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Ph.D. Thesis

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HOUSING CULTURE OF *YİLLİ* IN
KAYSERİ:
A HABITUS-BASED STUDY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
AND THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE
OF ABDULLAH GUL UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
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ABSTRACT

HOUSING CULTURE OF *YILLİ* IN KAYSERİ:
A HABITUS-BASED STUDY

Nihan Muş Özmen

Ph.D. in ARCHITECTURE

Advisor: Prof. Burak Asiliskender

July 2025

This study explores the spatial practices of the *yilli* (local) community in Kayseri through the perspective of identity and belonging, focusing on how housing shapes urban affiliation and social identity. Rather than treating housing as a purely physical structure, it is approached as a spatial framework through which cultural continuity, social ties, and a sense of belonging are materially articulated. The analysis adopts a multi-scalar approach—from the city level to the interior of the house—examining how *yilli* families organise domestic space according to culturally inherited dispositions.

Grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, the study investigates how historically shaped practices and values are embedded in everyday spatial arrangements. In this framework, *being yilli* is not simply defined by genealogy or neighbourhood origin. Still, it emerges as a socially situated identity, reproduced through housing choices, neighbourhood affiliation, and intergenerational cultural transmission. These dynamics manifest in daily routines, privacy norms, and aesthetic preferences.

Methodologically, the research relies on qualitative tools such as oral history, ethnographic observation, spatial mapping, and thematic analysis. Interviews with participants from multiple generations reveal how the shift from traditional houses to modern apartments reflects adaptation and cultural persistence. These transformations are interpreted not as technical changes, but as socially embedded processes.

The study offers a culturally grounded framework for understanding how locality, identity, and urban memory are reproduced through housing within broader urban transformation processes.

Keywords: Architecture and Identity, Urban Memory and Identity, Space and Culture, Spatial Practices and Habitus, Housing Culture in Kayseri

ÖZET

KAYSERİ’NİN ‘*YILLI*’LERİNİN KONUT KÜLTÜRÜ:
HABITUS TEMELLİ BİR ÇALIŞMA

Nihan Muş Özmen

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Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Burak Asiliskender

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Bu çalışma, Kayseri’deki *yilli* (yerli) topluluğunun mekânsal pratiklerini kimlik ve aidiyet perspektifinden ele almakta; konutun kentsel aidiyet ve toplumsal kimliği nasıl şekillendirdiğine odaklanmaktadır. Konut, yalnızca fiziksel bir yapı olarak değil; kültürel sürekliliğin, toplumsal bağların ve aidiyet duygusunun maddi olarak ifade bulduğu bir mekânsal çerçeve olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Analiz, kent ölçeğinden evin iç mekânına kadar uzanan çok ölçekli bir yaklaşım benimseyerek, *yilli* ailelerin ev içi mekânı kültürel olarak miras alınmış eğilimlere göre nasıl düzenlediklerini incelemektedir.

Pierre Bourdieu’nün *habitus* kavramına dayanan bu kuramsal çerçevede, tarihsel olarak biçimlenmiş pratik ve değerlerin gündelik mekânsal düzenlemelere nasıl gömüldüğü araştırılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda *yilli* olmak, yalnızca soy bağına ya da mahalle kökenine dayanan bir kimlik değil; konut tercihleri, mahalleye aidiyet ve kuşaklar arası kültürel aktarım yoluyla yeniden üretilen toplumsal olarak konumlanmış bir kimlik biçimi olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu dinamikler, gündelik rutinlerde, mahremiyet anlayışında ve estetik tercihlerde somutlaşmaktadır.

Çalışma, sözlü tarih, etnografik gözlem, mekânsal haritalama ve tematik analiz gibi nitel yöntemlere dayanmaktadır. Farklı kuşaklardan katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmeler, geleneksel evlerden modern apartmanlara geçişin hem bir uyum sürecini hem de kültürel sürekliliği yansıttığını göstermektedir. Bu dönüşümler, teknik değişiklikler olarak değil, toplumsal olarak gömülü süreçler olarak yorumlanmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma yerellik, kimlik ve kentsel belleğin, daha geniş bir kentsel dönüşüm süreci içinde, konut aracılığıyla nasıl yeniden üretildiğini anlamaya yönelik kültürel temelli bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Mimarlık ve Kimlik, Kentsel Hafıza ve Kimlik, Mekân ve Kültür; Mekânsal Pratikler ve Habitus, Kayseri’de Konut Kültürü

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This thesis is not only the result of academic effort, but also of the many forms of care, patience, and belief I received along the way.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I_1	Interviewee 1
I_2	Interviewee 2
I_3	Interviewee 3
I_4	Interviewee 4
I_5	Interviewee 5
I_6	Interviewee 6
I_7	Interviewee 7
I_8	Interviewee 8
I_9	Interviewee 9
I_10	Interviewee 10
I_11	Interviewee 11
I_12	Interviewee 12
I_13	Interviewee 13
I_14	Interviewee 14
I_15	Interviewee 15
I_16	Interviewee 16
I_17	Interviewee 17
I_18	Interviewee 18
I_19	Interviewee 19
I_20	Interviewee 20
I_21	Interviewee 21
I_22	Interviewee 22
I_23	Interviewee 23
I_24	Interviewee 24
I_25	Interviewee 25
I_26	Interviewee 26
I_27	Interviewee 27
I_28	Interviewee 28
I_29	Interviewee 29
I_30	Interviewee 30



For my beloved daughter,

*this work is dedicated to you—
for the early years we shared while I was often consumed by work,
in days overflowing with love yet shadowed by long to-do lists.*

*Thank you for your quiet strength, your
patience, and your unwavering love.*

Chapter 1

Introduction

Seyran, Anadolu Sarayı, Ferda-Sema, Tuğba, Mimoza, Ahenk...

These weren't the names of toys or imaginary heroes from my childhood. They were the names of apartment buildings lining Sivas Street.

As a child, I would sit by the window in my grandmother's house, overlooking the street, and immerse myself in a game she had invented. The rules were simple: starting from the corner—once home to a stadium—I would recite the names of the buildings one by one, all the way to the far end, and then repeat them in reverse order. Sometimes I would lose track or confuse the names, but the sense of familiarity with the street never faded.

Just as Sivas Street holds a deep place in Kayseri's collective memory, it also occupies a significant place in mine. For some, it was a path of youthful strolls; for others, it was the setting for first loves and encounters. For me, it was the stage of childhood. The faces I passed, the shop windows, the wide sidewalks, the buildings, the signs—each became a memory etched in time.

Years passed, and the city changed. A shopping mall replaced the stadium, building facades were renovated, and some names vanished altogether. Yet, the mark left by that simple game in my young mind remained. Looking back, I realise I wasn't just memorising names—I was, unknowingly, learning the language of the city, learning to read its memory. Every building, every street corner, told a story.

That is why I began this project. What started as a simple curiosity about a street grew into a deeper interest in the city's past, its ways of life, and the personal connections people have with places. My bond with Sivas Street was, in fact, my first real expression of belonging to Kayseri. Therefore, this work is not just about one street; it is an effort to trace the city's memory and everyday culture through the lens of that street.

Sometimes, the most personal stories hold the keys to collective memories.

With its deep-rooted history, Kayseri came under the influence of modernisation through investments made during the Republican era and underwent a rapid urbanisation process in the 20th century. The intense rural-to-urban migration in Turkey after 1950 also profoundly impacted the city. Particularly from the 1970s onwards, the rise in private sector investments led to new regulations addressing urban needs.

As the city rapidly expanded in the 20th century, it underwent demographic and spatial changes and transformed its social structure. This process accentuated the distinction between locals and newcomers, with long-time residents perceiving themselves as privileged and distancing themselves from the newly arrived. The sense of privilege derived from having lived in the city centre for many years transformed urban belonging into a marker of spatial status. While ‘being local’ came to signify a deep-rooted history, those migrating from rural areas were labelled as ‘villagers.’ Thus, a distinct social boundary emerged between the ‘locals’ and the ‘others’ in the city.

The primary motivation of this research is to examine the relationship between the city and housing through the concept of local identity and to analyse the transformation of spatial practices within the framework of social belonging. As someone born in Kayseri, raised in a family of locals, and having long-term interactions with them, my observations on the city’s spatial and socio-cultural dynamics have underscored the necessity of conducting this study.

Local identity can be seen as a dynamic phenomenon extending beyond lineage, continuously reproduced through urban space, housing preferences, and social structures. In the context of Kayseri, this concept encompasses a wide range of spatial practices, from traditional housing typologies to modern urbanisation processes. The accelerating trend of *apartmentisation*, transformations in residential areas, and increasing urban segregation in recent years make it essential to understand how local identity is reconstructed through space.

Both academic and personal factors drive my motivation for conducting this research. My interest in this study stems from a curiosity to understand the city’s social dynamics and their influence on the broader social structure. Kayseri’s cultural fabric, historical processes, and everyday life practices have always been aspects I have reflected on and sought to interpret. The concept of ‘being local’ is not merely a matter of spatial positioning; it represents a form of belonging shaped by social, cultural, and economic habits passed down through generations. This local identity primarily defines social

relationships and norms in the city, making it a key factor in determining individuals' social positions. Observing how this identification shapes my interactions with locals has further strengthened my motivation to undertake this research. Therefore, this study is an academic endeavour and part of a deeper search for meaning in the city where I was born and raised.

This research explores the interaction between urban space and identity through an interdisciplinary approach, combining personal observations with scientific methods. It examines the housing preferences, spatial practices, and sense of belonging of Kayseri's locals within the city's historical continuity. The primary aim of this study is to uncover the relationship between spatial arrangements and usage patterns through French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of urban identity.

Research Gap, Importance of the Topic, and Original Value

There are several important reasons for focusing on Kayseri in this study. Firstly, Kayseri is a city with a strong local culture, and its urban identity has largely been shaped within this cultural framework. This dominant local culture, which significantly influences the city, extends beyond spatial belonging in Kayseri; it is deeply intertwined with social relationships, economic structures, and cultural practices. Therefore, examining housing culture in the context of Kayseri is crucial for understanding physical spaces and exploring how these spaces acquire meaning and shape social relationships.

Kayseri is one of the cities in Turkey that has deeply experienced industrialisation, migration, and modernisation processes. Particularly in the post-Republican period, the growth of industry and commerce significantly transformed the city's spatial and social structure. In this transformation, how locals' housing practices and their position within the urban space have evolved is an area of interest: *How does the influence of local identity on housing perception persist?* Answering these questions is essential for understanding the relationship between space and identity in Kayseri and contributes valuable insights for conceptualising similar processes in other cities across Turkey.

Studies on the concept of 'being local' in Kayseri have generally focused on the city's historical and economic structures. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the spatial mobility of locals, their distribution within the city, and the impact of these processes on identity formation. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by analysing the spatial belonging of local families in Kayseri. Specifically, it will explore how locals have spread across different parts of the city over time and how these

movements intersect with urbanisation processes, making it one of the distinctive aspects of this research.

The unique value of this study lies in its ability to explore the relationship between space, identity, and social belonging by focusing specifically on the housing culture of Kayseri locals. Previous studies have examined Kayseri's overall urban identity or focused on housing. However, there is no direct study on how locals' relationship with their houses is shaped or how it integrates with the broader social structure. Therefore, this research offers a fresh perspective by revealing how local identity in Kayseri is reproduced through housing and its spatial manifestations.

Scope of the Study

Throughout its history, Kayseri has maintained its identity as a city while remaining one of the major trade centres. The dynamic nature of commerce has allowed various groups to coexist, shaping the city's social relationships through multiple factors. The concept of provincialism has largely influenced the daily life practices of its residents.

With modernisation, Kayseri, confronted with the concept of a modern city, has experienced a conflict and confusion between provincial and modern urban cultures. As Kayseri residents began to access the opportunities offered by the modern city, they developed various improvisations, balancing traditional habits with modern practices while trying to meet the demands of this new way of life.

With the influence of migration movements that began during this process, a sense of belonging to the city became a privilege for those who had lived in Kayseri for a long time. This situation created a distinction between long-time city residents and newcomers, emerging as a 'local-villager' comparison. Long-time residents identified themselves as 'locals,' while newcomers from rural areas were labelled as 'villagers.'

The Turkish Language Association (TDK) defines the term "yerli" as "a resident of a place, autochthonous", and "someone born and raised in the area they reside in, with ancestors who also lived there."¹ The word "yerli" originates from the Old Turkish word "yér," meaning "earth, world, ground," and is formed by adding the suffix "-li," which denotes belonging or association with a place. Thus, "yerli" signifies a connection to or rootedness in a specific location.²

This community, which maintains a strong connection with the urban space, identifies itself as "yerli" due to their deep sense of belonging to the city. Throughout this

¹ <https://sozluk.gov.tr/?ara=yerli>

² <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/yer>

study, the meaning of “yerlilik” (being local) and its English equivalent have been continuously examined. In this context, two key terms have emerged: *local* and *native*.

One of the English equivalents of the word “yerli” is “local,” which primarily relates to location. Derived from the Latin word “locus” (Old Latin “stlocus”), it conveys meanings such as “a place, point, designated position, location, or region.”³ In this context, “local” aligns with “yerli” in both usage and implies a strong connection to a specific place.

“Native” means “natural, innate, hereditary, or inherently connected to something.” It originates from Old French *natif* (“native, born, raw, unaltered,” 14th century) and directly from Latin *nativus* (“innate, produced by birth”). This word derives from the root “natus” and is associated with the Latin verbs “nasci” (Old Latin “gnasci,” meaning “to be born”) and “gignere” (“to bring into the world”).⁴ Since “native” is closely linked to birth, it defines nativeness primarily through kinship ties and native language. This concept, which refers to a community that speaks the language of the people they are born into, is strongly connected to ancestral belonging. From this perspective, the concept of “native” shares similarities with Kayseri locals, particularly regarding their distinctive language use and strong family ties.

Although both words refer to the concept of locality from different perspectives, the notion of locality in Kayseri is primarily defined through a spatial context, making it more closely associated with the term “local.” However, caution has been exercised in using this term due to its potential confusion with the concept of vernacularity.

In Kayseri, locality serves as a distinct identity marker. The word, pronounced “*yilli*” in the local dialect, has gradually evolved into a term that signifies local identity. Anyone hearing the word “*yilli*” in Kayseri can immediately recognise that it refers to the city’s local people. Therefore, while the concept of locality corresponds to it in English, the term “*yilli*” has been preferred over “local” to preserve its unique cultural significance.

Kayseri’s locals, or “*yilli*” as they call themselves, are a community whose roots trace back to the oldest neighbourhoods within and around the city walls, and they consider themselves the true owners of the city. Being born in Kayseri alone is not enough to be considered “*yilli*”; one’s roots must be traced back to the city centre. For instance, a person from a family that has lived in Kayseri for generations would not be considered “*yilli*” if they were born in one of the city’s districts rather than the city centre. Similarly,

³ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=local>, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/locus>

⁴ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/native>

individuals who have lived in the city centre for many years but whose family roots are from a district are not granted “*yilli*” status. Only those whose families have lived in the city centre for generations and are connected to it through ancestral ties are considered “*yilli*.” To emphasise this sense of belonging, they often mention their family names and the neighbourhoods they come from when introducing themselves.

The phenomenon of locality in Kayseri, with its spatial, cultural, and economic dimensions, highlights the class differences within the city, creating a distinction between the locals and others. This distinction plays a significant role in marriage, commerce, and social relationships, while also shaping Kayseri’s unique social structure and identity. Locality forms the foundation of the city’s economic and social networks, with the locals often maintaining their existence as a closed community. This situation has ensured the preservation of cultural values and fostered a strong network of solidarity within social relationships.

This study approaches culture as a way of life, focusing on understanding the lifestyles, values, norms, and rituals of social groups. Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* is deeply connected to culture and offers a broad framework that encompasses individuals’ lifestyles and the behavioural patterns shaped within it. In this context, the concept of *habitus* serves as an essential tool for analysing the spatial reflections of lifestyles, particularly in everyday life areas such as housing culture. The concept of *habitus* pertains to how individuals internalise the tendencies, habits, values, and ways of thinking acquired within society. These dispositions guide individuals’ social actions, while culture shapes this system of actions and values within a broader societal framework.

Culture determines our way of life, and its traces can be found in the spaces we inhabit. Culture also influences architecture, with housing spaces—where people most reflect their identities and habits—harbouring cultural elements. The way housing spaces are shaped, the neighbourhoods people prefer, and how these neighbourhoods have evolved offer valuable insights into the city’s socio-economic structure. Additionally, this analysis contributes to our understanding of Kayseri’s urban transformation process and the dynamics of modernisation.

Influenced by capitalist production systems, which have led to the standardisation of housing structures, this study focuses on the spatial practices associated with the unique lifestyle culture of Kayseri locals. By exploring the logic behind common and unconscious practices within houses, it aims to uncover the tangible traces of the *yilli*

habitus. In this context, the relationship between Kayseri's *yilli* culture and housing architecture will be analysed through the framework of the *habitus* concept.

Research Question and Theoretical Framework

This research is based on two fundamental concepts: culture and housing. Culture shapes individuals and society, determining our behaviours and way of life. On the other hand, housing serves as the fundamental living space for individuals and a reflection of their lifestyle. The way we use a house, furnish it, socialise within it, and even whether we take off our shoes when entering, are all influenced by our cultural habits. This study focuses on *housing culture*, where culture and housing coexist, allowing the traces of culture to be most clearly observed. In this regard, the research question centres around: 'What is the relationship between culture and housing, and how do individuals, whose lifestyles are shaped by culture, organise their living spaces and reflect themselves within them?' This study aims to explore how culture materialises in housing spaces.

