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# Marginal Female Subjectivities and Built Environment Through Household Types

# Hanehalkı Türü Üzerinden Öteki Kadın Öznellikleri ve Yapılı Çevre

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**Abstract**

*This paper aims to put forward the potential contributions of the "other" female actors, in other words, marginalized female subjectivities, of women living alone, of single mothers, of homemates to the formation of the domestic space besides the ones that play the traditional mother-wife role. It is oriented towards dwelling practices of women which is a more horizontally-diving problem area of the society. The text has been structured into two parts. The first part focuses on the social positions and dwelling practices of households characterized as "marginal" from past to present, putting a special emphasis on the distinct demographic features of Istanbul; while the second part reveals the findings of research conducted with marginal female households in Istanbul. The research comprises in-depth interviews carried out with 10 women between the ages of 26 to 46, all having university degree and belonging to middle/high-middle income group, living in various districts of the city.*

*Today, when the multiple household experiences of women during their life courses are considered, the importance of raising awareness for the needs and expectations of the marginal household categories which are outside the traditional norms comes along once more. Futhermore, such awareness can pave the way for the discussion of more qualified and sophisticated dwelling forms and practices which will enable a multi-purpose and flexible spatial use; thus, for the formation of a more sensitive living environment.*

**Keywords:** marginal/alternative households, other female subjectivities, dwelling practice.

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## Introduction

The fundamental aim of feminism has been to demonstrate the marginalized status of the woman and to bring forward strategies in order to overcome this derivativeness since it transformed into a massive movement at the end of the 19th century. Feminist theory was classified according to its connection to the various theoretical approaches of different fields of study and within the concepts it borrowed from these theories. For long years, the focus was on both the ignorance of women as users of public/private spaces at different levels, and the challenges they faced with and their methods to overcome these challenges. In the course of time, sometimes peacefully-sometimes vigorously, the woman struggled for being both "inside" and "outside", and for participating in social life; therefore, she familiarized the society with various states of femininity. This struggle is surely not to be realized or sustained with a stereotyped/anonymized "female subject". In fact, most of the time, the voices and actions of queer/marginalized women have been more determinative. Admittedly, this struggle has been given against the ignorance of woman not only as users of space but also as an active subject who constructs the built environment and domestic space. The point of view which borrows the biological fertility of the woman to express the design talent of the male architect/designer (Agrest, 1988), strived for including women who deal with creative works to a different sexual category until the second half of the 20th century, even until a much more recent period. If the woman gets involved with art against her nature, she pays the price with her femininity. She is now a hermaphrodite being, a lesbian. Lesbianism has been fictionalized as a third sex between male and female. (Stratigakos, 2005: 146). Therefore, feminist struggle contains in itself the fight against the female architect/designer ideal which is wrought to become "queer".

Starting from the end of 1990's, poststructuralist feminist theorists have considered the feminine subject in different ways; like Luce Irigaray (2000) as "non-existing subject" or like Monique Wittig (1981) as "non-universal subject" and revealed how diverse states of femininity can be expressed extending beyond the delineation of the classical definitions of femininity. Especially Judith Butler's (2010) Queer Theory, which encapsulates sexuality as a performance and aims to disturb and enhance bodily categories, provides significant theoretical support for examining different female subjectivities such as "abnormal" and/or "non-suiting to the norms" outside the stereotyped "mother-wife" subject. Admittedly, under the behavioral pattern allocated to women, there is a "mother-wife" role biologically and socially imposed; the mother and wife roles are considered as a whole. When the woman goes beyond this role,

she is considered to be inferior in varying forms and levels in different societies, or if she is successful in her career, her "femininity" is questioned.

Whether a user or a designer, the contributions of differing female subjectivities to the formation of the built environment are inevitably diversified. The topic of female user in Turkey has been mostly discussed through the impacts of woman - who is a member of nuclear family having the mother-wife role within the patriarchal social value system- to the formation of spatial organization and symbolic divisions in the traditional Turkish House in different regions of Turkey (Dostoğlu, 2009; Uraz, 1991; Turuthan, 1987; Uraz & Gülmez, 2011). However, as Gülsüm Baydar (2005: 33) also states, instead of considering "femininity" as a total gender category, the contributions, needs, and expectations of "other" female actors like lone-woman households, single mothers, elderly women, and domestic workers, i.e. of differently marginalized female subjectivities who actively provide support to the construction of the domestic household other than women with mother-wife role should also be studied.

Women outside the traditional mother-wife role and/or outside the armour of the conjugal union are the marginalized actors of social life. The marginalization occurs especially when their existence is ignored by the government policies under the "sanctity of the family" discourse and when they are left out of the social support network. Within the scope of this article, households headed by these women who stay out of the traditionally recognized norms and roles will be indicated as marginal, referring to their non-standard positioning which cultivates alternative dwelling practices.

This text is the product of the attempt of the author to reread the data of the selected sampling members (lone-woman households, single mothers, and female homemates) of a qualitative inquiry which focused on the social and spatial experiences, needs, and expectations of certain types of alternative (non-traditional) households living in Istanbul, in varying scales (city, neighborhood, and domestic space) conducted in 2007-2008. Additionally, it intends to make visible the subjectivities, hidden feminine stories, and important nuances belonging to sexuality, which were overlooked and/or ignored during the evaluation process under the hypernym of alternative household member. The aim is to open to discussion the status of being a "woman" belonging to alternative household types in the construction of subjectivity. Therefore, the relationship of the women, who divergently construct their femininity within in different periods of their lives, established with the city, neighborhood and domestic space as the places of their performances required by their changing roles is examined.

