



An Architect as a Daughter-in-Law in a Low-Rise Family Apartment Building in Istanbul: An Ethnographic Toolkit for Insiders

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ABSTRACT

Family apartment buildings contain intense indicators in terms of the culture-place-behavior relationship. Research on family apartment buildings should involve spending considerable time in the family circle to observe the ordinariness of daily life and discover the cultural background while investigating these indicators. This study emerged from the first author's experiences during the data collection process of her Ph.D. thesis on behavior setting analysis of coexistence in a low-rise family apartment building in Istanbul. As a result of being an insider researcher, the methods of dealing with the methodological difficulties encountered in the field were questioned in this study. Being in the field with the multi-layered identity of researcher, architect, and daughter-in-law led to developing a creative data-collection toolkit. The identity pendulum, adjustable word spanner, and diachronic flashlight were the elements of this toolkit, enabling her to overcome the problems she faced in the field. The authors suggest that these tools could inspire researchers doing research in similar fields and facing problems of a similar nature.

Keywords: Insider, home ethnography, family apartment buildings, ethnographic toolkit.

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, many people migrated to the metropolitan cities from the countryside as a result of industrialization and mechanization in agriculture that occurred after the 1950s. Migrant families often settled in squatter settlements (known as 'gecekondu' in Turkish) on the city's periphery. In time, these families established themselves in the city, and with the effect of socioeconomic change, they started to live in their apartment buildings. The family apartment building concept emerged due to the large family's tendency to live together in a multi-story, low-rise, urban apartment. This type of configuration caused the spatial distributions and behavior patterns of particular actions to be privatized.

Family apartment buildings in Turkey are examples of ordinary multi-story housing configurations where different users live on each story regarding the physical properties. From the sociological perspective, a family apartment building can be thought of as a single house where certain physical properties are broken and reconstructed as a result of vertical and horizontal relations, which are shaped by the complex family relations in the light of cultural norms, rituals, and values as a pattern of bonds. Low-rise family apartment buildings of this kind, where members of a large family continue to live and exist together, are built by squatter families who have migrated from rural areas and have developed their socioeconomic status. In this way, the family apartment building, which is a holistic single house, has become a reflection of cultural codes that squatter families already had in the daily routines of their rural settlements.



The first author's husband lived in such a family apartment building before their marriage. His parents came to Istanbul in the 1960s, settled on the city's periphery, and built their own "*gecekondu*." Patriarchal large family typology as a dynamic of rural life led them to live together in the city. The "*gecekondu*" they lived in was replaced by the family apartment building in the 1990s. The corresponding researcher of this study entered the family structure of the given case as a daughter-in-law, where she had the challenge of understanding the spatial equivalents of this "coexistence" as a researcher, an architect, and a family member.

For her Ph.D. study, which the other authors supervised, she was investigating the sociocultural aspects of behavior patterns in family apartment buildings in Istanbul, and she had chosen the family apartment building where her husband lived before their marriage as the case study and research area. Being in the field with the multi-layered identity of researcher, architect, and daughter-in-law also led to the development of creative methods in data collection. The researcher did not settle permanently in the family apartment building she investigated. Still, as she and her husband live in an apartment in the same neighborhood, she visited the family apartment building at least once a week. These frequent visits were not only due to physical proximity but also because of family bonds and cultural ties related to social group structure in Turkey.

At the beginning of her ethnographic research, she had biases and judgments as an insider acting with an architect's background. Still, as she started observing the daily routines and activity patterns in the field, she found that the information and forms of knowledge taught in architectural schools did not fit the facts of the case study apartment as a domestic space. This incongruent relationship often occurs through family apartment buildings in Turkey, where cultural codes of rural lifestyle shape daily life and reflect the extreme character of the domestic space formation. Observing this lifestyle's physical, cultural, and social counterparts led her to make inquiries as an architect with a varying concept of spatial organization.

The starting questions of this research are how vertical and horizontal spatial relations and activity systems have changed due to coexistence and how the cultural background of a rural lifestyle may be affecting the emergent lifestyle in the metropolitan city area. Producing discourses on the socio-spatial existence of family apartment buildings through the relationship between culture-space-behavior is the goal as the output, and this relationship has the potential to reflect the concept of 'family apartment building' as a unique case.

Family apartment buildings contain intensive indicators in terms of the culture-space-behavior relationship. To investigate these indicators, researchers need to spend sufficient time in the family apartment building to discover the ordinariness of daily life and learn about the cultural background. However, how much information this cultural group provides and how they provide the data directly relates to the researcher's relationship with them. Research involving people originally from rural areas may only be possible by crossing certain boundaries they create. It is, therefore, usually necessary to gain their trust and become an insider. In that sense, this article defines an ethnographic toolkit as a result of the field experience of the corresponding author as an insider.

Squatter settlements in Turkey

Squatter settlements in Turkey first began to emerge after World War II due to the urbanization in Turkey which forced many villagers to migrate to big cities to find jobs and make a living. After the war, the mechanization of agriculture forced laborers out of work in rural areas. Population explosion further catalyzed this rural migration (Karpaz, 2003). Nevertheless, the cities were not economically and physically developed enough to receive these migrants, so they built their own "*gecekondu*" on the edges of the cities or riverbeds. As the number of migrants increased, so did their "*gecekondu*" on the edges of the cities



(Erman, 2004). A "gecekondu" settlement is illegal but can form quickly and suddenly, so it appears as a suitable solution to meet the housing needs of low-income people (Sağlam and Dursun, 1998).