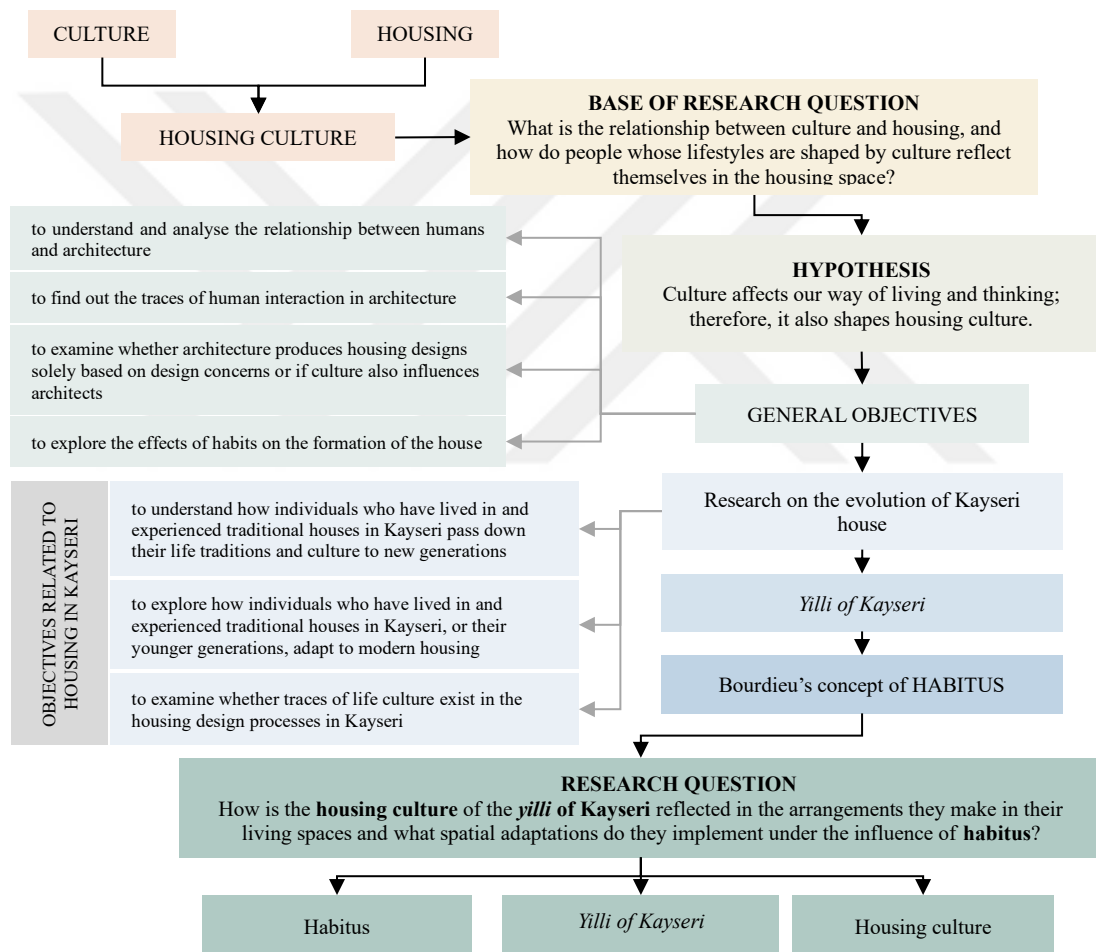
This study hypothesises that culture shapes individuals' ways of thinking and living, influencing housing culture. The research aims to trace cultural traces in housing spaces, analyse the relationship between humans and architecture, and explore how human interaction shapes architectural design. It also examines whether housing design is driven solely by aesthetics and function or if culture plays a role. Additionally, the study investigates the impact of habits on the formation of housing spaces.

The relationship between housing spaces and culture is a broad topic. Therefore, this research narrows its focus to Kayseri, specifically examining the transition from traditional to modern housing within the city's cultural context. The main objectives of the study are: to understand how individuals who lived in traditional houses in Kayseri passed down their living traditions and culture; to explore how these individuals or their descendants adapted to modern housing; and to analyse the traces of living culture in the housing design processes in Kayseri.

Individuals who lived in traditional houses in Kayseri are generally part of the community known as the *yilli* of Kayseri. Therefore, rather than conducting a general study of Kayseri, this research focuses on this group, which has experienced traditional housing, held the dominant culture of the city, and today, continues to influence the urban and housing spaces. Focusing on this community enables a more unique and in-depth examination, while also being essential for understanding the dominant cultural structure of the city.

Since conducting research based on the study's hypothesis requires a comprehensive approach to culture, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* has been adopted as the framework. The traditional houses of the *yilli* of Kayseri, shaped by the influence of a dominant culture, make the concept of *habitus* an invaluable analytical tool for this research (Table 1.1). As a result, the main research question is framed as follows: "How is the **housing culture** of the ***yilli* of Kayseri** reflected in the arrangements they make in their living spaces and what spatial adaptations do they implement under the influence of *habitus*?"

Table 1.1 Research map



Under the research question, the objectives of the thesis have been classified into the following categories: urban distribution and development, housing morphology and transformation, social and cultural habits and spatial experiences, and consumption and living space (Table 1.2). These objectives aim to examine the relationship between *habitus*, housing culture, and spatial organisation within the context of the *yilli* of Kayseri.

Table 1.2 Research objectives of the thesis

Urban Distribution & Development	Housing Morphology & Transformation	Social and Cultural Habits & Spatial Experiences	Consumption & Living Space
to analyse how the neighbourhoods of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri are distributed within the city and to examine whether this distribution affects urban development	to identify the morphological characteristics of the houses of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri, including size, room layout, and space usage, and to assess how these features have evolved over time	to examine the relationship between the cultural habits of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri and their spatial experiences	to explore the consumption habits of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri and how these habits shape their living spaces, including furniture choices, decoration preferences, and furniture usage
	to investigate whether the morphological characteristics of the houses currently inhabited by <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri are influenced by the traditional “Kayseri House”	to analyse how <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri shape their housing space under the influence of habitus and identify the adaptations they make	to determine whether the furniture preferences of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri result from cultural imposition and transmission or if they adopt different solutions to align with their own lifestyles and tastes
	to explore the impact of living culture on the morphological characteristics of contemporary houses inhabited by <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri	to investigate the socialization practices of <i>yilli</i> of Kayseri within their homes	

Literature

This study aims not only to examine the formal changes in the city from a housing-centred perspective throughout its historical process but also to explore the social, economic, and political dynamics that shape these transformations. By approaching architecture not just as a physical structure but also as a cultural and ideological expression, the study highlights how it is influenced by the city’s identity and sense of belonging.

This approach aligns with the method used by Sibel Bozdoğan in *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (2001). Bozdoğan, while exploring the architectural culture of Republican-era Turkey, argues that architecture is not just a matter of form but a multifaceted phenomenon that includes political and social dimensions. In examining modernisation, she considers newly constructed buildings and the broader context, extending from everyday life to political ideologies. Similarly, this study examines Kayseri’s housing culture, focusing on spatial forms and the social dynamics that shape these structures. Approaching architecture through the lens of urban identity and social belonging offers a deeper understanding of Kayseri’s transformation.

Understanding the housing culture of a city goes beyond examining the formal transformation of buildings. The methods of constructing houses, their priorities, and their

positions within the urban context offer important clues for understanding the city's identity and social structure. Cengiz Bektaş's *Türk Evi* [*Turkish House*] (2013) adopts a similar approach by exploring the evolution of housing culture in Anatolia. Bektaş emphasises the importance of designing structures that are harmonious with nature, flexible, and human-scaled. Hülya and Ferhan Yürekli's *Türk Evi: Gözlemler – Yorumlar* [*Turkish House: A Concise Re-evaluation*] (2005) examines the architectural features of the Turkish house and its relevance in contemporary times. Küçükerman's *Kendi Mekânının Arayışı İçinde Türk Evi* [*Turkish House: In Search of Spatial Identity*] (2007) focuses on the spatial organisation of the Turkish house, highlighting sustainable architecture principles. This study, inspired by these approaches, narrows the concept of the Turkish house to examine the unique spatial and cultural elements of the Kayseri house. A similar anthropological sensitivity is found in Amos Rapoport's work, especially in *House Form and Culture* (1969), where he argues that the built environment is primarily shaped not by function or technology, but by cultural factors. For Rapoport, house form emerges from systems of meaning, belief, and social organisation rather than abstract formal considerations. By framing domestic space as a cultural expression rather than a neutral container, this study aligns with Rapoport's broader call to interpret built forms through the socio-cultural logics that produce and sustain them. While drawing on broader assumptions about the Turkish house, this research seeks to make a new contribution by focusing on the distinctive aspects of the Kayseri house, such as its positioning within the city and its impact on social life. By building on the theoretical frameworks provided by existing studies, this study offers an in-depth evaluation specifically in the context of Kayseri.

Öncel's work, *Apartman: Galata'da Yeni Bir Konut Tipi* [*Apartment: A New Housing Type in Galata*] (2010), discusses the emergence of apartments as symbols of modernity in Istanbul, constructed for the bourgeois class. It offers a historical evaluation by comparing Ottoman housing culture with European lifestyles. It explores the relationship between space and lifestyle by analysing not only the architectural forms of apartments but also factors such as social identity, cultural structure, and economic status. Building on the framework presented by Öncel, this study narrows the focus to the apartment phenomenon in Kayseri, examining the unique aspects of apartmentisation in the city. Utilising existing literature on the historical development of apartments in Turkey, this study investigates how the apartment typology has evolved in Kayseri, intertwines with social and spatial dynamics, and interacts with the city's identity. By

evaluating the apartment not only as a housing form but also as a significant factor in urbanisation, social change, and settlement habits, this study makes a unique contribution to the literature, specifically focusing on Kayseri.

In his book *Haneden Ev Haline: 'Türk Evi'nde Mimari, Düzenleme, Pratik [From Household to Home State: Architecture, Arrangement, and Practice in 'Turkish House']* (2021), Seyhan Kurt views the house not just as an architectural form but as a living space that acquires identity. He argues that the house is more than a physical structure; it is a dynamic entity with memory and cultural meanings. The book explores the social and cultural dimensions of the house, covering topics from spatial organisation to individualisation. This study adopts a similar approach, considering housing not just as a physical space but as one shaped by identity, belonging, and social dynamics. However, unlike Kurt's broader perspective on the Turkish house, this study focuses on the spatial practices specific to the housing culture in Kayseri, including the city's locality and urbanisation. In doing so, it makes a more specific contribution to understanding the transformation of housing as both a physical and social phenomenon.

The relationship between housing and identity extends beyond typology, emerging through social practices and spatial interaction. *Use of Literature in Understanding the Transformation of Domestic Architecture* (Yılmaz, 2018) highlights how domestic space reflects socio-cultural dynamics, showing that literary texts can uncover the symbolic role of the house in shaping identity. In *Çok Katlı Konut Bloklarında Sosyal Yaşam ve Mekân İlişkisinin İncelenmesi: Bursa, Odunluk Bölgesi Örneği [The Relationship of Social Life and Space in Multi-Storey Housing: Bursa, Odunluk Region as a Case]*, Bilir (2020) demonstrates how residential blocks in Bursa reflect consumer culture and reinforce socio-spatial segregation. Similarly, *Planlı Konut Yerleşimlerinde Açık Mekân Kurgusu ile İlişkili Yaşantı Potansiyellerinin İncelenmesi [The Research on the Life Potentials Related to Open Space Organisation in Planned Housing Settlements: The Case of Ataköy]* (Mangut, 2021) shows that the design of shared spaces plays a critical role in shaping collective experiences and a sense of belonging. These findings intersect with *Mekân-Kimlik Etkileşimi [Space-Identity Interaction]* (Güleç Solak, 2017), which draws on phenomenological, socio-psychological, and Marxist theories to explain how belonging, privacy, and appropriation define spatial experience. Finally, *Sosyal İletişim Arayüzü Olarak Kentsel Mekân [Urban Space as a Social Communication Interface]* (Erdönmez & Haznedar, 2012) frames the city as a medium for identity negotiation and social cohesion. Together, these studies support the current research's emphasis on

housing as a socially constructed entity that reflects and produces local identity, forms of belonging, and boundaries between social groups. They also underline the importance of spatial arrangements not merely as design choices, but as cultural signifiers embedded in collective memory and urban experience.

Various studies focused on Kayseri are among the key sources contributing to understanding the city's development and housing, supporting this research. İmamoğlu's work, *Geleneksel Kayseri Evleri [Traditional Dwellings in Kayseri]* (2006), closely examines the traditional houses of the city's wealthy families, detailing their structural characteristics, growth patterns, and interior layouts. While this study is an important resource for understanding the traditional housing typology in Kayseri, it focuses on the social and identity-related dimensions of housing within a more limited framework. Çakıroğlu's thesis, *Kayseri Evleri [Kayseri Houses]* (1952), compares the plans and usage patterns of Kayseri houses with those of vineyard houses. Büyükmihçi's work, *Kayseri'de Yaşam ve Konut Kültürü [Life and House Culture in Kayseri]* (2015), examines traditional Kayseri houses within natural, social, and economic contexts, demonstrating how housing culture has been shaped.

Other studies on the transformation of housing typology in Kayseri also highlight the relationship between urbanisation processes and housing. Demir's work, *Kayseri'de Yerel Konut Mimarisinin Analizi ve Günümüze Etkisi [Analysis of Vernacular Housing Architecture in Kayseri and its Impact on Today]* (1988), examines the city's housing fabric by dividing it into local and new settlements. It emphasises that, while new constructions have developed in line with zoning laws, they have largely lost their local identity. Ateş's work, *Kayseri Sivil Mimarisi'ndeki Değişimler ve Etkenleri [Transformations and Factors in the Domestic Architecture in Kayseri]* (1997), explores the transformations in Kayseri's vernacular architecture since the 19th century, providing a comparative analysis of urban and vineyard houses.

In addition to these studies, Asiliskender's work, *Modernleşme ve Konut: Cumhuriyet'in Sanayi Yatırımları ile Kayseri'de Mekânsal ve Toplumsal Değişim [Modernisation and Housing: Spatial and Social Change in Kayseri by Industrial Enterprises of the Turkish Republic]* (2008), explores the development of a new housing typology in the city alongside industrial investments. Asiliskender, Ceylan, and Tozoğlu's work, *Kayseri'nin Yirminci Yüzyılı: Mimarlık, Kent Tarihi ve Kültürü [The Twentieth Century of Kayseri: Architecture and Urban Culture]* (2012), examines the city's evolving living habits and urban memory from an interdisciplinary perspective, analysing

Kayseri's spatial transformations throughout the 20th century. Özdin's work, *Kayseri'de Modern Konut Örneği Olarak Sıra Düzen Evler* [*Terraced Houses Exemplifying Modern Housing in Kayseri*] (2009), analyses the spatial arrangements of terraced houses built in Kayseri during the modernisation process.

While these studies provide a valuable framework for understanding Kayseri's housing culture, they primarily focus on the physical structures, spatial organisation, and layout of the houses. However, this study differs from previous research by examining housing in Kayseri as a physical shelter and exploring how it is shaped through its relationship with identity, belonging, and social structure. This study reveals the historical continuity and breaking points of Kayseri's housing fabric by comprehensively analysing the role of housing in urban memory, user experiences, connection to social relationships, and spatial practices. It focuses on the meanings that users attribute to space, relocation dynamics, social belonging, and the impact of housing typologies on social structure within the transformation from traditional houses to apartments. In this context, the study aims to contribute to the literature by examining Kayseri's housing culture in terms of physical and architectural changes and within social, cultural, and economic frameworks.

This study's approach to identity, belonging, and space extends beyond formal architectural transformations to encompass the everyday social networks and organisational forms through which individuals construct meaning. In this regard, the concept of *hemşehrilik*—a sense of belonging based on shared geographic origin—is a powerful perspective to examine how traditional ties are reconfigured in modern urban life. In the work *Küreselleşme Çağında Bir Aidiyet Zemini ve Örgütlenme Şekli Olarak Hemşehrilik* [*Fellowship as a Ground of Belonging and a Form of Organisation in the Age of Globalisation*], Köse (2008) interprets *hemşehrilik* as a mechanism of localised identity formation in response to the destabilising effects of globalisation, emphasising its role in creating a sense of rootedness for urban newcomers. Similarly, in *Sosyal Sermayenin Akrabalık, Hemşehrilik ve Güven ile İlişkisi: Konya Sanayi İşletmeleri Örneği* [*The Relationship of Social Capital with Kinship, Fellowship, and Trust: The Case of Industrial Enterprises in Konya*], Topçuoğlu and Eroğlu (2013) position *hemşehrilik* and kinship as key components of social capital in industrial settings, facilitating trust and cohesion in both economic and interpersonal relations. The study *Kentsel Kimlik ve Kentli İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Araştırma* [*A Research on Urban Identity and Citizen Relation*] (Altuğ Turan and Gülgün, 2016) further supports this perspective by showing that users' attachment to urban spaces is often driven by emotional and familial connections rather

than purely functional concerns. These insights directly align with the current study's investigation of Kayseri's housing culture, particularly in its emphasis on how spatial choices reflect and reproduce social identities, local belonging, and the symbolic boundaries between "insiders" and "outsiders."