The article is structured into two parts. First of all, the dwelling practices of households that might be considered as marginal to the existing norms will be briefly mentioned from the past to the present in the Western world and in Istanbul. Then, under the light of this theoretical background, the findings of qualitative inquiry will be critically reviewed.

## Marginal Households and Housing Practices from Past to Present

One definition of history of modernism, based on the discussions of Alain Touraine (2004: 174) might be put into words, as the history of transforming to nuclear family from crowded family and afterwards of the emergence of a new user type determined as the "household". While emphasizing that the real actors of the new world paradigm are women (Touraine, 2007: 255-285), he definitely builds his evaluations and perspectives over the Western world of which he is a member. Ulrich Beck (1998: 122) delineates the lone-person household as a symbol of fully developed modernity because the free market economy pays attention to the needs of neither the family and marriage nor parent. With a mobility demand, the market economy is after the resolution of the family in this respect. Statistical data and the increasing rate of alternative households compared to the nuclear family in many developed and developing countries among which Turkey stands, support the theses of Touraine and Beck.

On the other hand, the unique dynamics of Turkey, the structure of the households experienced through these dynamics and relations among household attitudes are considerably distinctive than they are in the West. The studies of Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (1998), Alan Duben (2006) and Nur Vergin (1985) put forward that in a Turkish town, an independent nuclear family establishes its existence with a more diverse relation system than the West's and that the kinship codes still maintain their status of "emotional interdependence". Nonetheless, as Sedat Murat (2006: 131) also indicates, this does not mean that the changes in the family structure of the Western societies do not have an impact on Turkey at all. İstanbul, which is the focus of this research, has had a demographically distinct place from the rest of the country throughout the history. In the 1885 census of the Ottoman Empire, which was the first to include the male and female population, the margin of the lone-person and non-family households is remarkable (Duben 2006: 191). According to 1907 census, when the distribution of the Muslim population is taken into consideration, it is observed that 21%, a rather high rate of the population was comprised of many men and a substantial number of women living alone, and among all households, 14% of the household heads were female (Duben and Behar, 1996: 70, 73).

The closest data that enable a comparison between Istanbul's status and the rest of Turkey belongs to the 1990 census. According to these data, when the proportions of the household types are compared to the population of Turkey and Istanbul, as expected, the total number of non-couple groups and lone-person households in Istanbul that belong to non-family category is more than the country-wide number[1]. Another remarkable point is that the household heads of 100% of the single parent families and of 53% of non-family groups (lone-person households and non-couple groups) are female (DIE, 1990). The members of the female households outside the traditional nuclear family prototype can be considered to freely construct their subjectivities, or to be "lost" in a cosmopolitan and crowded metropolis like Istanbul. This text, in a sense, is about the states of femininity and the range of female performance in the metropolis and the public domain.

From the past to the present, the dwelling experiences of the household types outside the traditional nuclear family have been a means for the emergence of various forms of communal living. As Sherry Ahrentzen (1991: xii-xiii) indicates, among the rental or cooperative living options with child-care and vocational activities offered in the 19th century, the ones carrying the bravest signs of change are the ones oriented to non-traditional households. For instance, the "Hull House" Project, configured under the leadership of Jane Adams as a cooperative and social living complex for women with children or educated and working women, has been successful on behalf of the women who asked for a life and an urban space of their own (Hayden, 1985: 163-174; Kerber, 1988: 36). Doubtlessly, the source of inspiration for such projects is the suggestions of communitarian socialists -in Dolores Hayden's (1985) words- like Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, who aimed to establish the awareness of modern cooperation instead of traditional values, as a result of the reaction against the unhealthy and non-humanistic life conditions of the industrial city in the 19th century. Materialist feminists, who were against the economic abuse of housework, thought that housework was the key to the independence of the woman, and then fought for the transformation of the domestic workplace in quest of economic equality and reform. This idea of modern woman, in other words, the perception that goes beyond the traditional by involving different female subjectivities, have created the reason for architects and urban planners to design more sophisticated dwelling alternatives in terms of social, technological, and aesthetic means.

The 20th century has disappointed the expectations of communitarian socialists, materialist feminists and historical materialists, namely Marx and Engels for industrial capitalism to give way to a socialist society. The forms of

communal living have lost their appeal since house appliances became small enough to fit in any house, thus transformed women to subjects of consumption (Hayden, 1985:1-29). After WWI and II, both in the West and in the young Turkish Republic, in all the visual and printed media, being a housewife, a mother and a wife was glorified. As a governmental policy, the relationship of woman with domestic space was encouraged through domesticating discourses which prolifetared via new technological developments (Bozdoğan, 2002; 97-104; Ockman, 1996; 201-203).

From those years till today, the enrolment of women to business life and their digression from the traditionally accepted mother-wife-housewife roles have developed very slowly depending on the continuation of the importance of the kinship code in Turkey (where religion and tradition play an important role) in both rural and urban areas -though relatively less-. According to recent research conducted by TISK (2011), two thirds of the women in Turkey between the ages 25-29 (65.8%) are inactive at present. It can be said that, both the enrollment of more women in economic life as independent individuals, and the diversification of female subjectivities, depend on the blooming of a "Civil Society" conduct in addition to the kinship code, that has been asserted by Duben as being the organizer of all kinds of relationships between individuals (Duben 2006:91-97).

In Europe and the North Atlantic coast, where civil society conduct was established long ago, diverse life styles and dwelling alternatives emerged in relation to globalization and demographic, socio-economic and technological developments through the end of the 20$^{th}$ century. For instance, the co-housing settlements which bring together different generations and household types, propose collaboration in doing several daily activities; so they aim to set a balance between private space and social life. Among other examples, kollektivhus which provide suitable accommodation especially for single mothers, residences that provide equal facilities especially for house-sharing, transitional housing, passage community housing and permanent housing alternatives aimed at single mothers, and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) can be stated.

