

## **Neighborhood senior daytime community centers in the town planning process in Turkey**

Lale Berkoz, Prof. Dr.

*ITU, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urban and Regional Planning*

*lberkoz@gmail.com*

Keywords: elderly living alone, daytime community center, life quality, life satisfaction

The growing ratio of elderly individuals within the total population is resulting in an increase in age-related problems. Known as the third age group, the seniors who make up this group face problems that can be classified as physiological, biological, psycho-social, and economic. Oftentimes, loneliness comes to the top of the list of the issues with which these seniors must deal.

While developed countries are rapidly instituting new and contemporary measures to establish senior community centers, Turkey, whose average life expectancy has now reached the 70s, has instituted almost no innovations in this area. Turkey does have a system of nursing homes that equate with resident old-age. These are facilities that the aging sometimes enter voluntarily, or are sometimes forced to enter due to certain issues in their lives. It is a well-accepted fact that the residents of these facilities live the remainder of their lives isolated from the greater community.

It is thus that the wide experience and knowledge that have been amassed by the elderly are simply tossed aside, constituting a significant loss for society. This isolation of the aging also means that these individuals both feel remote from society and suffer a loss in quality of life. Turkey's seniors need training and introductions that will help them bridge the gap of advanced technologies, while they also should be provided with opportunities to avail themselves of the social, educational, and cultural resources available in the wider society. In such a case the aging would be able to grasp the chance to develop their own potentials.

In this sense, if events in which seniors can participate in their spare time are provided, those participants will be able to further fulfill their social needs.

Participation in social events will strengthen their ties with life and by attending courses that aim to advance their skills and hobbies they may also feel productive once again. This study suggests that these are the kinds of activities that senior centers need to develop. The results of this study will assist in augmenting the contentment and life quality of the elderly.

We believe that the senior community centers proposed within the conclusions of this study will assist in mitigating the loneliness experienced by many elderly, especially by those who live alone and that the results of this study can be used to bolster the quality of life of Turkey's senior citizens. In the evaluation of the kind of spare-time activities that could be made available at these senior community centers, it has become evident that these activities should aim to increase interpersonal relationships and thus increase the life satisfaction levels of attendees. These centers could be enriched by providing them with facilities for engaging in hobbies and book lending, should have a meeting/classroom, space for watching movies, a cafe/restaurant, and a health room. These community centers should also provide activities that will allow the elders to socialize with people of younger generations. In this way, such centers would play significant roles in reversing the isolation of the elderly that has been a by-product of the dissolution of the extended family in favor of a nuclear family. The surveys conducted as part of this study have shown that we can anticipate wide participation of the aging at such centers.

Data was gathered using a questionnaire survey selected through a stratified random sampling in Istanbul. In the scope of this study, 410 face to face questionnaires have been carried out with elderly people in residential areas, in the districts of Bakırkoy, Kadıkoy and Besiktas. While selecting these samples, questionnaire quota has been applied in proportion with the population of each district and its elderly population. The reason why these districts were selected is the rate of the elderly population in the related areas which is twice as much as the average of Istanbul.