 70). This study was grounded in the perspective that every space should be described as somewhere in which everyday routines are influenced by positive recollections of the past. These were recalled not so much by the building structure itself, which is visible but out of reach, but rather by its components and furnishings, which can be touched and felt.

It is important to emphasize the significance of women's lived experiences, and the related impact in the world of imagery, including women's expression of their own personalities, aspirations, and choices for freedom, their agency in transforming the household, and their impressive genre-built normative trends. While these issues are not easily recognized, they create a moral value that transforms the home and focuses on the subject of feminism. Thus, this rigid, masculinist representation of social housing units is both constructed and deconstructed.

This study underlines the need for sensitivity in gender and women's studies regarding women's position in social and domestic life. It also shows the need to focus on the user's daily social life. Our findings can guide future social housing designs, particularly the need for diversification to avoid a uniform national architectural identity. Instead, project developers and designers should consider local user profiles and socio-cultural structures.

NOTES

1. The term *gecekondu* (used interchangeably with squatter housing) needs to be clarified. In Turkey, it conventionally refers to mostly unregulated settlements. Meaning "built overnight", a *gecekondu* is constructed based on a vernacular understanding on the periphery of cities as "shelter of the poor/rural migrants" (Erman and Eken 2004: 57–58). The settlements are generally constructed on state or private land without planning and/or construction permission through the efforts of rural-to-urban migrants and others from their home region in urban peripheries.
2. Given that agency is a broad term, we draw on Mahmood (2006: 38), who discusses the issue in relation to "resistance" in

patriarchal contexts, defined as the ability to pursue one's own goals despite the weight of tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective). The core, or slumbering ember, is thus the humanist need for autonomy and expression of self-worth. This may be sparked into flame as an act of resistance when conditions allow.

3. Our conceptualization of personal space is adapted from Wearing (1998: 143, 149). Instead of relying on the paid work/leisure dichotomy, it is constructed by enlarging the 'I' by integrating resistance and flexibility. Our study concentrates on the daily experiences of women's lives without focusing on non-work time. Rather, it insists on the moments when women can explore their own desires and pleasures.
4. Critics of domestic patriarchy and liberal feminists' strategic efforts to utilize the state's legislative and judicial capabilities to intervene on behalf of women in private spheres and build equal public spaces have relied on the public/private distinction (Joseph 1997: 74). Drawing on this, we consider "patriarchy" as a system built for suppressing women as an identity group in order to give them a subordinate position in the communal and private domains. Kandiyoti has also focused deeply on the dialectic of patriarchy and traditional cultural patterns in private (domestic) space. She also investigates the reflections of women's position and sometimes developed strategies accordingly. Kandiyoti's suggests the term "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti 1988) to describe a society where protection for women depends on accepting the conditions of a patriarchal contract. It is easy to see how women may embrace this choice if there was a cost to being one of the beneficiaries (Kandiyoti 2016: 108).

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors. The research project was funded by Yaşar University in the name of BAP 081 Women Experience in TOKI Uzundere Mass Housing Units (Kadın Deneyimi Açısından Toplu Konut: TOKI Uzundere Örneği).

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APPENDIX A. PERSONAL INFORMATION AND LOCATION

Although problematized issues of sexuality were not a main concern of this study, the selected cases show the predominance of heterosexual households, which is a dominant pattern. The study therefore did not consider other possibilities of queer gender relations and gender identities. The most common household form in Turkey is the heterosexual household in a conventional family arrangement.

	Q1: What is your educational status?	Q2: What is your age range?	Q3: Are you working?	Q4: How many people live in this house?	Q5: What is your monthly personal income?	Q6: Where are you originally from? Where do you come from?	Q7: How did you make the decision to move? Was it voluntary or forced?
Interview 1	primary school	60+	No	3	Retirement pension	Konya	Forced
Interview 2	primary school	50–59	No	3	Retirement pension	Konya	Voluntary
Interview 3	primary school	40–49	Yes	3	Varying	zmir	Forced
Interview 4	primary school	50–59	No	4	Above minimum wage	Sinop	Voluntary
Interview 5	high school	40–49	No	4	Above minimum wage	Konya	Forced
Interview 6	no education	60+	No	2	Retirement pension	Isparta	Forced
Interview 7	primary school	50–59	No	2	Below minimum wage	Denizli	Forced
Interview 8	no education	60+	No	1	Below minimum wage	Konya	Forced
Interview 9	primary school	60+	No	2	Above minimum wage	Konya	Voluntary

Interview 10	primary school	50–59	No	3	minimum wage	zmir	Forced
Interview 11	no education	60+	No	2	minimum wage	Turgutlu	Forced
Interview 12	primary school	40–49	No	5	minimum wage	Mardin	Voluntary
Interview 13	primary school	40–49	No	3	minimum wage	Mardin	Forced
Interview 14	primary school	30–39	Yes	5	minimum wage	Mardin	Forced
Interview 15	primary school	50–59	Yes	5	minimum wage	Sinop	Forced
Interview 16	no education	50–59	No	4	minimum wage	Mardin	Forced
Interview 17	primary school	60+	No	2	Above minimum wage	Konya	Forced
Interview 18	no education	60+	No	3	Retirement pension	Mardin	Forced
Interview 19	middle school	40–49	No	4	minimum wage	Denizli	Voluntary
Interview 20	primary school	60+	No	2	Retirement pension	Konya	Forced
Interview 21	no education	60+	No	3	Above minimum wage	Mardin	Voluntary
Interview 22	primary school	60+	No	5	Retirement pension	Mardin	Forced
Interview 23	no education	60+	No	2	Below minimum wage	Erzurum	Forced
Interview 24	high school	50–59	No	6	minimum wage	Van	Forced
Interview 25	primary school	60+	No	2	Below minimum wage	Konya	Forced