In Istanbul, housing possibilities and solutions designed for the social and spatial needs and economic accessibilities of alternative (non-traditional) households scarcely exist. In fact, in the period between years 1975-2000, the dimensions of housing units introduced into the market increased contrary to the decreasing household size, ignoring small housing and its potential users. As Murat Balamir (1996: 529) points out, cognitive conditioning also plays a significant role in this ignorance. It is to say that, the norms of family and household have been rigorously defined by rootbound traditions of the society, and small households are identified with some inappropriate behavior

threatening these traditions. However, for the past 10-15 years, the dimensions of the housing units are in decrease in parallel with the decreasing household size in Istanbul[2] and studio and two room flats have been taking more place in luxurious projects. What is more, they are consumed fast[3]. Nevertheless; the greatest problem here is that single mothers and homemates who are not involved in the traditional family structure and whose financial opportunities are limited cannot reach this small housing supply that is aimed at the high-income group. Furthermore, in terms of spatial organization schemes, in these houses where "sameness" utterly continues, it is believed that the multiplicity and nonuniformity of daily life activities and scenarios of "diverse" user groups and household types are substantially ignored, a class-based homogeneity is desired and sterile spaces are produced.

Even though there are situations when being a "woman" amplifies the inappropriateness of belonging to a non-standard household, sexuality, as a more general term, can be said to have affected the looks upon those who (had to) prefer inhabitancies found as uncanny by the society. The relations of alternative households with the built environment, the problems they face in owning a house, their preference criteria, and relations with neighbors are all subject to change due to both household type and gender.

## Outsiders of the Traditional Mother-Wife Role and their Spatial Experiences

This study is based on in-depth interviews carried out with 10 women whose ages varied between ages 26-46 and who belonged to the alternative household types (lone-person household, single-parent family, and homemates). Besides, all the participants were university graduates from the middle-low/middle income group, and lived in different quarters of Istanbul.

In the scope of this sub-title, both the space use patterns of marginal female households and their experiences of organizing the interspatial relations will be investigated. The acceptances formed by the collective memory intended for sexualizing spaces are created by members of the nuclear family in almost any culture and is assumed to be implemented on the general. However, this assumption does not reflect the reality. For example, when the woman digresses from the traditional mother-wife role, is there a change in the time spent in the kitchen, does her expectations about the kitchen and her way of using the kitchen change? If that happens, how?

The findings of this study have demonstrated that whether a lone-person household, a single mother or a female homemate, women outside the

traditional mother-wife role also attach great importance to the kitchen. This can sound strange at first because one would expect from these working women who are not members of the nuclear family, to define and experience the kitchen as a subsidiary space which they regard less and spend less time in. However, these women do not apparently consider the kitchen only as a place to cook food; they (or they want to) functionalize it as a space to live and socialize in.

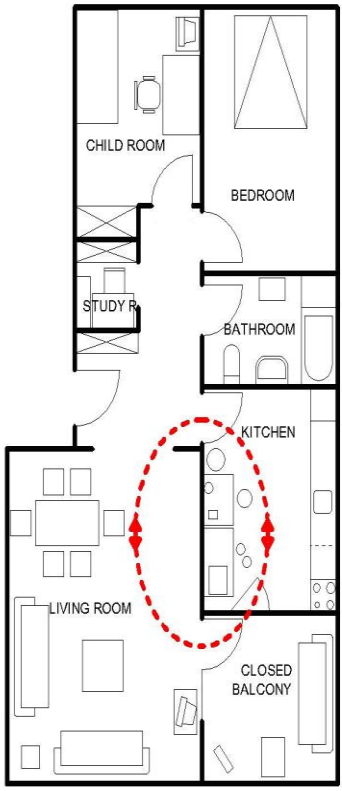
Diverging from other interviewees, Emel (LPH), who lived in a three-storey house with a small garden and terrace constructed on a 35m$^2$ area, said that she almost never used the living room on the middle floor; lived on the ground floor where the doors of the equal-sized kitchen and a room opened to the terrace; and that she welcomed her guests usually in the kitchen; expressing the importance she gave to the kitchen as a socializing area (Fig. 1). Her favorite feature of the house was the connection of the kitchen to the terrace. Likewise, Yasemin, who lived alone, dreamt of living in a house that had an opening to the terrace and the garden from the kitchen. Through the interviews, a common preference related to the spatial organization of the house appeared. In the house of Ferda, who turned part of her kitchen to an atelier where she realized her hobbies such as carpentry and wood painting and which was the corner she liked and spent time the most in her house, there was a square-shaped balcony placed between the kitchen and the living room, both of which had an opening to (Fig. 2). Ferda painted ivy on the wall of this space, placed a sofa, and turned it into a room which was sometimes used as a continuation of the hobby corner or a sitting area; where guests stayed if necessary or clothes were dried (Fig. 3). She said she used this corner to purify her mind and isolate herself from the outer world. It is significant that for Emel (LPH) and Ferda (SP) who liked spending time on their hobbies, the plan schemes of the most-used, most time-spent and most belonged-to sections of the houses are almost the same: The kitchen and the room/living room that are connected to each other forming an L shape, surrounded a balcony/terrace which both of them open to. In both plans, the circulation offers a cyclic pattern (loop) and a continuous movement either clockwise or anticlockwise. Emel increased the continuity of movement by taking out the kitchen and room doors on the terrace floor. Furthermore, Sevil (LPH), who had just started living in a flat having the same plan scheme as Ferda's (SP) in Ataköy, said that she glassed the balcony to turn it into an inner garden, so that she can spend her time there in the next summer. Thus, she showed the clues of heading towards a cyclic movement (loop) in the house. A similar use of space was observed in Esin's and Hande's house who were homemates. The closed balcony which Esin's room opened to, acted like the extension of the kitchen. The counter in the kitchen was really small and the refrigerator, washing