There have also been social research efforts aimed at understanding Kayseri's cultural fabric and social structure. Gürpınar's thesis, *Kayseri'nin Yerlisi Olmak [Being Indigenous People of Kayseri]* (2018), demonstrates that locality in Kayseri is not merely an inherited identity from the past but a form of belonging that is felt and reproduced within the urban space. While the study addresses housing and space only superficially, it provides valuable insights into how housing is positioned as an indicator of belonging within the traditional neighbourhood structure.

Nacak's work, *Merkezi Taşrada Kurmak [Construction of the Centre in the Provinces]* (2015), examines how Kayseri constructs its provincial identity, focusing on the relationships between city dwellers and outsiders, as well as forms of social interaction. While this study explores social identity through behavioural patterns, it only addresses the impact of spatial and physical transformations on the perception of locality in a limited way. Similarly, Çoruk's work, *Kayseri Esnafının Kent Kimliği Oluşumuna Etkisi [The Impact of Kayseri Tradesmen on the Formation of Urban Identity]* (2009), focuses on the role of tradespeople in shaping Kayseri's urban identity. While the study examines social relationships shaped by trade and tradesmanship, it only indirectly connects housing culture with social belonging.

While existing studies provide a framework for understanding the social belonging structure in Kayseri, they do not directly explore the connection between housing, spatial organisation, user habits, and social identity. This study, however, goes beyond seeing housing as just a physical structure, focusing on it as a space where social identity and belonging are constructed. By examining the continuity and ruptures between traditional and modern housing typologies, it looks at the relationship between housing and urban space in Kayseri through the concept of locality. Additionally, it explores how space gains meaning through social interactions, shedding light on its role in urban memory.

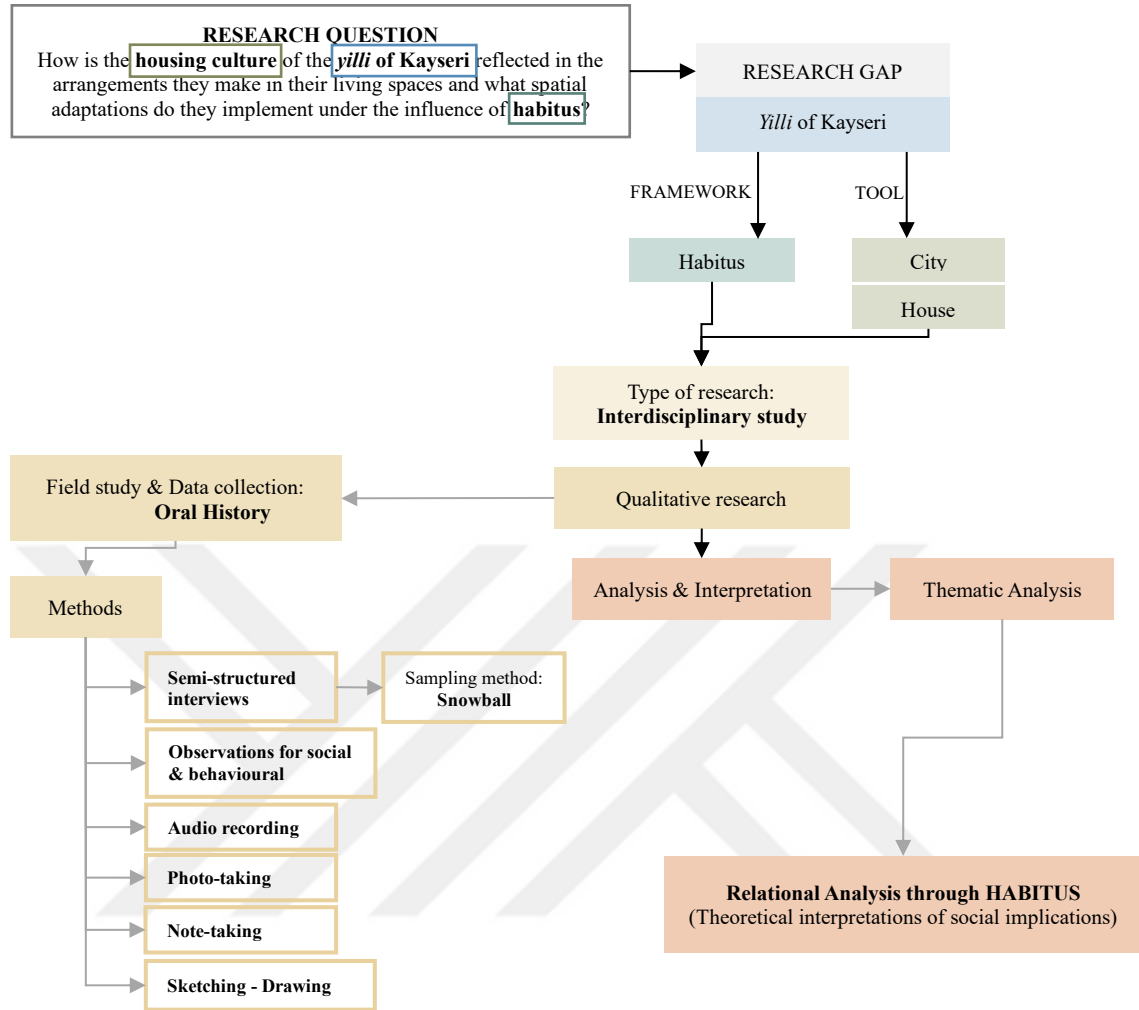
Methodology

Urban studies adopt an interdisciplinary approach to understanding historical and spatial continuity. This approach aims to provide more in-depth analysis by integrating perspectives from various disciplines, promoting a holistic understanding rather than establishing a hierarchy among them (Repko & Szostak, 2017).

This research adopts an **interdisciplinary** approach that combines **architecture** and **sociology**, examining the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri from a holistic perspective. The study focuses on exploring the cultural elements behind the housing structures of the *yilli* and the impact of *habitus* on these structures. It aims to analyse the spatial morphology and usage patterns of housing while examining the relationship between spatial arrangements, individuals' preferences, and consumption habits. Within the framework of the *habitus* concept, both **the city** and **the house** are used as tools to understand social dynamics, providing a comprehensive analysis supported by written sources, maps, archival documents, and oral narratives (Table 1.3).

Within this scope, the study is structured around three main themes: *habitus*, *yilli of Kayseri*, and **housing culture**. First, the concepts of culture and *habitus* are explained, detailing Bourdieu's *habitus* theory and examining its relationship with architecture. Next, the *yilli* of Kayseri, who form the research focus, are analysed within the context of identity. The identity relationship that the *yilli* establish with the city is evaluated in connection with the perceived image of a *Kayserian*, and their cultural characteristics, customs, forms of socialisation, and daily life practices are examined through a comprehensive analysis. In the housing culture section, the relationship that the *yilli* establish with space is detailed, following a process that extends from the urban scale to the interior of the house and furniture design. The relationship between the *yilli* and the city, as well as Kayseri's urban development process, is examined, with the attitudes of the *yilli* visualised through maps. The shaping of the housing phenomenon in Turkey during the modernisation process is discussed, outlining the transformation from traditional Kayseri houses to contemporary housing culture. Finally, within the framework of *habitus*, the meaning of spatial changes, the improvisations developed by the *yilli* in response to these changes, and the social context of these processes are analysed, with the findings presented in tables.

Table 1.3 Theoretical framework & Methodology of the thesis



In the research design, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be utilised. While quantitative research describes phenomena, qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. Qualitative research examines the internal dynamics of individuals and cultures, their ways of perceiving the social world, and their daily life practices through a holistic approach. In this process, the researcher is not only a data collector but also an active participant who constructs and interprets knowledge. Through field observations and in-depth interviews, the dynamics of social relationships are analysed (Creswell, 2009; Kümbetoğlu, 2005; Harmanşah & Nahya, 2016).

This study uses a **qualitative research method** to draw on **oral history field research** and **ethnography**. Oral history becomes a key research method when written sources are insufficient or individual memories are crucial for understanding social structure. Conversely, ethnography provides an opportunity to analyse social structures and spatial relationships through direct observation.

Ethnographic research requires the researcher to engage in long-term participation within a specific community, conduct observations, and gather information through unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Being born and raised in Kayseri and living my daily life closely intertwined with the *yilli*, I could directly observe how *yilli* identity is reproduced through daily practices, social relationships, and spatial use. Additionally, in-depth interviews have enabled me to connect more deeply with participants' lives and understand their experiences through their narratives. In this context, ethnography serves not only as a data collection method but also as a framework that allows me to assess the internal dynamics of the community from an insider's perspective, living within the social structure shaped by this identity.

Oral history allows for documenting the recent past through individuals' testimonies, providing insights into social environments, memories, and significant events (Kümbetoğlu, 2005). In this research, the oral history method has been employed to understand past social dynamics, recording participants' life stories, spatial experiences, and perspectives on social events through in-depth interviews. The narratives, along with individual histories, contribute to the reconstruction of collective memory regarding the urban fabric, neighbourhood, and housing culture. Furthermore, oral history serves as a valuable source for understanding the spatial transformations individuals have experienced since childhood, their sense of belonging, and evolving social structures. Analysing these narratives helps identify common themes, shedding light on the place of periods or spaces in social memory. Thus, constructing a collective historical narrative through individual memories also reveals how individuals' perceptions of their lived environment are shaped.

In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the daily lives, spatial preferences, and housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri. Participants were selected to ensure a balanced distribution based on age, gender, education level, employment status, and economic indicators. They were categorised into three age groups: 30-50 years (young), 51-70 years (middle-aged), and 71 years and older (elderly).

This classification provided an opportunity to evaluate urban transformation processes through the experiences of different generations. Due to the conservative social structure, the snowball sampling was employed to establish a reliable network of participants, and interviews were conducted with 30 individuals. Additionally, interviews were held with *yilli* individuals living outside Kayseri to explore their relationship with the city beyond the dominant cultural environment. Each interview lasted approximately

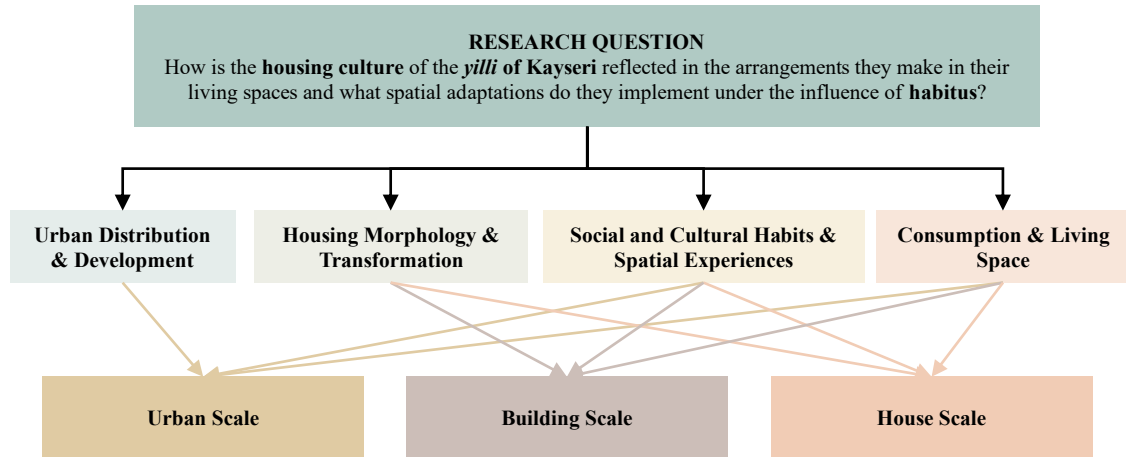
90-120 minutes and followed a flexible structure. Interviews were conducted at participants' houses or workplaces, with appointments scheduled in advance. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, asked to sign an informed consent form, and, with their permission, audio recordings were made to enhance data reliability.

During the research process, a multidimensional perspective was adopted to examine the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri, their relationship with space, and the effects of *habitus*. To comprehensively analyse the city's socio-cultural structure, participants were asked a range of questions categorised under the themes of **profile and identity**, **being *yilli***, **old neighbourhood and housing**, **existing neighbourhood and housing**, and **daily life and culture**. Through these questions, the interviewees' status as *yilli*, their perspectives on the concept of being *yilli*, their positioning within the city, cultural affiliations, and everyday life practices were examined in depth. Additionally, a comprehensive assessment of the socio-spatial dynamics within the city was conducted by analysing how these practices are linked to space.

The systematic execution of data collection and analysis phases is crucial (Akšamija, 2021). Therefore, the interviews were documented through audio recordings, transcribed, and subjected to detailed analysis. Additionally, visual data was generated through photographs, sketches, and notes. Photographs captured the current state of the space, enabling the visualisation of user preferences and spatial organisation, while sketches and notes contributed to a deeper spatial analysis. As a result, the morphological analyses of the houses were enriched, and the space transformation over time was examined.

In this research, framed within the concept of *habitus*, the thematic analysis method was used to analyse qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within the data. Its flexibility is enhanced by being independent of a specific theoretical framework and by having broad applicability across various research paradigms. The analysis process is systematised by identifying meaningful patterns through coding and transforming them into themes. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research, applicable through both theory-driven (deductive) and data-driven (inductive) approaches (Clarke & Braun, 2016; Naudé, 2024; Katz et al., 2024). In this study, the method facilitates an in-depth examination of the relationships between urban space and identity, specifically focusing on the housing culture, spatial practices, and transformations of belonging among the *yilli* of Kayseri (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Thematic analysis map



In the context of thematic analysis's flexibility, the data gathered from in-depth interviews were categorised into themes to reveal social and cultural dynamics. This method offers a data-driven and theoretically grounded analysis, allowing local experiences to connect with relevant concepts from the literature.

Additionally, thematic analysis helps understand individuals' relationships with space through their narratives, contributing to the analysis of concepts such as social belonging, identity, and *habitus*. The narratives shared by participants regarding their housing choices and settlement preferences provide valuable insights into spatial transformations and the improvisations developed. This structured yet flexible approach aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of the study, addressing research questions from fields such as architecture, sociology, and urban studies.

During the analysis process, interview recordings were transcribed for detailed examination. Observations from participants' natural living environments and narratives were documented through audio recordings. The data was then coded and categorised according to themes, enabling the identification of similarities, differences, patterns, and relationships within the narratives. The findings were interpreted through the framework of the *habitus* concept, shedding light on the socio-cultural dynamics that shape the relationships between individuals, communities, and space. In the final stage, the data were evaluated using various conceptual frameworks, allowing for a multidimensional analysis of the phenomena within their context.

The concept of *habitus*, developed by Bourdieu, refers to a system of unconscious tendencies, practices, and perceptions that individuals form based on their social environments and past experiences (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2021). In this context, *habitus* helps us understand the underlying structural dynamics that shape individuals' spatial

preferences, housing choices, settlement habits, and everyday practices. It enables us to view space as a physical environment and a complex structure of social relations. Through this framework, we can understand both the impact of space on individuals and how individuals, in turn, transform space. When examining the perceptions of the *yilli* of Kayseri and their housing culture within the framework of *habitus*, it becomes clearer how feelings of belonging, identity, and social attachment are intertwined with space.

The study interprets the data through the perspective of *habitus*, analysing how users project their living culture onto space and adapt through improvisations in modern environments. The influence of *habitus* in these processes was examined, and all findings were systematically categorised into tables within the thematic analysis framework and aligned with *habitus*-based themes.

The study also employs thematic mapping to visualise data at the urban scale. This method utilises spatial analysis techniques from Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map specific features or concepts (Herbei & Herbei, 2022). Since verbal narratives alone would be insufficient to explain the relationship between *yilli* and the city, their movements, areas of concentration, and changes in living spaces were visually represented. Thematic maps were created by overlaying spatial elements onto conceptual maps based on existing city maps. These mappings of *yilli* in Kayseri were structured around variables such as chronological change, functional transformation, and spatial usage differences. Historical periods were layered for comparative analysis, and the data were interpreted concerning urban development plans, academic studies, neighbourhood transformation processes, and insights from in-depth interviews.

In this study, my positionality as an insider—someone born and raised in Kayseri—has shaped my access to the field and my interpretive engagement with its social dynamics. Rather than viewing this familiarity as a source of bias, I adopt a reflexive stance that treats situated knowledge as a methodological asset. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of *participant objectivation*, I remain critically aware of how proximity to the field may enable and obscure particular forms of knowledge. My insider status has facilitated trust-building, enabled access to tacit norms, and allowed for recognising socially embedded practices that might remain invisible to an external observer. At the same time, I maintain a reflexive awareness of the potential for overidentification, which is addressed through iterative analysis, comparison with external literature, and explicit recognition of my own assumptions. Thus, being an insider is not an unquestioned advantage, but a complex positionality that demands ongoing critical scrutiny within the research process.

The interviewee's narratives are presented in the first-person singular, with context specified, while necessary distinctions are made to prevent them from blending with my expressions. While the advantages of insider access and contextual knowledge are acknowledged, it is recognised that familiarity may lead to the uncritical acceptance of certain data. Therefore, with an awareness of maintaining a critical distance, the information from the insider perspective was evaluated within a disciplined methodological framework.