The first "gecekondu" was built using secondhand found materials and had no infrastructure (Erman, 1996). Over time, squatter occupants obtained significant rights and economic wherewithal. Therefore, they brought their families from rural areas and began adding more rooms to their dwellings. The "gecekondu" is not a completed house, and its construction process never finishes. Sometimes, a room is added, a floor is added, and it grows gradually. Although it was built as a temporary shelter for the villagers who first came to the city, its identity has become a permanent feature of Turkish cities. It even became a multi-story apartment with the expansion of the family (Özsoy, 1984). In this way, squatter settlements have spread throughout the city peripheries.

Rural migrants have generally arrived in large numbers in metropolitan cities due to the unbalanced industry distribution across the country. The formation and spread of squatter houses in metropolitan cities are caused by many reasons, such as the inability to create a sufficient number of jobs, imbalance in income distribution, insufficient number of houses and lack of accessible prices, gaps in building and zoning laws, and the concerns of governments about their votes (Özsoy, 1983). People living in squatter settlements initially had a rural area-based identity. It affected their houses and lifestyle. Their lifestyle begins to transform with the effort of remaining in the city, and the "gecekondu" is one of the most important products of this transformation process (Sağlam and Dursun, 1998). Before explaining the family apartment building, it is crucial to explain the family concept in Turkey. In almost all its definitions, family is considered a main factor shaping social life. In general, the family can be defined as:

"A social entity in which people are produced in a certain way, the first and most effective place to be prepared for society, in which sexual relationships have been determined in a certain manner, in which warm and trusting relationships between parents and children have been established (and other relatives according to different family types), and which is shaped by the culture it exists within" (Ozankaya, 1984).

There are four main types of Turkish family structure. The core family is the nuclear type consisting of parents and their children. Patriarchal large family, in which one or more family units are added horizontally or vertically to the core family unit, and parents, their children, their wives, and their grandchildren are included. In general, the male parent makes decisions that cover the entire family. Property partnership exists, which is managed again by the male parent (Timur, 1982). A temporal large family is one in which a fragmented family or other person is added to the core family unit horizontally or vertically. A fragmented family is one in which the divorce or death of one of the parents is the reason for a contraction of the family (Kongar, 1976).

Family types affect the configuration or usage of the housing where the families are accommodated. Especially in urban areas, although apartments provide appropriate spaces for the needs of parents and their children, for large families, low-rise detached housing provides more suitable spaces. Families that moved to cities from rural areas after the 1950s created the first family apartment buildings by adding floors to their current "gecekondu." It unifies the family with relatives or members who have married and structured their core families (Duben and Behar, 2014). With the effect of changing socioeconomic situations and physical conditions, these families start adapting to urban life and grow in size by making agreements with contractors to build new apartments to replace their eclectic squatter dwellings. In every block of this apartment building, family members live with their core families, but the larger family uses common areas of the block. In these families, elders play a significant role in raising children and grandchildren. In addition, families tend to perpetuate the culture they belong to (Kaynar, 2014).



Sağlamer and Dursun (1998) mention that multi-story *"gecekondu"* settlements have an identity with both rural and urban features. They describe this type of settlement as *"an environment that is created without architecture."* Although they are imitating a multi-story apartment, their use in space differs from that offered by their configuration. Eating, sleeping, raising children, and privacy concepts usually create different behavioral settings in these family apartment buildings.

Culture and Behavior Setting Relationship in House

People with different attitudes respond differently to their built environment, which may vary depending on their social, cultural, or economic background. Rapoport (1969) defines a house as an institution or structure created for complex purposes and states that a house is not just a shelter. The shaping and organization of a house are also greatly influenced by the cultural environment to which it belongs. Therefore, the construction of a house can be considered a cultural phenomenon.

In the context of studies examining environment and behavior relationship in domestic spaces, culture is regarded in a context consisting of kinship, norms, rules, lifestyles, social and domestic rituals, values, environmental images, religion, and family and social structure (Lawrence, 1987; Rapoport, 1980). Rapoport (1969) underlines cultural core elements in his book, *House Form and Culture*, where he describes cultural factors that have the potential to shape the built environment. Elements that are influential in making the cultural core are explained as basic needs, family structure, position of women, privacy, and social intercourse (Rapoport, 1969). In that sense, people from different cultures show different behavior settings because their activity systems are different. Basic needs like sleeping, cooking, eating, and child-raising differ from culture to culture. Depending on the family structure, a variety of domestic space settings may change according to the household numbers and their lifestyles. The position of women is a critical cultural core element that differentiates the meaning of a house depending on the social group it belongs to. In a similar context, the achieved privacy forms the organizational structure of a house, where basic needs are also defined as social intercourse. The relation of these basic needs to activity patterns form a house in the context of culture (Rapoport, 1969). The cultural core elements form a different pattern in the case of the meaning and configuration of family apartment buildings. The family apartment building, which evolved from the *"gecekondu,"* is the equivalent of the cultural background that includes family relationships, hierarchy, and rural characteristics. Therefore, the family apartment building should be read not only as a shelter but also as a structure with its unique configuration in which its users, who were peasants before and transitioned into *"gecekondu"* families when they came to the city, realize their existence in the urban context of the metropolitan city.