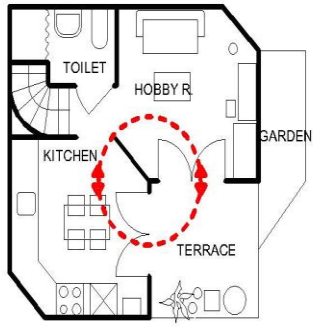
machine and cooker were placed in the balcony. There was continuous movement primarily between the kitchen and the balcony, and secondarily between Esin's (HSF) room and the balcony. All these data lead to the consideration that the continuous and cyclic movement between spaces with different functions in different plan schemes provides some of the interviewees a more sophisticated and flexible use of space and potential for functionalizing it. These considerations support the results of Ola Nylander's (2002:125) study regarding the integrating opportunities of loops/circuit patterns besides adding rhythm and drama to the character of the movement in the space (Fig. 4).

Figure 1. Emel's kitchen as a multi-purpose living area

Figure 2. Part of Ferda's kitchen where she carried out her hobbies

Figure 3. Closed balcony in Ferda's house used as a multi-purpose room




Plan organization of Ferda's house.

The ground floor plan of three-story house where Emel resides.

Figure 4. Cyclic spatial schemes.

In all the houses where lone-woman households lived, one of the rooms was used as a study or hobby room. Even the single mothers, who put special effort to use all the space as efficiently as possible and who had more difficulty in fitting into the house when compared to the other household types, either turned part of their room into a study corner or transformed very small spaces designed for some other functions into a study space (Fig. 5). Almost all of these women were computer and internet literate, communicating with their friends via the internet and working from home at times. Therefore, it is observed that they potentially create a working station in the house either for themselves or to be used collectively with the other members of the household.

Figure 5. Study corner in Ayşe's bedroom

Since I had the opportunity to interview or chat with all participants at their homes, I observed that the density of household furniture changed according to the household type. In the homes of single mothers, furniture left from marriage like dinner tables and sofa sets which can be defined as too big and too much for a small household, occupied a huge space besides the generally crowded rooms of their children. They tried to use all the possible areas for storage capacity. However, in the homes of lone-women, the situation was the opposite; especially the scarcity of furniture in their living room was remarkable.

Another subject that varied according to the household type is the multi-purpose use of space. Lone-women households used the spaces of the house much more flexibly and attributed some meanings and functions to domestic spaces beyond the general assent. Some single mothers (Ferda, Ayşe, and Nevra) especially used their bedrooms in a more condensed and multi-purpose way than other household types did. For homemates, spatial borders were stricter; the living room denoted the socializing space, while rooms appeared as personal privacy zones.

## Dimensional Expectations: Big House, Large Room and Search for Equality

Seven of the ten interviewees belonging to different household types lived in houses of 70 to 90m$^2$ with three or four rooms. The ones living in the smallest and the biggest houses were single mothers. Ayşe (SP), who was living with her two children and their babysitter in a 130m$^2$-house and who was the head of the most crowded household among the interviewees in terms of size, had bought this house after divorce and division of property. Ayşe and Ferda's common problem was, having to live in gradually smaller houses.

> All the spaces I lived in after I got married had more than enough living area for the number of individuals in the house. This is the first time I live in a four room flat and I cannot fit in because I'm not used to it (Ayşe, SP).

> I've had to live in houses decreasing in size. This wasn't my choice. As my income decresed, I had to live in smaller houses since they are cheaper. Actually, I don't like small houses. I have a lot of stuff because of my hobbies. I have too many books. For these I liked to live in larger houses but as I have a lower income, I've had to live in smaller spaces (Ferda, SP).

Except lone-person households, single mothers and female homemates were willing to live in houses with bigger kitchens, rooms or in bigger houses; however, this wish resulted from varying needs depending on the household type. Their concerns focused on the dimensions of rooms rather than the total size of the house. Especially, the disproportionality of room dimensions and the related problems in the housing stock of İstanbul were emphasized by single mothers and female homemates.

> There is such a mistake: somehow one of the bedrooms is designed as a parental bedroom and is large. Child's bedroom is kept smaller but this is totally wrong because a child's stuff is more than the parent if (s)he is not a baby. At the same time (s)he uses it as a living space, not only for sleeping. (S)he plays there, studies there, spends time there. (S)he spends more of her/his time there. We try to solve this by double-deckers and organize underneath as a playpen in those small spaces. In a way we try to create capacity but the room had better be larger instead (Ferda, SP).

Finding a house with equal-sized rooms and equal comfort conditions for both was the most challenging and attention-demanding issue for the homemates Gizem and Sema during the period of searching for a house (Fig. 6).

.... Generally the problem is this: In houses with 2 rooms, one of the rooms is large the other is small, even too small to put stuff in like a doorway... We've always dreamt of rooms with equal sizes because we both pay the same rent and meet the same expenses…one of us having a larger room and the other having a miniature room that she tries to fit in…but we eliminated many houses as such... The most important reason for mutual satisfaction was this: the two rooms are almost equal (Gizem, EP).