Limitations

As a resident of Kayseri with one side of my family being *yilli*, the process of accessing interviewees and establishing trust is facilitated by strong social networks and rapid information flow. My familiarity with local dialects and idioms enables more intimate communication with interviewees and a deeper understanding of cultural meanings. My knowledge of social norms and hierarchical structures also helps predict which topics can be comfortably discussed. Long-term field access further enhances the flexibility of the observation process, allowing me to track changes over time and conduct a comprehensive analysis.

However, the familiarity of being an insider can lead to forming assumptions and losing critical distance. When interviewees view the researcher as 'one of their own,' it may result in superficial narratives or omitting sensitive topics. Additionally, due to the tight social networks in Kayseri, participants may be cautious about their anonymity and limit their responses, fearing that the shared information could spread.

To mitigate the impact of these limitations, it is crucial to adopt methodological diversity. Conducting interviews with participants from different social strata and using additional methods such as observation and document review will help minimise subjective perceptions. Additionally, a comparative approach in qualitative data analysis will enable a more robust assessment of the similarities and differences between the interviewees' narratives.

In addition, it is acknowledged that Western-centred sociological concepts and methods have limitations in understanding Turkey's unique social structure. Societies have undergone significant transformations from traditional to modern structures. In the 19th century, thinkers like Marx, Weber, and Simmel developed various concepts to understand Western societies. However, these concepts are rooted in the historical and social context of the West and do not apply universally. Specifically, Western-centred sociology has limitations in explaining diverse social structures. This study also faces this

challenge. Societies like Turkey, which are neither entirely Western nor Eastern, cannot be explained using the conceptual tools provided by Western sociology. Mübeccel Kıray's (2000) rural area studies underscore this issue. Kıray argued that the survey methods used in the West are unsuitable for Turkey's complex social structure and, therefore, do not yield the expected results. It highlights the limited applicability of Western sociology in every context.

Although Turkey is open to modernisation, it also preserves its traditional values. This dual structure makes existing analytical tools insufficient, highlighting the need for new conceptual and methodological approaches. Therefore, this study adopts a perspective that considers local dynamics, rather than directly applying the concepts of Western sociology.

Habitus is an appropriate concept for understanding how individuals act in the uncertain and complex conditions of social structures. Based on his fieldwork with the Berbers, Bourdieu developed this concept to explain how societies respond to cultural uncertainties. Later, he attempted to apply the same concept to modern French society. However, since French society did not exhibit the same anthropological structure as the Berbers, the concept did not function similarly. As a result, Bourdieu refined the concept, focusing primarily on the consumption habits of the French.

Current research on modern societies builds upon the data provided by previous studies, enabling the continuation of knowledge production through new fieldwork. However, the lack of a similar academic foundation in societies with different social dynamics, such as Turkey, represents one of the main limitations of this study. Therefore, instead of directly applying existing theoretical tools, these concepts must be re-evaluated and supported by field data. In this context, one key point is that not every transformation or social situation in the city is directly linked to *habitus*. Even if such a relationship exists, it may not be fully demonstrated within the scope of this study. However, this limitation arises not from a methodological deficiency but from the existing structural constraints and the lack of sufficient academic work in the field.

Another limitation of this research is that the spatial analysis primarily relies on sources such as historical maps and development plans. These sources may make it difficult to establish the precise chronology of certain spatial movements, leading to analyses that are not definitive. Therefore, this limitation should be considered an important factor affecting the scope of the research.

Contribution of the Study to the Field

As one of the pioneering efforts to explore the concept of being *yilli* (locality) in Kayseri within a spatial context, this study makes significant contributions to urban planning and sociology. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines architecture and sociology, the study aims to offer a unique contribution to the literature by examining the relationships between culture, *habitus*, and spatial order, while also exploring how lifestyles are reflected in space.

Based on data obtained from field research, this study will analyse how the *yilli* of Kayseri use their housing spaces, exploring the social phenomena behind these usage practices. In a rapidly changing and growing city like Kayseri, understanding the relationship between the *yilli* and space could provide valuable insights for future urban planning and social research. Additionally, the study aims to establish an academic foundation for analysing different communities through the lens of the spatial reflections of housing culture and *habitus*.

This research also makes an innovative contribution to the field through its methodology. By integrating a method from the social sciences that is not widely used in architecture and urban planning, the study employs Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to analyse the relationship between space and the *yilli* of Kayseri. It establishes an interdisciplinary bridge between the social sciences and architecture, addressing the concept of *yilli* in Kayseri within a broader context.

From the architectural perspective, this study demonstrates how local architectural features, housing designs, and spatial arrangements are shaped and how they relate to the social and cultural context. In cities where traditional and modern buildings coexist, it significantly contributes to preserving local identity and promoting sustainable urban development. A *habitus*-based approach offers new perspectives for developing solutions sensitive to user needs and local culture in housing design. The social, cultural, and spatial data gathered can inform the development of new design approaches tailored to housing users' needs. Consequently, innovative solutions can emerge in areas such as the housing market, visual and auditory archives, inventory/database creation, and scientific initiatives.

The analysis of the *yilli* of Kayseri could also serve as a guide for other communities with similar social and spatial experiences. Providing a foundation for developing new projects at national and international levels can lead to the proposal of new strategies for the spatial arrangements of different communities.

Sociologically, this research can contribute to the understanding and preservation of local cultural values and lifestyles. Housing spaces represent local identity, materialising the historical and cultural heritage of communities. Greater awareness of this can strengthen the local community's attachment to and respect for its cultural heritage. Furthermore, this research can shed light on how social relationships and solidarity networks within the community are shaped and maintained, ultimately contributing to strengthening social bonds.

In terms of urban planning, this research can support the creation of more sustainable and liveable cities by ensuring that the needs and expectations of local communities are considered. A culturally sensitive urban planning approach can improve the quality of life for residents, while recognising and preserving local architecture and cultural values can create new economic opportunities in tourism and cultural heritage, thereby contributing to regional development.

General Overview and Roadmap of the Thesis

This study examines how the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri is shaped by inherited cultural dispositions and reproduced through spatial practices. Grounded in Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, the research approaches housing not solely as a physical environment but as a socially embedded space where identity, memory, and belonging are materialised. The study is guided by the central research question: *How is the housing culture of the yilli of Kayseri reflected in the arrangements they make in their living spaces, and what spatial adaptations do they implement under the influence of habitus?*

To address this question, the research adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative methodology that integrates tools from sociology and architecture. These include oral history, ethnographic observation, spatial mapping, and thematic analysis. Through this approach, the study investigates the relationship between cultural practices and spatial arrangements at multiple scales, ranging from the urban distribution of neighbourhoods to the organisation of domestic interiors. The analysis is structured around four principal thematic axes: urban distribution and development, housing morphology and transformation, social and cultural habits, and material consumption within the house.

By focusing on the spatial practices of the *yilli*, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how local identity is sustained and reconfigured within urban transformation processes. It aims to make an original contribution to the literature by conceptualising housing as a dynamic socio-cultural construct, thereby linking spatial configurations to historical continuity, social distinction, and cultural reproduction.

Chapter 2

Habitus: The Hidden Logic of Culture

Coming from a *yilli* family on my mother's side and a family of Kayseri villagers on my father's side and having spent my entire education in Kayseri until university, I made many friends from different places while studying architecture in the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul. Although I had travelled outside the city many times and visited various places for vacations, I had never lived elsewhere. My previous experiences were short-term, tourist-like trips where I didn't interact much with people. While living in Istanbul and building relationships with my friends, I inevitably encountered some differences. In their behaviour and speech, I experienced things I wasn't accustomed to, just as they encountered stuff in me that they had never seen before. One of the most memorable examples was when I used the phrase "araya gitmek" [meaning something wasted or ruined]. In Kayseri, this phrase would be easily understood by those around me. However, when I used it in Istanbul, I was met with puzzled looks, as if I were speaking a different language. Even after explaining its meaning, it didn't quite convince them, and they thought it was a rather strange expression.

This experience made me realise that, even though we live in the same country and speak the same language, the regional differences in our upbringing created linguistic and symbolic distinctions that set us apart. Our culture influenced everything, from the food we ate to how we dressed and our outlook on life. We learned a lot from each other. The values, traditions, and culture that had been taught to us up until that point shaped our identities. However, beyond that, I hadn't thought deeply about what culture truly is or researched it in detail. Although I had some understanding of culture from my education, it was through this thesis that I had the opportunity to explore and grasp the concept of culture more fully. As I explored research and examined the meanings of culture in the literature, I realised that I didn't fully understand what culture truly is, or that what I knew was only a part of it.

2.1 Culture to Architectural Culture

When we look at the historical development of the term “culture,” an interesting situation arises. “Culture is *cultura* in Latin. It derives from *colere*. *Colere* encompasses a range of meanings, such as cultivating the land, labouring, inhabiting, nurturing, preserving, and honouring through worship... The meaning of ‘inhabiting’ transformed into *colony* through *colonus*, while ‘honouring through worship’ evolved into *cult* through *cultus* (Dellaloğlu, 2020, p. 21). Until the 18th century, the term *culture* was primarily associated with agriculture, such as improving the soil and growing/planting crops and was not widely used in societal contexts. Instead, it was linked to agricultural activities and meanings related to cultivation, processing, production, and education (or religious worship). The English word “agriculture” denotes farming, and the Arabic word *hars*, which was previously used instead of *culture* and means “to plough the land,” is not coincidental (Gökalp, 2011). Similar usages can also be found in Turkish. For example, *kültür bitkisi* [cultivated plant] refers to plants that have undergone various stages of improvement, have high agricultural value, and are consciously cultivated. In France, *cultura* was used with these meanings until the 17th century. By the late 18th century, the term was transferred from French to German as *Kultur* and has been used in this form since the 19th century (Dellaloğlu, 2020).

According to Gökalp (2011), the concept of culture began to evolve into a term used in the social realm during the 18th century, reflecting societal values and behaviour patterns. There is no doubt that Enlightenment thought played a significant role in this shift, as thinkers of the time believed that, just like land, plants, and animals, humans and societies could be improved, shaped, and directed—and that they should be guided in this way. As a result, the term culture came to mean “the active development of the human mind” (Gökalp, 2011, p. 26). In English, however, *culture* began to detach from its Latin origins and be used in the sense of “the formation of the soul” only after 1691 (Dellaloğlu, 2020, p. 21).

The concept of *culture* in its modern sense emerged in French in the mid-18th century, alongside related concepts such as *civilisation* (Fr. *civilisation*, Tr.

medeniyet/uygarlık).^{5&6} This may explain why the relationship between *culture* and *civilisation* has always been quite complex. By the late 19th century, the term *culture* had shifted from being synonymous with *civilisation* to becoming its antonym. One reason for the differentiation between *civilisation* and *culture* by this time is that civilisation began to acquire Orientalist, colonial, and imperialist connotations (Eagleton, 2005, as cited in Dellaloğlu, 2020).

According to Eagleton (2005, as cited in Dellaloğlu, 2020), the synonymity of *civilisation* (Fr. *civilisation*, Tr. *medeniyet/uygarlık*) and *culture* reflects the universality of Enlightenment thought. Historically, *civilisation* was a concept of French origin, denoting a political, economic, and technical framework, whereas *culture* in German was more closely tied to intellectual, artistic, and religious aspects. While *civilisation* historically did not emphasise national differences, *culture* was explicitly meant to highlight the national. The rivalry between Germany and France can influence the relationship between *civilisation* and *culture*. In German, the term *Kultur*, initially synonymous with *civilisation*, first had an abstract meaning related to the general process of becoming ‘civilised’ or ‘cultivated.’ Later, it came to express the secular development process of humans. It was Herder who first distinguished *culture* from *civilisation* in German. He was the first to use the term *culture* in the plural form and consciously differentiated it from the singular and linear meanings of *civilisation*. Through this distinction, Herder laid the foundation for the approach that would later be known as the anthropological meaning of *culture* (the idea that people living in similar environments, sharing common habits, and a certain way of life inevitably have a common culture) (Dellaloğlu, 2020).

Anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) note that culture is explained through 164 different definitions. The renowned culture theorist Raymond Williams (1983, cited by Gökalp, 2011) also emphasises that culture has 164 different definitions,

⁵ The Arabic word *madanī* (مدني), meaning “urban”, is derived from the root +īya(t)² suffix. The word “*medeni*” is borrowed from the Arabic word *madanī* (مدني), which means “1. urban, 2. related to a city, 3. from Medina”. This word is a nisba form of the Arabic word *madīna(t)* (مدينة), meaning “city, state”, with the suffix +ī. Therefore, the word **medeni** conveys the meaning of **urban** (or **from Medina**). Sources: <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/medeniyet>, <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/medeni>

⁶ The reason for including both the concepts of ‘medeniyet’ and ‘uygarlık’ here is to highlight their ideological and historical distinctions. The term ‘medeniyet’ is preferred by those with right-wing and Islamic ideologies, while ‘uygarlık’ is more commonly associated with the Republican faction. The term ‘uygarlık’ itself is derived through free association from the name of the Turkic Uighur people. ‘Uygurluk,’ proposed during the first Turkish language reform movement in 1912, was rarely used until the 1930s. After 1935, the terms ‘uygar’ and ‘uygarlık’ became more widely adopted. Source: <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/uygarlik>

stating that ‘culture’ is one of the most complex concepts in the English language. Edles (2002, p. 1) categorises the concept of culture, which has over a hundred definitions, into three groups:

- (1) humanistic refinement and elite artistic activities (classical ballet, opera);
- (2) an entire way of life of a people or group (e.g., as seen in National Geographic);
- (3) system or patterns of shared symbols. These categories can be understood as aesthetic, ethnographic, and symbolic definitions of culture.

The aesthetic meaning of culture refers to the finest, most beautiful, and magnificent products of a society or civilisation, such as classical music, literature, and art. Additionally, culture can be used as an adjective, such as “being cultured” or “a highly cultured person,” to describe aesthetic and intellectual sensitivity (Gökalp, 2012). For example, we may label someone as “uncultured” if they eat a meal that should be eaten with a fork and knife using their hands. On the other hand, we might admire someone who interprets or understands the work of a famous painter, considering them to be highly “cultured.”

In his book *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias (2023) examines the long-term historical transformation of human behaviours and societies. Elias explains that the foundation of this transformation lies in individuals learning to increasingly control their behaviours and the emergence of more complex social structures. According to him, *civilisation* consists of three stages: the feudal period, the Renaissance and early modern period, and the modern period. In the Middle Ages, social structures were more straightforward and disordered, with prevalent violence and coarse behaviours. During the Renaissance, as court culture—the foundation of aesthetic culture—began to be transferred from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie, manners and etiquette developed, and interactions among the nobility became more refined. The bourgeoisie began to internalise the court culture they had always admired, imposing it on the working class to ensure the defence of these values and the maintenance of social order. With the emergence of modern states, social control became tighter. Competition among individuals increased, and social norms became more internalised. Individuals began to monitor themselves and constantly strive to conform to social expectations. Today, the Western societies from which we have inherited our *civilisation* (Fr. *civilisation*, Tr. *medeniyet/uygarlık*) have gone through the stages outlined by Elias to form the modern social structure.

The aesthetic definition of culture creates the impression that an already established aesthetic culture is being lived. Today, Western culture, defined as aesthetic culture, is an imposed culture that emerged after the transformation processes of these societies. In contrast, the values practised in the daily lives of anthropological societies that have not gone through these stages form the culture of those societies.

In the anthropological classification, culture is defined as the “entire way of life” of a group, encompassing its members’ beliefs, norms, and material creations. This definition allows for the use of ‘cultures’ in the plural, distinguishing it from the ‘elitist’ notion of culture as something ‘above’ daily life. Instead, *culture* is an essential element ‘within’ everyday experiences. This broad definition includes everything human groups produce and encompasses all aspects of daily social life (Gökalp, 2012, pp. 101-102). Based on Herder’s distinction between *culture* and *civilisation*, this approach recognises various cultures shaped by everyday habits and lifestyles, moving away from the singular, linear concept of *civilisation*.

Although one cultural definition focuses on aesthetic values and the other on lifestyle, both share a similar process. The definition involving aesthetics also includes lifestyle, but in one case, lifestyle is grounded in aesthetic values, while in the other, it is based on historical and shared societal values. People from anthropological cultures perceive their behaviours aesthetically, even if those behaviours do not conform to Western aesthetic norms. For example, a community eating with their hands may view it as the correct way, making it both anthropological and aesthetic from their perspective.

The aesthetic definition of culture refers to an aestheticised lifestyle throughout history. However, a common oversight in this explanation is the assumption that humans have always known and behaved according to aesthetic norms from the beginning. Societies, including those we consider “anthropological,” have refined practices and meanings through time to reach their present stage.

The key difference between the two cultural societies is that one exists within an imperialistic framework where daily life is aestheticised from eating to dressing, often influenced by capitalism and the imposition of its values as the correct way of life. The other society, in contrast, adopts a political stance and develops a perspective that it does not have to accept these imposed values. The definition of culture as ‘culture’ or ‘cultures’ is inherently political, much like the distinction between *civilisation* and *culture*. While culture has traditionally been discussed through these two distinctions, the literature has also introduced a third perspective: culture as a shared system of meaning.