When the focus is more on activity systems, they can be seen as an emerging mechanism through environmental stimuli and response relationships affecting human behavior. The responses in cultural context mainly emerge as a result of economic, political, social, and technological factors. Sutton and Anderson (2010) examined activity systems as a cultural response to five different variables: organization, technology, social networks, settlement patterns, and storage habits. Culture is a much more multi-layered, flexible and fast adaptive response among individuals than biological responses. Henry (1995) succinctly states this long-lasting adaptive response by mentioning that *"behavioral responses to external environmental forces can be acquired, transmitted, and modified within the lifetimes of individuals."* Therefore, each individual belongs to a particular sociocultural group with some basic common understanding, but within these groups, each individual may also develop a unique, learned behavioral pattern. In this context, time-varying conditions frequently transform and update the form of a house and the activity systems linked to people's behavioral patterns. Updates in the house occur depending on economic, social, political, and technological factors that change through time. The modification or continuity of learned behaviors that individuals receive as a code from the environment in the context of culture reveals the concept of housing culture. Generally, family apartment



buildings with expanded family structures may also be considered an intersection area of cultural codes transmitted from the past and the changing activity systems during the process mentioned by Sutton and Anderson (2010). Each individual's relationship to a particular sociocultural group concerning technology, social networks, or past experiences varies. Although individual activity systems differ according to Sutton and Anderson's (2010) five variables, the individual's past experiences and cultural roots at the top of the family hierarchy try to hold these activity systems in a common point.

The relationship of activity systems with particular periods and environments is crucial in creating various patterns. Schoggen (1989) underlines Barker's attempt to explain this through behavioral theory, where there are four essential components in forming a behavior pattern. These are activity, milieu, synomorphy, and time frame. The milieu is defined as the environment where the activities take place. The harmony between activity and activity environment (milieu) in a time frame is expressed as synomorphy (Schoggen, 1989). Since the family apartment buildings that transitioned from "gecekondu" have both rural and urban features, the spatial behavior patterns of the users of these apartments are intermittent. In that context, Sağlamer and Dursun (1998) mention that the common entrance halls of each flat level within this type of low-rise apartment block are used as if they belong to the related single flat's entrance hall as an expansion of the domestic space plan layout. In addition, having different arrangements due to the coexistence updates the behavior patterns. This situation starts to attribute different meanings to activity systems used in daily life. So, behavioral patterns in low-rise family apartment buildings indicate some cultural codes.

The insider experience of the first author as an architect shows that the multi-layered pattern of the holistic family apartment building of this study has gone beyond the certain patterns and configurations of domestic space as taught in architecture schools. For example, multi-story apartments are mostly discussed in design studios at architectural schools as individually owned flats that comprise the whole apartment. In addition, the individually owned flat conceptually evokes a plain space that is generally horizontally configured. At the same time, the vertical relationship between the different stories of a multi-story apartment is mostly minimized unless it comprises two, three, or more leveled flats of a specific, specialized architectural design.

Being an insider in ethnographic research

Ethnography is "*writing people*" (Scott and Garner, 2012), and for an ethnographic researcher, being in the field is like the water in which fish swim (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2014). Prus (1996) states, "*Understanding derives most directly from the immediacy of our participation in social actors' shared worlds.*" This participation will be more accessible when there is a shared world between the researcher and the research participants.

The role of insider/outsider severely impacts qualitative research, especially on data collection techniques. Agar (1996) mentions that an ethnographic researcher assumes they start their work as a professional stranger. But they also develop an insider's perspective during their stay in the field. Related to this issue, Scott and Garner (2012) state, "*Hardly ever does the ethnographer 'go native' or become a full-fledged member of whichever society she's studying. Instead, she retains 'critical distance,' which ebbs and flows depending upon time and circumstance.*"

The determinants of being inside or outside are relationships, context, and time. In other words, the identity of the researcher is shaped according to their relations with the people in the field, the reason for being in the field, or the time they are in the field. Bucerius (2013) states that he was perceived differently depending on who he was talking to or according to the time or context he was there. Additionally, Woodward (2008) emphasizes that one cannot be completely insider or outsider in the research process.

Being an insider may make the researcher doubtful in some cases when conducting academic research. Bektaş Ata (2019) says that while conducting academic research in her old neighborhood, the distinction between interviews and short chats was sometimes confusing. Becoming a part of the research field breaks the interviewer/interviewed dichotomy and enables the joint production of information. Creswell (1996) describes the situation of being an insider or outsider as follows:

"Places are fundamental creators of difference. I am possible to be inside a place outside a place. Outsiders are not to be trusted; insiders know the rules and obey them. The definition of insider or outsider is more than a locational marker. Just as place has objective and subjective facets, the designation of difference through place means two connected things. An outsider is not just someone literally from another location but someone who is existentially removed from the milieu of our place- someone who doesn't know the rules." An advantage in which being an insider gives confidence is understanding not only the participants' direct expressions but also those made without words. Regarding this, O'Reilly (2009) says that researchers who are insiders are better at understanding nonverbal communication and states that insiders have the competence to ask more sophisticated questions on complex issues. Nevertheless, Fleisher (1998) points out that participants have real-time motivations and complexities. O'Reilly (2009) speculates that during an ethnographic investigation with close people, these people might think they are not interesting enough. But in these cases, an insider may push themselves to find different methods to get to know the researched group during data collection. Therefore, although being an insider might create a problem, it is also the insider who might be able to solve it.