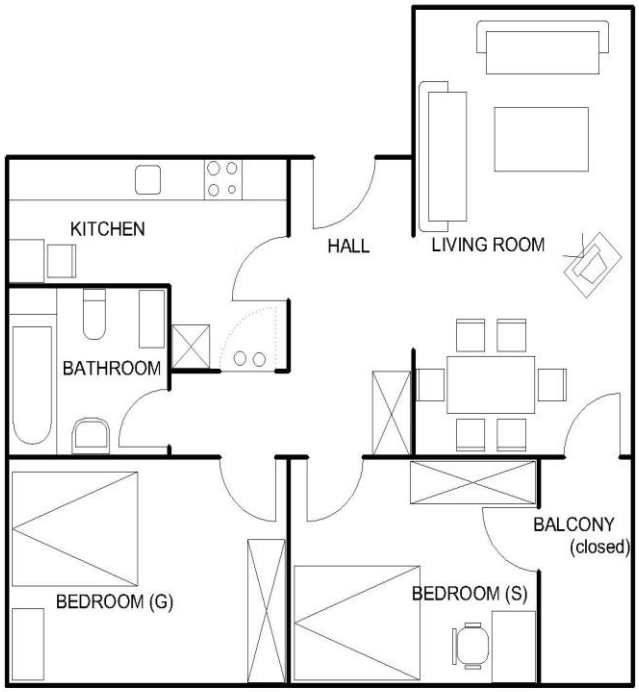



Figure.6. Gizem and Sema's house, a quest for equal-conditioned rooms.

The dreams of women to live in larger spaces and houses -except the lone-person households- was interesting and showed a parallelism with the inversely proportioned development between the decrease in household size and increase in dwelling size, that continued until the end of 1990's, which Balamir (1996) also refers to in his extensive research.

Emphasis of women on the dimensions of rooms rather than the total size of housing, their satisfaction from loop/circuit patterns and their efforts to remove doors between some spaces, make one think of an easier supply for the needs of

marginal female households with more democratic plan schemes having a high degree of fluidity between spaces and involving the continuity of movement.

## Relationships: Ebb-and-flows Among Privacy, Solitude, Independence and Sharing

Even though the crowdedness and chaos of Istanbul involves a potential that provides the construction of subjectivities of these women as individuals standing on their own feet in this city, Yasemin's words created an impression that this subjectivity is fictionalized on a slippery and ambiguous ground sometimes having uncanny paths.

> …there seems to be a paradox here. I believe in both the absence of privacy and the existence of solitude. You may not have much freedom to do certain things at the same time. In fact you get lost among the crowds since it is a megapolis. When we go to small towns for temporary duty or go to a village, I observe that there is no or little privacy. You really get stuffed inside the home but in Istanbul, since you asked, yes indeed maybe easier privacy, more solitude… (Yasemin, LPH).

Some members of the marginal female households (those living alone and are homemates) emphasized how superficial feelings and relations were in Istanbul and those came from the countryside like Gizem and Esin declared how they missed the deep and sincere sharing experienced in small towns. The profit of superficiality of relations in Istanbul, the pace of the tempo of life and the isolation caused by long distances revealed themselves as feelings of "privacy" and "partial freedom" that these women could experience within the scale of city and neighborhood. However, the state of "getting lost among the crowds" which they found advantageous today and which swathed them like a shield was at the same time a future concern.

> As long as I work, I prefer to live in Istanbul but in my retirement I prefer to return to the city I came from. Of course both economic and social life, and long distances can be challenging although we are young, healthy, productive and bread-winning individuals. In a period when we don't work, produce, earn money and besides lose power, I mean old age and retirement, this city becomes more difficult. I guess old age will be very lonely in this city unless I start a family (Gizem, HSF).

The tendency of accepting Istanbul as it is especially by single mothers and the difference of their perspective to the physical and emotional effects of Istanbul which irritated other female headed household types were remarkable.

> Instead of the approach that how challenging it is in Istanbul or such a metropolis, I came to Istanbul accepting that it is a metropolis with several rules. Istanbul neither exhausts me nor upsets / bores me as I know the conditions here and since I've been conditioned to orient myself, there is no problem we get on well together with Istanbul…(Ferda, TE)

Both the interviews and my own observations revealed that the female homemate participants of the research all of whom came from the countryside leaned on one another within the uncanny web of relationships imposed by the city; so they tried to compensate their longing for establishing warmer and more intimate relationships through one another. Although known to be a very important factor, none of them said a word about economic problems. This, in a way, supports Heath and Kenyon's (2001) findings of their study on homemates which is that the only reason to share a house is not economic and that people prefer this household type and the life style it brings consciously in order to support one another and share their lives.

This study has also uncovered some tendencies that were unforeseen at the process of preparing the questions of the semi-structured interview. The most astonishing among these was that seven of the ten household members reached by chain sampling method, owned one or a couple of pets. All the women living alone shared their house with a cat/cats, which affected the relation they formed with their home spatially and temporally since the existence of another living at home meant the existence of certain rituals related to it, several routines related to time-planning, and several precautions taken for its security which required spatial interventions. At the same time owning a pet emanated as a reason to return back home, a factor to enhance place attachment and a way to cope with loneliness at home.

> …It will be true to say that I give the priority to Tılsım in making my plans. I haven't had a child but I see it as a child. If it were, I guess I would be only this much attentive (Sevil, LPH).

One important finding of this research is that, consideration of the phenomenon of neighborhood and neighbor relations shows diversity according to the household type women belong to. Moreover, neighborhood is a significant need in order to share feelings, loneliness, and experiences for especially lone-woman households.