Culture, defined as shared systems of meaning, encompasses not only art and lifestyle but also all symbolic phenomena, including everyday practices like removing shoes before entering a house and broader systems like religion, language, art, and fashion (Gökalp, 2012). This definition moves beyond the aesthetic or lifestyle aspects of culture and integrates both. It rejects the idea that culture is solely aesthetic or imposing, while also opposing accepting any lifestyle as culture. The question then arises: why does accepting every lifestyle as culture pose a problem? For instance, in Turkish films and TV series, blood feuds—where family members seek revenge for wrongs passed down through generations—are often depicted. Accepting such practices as culture raises ethical concerns. Therefore, culture is understood here as shared systems of meaning, with distinctions between aesthetic, anthropological, and symbolic values.

These definitions, though focused on lifestyle, differ in their reference points: one values aesthetics, another anthropological aspect, and the third is symbolic elements. While these distinctions can be confusing, they reflect the complexity of understanding culture as a concept.

To summarise, the concept of culture originally referred to agricultural activities and religious worship until the 18th century. Influenced by Enlightenment thought, it evolved to represent societal values and behavioural norms, with thinkers using it to signify the “active development of the human mind,” suggesting that societies could be guided in a manner like agriculture. In the 19th century, the relationship between *culture* and *civilisation* became more complex: culture came to be associated with intellectual and artistic aspects, while civilisation was linked to political, economic, and technical frameworks.

Over time, the concept of culture has evolved and is now understood through three main definitions. The aesthetic definition views culture as the highest artistic and intellectual achievements of society, such as classical music, literature, and art, often associated with being ‘cultured.’ The anthropological definition sees culture as encompassing a group’s entire lifestyle, beliefs, norms, and material productions, reflecting shared habits and values in daily life. The definition of shared meaning systems expands further, describing culture as including both aesthetic products and symbolic elements, such as norms, values, and symbols, that shape all aspects of life. Together, these definitions highlight the broad scope of culture, from artistic to symbolic meanings, and its significance on both individual and societal levels.

Although culture regulates social lives and shapes lifestyles, studies on “architectural culture”⁷ are rarely found in the literature. A quick search for architectural culture yields little, and Google redirects to topics such as *culture in architecture* or *cultural architecture*. Like the concept of culture, there is no clear definition of architectural culture, possibly because the term is not commonly used. It could be that what we call architectural culture is, in fact, culture itself, and Western civilisations may already associate architecture with culture. If we consider architecture in this context as related to culture, we can establish a connection between architecture and the three definitions of culture.

If we understand culture as aesthetic, architecture can be seen as a manifestation of aesthetic values, thus equating architecture with culture. Aesthetic culture encompasses a society’s understanding of beauty, art, and taste, and architecture concretises this understanding. The forms, colours, ornaments, and design principles in architectural structures reflect a society’s aesthetic preferences. For example, Gothic cathedrals, Islamic architecture, and modernist buildings each embody the unique aesthetic values of their cultures through their intricate details, geometric patterns, or minimalist designs.

Architecture, as a physical expression of culture, reveals a society’s artistic sensitivity. The design choices regarding form, material, and structure reflect the aesthetic norms of their time. Renaissance architecture, for example, emphasises symmetry and order, while modern architecture focuses on functionality and minimalism. The architectural profile of a city or region reflects the broader aesthetic culture of the society.

The fact that some architecture departments are housed within fine arts faculties underscores the link between architecture and aesthetic culture. This arrangement emphasises the importance of aesthetics in architecture. The visual appeal of buildings reflects the deep connection between architecture and art, where aesthetic understanding plays a crucial role in both the design of a building and its harmony with its environment. In this context, architecture is closely tied to the fine arts, reinforcing its connection to aesthetic culture.

⁷ While not consistently defined across the literature, the term architectural culture has been employed to highlight the embeddedness of architectural practice within broader cultural, ideological, and institutional structures. Manfredo Tafuri’s (1976) analysis of architecture as a site of ideological production, Kenneth Frampton’s (1980) emphasis on cultural context in his theory of critical regionalism, and Sibel Bozdoğan’s (2001) more explicit formulation of *architectural culture* as a field shaped by politics, institutions, and discourse, all contribute to this analytical framing. Although not a fully institutionalised concept, *architectural culture* is a valuable heuristic for exploring the social embeddedness of architecture.

Architecture takes on a broader social and cultural significance when we understand culture anthropologically as a shared way of life. The anthropological definition of culture encompasses the behavioural patterns, belief systems, values, and meanings learned and passed down through generations. From this perspective, architecture is not just about the physical form of buildings but also their social and cultural contexts. It serves as a physical manifestation of cultural structures, reflecting a society's way of life, social hierarchy, rituals, and worldview.

For instance, the organisation of houses and public spaces can reveal aspects of a society's lifestyle and social structure, while religious buildings and monuments embody cultural rituals and ceremonies. In this way, architecture becomes a key tool for preserving and expressing cultural practices. It carries and communicates a society's cultural identity, transmitting its heritage and history across generations.

When understood as shared systems of meaning, culture encompasses a society's collective values, beliefs, and symbols. Architecture, as a physical representation of these cultural meaning systems, reflects and materialises these shared beliefs. For example, buildings such as mosques or temples, which serve as places of worship, symbolise a society's religious values and understanding of the sacred. Through their form, materials, space, and layout, architectural designs embody cultural symbols, preserving and passing on the shared meanings of society to future generations. Thus, architecture plays a vital role as both a product of culture and a vehicle for conveying cultural meaning.

Architecture is deeply intertwined with all definitions of culture, reflecting social phenomena, shared values, and aesthetic qualities. When we extend the concept of *civilisation* to architecture, styles like Gothic emerge as products of *civilisation* itself. Gothic architecture, with its intricate details, is a product of medieval European civilisation, embodying the artistic and technical advancements of its time. Similarly, Greek, Renaissance, and Baroque styles reveal the cultural and social structures of their respective periods.

In contrast, architectural styles from societies without expansionist power, such as those of certain African tribes or South American communities, remained local and had limited global influence. These traditions were not widely recognised due to a lack of global impact. However, in recent years, there has been a growing appreciation for the unique and locally specific features of these architectural practices. This shift mirrors broader cultural trends where traditional methods are re-evaluated for their intrinsic value.

Anthropological studies have uncovered the architectural wisdom of these societies, highlighting techniques that focus on sustainability, the use of natural materials, and climate-adapted designs. These aspects inspire modern architecture, as contemporary architects draw on traditional methods to develop innovative solutions. As a result, the revaluation of local and traditional architecture enriches the anthropological perspective in architecture. The ongoing relationship between culture and civilisation is becoming increasingly evident, with local and global influences contributing to the diversity and richness of architectural practice.

The definition of “architectural culture” by Sibel Bozdoğan (2001) provides a detailed assessment. According to her, architectural culture should not be viewed as an autonomous discipline concerned only with forms and form-making but as a broader institutional, cultural, and social field with significant political implications. It involves a cultural historian’s approach to buildings, projects, and architectural texts, which create a *discourse* about architecture.

While architecture is often seen as a discipline focused on aesthetics and form, Bozdoğan’s definition emphasises that it is much more than this. She argues that architecture should not be reduced to form and aesthetics alone but should also be understood in the context of its political, cultural, and social dimensions. Bozdoğan stresses that what appears as form and aesthetics is already a product of various social, political, and cultural factors. In other words, nothing is purely aesthetic in isolation; aesthetics reflects the social context in which they are produced.

Based on these perspectives, I aim to approach architecture not just as an aesthetic phenomenon, but as a social one, seeking to understand the *habitus* behind the aesthetic. I focus on deciphering the social, cultural, and political codes to uncover the *algorithms* driving these values. In this context, by examining the *yilli* of Kayseri, the subject of my research, I adopt a multifaceted approach to their housing culture from a Bourdieusian perspective. Bourdieu’s objective, systematic, and measurable sociology, along with his concept of *habitus* as it relates to culture, provides valuable guidance as I explore the spatial, social, economic, cultural, and political meanings underlying the housing culture of Kayseri’s *yilli*.

2.2 Habitus through Cultural Phenomenon

Born in 1930, Pierre Bourdieu grew up in Denguin, a small commune near Pau in southwestern France, where most of the population worked in agriculture. Raised in a working-class environment, he was encouraged by his father to pursue formal education, which gradually distanced him—both geographically and socially—from his origins. His educational success led him across various regions of France, eventually shaping his academic career.

Bourdieu states that being positioned **within** the French educational institutions as a **peasant** provided him both the justification and the opportunity to reveal the circulation of economic, social, and especially cultural capital in society, as well as its role in shaping individual practices and maintaining social hierarchies. This experience enabled him to conduct a series of sociological and anthropological studies. As he advanced in his career and broadened his perspectives by collaborating with researchers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu carried out anthropological research on the “spatial-cultural effects of French colonialism on the indigenous Kabyle tribes” during his time in Algeria. These studies laid the foundation for some of his most influential sociological works (Webster, 2023, p. 23).

Through his research, Bourdieu developed **reflexive sociology**, an approach that recognises researchers as active participants in constructing meaning during the research process. This perspective also posits that individual practices and cultural environments shape each other, highlighting the dynamic interaction between social structures and personal agency (Webster, 2023).

In his influential work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (1984) [originally published as *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement* in 1979], Bourdieu examines French cultural preferences, arguing **that culture functions as a mechanism for maintaining social hierarchies**. He demonstrates that tastes, lifestyles, and consumption patterns are not merely personal choices but are shaped by economic, social, and cultural capital. By revealing how cultural distinctions reinforce class divisions and sustain power structures, Bourdieu critically analyses how social inequality is reproduced (Webster, 2023).

Using concepts like *capital*, *habitus*, and *field*, Bourdieu's sociological work explores the complexity of social structures and how individuals navigate their positions

within society. His analysis reveals how social dynamics and power relations shape individual and collective practices and are shaped by them.

2.2.1 Foundations of Habitus: Sociology of Bourdieu

Bourdieu's sociology is based on the triad of *habitus*, *field*, and *capital*. According to him, society is structured into distinct layers, with the social space functioning as a macrocosm comprising multiple microcosms. This broader social space contains various subfields, such as the cultural, religious, and academic fields. Each subfield, or microcosm, operates as a distinct game with its own specific rules and objectives.

Bourdieu argued that culture is not a fixed concept but is arbitrarily structured, meaning social groups create unique and incidental definitions of “culture” to support their interests. This idea has sparked significant debate. [As noted earlier under the ‘Culture’ heading, culture has multiple definitions, and even widely accepted ones fall into three categories. Bourdieu builds his understanding of culture on top of these existing definitions.] He further claimed that dominant classes impose their definitions of culture to establish, maintain, and reproduce their privileged positions (Webster, 2023).

To simplify, Bourdieu's theory suggests that in any social field—whether economic, political, or artistic—a dominant group always holds the most influence and sets the rules. While they may not be seen as direct decision-makers, they are perceived as the most powerful actors in the field. These individuals are generally approached with the belief that they are fair or make just decisions. People tend not to question the existing system if those in power act rationally due to their experience. However, Bourdieu argues that this is an illusion.

For example, consider the upbringing of a child whose parents are architects versus a child whose parents are factory workers. Many assume that the child raised in an architectural environment is naturally inclined toward architecture, while the worker's child is less likely to pursue such a career. Bourdieu challenges this assumption, arguing that while the worker's child might be more creative, the system reinforces the illusion that talent is inherited within privileged environments. The idea that a child of architects will inevitably become a better architect due to their upbringing is a form of symbolic violence—it disguises structural advantages as personal merit.

According to Bourdieu, individuals seek acceptance and status in social space, and confidence plays a crucial role in achieving this. Confidence, in turn, is developed through experience. A real-life example illustrates this: Two children, both sons of basketball

players, are selected for a youth team at a prestigious club. One child's father was a national basketball player, while the other's father only played at the local level. Due to his father's social capital, the first child is given more playing time, allowing him to gain experience and build confidence. The second child, receiving fewer opportunities, struggles to develop his skills and gradually loses confidence. It demonstrates how symbolic capital—comprising all forms of capital—shapes social positions. From the outset, individuals inherit advantages or disadvantages that influence their trajectory.

Bourdieu, a former rugby player, uses the metaphor of games to illustrate his understanding of social life. However, in this context, the *game* does not refer to mere entertainment or simple activities but rather to an athlete's deep, strategic engagement with a sport (Çeğin, 2007). He explains social fields—such as education, art, and politics—through this metaphor, emphasising that each field functions like a game arena with its rules, strategies, and rewards.

A key example of this is the academic career process. According to Bourdieu, academia operates as a structured game in which academics, students, and researchers must navigate its rules to achieve success. Strategies such as publishing articles, attending conferences, and securing positions at prestigious universities become essential for advancement. In this system, academic achievements—such as professorships or prestigious awards—serve as the game's rewards. However, Bourdieu questions whether those controlling these rewards distribute them fairly, highlighting the power dynamics in social fields.

According to Bourdieu, the place where the game is played is referred to as a *field* (Fr. *champ*), and players must have specific interests that can be gained from the game to participate in it. He states that for a game to be considered worth playing, interests (*illusio*) must be gained, and the rules of the game (*doxa*) are not questioned. Being included in the game means finding it worth playing, so the field's established order (rules, *doxa*) is recognised and adopted.

For example, suppose a job seeker attends every interview but dislikes the conditions, argues with company officials, and leaves. In this case, the person will never establish a place in the job market or the game because they do not accept the rules. The job seeker does not determine the rules of the job market; the employer sets them. Therefore, if the person wants to participate in this game, they must accept the rules; otherwise, they should not be interested in it.

Each player holds certain ‘cards’ in the game, represented by Bourdieu’s concept of *capital*. There are three main types of capital: *economic capital* (material resources), *cultural capital* (cultural codes acquired primarily through education), and *social capital* (networks of relationships). The importance of each capital type can vary depending on the context in which they are found. *Symbolic capital*, a concept derived from the combination of these capitals, can be seen as the practical reflection or sum of all types of capital—this is the ‘cards’ that players hold (Z. Özmen, personal communication, June 8, 2024).

Economic capital simply refers to financial resources. *Social capital* pertains to the network of relationships within a field and includes connections, group memberships, obligations, privileges, and trust. *Cultural capital*, a fundamental concept in Bourdieu’s work, is the knowledge and cultural structure passed down through education from those who hold power in a field. It exists in three forms: *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalised*. *Embodied cultural capital* includes habits and skills such as language, writing styles, and body language learned from childhood. *Objectified cultural capital* refers to tangible items that require cultural knowledge to appreciate, such as books, art, and scientific works. *Institutionalised cultural capital* relates to structures like inequalities and hierarchies created by educational institutions (Görgün Baran, 2019).

For example, poverty can be illustrated through the three forms of capital. It is embodied in behaviours like insecure speech or poor posture (e.g., slouching). Objectified capital appears in preferences, such as the type of television purchased, which reflects class distinctions. Cultural capital is associated with taste, and an individual’s clothing and preferences indicate social class. Institutionalised cultural capital is represented by certificates or symbols obtained through educational or social institutions. Everything individuals possess is symbolic; these items send messages to others about their status and identity. Symbolic capital, encompassing varying amounts of economic, cultural, and social capital, represents an abstract state that can influence one’s position within a field (Görgün Baran, 2019).

The field refers to the network of objective relationships between individuals’ positions, and the *social space* is not simply the sum of individuals but the objective relationships between the social positions they occupy (Bayhan, 2019). In other words, social space encompasses all areas formed by status-related networks. “Fields are arenas of struggle conducted over the control of valuable resources” (Swartz, 2011, p. 174). Each

field, therefore, is a structure where certain types of capital—economic, social, cultural, and symbolic—are produced and distributed.

From this perspective, architecture operates as a field in which practitioners believe and assert its value. However, suppose those within the architectural field fail to make others recognise its significance or exert symbolic violence. In that case, individuals without formal education in architecture may take matters into their own hands. They might draw, build, or commission houses in these cases. It is especially common in Turkey, where the field of architecture does not hold the same prestige as the field of medicine. While society respects doctors' expertise, many people treat architecture as though they have the qualifications of an architect, despite lacking the necessary formal education and training.

In other words, the production and distribution of capital within the field depend on the field's influence and power. Actors (individuals) try to increase their power by accumulating various forms of capital. Competition arises as these actors struggle to obtain and control the capitals.

Field struggle revolves around various forms of capital, including economic, cultural, scientific, and religious capital. For instance, cultural capital plays a crucial role in the intellectual field, while economic capital is essential in business. In the field of science, scientists fight for scientific capital. Thus, different fields exist for each form of capital, and actors (individuals) strive to determine what will be considered valuable within these fields (Swartz, 2011). Actors (people) and institutions within a field compete for specific gains by utilising different forms of power, which gives them varying chances of success. They do so by adhering to the rules that define the field; at times, they may even shape these rules. Those in dominant positions aim to manage the field in ways that favour their interests (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2021).

2.2.2 Habitus as Embodied and Implicit Cultural Knowledge

Although many sociologists and anthropologists are familiar with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, its meaning remains widely debated. Even among scholars well-versed in Bourdieu's work, disagreements persist regarding its interpretation. The term *habitus* has a long history predating Bourdieu, originating from the Latin word *habitus*, derived from Aristotle's concept of *hexis* (disposition; habit). In medieval philosophy, it is described as a "constantly repeated, habitual behaviour pattern" (Görgün Baran, 2019, p. 10). Durkheim used the concept in various contexts in his lectures on pedagogy and

evolution in France⁸, Mauss explored it in his work on body techniques,⁹ and Weber referenced it in his major works (Kaya, 2018). However, none of these thinkers assigned *habitus* the central role that Bourdieu did.

