ABSTRACT

Urban growth and speculative housing development on rural areas, especially at urban fringes cause transformation of ownership relations, deterioration of traditional pattern and landscape character. The rapid increase of population in cities necessitates new housing demands and this need is met by peripheral rural lands. This urban development process occurs as urban sprawl through rural areas. Karabağlar is a traditional rural settlement in the vicinity of the town of Muğla and it is registered as third degree natural site. It carries unique vernacular features such as special outstanding landscape components, traditional houses that are part of the typical domestic architecture and ownership pattern that create the cultural heritage. The land-use character is based on agriculture. The misuse of lands, new housing demands of urban residents and secondary housing related with urban growth in Karabağlar resulted in urban pressure on the area. This situation put forth the necessity of ecological and cultural preservation of the lands of Karabağlar settlement against housing speculation. The aim of this paper is to determine the pressure of the urban growth and construction of urban settlement on rural areas and degeneration of traditional pattern in Muğla, Karabağlar in a historical process. The requirement for preservation of rural, agricultural or natural lands, spatial layout and cultural heritage of Karabağlar and sustainability is remarked.

Keywords: Urban Growth, Cultural Heritage, Speculative Housing Development, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

In spite of long urban development period, new housing demands and the need of urban development area, owing to the rapid increase of population has been the cause of a rapid urban growth and urban sprawl. Cities and towns spread into the
surrounding countryside and transformed farms and villages into new housing development areas such that the new houses are constructed amidst fields.

The problems arose from the process of urban growth and rapid urbanization has been key factors for the uncontrolled rent increase on peripheral lands of the cities. In addition, Radeloff et al. (2003) indicates that the housing development and urbanization are key factors for human domination on biodiversity by increasing road density, land-use intensity and recreational activities, also. Related to these factors, some of the settlements at the peripheries of the cities became a transition zone between urban and rural life. Although these rural areas have been a buffer zone for the urban sprawl, they have also obtained a potential of being new urban development area. The villages and farms are linked with cities and towns by forming a landscape of diffused development. Dispersed type of urban development has affected on the land use character of the rural areas, especially the agricultural and protected lands of rural landscape (Maestas et al, 2001). This speculative urban growth has changed the characteristics of the rural settlements in terms of socio-spatial components.

The character of the landscape possesses the quality of landscape, which necessitates the preservation of unique cultural or biological resources and formations (Altman & Wohlwill, 1983). As urbanization spread through countryside, the necessity of protected rural landscapes and controlled urban growth is recognized for the continuity of spatial rural patterns and landscape character. As Qadeer (2002) states, the form of sprawl type of urban development through rural areas may vary depending on the historical settlement pattern and changes from region to region. In this respect, identification of the unique characteristic of the rural settlement according to location and historical process is prominent in order to maintain the sustainability of the area.

Vineyards and farmyards have been the typical examples of traditional rural settlements in Anatolian peninsula for years. When we investigate their main role in human life, we observe that these rural settlements have become places for summer life for urban dwellers since nomadic times till now (Cengizkan, 2002). This kind of lifestyle identifies the formation and characteristics of the traditional rural settlements. The aforementioned urban growth problems are threats for the traditional rural settlements in Turkey in terms of spatial form of the settlements, cultural habits of the inhabitants, lifestyle, open space amenities and ecological formation.

One of the traditional rural settlements under the pressure of urban sprawl is the setting of Karabağlar in Muğla. The aim of this paper is to analyze the urban growth problematic on the rural lands of Karabağlar and to identify the transforming setting in terms of cultural, social and physical changes in historical process. It marks the degeneration of the traditional pattern and interventions to
the spatial layout of the settlement. It focuses on the necessity of preservation of the rural character of the settlement in terms of cultural heritage, socio-spatial amenities, natural landscape and agricultural activities. The paper concludes to remark the importance of sustainable planning of rural settlements.

THE SOCIO-SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF KARABAĞLAR

Karabağlar locates in the vicinity of Muğla town at the southwestern side of Turkey. It is a rural settlement located on a plain closed with mountains in Men-teşe region. It is about 660 km high from the sea level. According to geomorphologic structure, Karabağlar Plain is formed by tectonic and karstik movements. It means that the surface water is moved with underground tunnels and river patterns to the sea (Gökova Bay). Figure 1 shows the location of Karabağlar according to Gökova Bay.

Karabağlar is 4 km away from Muğla on the eastern side separated from Muğla town with Hamursuz Hill. It is surrounded with Düğerek District, Kötekli Village, and Ortaköy Village (Figure 2). Denizli Road separates Karabağlar into two parts by passing through fields of Karabağlar.