Sevil, Yasemin and Emel talked about the neighbor relations, even friendships they developed so strongly at times in their previous and present houses.

The relations of single mothers with their neighbors seemed to have been established on a vulnerable balance. Some of them benefited from neighbor relations to a great extent for childcare support when their children were small. Based on the age of their children, the need and type of neighborhood relations changed. For instance, Banu (SP), who had an eleven-year-old daughter, told that although she did not fancy neighborhood, she kept in touch with the family of her daughter's friend from the apartment. As it is understood from Nevra's words, close neighbor relations and cooperation had both irritating, and tolerating sides.

> Maybe it was a coincidence. I shared a lot with my nextdoor neighbors in my previous houses for 10 and 8 years respectively. But it was a sharing like this: in my first house I had a middle-aged neighbor with children whose husband worked in Germany as a farmer. She supported me a lot. I was very happy about her presence and we had an informal relationship. Later, in the house where I lived for 10 years, we were the same with my nextdoor neighbor but it had some side effects. In other words, because she was unemployed and had plenty of time, I had to sacrifice in order to be with her whenever she wanted to. For example, I had another neighbor and with them I experienced a really sincere cooperation. I had trouble finding time for myself. That was such a disadvantage but at the same time their presence made me happy in many ways. But as I said, I wanted to keep time for myself and got older, so I acted differently here…I specified the relations because otherwise I had difficulty. All in all, I have neighbors here whom I like and really enjoy the company of (Nevra, SP).

One of the homemates, Sema said that they did not prefer neighborliness despite the availability of their apartment for neighbor relations. Both of them felt secure and sincere both in the apartment and neighborhood; however, they wanted to keep the distance especially with their neighbors from the apartment at the same time. Their solicitude might have meant a refusal for any intimacy that would pave the way for commenting on or being involved in their lives/life styles.

It was interesting to see how the women outside the traditional mother-wife role established relations with the cleaning lady and what strategies they produced by this means. Except Ayşe (SP), who owned a house after her divorce and had a boarding lady who looked after her two children, others could hire a cleaning lady for limited time spans when their financial situations improved. According to Ferda (SP), who said she had not had a charlady for a year, this was the first issue to sacrifice for at the time of bottleneck. Only Sevil, who lived alone, hired a cleaning lady on a regular basis (every fortnight) except Ayşe.

Sevil's cleaning lady was a Moldovian university graduate. She was knowledgeable in almost any subject and their relation went beyond charlady-employer relations. Furthermore, the similarity of Yasemin (LPH) and Nevra's (SP) perspectives about the topic was remarkable. Having been a member of left-wing unions, a social democrat and especially sensitive about the topics such as sustainability and human and animal rights, Yasemin established a distinct relationship with the cleaning lady, Leyla, who came every fortnight or month. On that day the two of them would do the cleaning half day long, and then they would sit and have tea together. A similar attitude was observed in Nevra, who had hard times during and before her marriage. Nevra (SP) highlighted that she did not like to have her work done by another person. On the other hand, Gizem and Sema, who were homemates, said that they had always longed for somebody who would behave as an elder sister, and who would embrace the house as her home like in the movies. Looking from that framework and especially taking into consideration the results of Aksu Bora's (2010) study on housewife and working female employers belonging to the traditional nuclear family, and women working in the housecare sector, it can be claimed that there is a difference in the viewpoints of marginal female households, to women working in housecare. In addition, they experience the construction of subjectivity through class diversity differently than women who obey traditional norms in the context of the household type.

## Being Different, Keeping Distance: Experiences of Uncanniness

Distance was significant for marginal female households as both a unit of intimacy of their relations with other people and an indicator of the frequency of these relations in physical terms. The interviewees defined an ideal distance between themselves and their families. Despite its relativity, it was such a distance that would prevent sudden and uninformed interventions of family members to their lives but at the same time would allow these members to visit them without spending much time and effort. They ascribed extreme importance to "distance" in terms of keeping their privacy. Including the ones whose families lived in Istanbul, none of them wanted to live too close to their families.

> …I didn't want to live so close but now we're on the Anatolian side. I wouldn't want to live on the European side. For emergencies, access is good. ..(no) mingers with pots and pans at the door (Emel, LPH).

Especially for single mothers, the physical and emotional distance they kept with their families provided a space of further freedom for the education of their children.

> ...I'm quite a rebellious child. I wanted to set my own rules in raising my child. I didn't want to raise her under my parent's impact and directions that would cause dilemmas. I prefered to live in a farther place, knowing and facing all the challenges. I think I did it all to the good (SP).

The feelings of "alienation" of women rising from being positioned outside the traditionally accepted household prototype were sometimes experienced more severe, by being reinforced with cultural and lifestyle differences depending upon the neighborhood they live in. Esin (HSF), who had an ambivalent mood about Fatih, whose inhabitants had diverse worldviews and images, stood somewhere between adapting to or alienating from the neighborhood. The image and associations of the neighborhood affected her space attachment negatively.

> When Fatih is spelt, one thinks of headscarfed, puritan people but it's not so. On the road, for example, we can see women wearing mini skirts but there are many chadored people, too. So in a way I don't belong here because that is Fatih, as an image, it is more different. But people like us live here too so as a neighborhood both I'm pleased with it and there are problems (Esin, HSF).

The common ground shared by all interviewees was their satisfaction with the presence of diverse household types in their neighborhoods. Although diversity was a concept conceived subjectively, somehow it legitimized their existence in the neighborhood. For instance, while Yasemin (LPH) expressed her satisfaction of the diversity, the togetherness of people belonging to different income, education level, and household types in her neighborhood, therefore the satisfaction of living in a heterogenious environment; living in a place where alternative household types were becoming out of "being the other" by increasing in number, in a place which started to become homogenious in terms of density of marginal households, increased Sevil's attachment.