THE FIELD: Low-rise family apartment building and the carpet in the staircase

Before their marriage, the first author's husband lived in a low-rise family apartment building in Bahçelievler / İstanbul. His family moved to Istanbul from Tokat province - Emirdolu village in the 1960s and started to live in a "gecekondu" as a core family (Figure 1). Due to changing socioeconomic conditions, a low-rise family apartment building later replaced the "gecekondu." Today, the apartment building's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors have all been allocated to the family (Figure 2 on the left and right). Tenants live in the basement and ground floors of the apartment, and they generally change from year to year. The mother, the oldest family member, lives on the 3rd floor with two unmarried daughters. On the 1st and 2nd floors, two sons of the mother live with their families. Part of the 4th floor also belongs to the mother and her two daughters, whereas the remaining part of the 4th floor is used by all the households that live in this apartment building.



Figure 1. The squatter family in their street in 1963

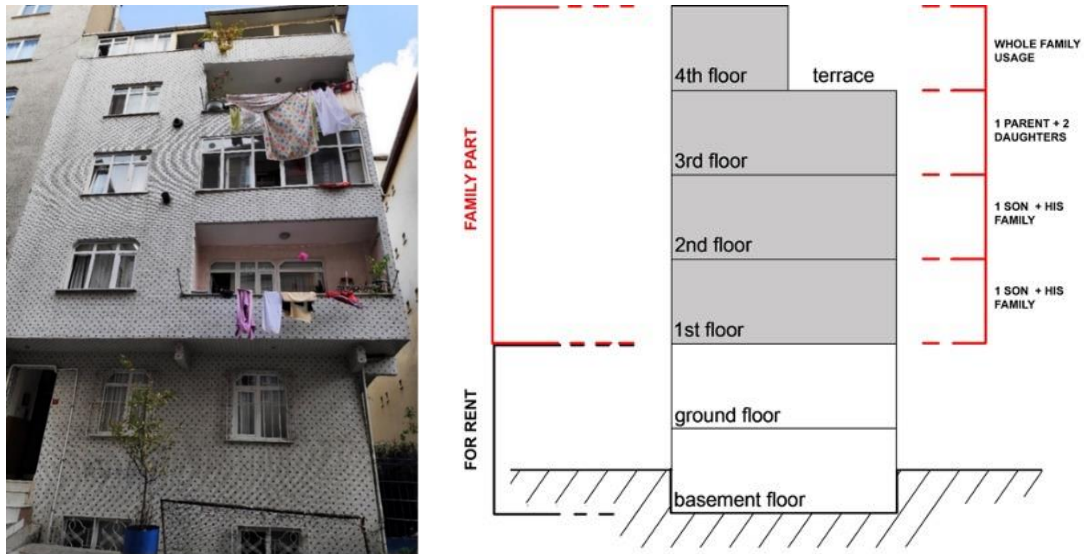


Figure 2. Left. The low-rise family apartment building in 2019
Figure 2. Right. The diagram of the building usage

As the daughter-in-law, the first author does not live in this apartment but has been visiting the family apartment building regularly since 2011. The factor that caused her to wonder about the pattern of everyday life was noted in her memo (2019):

"In the following days, we visited the family apartment building. After going up to the first floor, a carpet on the stairs of the apartment hall greeted me. I tried to take off my shoes up there, not knowing what to do. But they said it wasn't necessary."

"The key to the mother's house was always in the door. Everyone could come and go as they wanted. Beginning from the 1st floor of the apartment stairs, everyone was walking around with house slippers. Everyone comes and goes off to the mother's house. There was always a tumult. The apartment building was like a big house, and the living room was like the mother's house." (Field notes, 2019)

The area that connects the floors is not part of the flats but is being used as if inside. The carpet in the staircase hall that connects the floors (and the flats) turns the apartment into a different configuration. It emphasizes that the individuals living in this apartment have a kinship relationship with each other. This was the first spark for this research, the first meeting with the field. That carpet ignited the corresponding author's curiosity; from then on she could not help but observe the individuals and places in greater detail.

As the number and duration of the visits increased, rituals of daily life in this family apartment building became ever more remarkable. Being officially involved in this family in 2013 as a daughter-in-law made it easier for her to be accepted as a researcher in the field. Brewer (2000) mentions that sponsors or individuals may softly give access to the researched group. They are defined as gatekeepers, and Smith (2007) states that gatekeepers effectively persuade the investigated group. However, a gatekeeper may not be a person. In this experience, it can be said that the husband and the family's involvement in the marriage played the role of gatekeeper in the present research.

As an architect, a researcher, and a daughter-in-law, the first author experienced the dilemma of being an insider and an outsider when examining the everyday life patterns of the family apartment building, and sometimes she had doubts about how to manage this research process. Being involved in the field with these multi-roles might have also created confusion in the research community, which in this case was her husband's family. There



was a need to instinctively perceive their confusion as a daughter-in-law while also analyzing the field as a researcher.