For Bourdieu, *habitus* is a **system of dispositions** that shapes an individual's social actions. "The term 'disposition' is key for Bourdieu, since it suggests two essential components he wishes to convey with the idea of *habitus*: structure and propensity" (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). *Habitus* operates as an unconscious set of tendencies that influence behaviour, shaped by personal tastes, preferences, and emotions (Korkmaz Yaylagül, 2008).

Bourdieu uses expressions such as "*cultural unconscious, habit-forming force, set of basic, deeply interiorized master-patterns, mental habit, mental and corporeal schemata of perceptions, appreciations, and action, and generative principle of regulated improvisations*" to describe this key concept (Swartz, 1997, p. 101). As seen, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is complex and multifaceted; even Bourdieu himself has offered various definitions when explaining it.

Habitus consists of the patterns of perception, evaluation, and action that individuals unconsciously internalise during socialisation, whether through primary education in childhood or secondary education in adulthood. These patterns shape how individuals perceive and interpret the world and guide their actions. *Habitus* varies depending on life conditions and social trajectories. People from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who experience comparable living conditions often develop similar *habitus*. Since dispositions that form *habitus* can be transmitted across different contexts, dispositions acquired in one setting (e.g., family or school) can influence behaviour in others (e.g., work life or sports activities). This process contributes to the formation of homogeneous lifestyles (Kaya, 2018). Although this explanation may suggest that *habitus* changes easily, it is not a structure that transforms rapidly. Change does occur, but it unfolds gradually over generations.

According to Bourdieu, individuals cannot be considered independent of the shared history of their group or class. *Habitus* is a product of this shared history and represents the collective accumulation of experiences within the group or class, rather than the actions of autonomous individuals. Therefore, individuals are constrained by the limitations of *habitus*, which is rooted in the history of their group or class. *Habitus*

⁸ Emile Durkheim, 2006.

⁹ Marcel Mauss, 1973.

determines the tendencies and modes of thinking characteristic of the class to which a person belongs, functioning almost like an “operating system” (Özmen, 2020).

For instance, someone from a poverty-dominated *habitus* may struggle to accumulate economic capital because they have grown up in a poor environment. *Habitus* is like a template that limits individuals' behaviour and choices, like an “algorithm” (Özmen, 2020). A poor person, shaped by their environment and history, will think in ways consistent with their social position. The culture and *habitus* of their class determine their thought patterns and shape them both concretely and abstractly.

A *habitus* dominated by poverty, for example, often inhibits self-confidence. Shared systems of meaning within a class, lead individuals to value similar things and share a common worldview. Someone raised in such a *habitus* will prefer things that poor people value, rather than what wealthier individuals may find important. A poor person may lack the financial resources or the vision to pursue different opportunities. A child raised in such a *habitus* might think, “I can’t go there for university,” “I can’t study there,” or “They won’t accept me.” This mindset is not explicitly imposed but instead emerges naturally from the evolutionary process of *habitus*.

Habitus reproduces social systems through a cyclical process. The capital individuals acquire tends to mirror their parents' capital, including cultural, material, and non-material aspects. Parents can only pass on as much capital as they possess, which means their children typically acquire similar forms of capital. In most cases, it is difficult for children to develop behaviours or ways of thinking that differ significantly from their parents. For example, a child born to Muslim parents will likely grow up Muslim, and their children will likely be Muslim as well. As a result, the system reproduces the existing social order rather than creating something new. It is why the process is referred to as a *reproduction system*. *Habitus* perpetuates existing social structures and values, ensuring that social status and norms are maintained across generations.

The concept of *habitus* is closely tied to the acquisition of cultural capital, while social capital emerges from the combination of cultural and economic capital. Social networks and connections merge a person's cultural and economic capital, ultimately shaping their societal position. For example, consider the typical middle-class Turkish family. Parents often go to great lengths to educate their children, sending them to preparatory courses and encouraging their studies. The state provides opportunities, which we take advantage of. However, the outcomes vary—some individuals acquire cultural and social capital while others do not.

It may not be valued everywhere if we attempt to leverage our cultural capital. Culture is not universal; it varies regionally and can hold different meanings for different people. For example, cultural capital may become useless if not recognised in a specific field. It's like having savings in euros but trying to exchange them in a place—such as a remote African village—where nobody recognises the currency. Similarly, the capitals we have are only valuable when acknowledged and valued in the proper context.

Suppose we are considering how to secure our child's future. We want to increase our economic capital because our child's social capital depends on it. Without increasing economic capital, our child's social capital will remain tied to cultural capital, which may not be sufficient in specific contexts. But what if we do not want our child to be confined to the same social class and *habitus* as ours?

Let's assume we come from a poor *habitus*. To avoid our child growing up in poverty, we need to increase their cultural, economic, or social capital—essentially, we must change their social class. However, changing social class is not easy. For instance, moving to a wealthier neighbourhood doesn't guarantee the wealthy will socialise with us. Similarly, a family moving to an affluent area to find a wealthy suitor for their daughter does not ensure their daughter will attract one just by living there. If we are already poor, increasing economic capital becomes quite complex, limiting the ability to increase cultural capital, as it depends on financial resources. We are stuck in the same cycle since social capital is also tied to these. It is what Bourdieu refers to as **reproduction**.

As seen, what we can and cannot do or cannot achieve is shaped by a system (*habitus*) that operates behind the scenes in our minds. It's akin to saying, "Poverty is etched into the soul." *Habitus* is ingrained in our soul and body; it's not something we can easily change, like clothes. These patterns, formulas, or templates—this system of *habitus*—define where we come from, shape our confidence, and determine our mannerisms, speech, likes and dislikes, attractions, and capabilities.

Parents unconsciously pass their *habitus* to their children, who learn their behaviours, thoughts, and values. *Habitus* dictates how individuals navigate the social world and the strategies they will pursue. This process helps reproduce the social structure and perpetuates social inequalities. The Turkish saying "armut dibine düşer" (literally, "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree")¹⁰ captures this idea perfectly, as it reflects the

¹⁰ <https://klusemlms.klu.edu.tr/armut-dibine-duser-atasozunun-anlami>

The proverb "Armut dibine düşer" (literally "The pear falls near its tree") suggests that undesirable outcomes or unfavourable circumstances are sometimes inevitable, implying that the result of a situation

predictable and almost inevitable outcome of a situation based on its course, just as *habitus* shapes the trajectory of individuals' lives.

An example from Ekşi Sözlük¹¹ illustrates *habitus* well. The writer describes a scene where a modified black car, playing a Demet Akalın song, passes by with screeching tyres and the handbrake pulled. It is a common sight in our everyday life. According to the writer, the person driving the car is unlikely to be an associate professor, professor, sculptor, or poet, because the type of capital possessed by such individuals is at odds with the class *habitus* in which behaviours like this occur. Similarly, a person who frequents a jazz bar and plays tennis on weekends possesses a different cultural capital than someone who goes to a tavern to drink rakı with friends around a barbecue. While the economic capital required for both activities might be the same, their *habitus*—their underlying *dispositions* and practices—sets them apart. The types of capital individuals hold and how they utilise it ultimately shape their *habitus*, leading to distinct practices and lifestyles for people from different backgrounds.

Habitus determines the type of capital we will possess and the fields in which we can participate, much like a dealer at a gambling table or a player at a roulette wheel (Özmen, 2020). Our parents, close ones, and social environment pass on both material and spiritual characteristics, including cultural values. Growing up in these environments, we naturally learn and internalise this culture, which shapes how we act, think, and move. We enter life equipped with the skills we have learned and the opportunities available. However, culture does not always dictate our actions or guide us in every situation. It is where *habitus* comes into play. We can improvise and adapt to new situations with the cultural capital we inherit and the tactics we have learned.

Culture provides us with a framework of rules and norms, but it doesn't specify how to act when faced with other cultures or unfamiliar scenarios. In these instances, the tendencies ingrained in us through *habitus* guide our behaviour. When culture doesn't offer clear instructions, *habitus* provides the tactics for *improvisation*.

The structure, amount, and composition of capital, which are key components of *habitus*, play a significant role in shaping social dynamics. The *structure* refers to the type of capital an individual possesses—whether economic, cultural, social, or symbolic. The

can often be predicted in advance. It emphasises that the outcome of an event can be anticipated based on its course, and in some cases, these outcomes are unavoidable.

¹¹ <https://eksisozluk.com/entry/98130013>

amount indicates the quantity of these capitals, whether abundant or scarce. The third element, *composition*, refers to the mixture and distribution of different types of capital.

To illustrate, imagine a wallet containing different currencies, checks, and promissory notes. These assets represent an individual's capital structure. For example, two people may have the same types and amounts of money—dollars, euros, and TL—yet their social positioning and interactions can differ significantly based on how these capitals are utilised and combined. One person may have more economic capital but lower cultural and social capital, while the other might possess a more balanced mix of capitals, leading to different social outcomes.

In other words, to understand an individual's social position, it's not enough to simply look at the amount of capital they possess; the type of capital and how it's combined are equally important. Additionally, the speed at which this capital is accumulated matters. For instance, imagine two students with the same intelligence, diligence, and education level. Their teacher gives them the same task. Even though they are identical in every way, one may receive a higher grade or be ranked higher than the other. The reason for this distinction is simple: the student who submits their assignment first—who reaches the required capital in a shorter time—will be more successful.

Bourdieu suggests an analogy to handwriting, which embodies a “stylistic affinity” unique to everyone, regardless of the form or material used (Swartz, 1997, p. 108). This example of handwriting effectively illustrates how *habitus* manifests in everyday life. No matter what materials are provided, a person's writing style and manner are consistent. It reflects their *habitus*. It shows how *habitus* shapes not only a person's habits and behaviours but also their creativity and originality.

Habitus refers to a reality in which an individual performs actions naturally and without calculation, aiming to be accepted by society. “To do without calculation” implies that the individual acts under societal norms and expectations. In this context, *habitus* is a “set of dispositions” that enables the individual to act with the thought “anyone would do the same.” While *habitus* may undergo minor transformations over time, its general structure remains unchanged mainly (Görgün Baran, 2019, p. 9). Although *habitus* suggests that individuals act spontaneously, it highlights that their behaviour is in harmony with their culture. It reflects how individuals internalise natural tendencies shaped by societal norms, values, and expectations.

For example, a person from a rural background, having grown up with the culture of the village, may experience cultural incompatibility and struggle to adapt when moving

to the city. The habits and cultural codes learned in the village may sometimes be insufficient or create friction in the urban environment. When the rules and expectations in the city differ, the person might improvise, relying on their old habits while trying to adjust. However, these improvisations can lead to issues if there is a mismatch between the norms and expectations in the city and the habits acquired in the village. For instance, villagers who move to the city from remote areas of Anatolia and begin living in apartment buildings might still use the fire escape for storage, keep potatoes and onions there, or wash carpets in the apartment garden, even after living in the city for 20-30 years. It illustrates how they have not fully adapted to the urban norms, as their village-influenced habits persist.

Bourdieu does not claim that all behaviours are governed by *habitus*. Instead, *habitus* explains behavioural patterns in situations where cultural norms are ambiguous or absent. In such cases, individuals rely on their internalised dispositions to navigate complex or uncertain environments. However, in highly structured or regulated situations, where rules and norms are explicit, *habitus* less influences behaviour. Instead, external factors like material interests or political norms have a stronger impact (Swartz, 2011).

When cultural expectations are clear, individuals follow established rules or guidelines, leaving little room for *habitus* to shape their behaviour. But when the rules are unclear or the culture does not specify what to do, *habitus* comes into play, allowing for *improvisation* and flexibility in actions.

2.3 Habitus and Architecture

In *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1951), Erwin Panofsky argues that Scholasticism, a central theological and philosophical movement of the Middle Ages, represents both explicitly stated theoretical attitudes and implicit cultural assumptions. He contends that Scholasticism functions as a mode of thought transmitted through institutions, practices, and social relationships, acting as a “habit-forming power” that shapes individuals’ cognitive and behavioural schemas. Panofsky’s analysis has played a key role in shaping Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. Bourdieu’s *habitus* explains how individuals’ actions, behaviours, and preferences are influenced by the cultural and social structures they internalise, reflecting their positions in the social order. Panofsky’s insights into Scholasticism have significantly contributed to the development of Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* (Swartz, 2011).

Helena Webster (2023), in *Bourdieu for Architects*, explores Bourdieu's key analyses and their implications for architecture. Influenced by Panofsky, Bourdieu investigated various themes in his Algerian fieldwork, including the cultural instability caused by the displacement of mountain communities into French-designed settlement camps, the *cultural liminality* experienced after rural-to-urban migration, and the symbolic content of the Kabyle house (Bourdieu & Sayad, 1964; Bourdieu et al., 1963; Bourdieu, 1960; 1965, all as cited in Webster, 2023).

He later expanded on these findings by documenting multiple aspects of Kabyle culture—agricultural calendars, social groupings, construction methods, gender roles, spatial arrangements, marriage rituals, farming practices, cooking, weaving, proverbs, songs, and rites of passage. He recorded all material on 1,500 perforated cards and systematically indexed them to uncover structural patterns (Bourdieu, 1990). The initial results were published in *The Berber House or the World Reversed* (1970) [originally published as *La Maison Kabyle ou le Monde Renversé* in 1960], and a revised version appeared a decade later in a volume honouring Claude Lévi-Strauss's sixtieth birthday (Bourdieu, 1970; 1970). Webster (2023) discusses these works to highlight how Bourdieu's ethnographic insights inform architectural thinking, particularly in relation to the idealised Kabyle house (Figure 2.1).

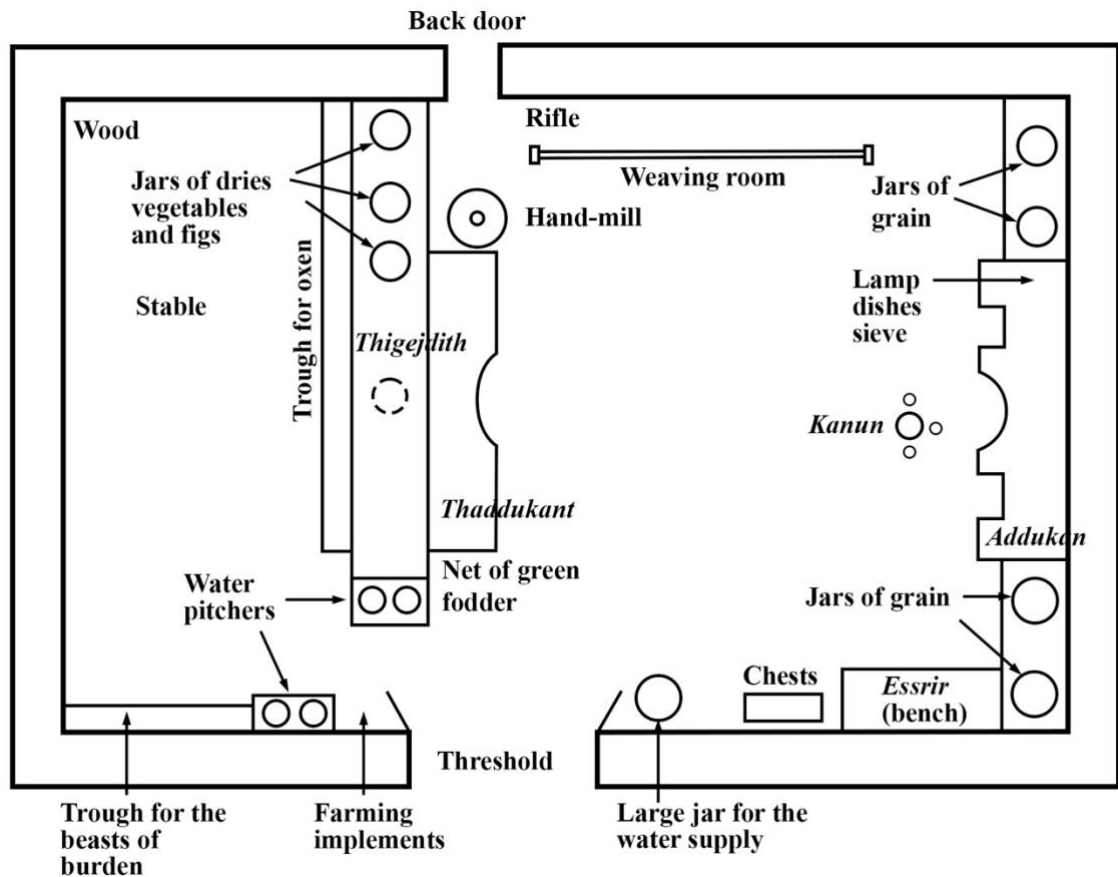


Figure 2.1 Plan of the Berber house (Reproduced from the source: Bourdieu, 1970)

The second version of the article attracted widespread attention from anthropologists, cultural theorists, sociologists, and architects, leading to multiple reprints over the following decades (Bourdieu, 1972; 1973; 2000; 2003, cited in Webster, 2023). Drawing on Bourdieu's methodological approach, numerous scholars have examined the symbolic dimensions of domestic arrangements. Their work sheds light on the structural and cultural meanings embedded in the organisation of houses across different societies (Löfgren, 2003; Mitchell, 1988; Pellow, 2004; Robben, 1989), as Webster (2023) discussed.