> ...The number of people there (her previous neighborhood) living like me. I felt closer to the zone, I mean there are many singles there, many studio lives. This neighborhood is a predominantly family place maybe that is what I find strange. Here houses are big for example there seem to be too many children around. There is more domesticity; this is such a zone (Sevil, LPH).

Gizem (HSF), who declared that she wanted to live with different household types, was irritated by Fulya, where single people dominated and where she also lived with her current homemate Sema (HSF) before Çırağan. There was a proportion of household diversity on her mind and Fulya stayed out of this idealized range.

> I want diversity around me... if there's diversity there's more comfort, non-family people can feel more attached but one thing is certain that the more number of families there are in a neighborhood, the more peace and quiet there is. For example Fulya, where we lived, was a place full of people living alone, students living alone, homemates, and bachelor's flats. It was less secure, more disorganized. People had less respect towards one another... Places with families have a peaceful and secure environment, they are more prudent but when there are only families it can be a little disturbing for single people. I mean, that rate might be 30 to 70, a good rate… (Gizem, HSF)

Positive approaches to the diversity of household types decreased when the subject changed to proximity of households with different incomes. Especially single mothers mentioned that they wanted to live with households with similar incomes. Compared to other household types included in the study, "diversity" of incomes looked more threatening for single mothers that seem to be experiencing a less temporary period in their life-cycle.

> ...I mean living in places where there are people in my socio-economic level or parallel to my world-view puts me more at ease. I feel pressure the other way round. I don't like it, I mean, I feel as if under surveillance (Ferda, TE).

The social perspective on women, especially on those outside the traditional mother-wife role and social prejudices, can be said to have caused marginal female households to develop an auto-control mechanism. Moreover, by means of lifestyle, the "woman" who goes beyond social codes and the "norm", takes an ambivalent and uncanny stance, which can be said to put several limits to her life style, relations, and behavioural patterns. For instance, one of the lone-woman, Yasemin states as follows:

> This is a very old apartment and most of the inhabitants are householders. They are very old people. There are also very conservative, very gossipy people. No matter what. For example, there was a lot of gossip about my visitors. In fact, now I'm more careful and selective, hesitant about having my boyfriends as a guest.

Despite the common opinion that marginal female households have a potential of offering a more flexible daily routine; that the houses of women, who do not share it with a man and are the heads of the family, are more permeable, more open to friends, having more visitors; findings demonstrate that the real case is totally the opposite. Especially women living alone only accept informed guests to their house and usually meet their friends outdoors.

## Choosing a Location, Finding a House

Some participants of the research told that they experienced difficulty about single income, and economic problems related to tenancy or houseowners. For example, financially-struggling single-mother Ferda wanted to live in the same neighborhood (Ataköy) at the end of her lodging term but she was worried about the future since she thought she would not be able to afford it. The despair about becoming a homeowner can be explicitly seen in Emel's (LPH) undermentioned expression:

> ...I cannot save money because I am a tenant and alone. Anyway, buying a house has become a very far-reaching task now. I don't think about it much but I'd better think of an alternative but I'll probably just think. I guess I can't do much on my own (Emel, LPH).

Gizem also referred to the economic problems they experienced in finding a house.

> We had trouble (in finding a house). Deciding on the neighborhood wasn't a problem, we wanted Beşiktaş but we had to look around for a long time and we had a bit of luck to tell the truth because in good quarters they ask for too much rent. Because of our demand on both appropriate rent and good neighborhood, we searched for almost 7-8 months (Gizem, HSF).

Banu, one of the single mothers, was reactive towards the conditions imposed by the real estate agents. She believed that some issues would become easier for her if real estate agents and their praxis faded from the scene. Having a child became an apparent factor, especially for the neighborhood choice of single mothers.

> When I came to Istanbul for the first time, my daughter would start primary school that year. Anyway I first decided on her school, then I found a house next to the school zone because I didn't want her to be knocked around in school buses as she was so little. I moved in but I chose the

> place for its closeness. As I don't like walking much, it's hard for me to walk up hills and it was a steep district, an exhausting neighborhood. As for me, I wouldn't live there (Ferda, TE).

While telling about the problems they faced in raising their children and the solutions they invented, single and working mothers also mentioned what kind of support they needed during this period.

> We had difficulty at (grade) 3 and 4... I got support from the doorman's wife. She stayed next to Nazlı until I came... Then I left her to a study center, a kindergarden in Incirli. I saw that she was miserable there, she didn't do her homework. On one account okay the woman is uneducated, she can't help her with her lessons but lessons aren't everything. At least the kid was at home. Then I hired her back, yes, my kid was more peaceful. Then she grew up anyway now she can come home on her own (Banu, SP).

> …I would very much like to have institutions where I can entrust my child at different hours of day or a kindergarden which my salary could afford. My neighbors, those neighbor relations were a real advantage. I feel grateful for my neighbors they helped a lot with the raising (Nevra, SP).

Especially Ferda's thoughts about the necessity of an institutional support mechanism and her suggestions were quite extensive.

> ... That is my biggest problem, and will continue to be a problem for a while until my daughter grows up. I'd like a babysitter, a very trustworthy babysitter system or an institution close to home where I could entrust my child after she comes from school. It would facilitate my life. That is a very important requirement for single mothers: an institutional roof to entrust her child, but not private (Ferda, SP).