THE TOOLKIT: a personal set of resources

At the beginning of this research, the first author did not know precisely where or how to gather data. Everything in the field was competing for her attention. Still, the lack of a methodology meant these observations were far from academic. With the guidance of the second and third authors, her Ph.D. thesis advisors, a pilot research study was designed. As a result, in 2019, the first author started to observe the family members living in the family apartment building more regularly: once during the week (Thursdays) and once at the weekend (Sundays) to understand different patterns. Semi-structured interviews were made to support the observation data.

During the observations, not everything went as the researcher wanted, and a reflexive process began:

"The answers I received to some questions were not helpful. For example, there was a question about the old "gecekodu" they lived in and the homes they have in the family apartment building. The question is: 'Can you give some information about your kitchen usage and dining place'? The answer I received to this question was: 'We cook food in the kitchen; we eat in the kitchen.' It did not work for me. I knew there was so much more. I did not go over that question during the conversation. Another day, I tried to get some information from them by asking another question".

"I wanted to have a sketch of the old "gecekodu." But my mother-in-law was not eager to draw. I think this is because she was an illiterate woman. I saw how she was anxious about holding the pen. I never insisted. Two of my husband's sisters drew a sketch. I asked them the questions I was curious about and made them think more about their past". (Field notes, 2019)

The boundaries that the researcher encountered due to different identities in the field, the unwritten rules of the family, and her curiosity about the space as an architect led her to find various tools to learn more. This trial-and-error process directed the authors to attempt to create a toolkit for researchers who might face similar problems in similar research fields. This toolkit is presented in this paper.

In using these unique methods, untied nodes emerge due to the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Reyes (2018) mentions that each researcher creates their ethnographic toolkit; this toolkit shapes access to the field, field dynamics, and data analysis, and it is made up of, among other things, the social capital and history of the researchers. DeLyser (2001) presented a similar view by emphasizing that as an insider, researchers should find more strategic alternatives to traditional interview methods. In parallel, Riessman (1994) states that ethnographic tools include personal experiences, emotion, and imaginative identification as academic knowledge sources. The purpose of having a unique toolkit for ethnographic research is to obtain more information about daily life and is related to addressing the psychological infrastructure of the researched group. Harrington (2003) says that the theories of social identity and self-presentation are the mechanisms of the researcher and researched, and he adds:

"This is because social identity theory focuses on the categorization process and objectives of participants in identity negotiations, while the self-presentation literature calls attention to the call and-response mechanisms through which identities are negotiated. In other words, social identity theory addresses the "why" of identity negotiation, while self-presentation theory looks at the "how" of these interactions" (Harrington, 2003).



The theories Harrington (2003) mentioned form the toolkit framework used to access information in the field in this study. In light of this information, in the next section, the authors present the tools used by the first author in the field where family relationships affect verbal and nonverbal communication. These tools have emerged due to her experience as a researcher, an architect, and a daughter-in-law.

IDENTITY PENDULUM: swinging back and forth between different identities

Making observations without changing the behavioral patterns in the family apartment building is a challenge to overcome for the researcher. Observing them in their natural flow was necessary to analyze spatial usage and activity systems. In his book *Inquiry by Design*, Zeisel (2006) explains the observation in environmental behavior research as *"systematically watching people use their environments: individuals, pairs of people, small groups and large groups."* What people do, how they relate to space, how the physical environment positions behavior, and how people influence their relationships and environment could only be explored through systematic observation. Hall (1969) emphasizes behavioral observation in people's natural environment; according to him, the spatial dimension of human relations can be best examined with sensitive observation.

Zeisel (2006) examined systematic observation in four categories according to the observer's position in environmental behavior research. The first category is the secret outsider, where the observed people do not know the observer. The second is the recognized outsider, where the people to be observed recognize the observer and generally change their behavior because they know they are being observed. The third is marginal participant, where the observer is more comfortable and familiar with the group. Finally, the fourth is full participant, where the researcher is already in the researched community. In this research, the first author's position as a researcher constantly had to change between these four. She was neither a secret outsider nor a full participant observer but felt closest to being a marginal participant. Her position was shaped according to the group's responses that she was continually researching.

Being in the field with the role of the researcher during observation disrupted the natural flow of these behaviors in some cases. When she came across such situations, the daughter-in-law's identity would come into play and cause the person(s) being investigated to return to their daily flows:

"I went to my mother-in-law's house for observation the first week. Before that, I told them I'd see what they do daily. I said, 'Mom! You act as you please. Accept me as if I were absent. Of course, it didn't take me much time to realize that my discourse didn't work. I went there that day with my computer. I guess it had a bit of a negative impact. My mother-in-law wanted to sit next to me and chat instead of performing her daily routine. She thought I'd ask her some questions. Even sitting next to me sometimes, she asked me, 'Do you have a question for me, baby? If you're going to ask questions, I'll sit down. If not, I'll go to the market.' I realized that my day was wasted because I wasn't invisible to her. I went again on Sunday in the light of this experience. I didn't take my computer with me this time. When I came in, I lay on the living room sofa and said, 'Mom! I'll lie here for a bit. I have come here a little early. Of course, I didn't sleep. I just wanted her to forget me". (Field notes, 2019)

According to the experience above, being invisible in the field differs from being a secret outsider. Because the secret outsider is not known by the person or community observed, the first author could be considered a full participant observer in terms of observing the community she has been in for a while. Yet while she was in the field, the "Accept me as if I were absent" discourse seemed an effort to become a recognized outsider. However, when she realized that this affects behavioral patterns, she became more like a marginal participant observer by shaping herself according to the responses of the people she was investigating.