Figure 1. The Location of Karabağlar Reference to Gökova Bay

Karabağlar is rural settlement where the agriculture has been the source of life for years. The socio-spatial and cultural formation and traditional pattern gives a rural character; however it can be accepted as countryside more than a village because of its spatial layout. The agricultural production is the main economic
activity at self-sufficient level. The seasonal migration is the cyclical activity happens in both winter and summer as the outcome of economic conditions favoring the accumulation of livestock and food supply (Cribb, 1991).

**Figure 2.** Karabağlar and The Surrounding Villages. Source: Adapted and Redrawn from the Conservation Oriented Development Plan (Municipality of Muğla, 2003).

**Figure 3.** Panoramic Views of Karabağlar Landscape
Population of Karabağlar is approximately 4,000 and the house stock is determined as 1,175 by Muğla State Institute of Statistics. It is a large plain spreads over an area of 15.5 km² (Figure 3). Although it is a plain geomorphologically, the local inhabitants of the settlement call it as Karabağlar Plateau because of its cool climate. Aran (2000) points out the scattered miniature cubic houses and one- five-acre horticultural flatlands of Karabağlar landscape.

In 1977, Karabağlar was registered as third grade natural site that must be preserved according to its rural character, natural and cultural assets and cultural heritage. In January 2003, Muğla Municipality approved a conservation plan prepared by Dökuz Eylül University, City and Regional Planning Department. The aim of the plan was to regulate the density of summerhouses.

The distinct spatial character of the settlement is based on the domestic architecture and vernacular landscape components such as yurt, irım, kesik, kabalik, düden; and its historical mosques and coffee houses as the focal points. All the components both landscape and architectural are in great unity and harmony that the initial settlers of Karabağlar thought the details of the settlement in order to create their friendly living environment. As Aran (2000) suggests the initial settlement process in Anatolia, the inhabitants of that rural settlement have considered traditional requirements, place and climate factors, sensibility and harmony with nature. Therefore, rural buildings have natural characteristics of representing the inhabitants’ lifestyles and culture. Rural buildings represent the interaction between human behaviors, building and natural environment. We see this interaction and harmony entirely in Karabağlar.

**CHANGING BALANCES IN KARABAĞLAR IN HISTORICAL PROCESS**

Kuban (1995) notices that the cities in Anatolia and the Balkans kept their medieval physiognomy and many of them were fortified until the Pax Ottomana after 15th century. When the cities started to develop outside the walls, the new settlers and the nomads led to transformation of the cities, they settled outside the walls, and new quarters were set up in open lands of rural areas (Tekeli, 1993). This suggestion explains the first settling of Karabağlar outside the Muğla Town fortress (Hisar) that gives its name to the mountain (Hisar or Asar Mountain).

The name *Karabağlar* comes from dense shady black tree structure of the area, which constitutes a dark color and from planted grapes and vineyards. According to Evliya Çelebi, Karabağlar was consisted of vineyards and dark green black trees. He cited 11 thousand vineyards and pattern of roads, which did not get any sunlight inside because of dense and shady trees throughout the road in his travel book after he visited Karabağlar and its surrounding in 1671.
Karabağlar settlement has a characteristic of scattered houses on one-five acre horticultural flatlands. Every 3.000 m²-5.000 m² flatland, which is composed of a field, a well and a house or a wooden hut, is called as yurt. The origin of yurt most probably comes from the circular tent of the nomads, which was the first prototype of residential architecture for Turcoman nomads (Sözen & Eruzun, 1992). According to Kuban (1995), the idea of centrality can be accepted as identical for both the circular tent (yurt) and centrally planned traditional Turkish house. However, we determine that a piece of land with a field, house and a well is identical with nomadic tent (yurt) in Karabağlar. The reason of this different understanding of yurt in Karabağlar may be the public appropriation of the field and house as undivided structure of their social life and culture.

Yurtlar are separated from one another with 1 m - 2 m width and 1.5 m - 2 m high trees and shrubs on a soil heap, which is called kesik (Koca, 2004). The trees and shrubs on the kesikler growing on the corners of yurtlar are called kabalık. Rainwater that comes from yurt and kesikler is collected in the space between kesikler called as irım. Irımler are used as road to cross from one yurt to another as well as providing drainage (Figure 4). The excess water that sometimes causes flooding in Karabağlar is also drained by well-like geological formations called düdenler. These wells are then connected to long underground tunnels that help carry the water to the sea.

According to the information derived from wakf documents, most of the traditional buildings in Karabağlar were constructed at the beginning of 19th century and some of them are estimated to be constructed before 19th century. The most well known example to the 19th century buildings in Karabağlar are coffee houses and small masques. Most of them are registered as the example of civilian architecture. Nineteen coffee houses in Karabağlar have engendered a traditional life among the residents by clustering yurtlar around themselves. These coffee houses also determined the name of neighborhood area in which coffee houses were located. Service buildings are assembled around these coffee houses, too. Monumental plane trees that specified the location of coffee houses is another characteristic of the settlement. Most of them are more than 1000 years old today.