## Conclusion

Women position themselves according to their race or beliefs, sexual preferences, whether they work or not, whether they have children or not. They build their identities through various combinations of these differences; so that they can be politicized by the medium of their built identities. Black women, immigrant women, and lesbians have been able to make their voice heard in the West for long years; they even created concepts and theories which lead the way to diverse perspectives for gender issues like "queer theory". In Turkey, despite in a limited field, Kurdish women and conservative women have been

involved in an attempt to be organized for the purpose of describing themselves with a sub-identity attached to their upper identity of being a "female", since they started generating a political rhetoric (Bora, 2011). The number of studies carried out on housewives, cleaning ladies and house girls (unmarried girls living in family home) who experience the transition phase between family home and husband's home within the life course is gradually increasing. Yet, related to dwelling which is one of the most fundamental needs of the human being, they have put forward neither any naïve identity politics nor any civil initiative. Researches on alternative (non-traditional) households, especially on female headed households who have been ignored by the generalizing and family-blessing politics of the government have been too restrictive. What is more, this sub-group (alternative households) is divided within itself into subgroups having very different needs and demands towards the built environment. Their perceptions and use of space, relations with immediate surroundings and the city, even relation establishing strategies (of single mothers, female homemates or lone-women households) significantly differ from one another. Their common ground is the inaccessibility of housing supply of almost all of them. Especially single mothers are in urgent need of institutional support mechanisms, but they neither speak nor struggle with political power mechanisms for this.

Paving the way for these women to speak can be realized through exclusive and profound studies aimed at revealing their differentiating experiences and needs, and making problems visible. Therefore, each type of these marginal female households should be studied further in terms of their use of domestic space, place making strategies, privacy expectations and all the challanges they come across with in urban scale; so that their spatial and social needs and expectations could be regarded in the formulation of housing and design politics. Moroever, the visibility of the marginal actors in the housing market might accelerate the necessity of participation of users in design processes. That would also enchance the potential of breaking up with the sameness of the spatial organization schemes regarding the housing typology of Istanbul.

If we believe that institutional support mechanisms can facilitate the lives of marginal female households in different ways and degrees, then it is necessary to campaign for this and to produce rhetoric and projects via civil organizations. In case of achieving to raise awareness using appropriate means, the most remarkable outcome will definitely be discussing the suggestions and ways of versatile and flexible, more qualified and sophisticated housing forms and providing the ground for more sensitive living environments, since looking from the "outside", and listening to those who look from the "outside" reveals "unforeseen" potentials.

## Notes

[1] According to the 1990 census of the State Statistical Institution, the percentage of the groups that don't form a family throughout Turkey is 6.7 % (5.6% lone-person household + 1% groups that don't form a couple), The percentage of the groups not being a family in İstanbul is 8.6 %. (6.9% lone-person household + 1.7% groups not forming a couple)

[2] The average size, being 133m2 in 2007, decreased to 125m2 in 2009. http://emlak.ensonhaber.com/nufus-yaslandikca-evler-kuculuyor.html) (News dated 2010-05-06, retrieved October 7, 2011).

[3] Umut Durbakayım, the vice-chairman of Teknik Yapı, claims that the most favorite and the first sold flats are 2 room flats in the projects built after 2004: "The proportion of 1+1 type flats in the projects realized has risen up to 50%" http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25032983/ (news dated December 17, 2009) retrieved October 7, 2011.

## Abbreviations

LPH : Lone-person household
SP : Single parent
HSF: House-Sharing Friends

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# Hanehalkı Türü Üzerinden Öteki Kadın Öznellikleri ve Yapılı Çevre

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***Öz***

*Bu yazı, anne-eş rolünü üstlenen kadınların dışında, domestik mekanın oluşumuna aktif olarak katkı sağlayan "öteki" kadın aktörlerden yalnız yaşayan kadınların, yalnız annelerin ve evi paylaşan kadınların, bir başka deyişle marjinalleştirilmiş kadın öznelliklerinin hem yapılı çevreye yönelik ihtiyaç ve beklentilerini hem de potansiyel katkılarını ortaya koymayı hedefler. "Kadınlığın" topyekün bir cinsiyet kategorisi olarak değerlendirilmesinin; Türkiye'de kadınların çoğunlukla ırk ya da din eksenli söz söyleme, direnç üretme üzerine yoğunlaşan pratiklerinin ötesinde, toplumu daha yatay kesen bir problem alanı olan kadınların barınma pratiklerine yönelir.*

*Metin temelde iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm geçmişten günümüze marjinal olarak nitelenen hanehalklarının toplum içindeki konumuna, barınma pratiklerine ve İstanbul'un bu bağlamdaki ayrıcalıklı konumuna odaklanırken, İkinci bölüm İstanbul'da alternatif hanehalklarına mensup kadınlarla gerçekleştirilen ve derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanan alan araştırmasının bulgularını ortaya koyar.*

*Günümüzde kadınların yaşamları boyunca çok sayıda farklı hanehalkı türü deneyimledikleri hesaba katıldığında, geleneksel normların dışında kalan marjinal hanehalkı türlerinin ihtiyaç ve beklentilerine yönelik farkındalık yaratmanın önemi bir kez daha ortaya çıkar. Böylesi bir farkındalığın çok amaçlı ve esnek kullanıma elverişli, daha nitelikli ve sofistike barınma biçim ve önerilerinin tartışılmasına; daha duyarlı yaşam çevrelerinin oluşumuna zemin hazırlama potansiyeli taşıdığı düşünülmektedir.*

***Anahtar Kelimeler:*** *Alternatif/marjinal hanehalkları, öteki kadın öznellikleri, barınma deneyimi.*