"In the evening, we chatted at the home of one of my husband's brothers. While observing them, I felt I could ask my questions. I found that the way each family member contributed was different. For example, my conversation with the lady of the house turned into a one-on-one conversation after a while, and this process was more productive. Talking to her alone allowed her to tell me what her house was like in this family apartment building. I also got an idea about family relationships and the roles of individuals. The mother was more dominant than the others." (Field notes, 2019)

During the observation and interviews, the field and the researched individuals gave a natural direction to the research. At first, the dialogue with the lady of the house mentioned above did not start one-on-one, but it turned into a one-on-one conversation during the process. The critical thing here is that the first author, as a researcher, recognizes and follows the signals of the person or group being researched. While investigating the family type in which the hierarchy actively builds relationships, respecting family roles speeds up gaining their trust and access.

Throughout the field experience, the first author could match the status of being an insider or an outsider with the metaphor of 'swinging.' Expanding this metaphor, the architect and the daughter-in-law's identities constantly alternated during the field data collection experience. After a while, this became a spontaneous process, and a pattern emerged where the researcher became a pendulum between two identity poles (Figure 3). Therefore, being in the field with multiple identities requires being an insider and an outsider. It shows that being an insider does not mean being one of them. Since 2011, spending more time with them as their daughter-in-law, even being involved intermittently, did not make the first author one of them. She is an insider regarding the information they share with her, but it is about their lives before meeting. She is trying to get all this information from their past through the stories they tell or the documents and photos they show her. Understanding and being aware of this process also makes her aware of the critical distance from the researched people and the emerging research methodology where critical distance fits the metaphor of swinging once more.

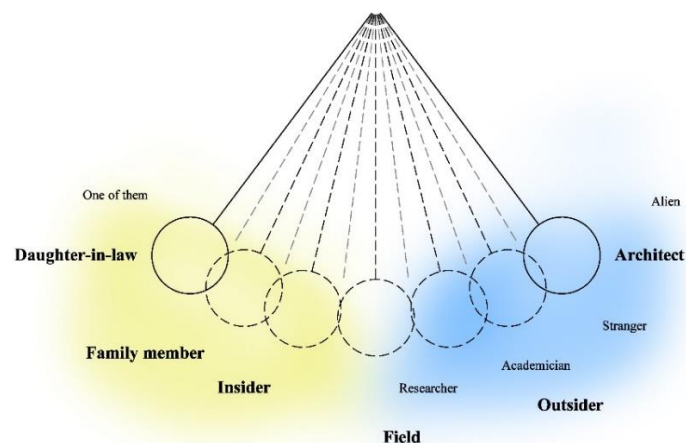


Figure 3. The identity pendulum

The intermittent interchange of the daughter-in-law and researcher identities and the preservation of work/life balance was one of this research experience's challenges, shaping the methodology. As O'Reilly (2009) puts it, the field is where the researcher takes their informal and formal training and theoretical perspectives. The first author gained her informal and formal training in her field through trial and error, and the field made her alive to its world.



ADJUSTABLE WORD SPANNER: Icebreakers, compliments, and more

Starting interviews with several words that would be of interest to the family members, especially in conversations with children, helped the first author to get the information needed for research:

"The first time, I had little efficacy while interviewing children (the mother's grandchildren). Observing them in their room, sitting by their sides and saying, 'Come on, tell me what you get up to,' wouldn't give any meaningful results anyway. I learned this from my experience to date. That day, the kids said, 'I come from school, hanging out in the room a little.' That's all. But another day, I saw a cushion in the room. It had been there for a long time. It was in front of the heater. I sat there and said, 'This is probably the best spot in the room. It would be a great place to watch Netflix.' So the granddaughter said, 'We're already doing that.' I immediately asked: 'Who do you do it with?' With this question, I immediately rolled into the topics I wanted to discuss. She told me that she and her cousin sitting downstairs could get together only at weekends because they were now studying in separate high schools, and they stayed here for one day a week at night and another week at his cousin's house. They watched Netflix and surfed on social media in the corner." (Field notes, 2019)

The relationship of each person with the researcher was different. While the first author was in the field as a multi-identity researcher, her daughter-in-law's identity would come into play and support her in untying the nodes when her researcher identity formed a node during some interviews. Getting information when communicating with children or teenagers for the first time was impossible. First, she had to use an imaginary adjustable spanner to loosen the nodes and to involve herself in their community. Then, she would ask her questions by adjusting them to appeal to the children or teenagers. Adjusting the words for the community is vital for acceptance, and the researcher must be patient to gain access.

In the field, compliments usually break the invisible distance between the researcher and the researched person, catalyzing the flow of information:

"I have developed a method of beginning with a compliment for some questions that I could not get answers for. I tried to get some information from them by asking another question. It is paraphrasing. For example, 'Mummy! How did you cook food, do the laundry, and do other household chores when dealing with so many children in your old gecekonddu? I could never have managed that.' She started to tell me where she was doing the laundry, what else she had to do while cooking, and so on. I was able to get information."