The yurts are the main structural component of Karabağlar, which are located side by side and around coffee houses. Houses in every yurt are located at the corner of the lands to benefit from the farmland in the best way. The traditional houses of Karabağlar, all of one are the example of domestic architecture has similar introverted plan characteristics of the traditional Muğla houses (Tekeli, 1993) (Figure 5). The initial buildings were called as shelters between 17th and 19th century because these one-storey buildings were composed of one or two rooms and made of wood. Kuban (1995) explains the evolution of shelter (the nomadic yurt) to a house and the gradual increase in the building density as the work of centuries.
Figure 4. Irimler and Kesikler

Figure 5. Examples of Traditional Houses in Karabağlar.
Karabağlar is a specific example to the changing land-society and ownership relations after the first settlement movements of Turcoman nomads. The politics of Ottoman Empire, changing habits in agricultural production, the life styles of new comers, and technological developments in the period of Republic and then speculative housing developments have been effective on the restructuring of the ownership pattern of Karabağlar in about 3000 years period. Since 15th century, we witness the negative effects of transformation of possession into ownership as the deterioration of *irim* and *kesik*, abandonment of agricultural production, identification of ownership boundaries, new changes that enhance the value of private ownership, but do not conform to traditional pattern.

In Analytic Study of Muğla-Karabağlar Urban and Natural Site (2002), the initial settlement process is considered that Turcoman nomads, living near Kütahya, move to southern part of Anatolia because of drought after the settlements of Turks in Anatolia. However, Cribb (1991) clarifies the adjustment of nomadic pastoralizm to sedentary settlement as the order seeking of political power more than an ecological balance, therefore the sedentary settlement movements starts in the 17th century. They first settle down in Menteşe region. Some of them settle down at the skirts of the mountain situated in the north of Karabağlar and Düğerek. Then, they move toward the shady and dense vegetated Karabağlar and settled in. As a result of sedentary movements, some complex of buildings (mosque, fountain, small mosque) was constructed by foundations. At the end of 19th century, coffee houses were constructed as common spaces in order to serve travelers with camels who provided transportation of agricultural production.

In 19th century, we see private ownerships as independent small farm managements that are accepted as the basis of Land Edict (*Arazi Kanunnamesi*) of 1858. This legislation indented to prevent transformation of lands into farmstead of some certain influential persons; however, it could not be able to prevent emergence of some warriors granted with a fief (*tumarlı sipahi*) as powerful landowners in rural areas of Muğla and its neighborhood. It is clear that the ownership pattern of 19th century lands and the products gained from these fields guaranteed capital accumulation to powerful landowner families (Tekeli, 1993).

At the end of 19th century and at the beginning of 20th century, tobacco plantation was seen in Karabağlar. Although plantation of tobacco was not the job of Turks, it is known that they planted it because of the demands of English market. According to Keyder and Tabak (1998), the property right is exchanged from *ayanlar* (provincial notables) to nomads. *Ayanlar* bought the small agricultural enterprises in order to establish large farmsteads. The nomads were the basic farmers who provide the agricultural production of 19th century and *ayanlar* were employing the nomads from Aegean islands, nomadic tribes and migrants who came from east Anatolia. Lands were given to the nomads in order to make...
them settled but they were working for *ayanlar* at first. Nevertheless, the nomads hedged their land boundaries and got the property rights of these lands later. With the transformation of state owned lands into private ownership, powerful landowners became richer with their land incomes.

We see the negative effects of tobacco plantation on the ownership pattern evidently in terms of changing habits and spatial organization. The tobacco yeomen brought workers from near villages in order to meet their accommodation needs; they built stone houses that do not suit the traditional building structure of Karabağlar. These one-storey houses have flat roofs and extend through the road. They were enclosed with walls. Tobacco yeomen bought more than one *yurt* and they joined them under an ownership. Owing to tobacco production, firstly, the vineyards disappeared, and then the sizes of the *yurtlar* enlarged (Sapmaz, 1996).

At the beginning of 20th century, the lands of Karabağlar subdivided and their owners changed. After 1923, the property rights of large farmsteads are transferred from yeomen to local residents.

Technological developments were another factor that affected ownership relations in Muğla. In 1900s, the plow was started to be used instead of primitive plow; later in 1950s, we see the first use of tractor and other vehicles in the fields of Muğla. At the end of 1960s, the pace of technological improvements speed up the transportation developments and at the end of 1970s, the automobiles entered into Karabağlar life. Autobuses started their tours in Karabağlar. Roads were filled with material and heightened in order to avoid from the drainage water. However, this intervention resulted in the damage of drainage system linked with *irimler*.