The text begins with a precise and straightforward description of a Kabyle house: a modest, rectangular, bare stone structure divided into two sections by a low wall with two doors. One section, occupying two-thirds of the space, is dedicated to people and includes a hearth, cooking area, and weaving loom. The other section is reserved for animals and water containers. Initially, the text focuses solely on the functional uses of these objects.

Bourdieu, however, emphasises that the text does not fully explain the form of the Kabyle house. He argues that the fundamental elements determining the house's form are rooted in the beliefs and practices tied to the Kabyles' mythic-ritual system, as these serve

as the foundational regulatory principles of their society. In his later interpretations, Bourdieu explores how the Kabyle people's deep connections to the natural world, seasons, daily cycles, life cycle, and fertility are reflected in the symbolism embedded in the house's structure. However, Bourdieu acknowledges that symbolic systems alone do not explain or determine the house's form (Bourdieu, 1970, cited in Webster, 2023). Using a structuralist approach, he asserts that symbolic expressions always manifest as binary oppositions, which form a coherent and balanced system through structural similarities, metaphors, comparisons, and hierarchical structures. For example, the house's orientation is influenced by cosmological beliefs, with its main axis aligned east–west and the entrance facing the rising sun. Bourdieu shows that from these basic oppositions, a series of analogous oppositions—such as dawn–twilight, spring–autumn, light–dark, and male door–female door—emerge (Webster, 2023) (Figure 2.2).

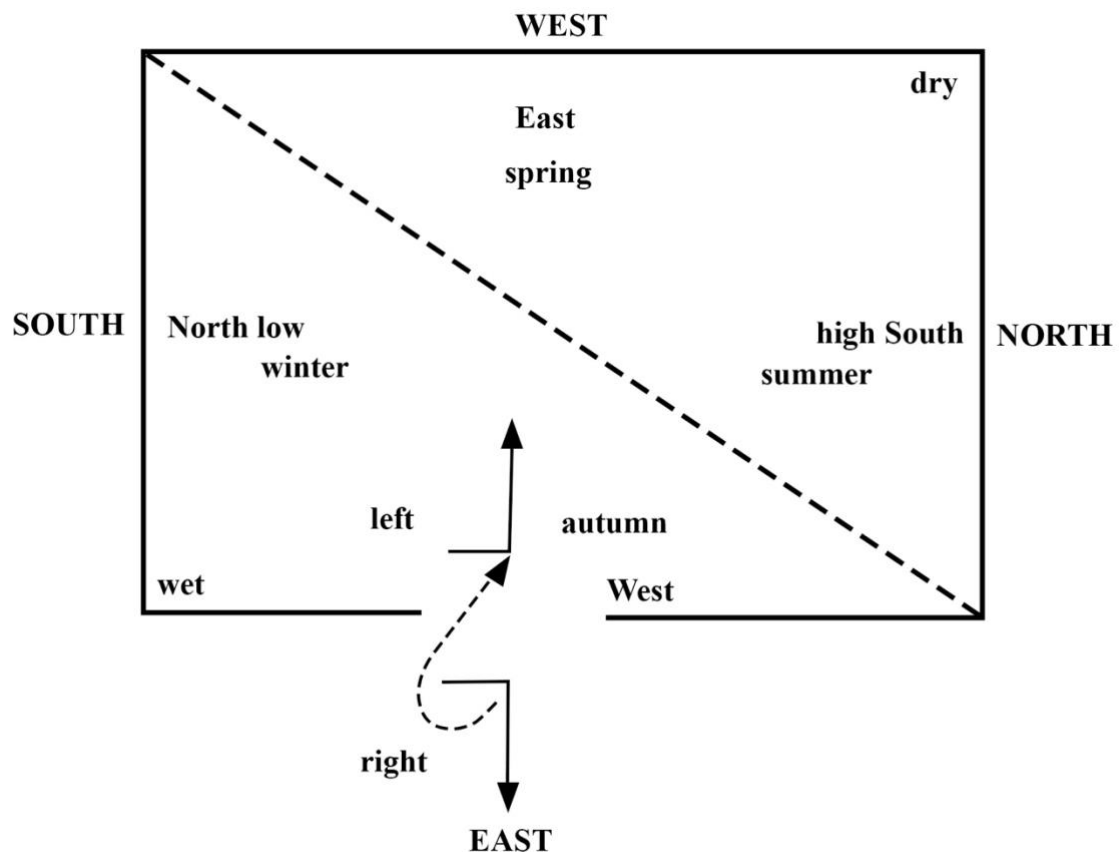


Figure 2.2 Diagram of the Berber house from Bourdieu's perspective (Reproduced from the source: Bourdieu, 2018)

According to Webster (2023), one of Bourdieu's most striking interpretations was his analysis of the fundamental masculine and feminine binary oppositions within the Kabyle house. Bourdieu argued that in Kabyle society, the external world was considered the male realm, while the domestic space was perceived as the female domain. Proverbs supporting this understanding highlighted a binary opposition between masculine and feminine interpretations of the house. Bourdieu posited that the east wall of the house, which faced the external world, symbolised the masculine west wall of the house's interior. Similarly, the west wall facing the external world represented the feminine east wall within the house. The west interior wall, illuminated by light from the main door, was called the "bright wall" and associated with dawn, spring, fertility, and the work at the weaving loom.

In contrast, the east interior wall, which did not receive light from the main door, was called the "dark wall" and linked to the storage of water, the man's sleep, and the dark corner of the house known as the stable. Bourdieu's interpretations of the Kabyle house were notable for their craftsmanship and detail. For example, the nature-culture binary opposition was expressed in the spatial division of the interior, with people occupying the southern side and animals the northern side. This division extended to a series of secondary binary oppositions, including high – low, dark – light, cobblestone floor – black earth and dung floor, wet/damp/raw food storage – dry food storage, women's sleeping area – men's sleeping area, and private natural activities (sex, birth, death, taboo) – cultural activities (cooking, food preparation, weaving, hosting guests, respect).

Shortly after these studies, Bourdieu noted that the findings from his research on the *marriage game* of villagers in his hometown of Bearn (Bourdieu, 1962, as mentioned in Webster, 2023) confirmed the results of his study in Algeria. In Bearn, the social status of singles was determined not only by material wealth or economic capital but also by symbolic capital, such as the size of their houses (large or small) and the social standing of their families (large or small). Bourdieu's fieldwork on both the Kabyle people and Bearn inhabitants laid the foundation for the idea that symbolic goods and practices are essential in constructing, maintaining, and reproducing society's **arbitrary** values and practices, serving as indicators of social differences (Webster, 2023).

Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) [originally published as *La Distinction*, 1979] is foundational in exploring how aesthetics are class-based and how they serve to maintain elite interests. He argues that "education is a tool controlled by those in power, and for

this reason, it never operates in a way that could lead to the erosion of power” (Webster, 2023, p. 64). Bourdieu was influenced by Erwin Panofsky’s art historical approach (Panofsky, 1939, 1951, 1955, as cited in Webster, 2023), which emphasised the relationship between the artist, artistic production, and the context of the work, rather than viewing art in isolation. This influence is reflected in Bourdieu’s development of the concept of *habitus*, as noted in his retrospective article *The Genesis of the Concept of Habitus and of Field* (1985).

Following Panofsky’s lead, Bourdieu argued that schooling provides individuals with deeply embedded cognitive schemas that shape their culture, more precisely, their *habitus*. He maintained that *habitus* functions by converting collective heritage into both individual and shared subconscious awareness (Bourdieu, 2005, as cited in Webster, 2023). Guiding individuals to integrate into their social environment and historical moment, *habitus* informs creative action in ways that typically escape conscious reflection.

Bourdieu’s most influential sociological work was deeply informed by studies of architecture and art history. The interaction between these disciplines helped him understand how social structures and power relations are shaped through architecture. For Bourdieu, architecture is not just the design of physical spaces but also a tool for expressing these spaces’ meanings in social and cultural contexts. Through the concept of *habitus*, he argued that architectural works are not merely aesthetically valuable; they reflect social class differences and symbolic power relations. The social dynamics behind architectural works laid the foundation for Bourdieu’s contributions to sociology, emphasising the critical role of architecture in understanding the complexity of social reality and its structures.

I am focusing on the **housing culture** of the *yilli* in Kayseri, which has been disrupted by the standardisation of housing structures within capitalist production systems. My aim is to explore how the living culture of the *yilli* is transmitted across generations, specifically through the **improvisations** that emerge within these standardised housing structures. I am searching for traces of the *habitus* of this social group in everyday housing practices, which often reflect implicit cultural meanings. These spaces, where culture is not explicitly defined, allow people to express themselves most clearly through unconscious and common practices. By observing these practices, I seek to uncover the underlying logic and improvisations that shape the housing culture of the *yilli*.

I am focusing on the sociological foundations of architecture and the contributions I can make to this field. Architecture is not only the construction of physical structures but also a reflection of social relationships, cultural values, and societal arrangements. To understand architecture's future development, viewing it as a social process shaped by cultural contexts is essential. Housing architecture, for example, reflects not just physical characteristics but also a society's values, lifestyles, and social dynamics. We can uncover how architecture carries deeper social and cultural meanings by examining how people organise their houses, prioritise functions, and shape interactions. Therefore, studying architecture's development requires considering the cultural contexts that influence social dynamics.

Panofsky emphasises that Gothic architecture reflects scholastic philosophy, and inspired by this, Bourdieu, after analysing the house of the Kabyle tribe, reveals that their culture is structured around the concept of *honour*. Similarly, my goal in this study is to examine the relationship between the culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri and housing practices and to explore the connection between architectural and cultural practices through the concept of *habitus*.

Architecture involves the construction of physical structures and shapes the behaviours and cultural habits of those living within them. Factors such as the use of a balcony or the internal arrangement of a house can influence its inhabitants' cultural and social practices. For example, using fire escapes for storage or transforming common areas like hallways, terraces, and gardens into private spaces can offer insights into cultural habits and *habitus*. The concept of *habitus* can help us understand how individuals and groups improvise their cultural practices in these spaces. This study aims to uncover the logic behind these cultural practices and their underlying reasons. Understanding how apartment living in Kayseri interacts with traditional culture and generates new habits is key to analysing these cultural dynamics.

Chapter 3

Yilli of Kayseri

Kayseri, an industrial hub in the heart of Anatolia, has long attracted a diverse population through migration and the presence of universities drawing students from across Turkey and beyond. Its proximity to Cappadocia and its role as a transfer centre make it a frequent destination for international tourists, contributing to its cosmopolitan character. This diversity has deep historical roots. While the city's founding date remains unknown, its central city walls date back to the Roman Empire. Later, under the Seljuks and Ottomans, Kayseri became a key urban centre, shaped by successive historical and cultural layers.¹²

Kayseri has been a cultural and religious crossroads throughout its history, particularly during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, due to its strategic location along trade routes. In the Seljuk era, Muslim Turks, Christians, and Jews coexisted, engaging in commerce and cultural exchange, traces of which remain in the city's historical buildings and caravanserais. During the Ottoman period, Kayseri remained ethnically and religiously diverse, with Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews contributing to its economic and social life. Trade and craftsmanship fostered interaction among these communities, shaping a shared cultural heritage. Today, Kayseri's historical fabric reflects this legacy, demonstrating how different religious and ethnic groups coexisted with mutual respect.¹³

Although Kayseri has hosted various communities, one group stands out—the *yilli*, who consider themselves the true natives of the city. *Yilli* is a dialectal pronunciation of *yerli* (meaning “local”), shaped by Kayseri's distinctive speech patterns. This pronunciation is so widely accepted that even non-*yilli* use *yilli* to refer to them.

The *yilli* trace their roots to the oldest neighbourhoods within and around the city walls. When introducing themselves, they often mention their family name and neighbourhood. As Dülgeroğlu (2012) notes, “When you ask a person if they are from

¹² For more information see Çayırdağ, M. (2001). *Kayseri Tarihi Araştırmaları*. Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları.

¹³ This information is based on experiences shared by people in my family.

Kayseri, you will receive the reply, ‘I am *yilli*.’” However, not all long-time residents qualify as *yilli*. Even if they have lived in the city centre for generations, families from surrounding districts are not considered *yilli*. Only those with deep-rooted lineage in the city centre hold this status. Additionally, *yilli* families have distinct nicknames by which they recognise one another.

The *yilli* of Kayseri consider themselves the true owners of the city, distinguishing themselves from other residents. While the local-outsider divide is common in many places, it takes on a distinct form in Kayseri. The most notable aspect is the *yilli*’s sense of superiority over other groups, reinforcing a clear distinction between locals and outsiders, often referred to in daily life as *yilli* versus villagers.

3.1 Culture and Identity

Culture and society are fundamental to human existence; without them, our understanding of humanity would not be possible (Assmann, 2011). According to Neill (2004, p. 2), culture provides the context in which we define ourselves, shaping our identities and influencing how we express “who we are” and “where we come from.” At its core, identity consists of characteristics, values, and relationships that distinguish individuals or communities or unite them. In this sense, recognising shared values makes individuals or groups unique. Sennett (1992) further defines identity as the fundamental terms people use to differentiate themselves from others.

The term *identity*, derived from the Latin root *idem*, conveys notions of sameness and continuity. The Turkish Language Association defines identity as “the entirety of signs, qualities, and characteristics that show what kind of person a human being is as a social entity.”¹⁴ In Turkish, the term “kimlik” (*identity*) originates from the root “kim” (who) and, like its Latin counterpart, is associated with belonging, sameness, uniqueness, and self-definition (Aydoğdu, 2004). The Cambridge Dictionary defines identity in two ways: “who someone is” and “the things that make one person or group of people different from others.”¹⁵ According to Connolly (as cited in Dalbay, 2018), identity is not merely about personal choices or preferences but about who we are and how we are recognised. Moreover, identity relies on differences to sustain itself, often marginalising them to establish certainty. Gleason (1983) highlights that in social sciences, identity primarily

¹⁴ <https://sozluk.gov.tr/?ara=kimlik>

¹⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/sözlük/ingilizce-türkçe/identity>

refers to the relationship between individuals and society, addressing the fundamental questions: “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?”

Identity consists of two key components: **sense of belonging** and **identification**. *Belonging* refers to individuals’ connection with a place, person, or group, which is central in defining their sense of identity. In some theories, *belonging* is synonymous with *identity* because belonging is integral to how people define who they are. The second component is *identification*, which occurs when people define themselves as part of a group. *Identification* can be understood in two ways: internal and external. Internal identification refers to how individuals perceive their identity, while external identification is about defining oneself in relation to others, often highlighting differences. These aspects of identification are interconnected. When we define ourselves, we also define others and their differences. For example, saying, “We Turks are very hospitable” implicitly suggests that others are not. Similarly, saying “Arabs are dirty” implies that “we are clean.” Thus, every external definition also shapes an internal one. Identity is therefore tied to both self-definition and a sense of belonging. While some may use the terms “belonging” and “identification” separately, “identity” is the term generally used to encompass both (Z. N. Nahya, personal communication, July 10, 2024).

The verb *to define* plays a crucial role in shaping *identity*. Identity is not a fixed “thing” that simply “exists” but a process that must be continually constructed. It involves two key aspects: classifying things or people and associating oneself with something or someone else, such as a friend, a sports team, or an ideology (Jenkins, 1996, p. 17). An identity is formed with various socially recognised differences, which are fundamental to identity (Connolly, 1991). While identity is centred on the individual, it is also a social construct. It is how an individual understands their society and their place within it. All human identities are inherently social.

Defining ourselves or others is an ongoing process of meaning-making, shaped by interaction: through agreements and disagreements, traditions and innovations, and communication and negotiation (Jenkins, 1996). Identity also involves a sense of attachment or shared characteristics (attributes) established in contrast to the isolation created by another person, community, or common goals and boundaries (Hall, 1996, as cited by Asiliskender, 2008).

Identity is both relational and collective. It is shaped by the elements we identify with or are identified by others, such as white, male, American, or a sports fan. At the same time, it is defined in contrast to what we are not. Therefore, identity always relies

on a range of differences that help distinguish one person or group from another. Identity expresses the unique characteristics of individuals and communities with others. It includes not only our self-understanding but also how we perceive others and how others perceive themselves and us. In this sense, identity synthesises relationships of similarity and difference. Because identity is a product of ongoing agreements and disagreements, it is not fixed. It is always subject to negotiation, influenced by the dynamic interactions between individuals and communities (Jenkins, 1996).

Collective or social identity extends beyond individual and subgroup identities to encompass the broader identity of a nation or society. According to Bilgin (1999), collective identity represents groups' demands, particularly ethnic communities, to highlight and emphasise their differences within a specific territory. Özdemir (2001) adds that social identity reflects an individual's sense of belonging to the values, norms, beliefs, customs, language, religion, and other institutions of their social environment. Through this awareness, individuals recognise similarities, contrasts, and conflicts between their society and others, shaping their actions accordingly. A key aspect of collective identity is its retrospective dimension. It is rooted in tradition, constructed from symbols, memories, customs, values, beliefs, and knowledge passed down through generations. This collective memory helps communities understand themselves through a shared past, commemorated and interpreted through rituals and ceremonies (Dalbay, 2018). Collective identity is subjectively perceived and constructed, often by emphasising differences. It requires creating an "us" in contrast to "them." This identity is linked to a group's awareness and sense of belonging to its unique characteristics. Language, culture, religion, history, living space, material conditions, and collective memory play significant roles in shaping collective identity (Bilgin, 1999).