"Sometimes, when helping my sister-in-law in the kitchen, I would ask her about the house usage or compliment her. For example, 'Sister, I envy you! How come you're such a good cook in the kitchen?'" (Field notes, 2019)

She was beginning to explain immediately. She said that cooking and eating were essential for them, so they took every vegetable and fruit during the season and prepared for the winter, so they spent more time in the kitchen. When I compared this information with my observations, I realized that they were consistent with each other. For example, they had a corner set in their kitchen for comfortable seating, more than tables and chairs. There is a large screen plasma TV in the kitchen. In the kitchen, there is a fridge and a deep freezer. At the same time, there is one more deep freezer in the master bedroom.

In this study, how to communicate more effectively with the interviewed person or group generally left clues to the researcher during the conversations. Icebreakers, compliments, or the right words set an informal environment while conducting ethnographic research. Fetterman (2010) states, *"Pleasantries and icebreakers are important in both informal and formally structured interviews, but they differ in the degree of subtlety each interview type*



requires." In this research, for example, when talking to teenagers or children, the language of their community and being up to date created an ice-breaking feature, while complimenting peers or older people on how they do something became an ice breaker in that particular communication style. Complimenting was an icebreaker since appreciating elders is necessary for the Turkish family structure. An imaginary adjustable word spanner was used to loosen the environment nodes and involve the researcher in the researched community.

DIACHRONIC FLASHLIGHT: Photocollage Notebooks

Photography is used to document events, people, and places that create contextual complexities that narratives have difficulty expressing (Powell, 2015). In this ethnographic study, photographs of the houses where the family lived in the past were needed to explore the roots of the daily life in the family apartment building. While obtaining the photos, the first author identified family members who had a photo archive and visited those people one by one. The images and places were grouped by scanning the photos together with each person. This job required time and effort, and being an insider made it easier for the family to show patience and struggle with the researcher.

With the space-based and chronological ordering of the photographs, the aim was to reveal the family's relocation process in the city after the migration and to present data about the places they use in the context of the culture-space-behavior relationship. Being a space-based research, 'writing' started to fall short both in the research process and in revealing the data. Pink (2013) states that new knowledge-producing and presenting techniques can be developed with the involvement of the researcher's personal and professional approaches during the production of ethnographic knowledge. She adds that this contributes to the production of ethnographic meaning. In light of this approach, it was realized that the data produced through photos, short chats, and interviews constituted a story. The first author drew on her identity as an architect and got access to the photographs with the insider's identity. Then, she tried visualizing this story with a photo collage notebook (Figure 4). This notebook does not contain a single production technique; as the researcher's vision improved and parts of the story were completed, the notebook evolved its technique. Generally, the notebook consists of photographs, drawings, collage layers, and short notes. Berger (1972) mentions that we always look at the relationship between objects and people, not just the isolated thing. He adds that this relationship is always alive and active. The photo collage notebook has the vitality that Berger mentioned. With a similar point of view, Bonanno (2019) states that visual representations contain different perspectives and subjectivities. He adds that visual representations make it possible to capture events, relationships, and interactions simultaneously, and this situation defines the intersubjective nature of ethnographic research. Each piece of content in the photo collage notebook has ceased to be an object and has made contact with the researcher.