In 1970s, the emergence of new professions resulted in the change of socio-economic life in Karabağlar. New generation preferred to live in the city entirely so some of them let *yurtlar* take care of themselves and some of them sold their *yurtlar* to new comers who were part of a different culture and social life. These new comers changed the elements of their built and natural environment by trimming kesikler, widening *irimler* and enclosure of their ownership with wire or wooden fences and stonewall. Some of them preferred to build huge and showy village houses by demolishing unpretentious, naturally well-adjusted traditional houses. This exchange of ownership has been the most important factor that damages the natural character of the settlement.

After the second half of 1950s, the popularity of sea holidays, holiday villages and coastal settlements turned into summerhouse tourism by turning towards inside regions and plateaus (Cengizkan, 2002). In addition, the crowdedness in coastal settlements directed people towards rural life again. At the beginning of 1980s, when the secondary house ownership became the indication of richness,
high-income groups of the cities started to buy yurtlar from Karabağlar. These groups were not in trouble of agricultural production, they transformed the fields into hobby gardens and large grass areas replaced the traditional courtyards. Recreational facilities related to secondary houses have changed the land use character of the settlement.

Since 19th century until now, we see how the speculative alterations related to urban growth have transformed the ownership relations in Karabağlar. Today, speculative housing development over rural areas rising with secondary housing is a reason lying behind the diminishing of farmlands in Karabağlar. In addition, the demands for secondary house ownership of city-dwellers cause the rise of the number of residential units on farmlands. The increase of population and inadequate dwelling units in city causes sprawl of the city through Karabağlar. However, the cultural organization on a specific geography and the organization of spaces according to lifestyles are the values should be preserved in order to provide the continuity of initial character of the Karabağlar settlement.

CONCLUSION

Urbanization, housing development, modernization have transformed the overall rural character and pattern of the vernacular settlements. Within this transformation, the socio-cultural changes in addition physical changes have modified the vernacular form of the rural settlements. These uncharacteristic spatial attributes contradicting with the existing traditional pattern brought the conservation problematic of rural character to the consideration. Because of the countryside concept, we see a special concern on conservation of rural landscape especially in England. There are noteworthy researches on this subject and conservation organizations and groups, which determine the planning objectives and policies in England and America.

In terms of planning and design objectives for conservation of rural character Cloke (1983) defines conservation aim of ‘villages of special overall character as follows: “The conservation and enhancement of general character and appearance would be the primary planning objective. In general, new development would be restricted to minor infilling and, in any event, would be required to be of a high standard of design, in sympathy with the existing village character” (Cloke, 1983).

Gilbert (1971) suggests that rural hinterlands would continue to be farmed; however, in order to secure farmlands from recreational pressures. The rural areas should not be turned into empty wilderness. He claims that the aim of conservation should be to isolate beauty of rural, to provide the remoteness and high visual quality of farmlands.
According to Harvey and Works (2002), exurban developments and hobby farming are arising problems of urban growth. Land-use changes in rural areas concerning urban and rural residents’ suggestions are regarding urban growth boundary. Urban Growth Boundaries function as transitional landscape like greenbelts and they prevent spread of sub-urbanization outside of boundaries. Weller (1967) states the necessity of greenbelts for definition of rural and urban boundaries, especially to have a clear division between recreational and farm lands. These greenbelts may be agricultural or recreational in character.

Most of the countries solved the problem of aforementioned land use contradictions with incentives like tax reduction/exemption and land-use controls like purchase and transfer of development rights and zoning procedure. However, the conservation of rural character stands as the main problematic statement for the conservation policies.

The physical and ecological landscape of rural areas acquires socio-economic-cultural characters with land-society relations and settlement movements. Rural settlements shelter agricultural lands, historical buildings and environments that have symbolic meanings and they reflect the social preferences and admirations of the inhabitants. In Karabağlar, there are various reasons of urban expansion, but the physically the proximity of Karabağlar to the urban area has been effective for urban growth. The main features that strength uniqueness of Karabağlar are the ownership pattern consisted of private ownerships, specific road network, traditional houses, variety of vegetation, high water table, self-sufficient agricultural production, intimate relationship of residents and their traditions. However, the rural settlement is in the course of transition into an urban residential settlement of Muğla. Speculative urban growth, changing ownership pattern and cultural habits, misuse of lands, second house demands of urban residents in Karabağlar resulted in urban encroachment on the area. The spatial layout and socio-cultural context is changing day by day. The landscape of Karabağlar offers a wide variety of functions as well as a unique cultural phenomenon. In this respect, the sustainability of rural character and cultural heritage gains importance in terms of preventing disappearance of the socio-cultural and spatial assets of the rural site areas. Sustainable development can be achieved with balance between utilization and preservation. Therefore, there should be conservation planning and design policies related to special rural areas and settlements management and their sustainable use.
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