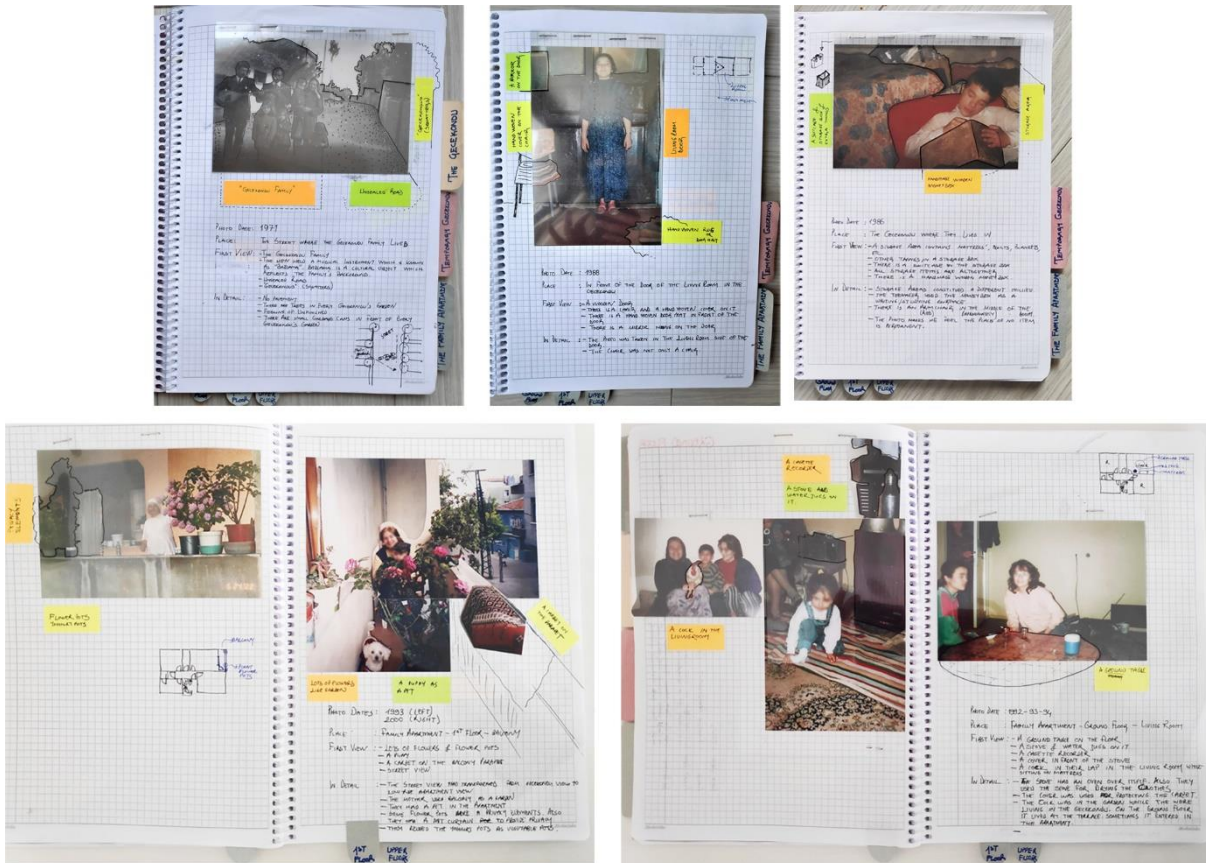


Figure 4. Content examples from the photo collage notebook (First author, 2020)

Completing existing photographs with drawings and trying to combine the invisible parts of the space made it easier to see the interactions between people, space, and objects. The aim is to expand the physical boundaries of the space visible in the photographs, to read the space in the context of culture-space-behavior, and to imagine life. While doing this, being there as an insider and an architect has some advantages. Being in the field with the identity of an architect and being accustomed to working with visuals and drawings made it easier to reveal the data. On the other hand, being an insider provided an advantage in reading the story and behavior scheme within the space beyond the boundaries of the space in the photographs. The information the researcher gained from the moment she met the family and the information obtained from the photographs and life narratives quickly became inter-related. Photo collage notebooks operated as a diachronic flashlight, shedding light on the field's narrative while revealing how this story has developed and evolved through time.

CONCLUSION

This study presents methodological issues related to ethnographic research examining the relationship between the spatial configurations of family apartment buildings in Turkey and the cultural background of the families that live in them. An ethnographic toolkit was used to overcome difficulties encountered during data collection due to the ambiguous role of the researcher.

Being a member of the research group and being an insider as a researcher was a major challenge, especially at the beginning of this process. When the first author of this study entered this family as a daughter-in-law, she tried to understand the spatial equivalents of this 'coexistence' as an architect and a researcher. The famous Turkish architect Cengiz Bektaş (1934-2020) stated in his interviews that before designing a house, he stayed with the families for approximately a month to learn about them before designing a living space for them. The architect aims to get more information about the family; in other words, to



gain access to the users' daily lives. Glesne and Peshkin (1991) argue that qualitative researchers are like actors and state that "*they must be able to "unself" themselves as they enter the lives of other people. They do not "become" other people, but they do manage the impressions that they give.*" In architecture, it can be said that experiencing the role of the users is a similar practice.

Besides hosting an insider-outsider dilemma, this research includes a daughter-in-law and an architect dilemma. The lessons learned in architecture school compared to the reality of the family house created this dilemma. Experiencing these dilemmas quite frequently during the data collection process was a challenge in the early stages of the research but became a positive contribution later on. However, trying to establish an influential role as a researcher continued throughout the study. Discovering that certain boundaries cannot truly separate the state of being an insider or outsider was the moment of epiphany. For the researcher, observing events, behaviors, and activity systems from the perspective of an outsider identity as an architect and observing as an insider daughter-in-law turned into an automatic displacement reflex after a while. It led to new data collection methods specific to the research with its dynamics and created the first tool, the identity pendulum. Establishing the balance between insider and outsider requires the researcher to be in the field personally and professionally. The fluidity between these two emerges as a product of the social relationship between the participants and the researcher during the research. The speed of reflex understanding as to which identity limits the researcher and the displacement of identities accordingly is directly proportional to the actual existence of the researcher in the field.

The node-untying methods used in face-to-face interviews and observation emphasize the importance of the researcher's words in the research. Understanding the social psychology of the researched group is essential to gaining access to and collecting data. Harrington (2003) emphasizes that ethnographic researchers are identity managers and data collectors. Acting according to the time, place, and context and using the second tool, the adjustable word spanner is a product of the intersection of the researched cultural background and the researcher's cultural background. Over time, the researcher and the researched shape one another and develop a relationship. When this happens, the researcher steps into the real world.

The third tool in the toolkit was the diachronic flashlight, a flashing light used for displaying how the daily life of the family apartment building emerged and evolved through time. Using photo collage notebooks, the researcher could present the visual story of the field. Being in the field of ethnographic research is an instructive experience in every aspect. It offers the researcher a critical process in understanding their capacity to solve a problem. One of the most essential achievements in the particular cultural environment in which the first author was a daughter-in-law-to-be as a family member and an architect, examining their ordinariness and demonstrating their creativity as a researcher to show them that they are not ordinary.

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