"The collective or 'we' identity is the image that a group has of itself and with which its members associate themselves. It therefore has no existence of its own but comes into being through recognition by its participating individuals" (Assmann, 2011, pp. 113-114). Hall (as cited by Neill, 2004) defines cultural identity as a collective, true self hidden beneath many superficial or artificial selves. People share this true self with a common culture, past, and ancestry.

In summary, identity is the ongoing process of defining and making sense of one's existence to "others," both on an individual and societal level. It is a symbolic framework that shapes how people interpret their values, position themselves in the world, and

establish relationships with time, space, and the concept of “the other” (Asiliskender, 2008).

Culture and society play fundamental roles in shaping identity, providing the context for our sense of self. Culture offers the interpretations and values that help individuals define their identities. At its core, identity consists of characteristics that distinguish or connect individuals and communities with or against others. There are two key components of identity: belonging and identification. Belonging reflects where an individual feels they belong, while identification, which has internal and external aspects, plays a crucial role in forming identity. Identity is continuously constructed through social interactions and defined by relationships with different social groups.

Collective identity, in contrast, is formed through a group’s shared history, culture, and values. It emphasises the unique characteristics and sense of belonging within the group. The identity of being Kayserian, for example, is rooted in the city’s historical and cultural heritage, lifestyle, and the values of its native inhabitants. To be Kayserian is to embrace and perpetuate this collective past, making the Kayseri identity a defining factor in how individuals and communities perceive themselves and others.

3.2 Identity of Being Kayserian

There is a story about a Kayserian and an Armenian who had a close relationship. One day, the Kayserian borrows money from his Armenian friend, promising to repay him when the snow on Mount Erciyes melts. A year later, the Armenian asks for the money, but the Kayserian points to the mountain and says the snow hasn’t melted yet. The Armenian realises he has been tricked and decides to get revenge. He borrows money from another Kayserian, using the same excuse. A year later, when the Kayserian asks for the repayment, the Armenian shows him the snow. Still, the Kayserian cleverly responds, saying that the snow he sees is from this year, while the snow from the previous year has already melted. The Armenian is left helpless and has no choice but to pay the debt. This story reflects the wit and cunning of the Kayserians.¹⁶

The image of the Kayserian, characterised by cleverness and cunning, is one of many stories passed down through the years in Kayseri. Numerous stories, jokes, and

¹⁶ <http://www.trakyaogzlem.com/yazar-erciyes-dagI-nIn-karI-eriyince-1685.html>

films—such as *Yalancı Yarım*, *Salak Milyoner*, *Köyden İndim Şehire*, *Nöri Kantar Ailesi*, and *Meraklı Köfteci*—have contributed to shaping this image. In these films, the Kayserian is often portrayed as a shrewd trader, sharp-witted, and frugal, with a distinctive way of speaking highlighting their unique personality.

Perhaps due to the influence of such stories or personal experiences, there is a specific image of Kayserians in Turkey. “Kayserian” is often associated with cunning, trickery, a strong appreciation for money, and being skilled at bargaining.¹⁷ This image generally symbolises a personality that understands trade. These traits include sharpness, business knowledge, self-interest, financial acumen, boldness, persuasiveness, and determination. Kayserians take pride in these qualities (Çoruk, 2009). While this image is widely recognised throughout Turkey, is it truly representative of all Kayserians? As a Kayserian, I can say that although some of these traits might be generalised due to the tendencies and characteristics associated with a trading background, they do not apply to everyone. For example, I find bargaining quite awkward and struggle with it. When I need to make a purchase that requires bargaining, I always take my mother, a *yilli* of Kayseri, with me. Perhaps this trait is due to my mother being a *yilli* of Kayseri, and I am not.¹⁸

Kayseri has long been a key trade city due to its strategic location at a crossroads that facilitates the movement of trade goods from the east and south to the west. Beyond its central trading hub role, the city stands out as a centre of culture and civilisation. The region’s nature, which is not conducive to agriculture and livestock, has steered its residents toward trade, laying the foundation for the city’s current economic success (Keyman & Koyuncu Lorasdağı, 2009). Kayseri distinguishes itself from other cities in Turkey through two key characteristics: its commercial nature and its conservative, Islamic character. The city’s commercial identity is so ingrained in its culture that expressions like “I can’t read or write, but I’m from Kayseri” or “A Kayserian would paint his mother and sell her to his father”¹⁹ have become proverbs that reflect the city’s sharp business acumen in public discourse (Akşit et al., 2011, p. 50).

Kayseri is renowned across Turkey for its commercial success and expertise, with its merchants serving as role models for businesspeople nationwide. This reputation stems

¹⁷ <https://eksisozluk.com/kayserili--528493?p=1>

¹⁸ The concept of being *yilli* is passed down through the paternal side. Since my maternal grandfather was *yilli*, my mother is considered *yilli*, despite her mother not being so. In my case, however, my father is from a village in Kayseri and is not *yilli*. Therefore, I am not considered “*yilli*”, even though my mother is.

¹⁹ It is essential to understand that they describe a product’s features so convincingly and influence the other party to such an extent that they could even sell their mother to their father by highlighting aspects of her he never knew about.

from the city's long-standing tradition of trade. Kayseri's strong trade culture, commercial acumen, and social values give individuals the tools to thrive in commerce. From an early age, families actively guide their children into trade, fostering a relationship with money that becomes ingrained in their upbringing. Over time, this focus on trade has become a societal norm, and each successive generation has further cemented Kayseri's reputation for commercial intelligence (Keyman & Koyuncu Lorasdağı, 2009).

In Kayseri, values such as hard work, saving, and maximising earnings are deeply ingrained and regarded not only as commercial principles but also as values embraced with the same devotion as religious practices. A well-known saying about the city suggests that intelligent individuals are guided toward trade, while less business-oriented people are encouraged to pursue education. While this perception is widespread among outsiders, the extent to which it truly reflects societal reality remains a topic of discussion. Due to Kayseri's geographical conditions, trade has historically been a necessity rather than a choice. As a result, people raised in this environment are often perceived as sharp, resourceful, and business savvy. There is a common belief that intelligence naturally follows in a city where trade dominates daily life. This belief has led to the notion that bright children in Kayseri are steered toward commerce. Many stories reinforce this idea, one of which is as follows (Çoruk, 2009, p. 59):

A Kayseri resident reunites with an old friend and complains that two of his four sons are foolish. When asked why, he explains that the two who became a deli owner and a shoemaker were successful, while the other two, who became a teacher and a civil servant, were considered foolish. He adds that in Kayseri, intelligent people become merchants instead of pursuing academic careers.

Comments about Kayseri often include both positive and negative evaluations of the intelligence of its people. This intelligence is sometimes portrayed as the sharpness of a perceptive, alert individual who avoids being exploited. At other times, however, it carries negative connotations, such as being troublesome or stirring up discord (Tamer, 2019)—another story emphasising the shrewdness of Kayserians (Çoruk, 2009, p. 65):

The story is about a Kayseri resident separated into a group of people who can read and write during a military selection process. The commander, suspicious of the situation, asks him if he knows how to read and write. The Kayserian confidently replies, "Commander, I don't know how to read and write, but I am a Kayserian!"

Kayserians take pride in their intelligence and readily accept positive comments about it. However, one trait often attributed to them that they find less appealing is

‘stinginess.’ One interviewee, however, reframed this characteristic as frugality rather than stinginess. Kayseri’s challenging economic conditions—stemming from infertile agricultural land, harsh winters, and trade difficulties—have shaped a culture of careful financial management. Due to these hardships, possessions, especially women’s dowries, are used for extended periods and rarely replaced. Men typically prioritise saving money and investing in their children’s future, while parents provide financial support well into adulthood. In Kayseri, economic security is deeply intertwined with family structure and marriage. The necessity of maintaining financial stability over the long term has reinforced a tradition of cautious spending and resourcefulness. This cultural emphasis on financial prudence, rather than mere stinginess, has been a defining characteristic of Kayserians over generations (I_3).

For Kayserians, using their money and time efficiently is of great value. They never waste time and make the most of every moment (Çoruk, 2009). According to Beğenç (1950, cited in Doğan Topçu, 2012), for Kayserians, working, acquiring knowledge, and avoiding deception are essential. They tend to go to bed early, wake up early, and understand the types and qualities of goods. However, they do not mock those who lack this knowledge. Their expertise allows them to influence others to align with their views. They do not deal with unproductive land or unproductive work. Kayserians are not stingy; they know how to multiply the money they receive, like a forest, spend it gradually, save it, and let it grow like sheep. A Kayserian’s money grows like the snow on Mount Erciyes.

Kayserians are most notably recognised for their commercial skills, but another prominent characteristic is their conservative nature, which strongly influences daily life in the city. This conservative structure also plays a significant role in Kayseri’s political context. Historically, the city has been a thriving trade centre, fostering a culture of opportunism. As Korat (2009, p. 27) observed, Kayseri is aligned with the “ever larger and more roaring water,” symbolising its adaptability and growth. Politically, Kayseri’s identity generally mirrors the national trend, which is primarily conservative. This alignment not only shapes the city’s political landscape but also contributes to its economic foundation, particularly by supporting the growth of trade and industry.

A saying that highlights Kayseri’s conservative nature is “*until Boğazköprü*,” which reflects the idea that once people cross the Boğazköprü junction on their way into the city, they must conform to its social norms (Akşit et al., 2011). Having lived in Kayseri until university, I frequently encountered this saying. Boğazköprü, a small bridge where the roads from Ankara and Adana meet before leading into Kayseri, symbolises the boundary

between the city and the outside world. Though far from the city centre, crossing it marks entering Kayseri, while travelling in the opposite direction is seen as leaving the city. It creates a mental separation for Kayserians, where behaviours and customs shift depending on whether inside or outside the city. For example, women encouraged to wear a headscarf upon marriage would remove it when they crossed Boğazköprü on their way to summer houses in Mersin. Similarly, people who wanted to drink alcohol would go to Ürgüp, near Kayseri, to avoid being seen. This practice of secrecy, particularly in more conservative contexts, is still prevalent.

In a previous study, a Gaziantep interviewee described Kayseri as having a closed, narrow social environment where behaviours are often concealed from others. They noted that a Kayserian friend, rather than hosting them in Kayseri, took them to Ürgüp to avoid being seen (Cindoğlu et al., 2017). This trend continues today, as many people leave Kayseri for places like Cappadocia to drink or engage in other activities, but they prefer to keep it private. Once they cross Boğazköprü and enter Kayseri, they adhere to the city's social norms.

Kayseri's conservatism extends beyond religion to include a strong sense of insularity. While the city has seen migration from places like Yozgat and Sivas, migrants have typically settled on the outskirts. Even with a rise in migration in recent years, particularly after the February 2023 earthquake, these influxes have not significantly altered the city's structure, unlike in larger metropolitan areas. This insularity has fostered cultural homogeneity, and Kayseri's identity is centred on the concept of 'being Kayserian,' rather than multiculturalism. Social bonds in Kayseri are built on mutual aid, trust, and solidarity, strengthening the city's cohesive identity. Traditionalism remains a key value, reinforcing the tight-knit nature of the community (Keyman & Koyuncu Lorasdağı, 2009).

Kayseri has long been a prominent trade centre in Turkey, with its strategic location at a crossroads of trade routes fostering a rich commercial tradition. The city's economic success is rooted in this deep trade history, with its people known for their commercial expertise and bargaining skills. Kayseri's identity is also shaped by its conservative nature, which influences both daily life and societal norms. Values such as thriftiness, work discipline, and efficient use of time are central to the city's cultural fabric and contribute to its continued economic vitality. In short, Kayseri's historical, cultural, and economic structures set it apart from other Turkish cities, blending a strong heritage with dynamic economic growth.

3.3 Being *Yilli* in Kayseri

The concept of ‘being Kayserian’ is shaped by a distinctive image rooted in the city’s commercial and conservative identity. However, this image primarily represents a small, exclusive group within Kayseri. While the city has expanded and absorbed significant migration in recent years, including individuals from nearby towns and villages who establish businesses or even accumulate wealth, they remain outside this ‘Kayserian image.’ Kayseri’s conservatism has fostered a sense of ‘true ownership of the city,’ where outsiders, even those from its districts, are not entirely accepted. The idea of ‘being *yilli*’ (locality) is defined by a distinction between those from the city centre and those from surrounding areas.

Gürpınar (2018, p. 33) states, “To be considered a local (*yilli*) of a city, generations must have maintained their presence there since the great ancestors.” It emphasises that being *yilli* (locality) is not merely about physical residence but also about deep-rooted family history and continuity. Being *yilli* is tied to geography but also involves cultural and historical ties. Interviews with *yilli* in Kayseri reflected this perspective. One respondent defined a *yilli* as someone whose family has lived in Kayseri for at least seven generations (I_20), underscoring the historical depth of being *yilli*. Another mentioned that being a true *yilli* requires at least five or six generations of ancestors from Kayseri. An additional respondent emphasised that if a person’s family records, including those of their fathers or grandfathers, are not from the city centre, they are not considered truly from Kayseri (I_2). This distinction reinforces an “us versus them” mentality, where *yilli*—who see themselves as the true owners of the city—marginalise those they consider “villagers.” Another interviewee pointed out that a defining feature of being *yilli* is having no ancestral connection to any village (I_3).

Before continuing with the definitions and discussion of being *yilli*, it is essential to clarify the term *yilli*, which I have explicitly used in the title of this study and this section. The Kayseri dialect has a distinctive structure, often depicted in films and stories about Kayserians. One of its most recognisable features is the pronunciation of ‘K’ as ‘G,’ such as saying Gayseri instead of Kayseri and Gayseriliyim instead of Kayseriliyim (meaning “I am from Kayseri”). As previously noted, the *yilli* of Kayseri shape the dominant features of the Kayserian image, and the Kayseri dialect is specific to them. While others in the city may adopt aspects of the dialect through interaction, a *yilli* is immediately recognisable by their speech. In the Kayseri dialect, the word for “local” is

pronounced as *yilli*, and locals refer to themselves as *yilli*. They also use *yillisiyim* [meaning “I am *yilli*”] to express their identity as a local of Kayseri. This term has remained distinctive, so I emphasise the *yilli* concept in this study.

Returning to the “us vs. them” distinction, the identity of being a Kayserian or *yilli* is fundamentally shaped by this differentiation. Identity is formed through a sense of belonging—either to a place or a group—and being *yilli* in Kayseri is rooted in ties to the city’s oldest neighbourhoods, particularly within the city walls, and to others from these areas. Residents who identify as *yilli* establish a collective “we,” contrasting themselves with “them”—those from villages or later migrants to the city. For instance, when asked, “Are you from Kayseri?” or “Are you from inside or outside?” a person is prompted to define their belonging. Responding with “I am *yilli* of Kayseri” or “We *yilli*” signals membership in an exclusive community. This sense of belonging shapes one’s identity and social position while reinforcing exclusionary attitudes toward newcomers.²⁰

While similar phenomena exist elsewhere in Turkey, Kayseri’s sense of locality has distinct characteristics. Şerif Mardin (1990) traces the origins of class formation in Turkey by examining centre-periphery relations in Ottoman lands. As the empire expanded, controlling distant territories became increasingly complex, leading to the use of “kulls”—non-Muslim recruits trained to serve the Sultan. Since all land belonged to the Sultan, these *devshirme* had no personal claims to property and remained highly loyal to the central authority. To prevent the consolidation of power in the periphery, the Ottomans avoided hereditary governance, instead appointing new administrators, often religious figures, with each transition. Over time, families in the periphery circumvented this system by establishing religious foundations and economic institutions that allowed them to maintain influence across generations. Wealthy families who accumulated economic and social capital became known as *eşraf*—prominent figures consulted in their

²⁰ Although this situation may seem to reflect an aristocratic understanding of identity, as will be discussed further, it is more related to economic capital. *Yilli* pay close attention to whether the people they socialise with or establish kinship relationships with are primarily *yilli*, but economic status also plays a significant role in this process. One interviewee mentioned that when marrying off their daughters, they first consider whether the suitors are *yilli* and then their financial situation (I_6). Another respondent stated that arranged marriages within the family are conducted to keep the family’s wealth within the family and preserve their economic status (I_16).

Comparing this with the Circassian context, Circassians, who are pretty conservative in preserving their culture and maintaining insularity, prioritise whether the person they marry is Circassian, regardless of their financial status or education. In their view, Circassian blood is considered noble and must be preserved through marriage. In contrast, *yilli*, while valuing nativeness, can make their preferences based on economic factors, which may depend on whether the financial situation is good or bad. It may be related to their trader origins and their tendency to plan family institutions to maximise economic benefits.

communities. As their power grew, the *eşraf* families assumed an intermediary role between the centre and the periphery (Özcoşar, 2017).²¹

The Turkish Language Institution's Contemporary Turkish Dictionary defines *eşraf* as "the rich, the influential, the prominent of a place."²² The concept of *eşraf* is a significant social phenomenon in Turkish culture and societal structure, symbolising the status of a well-known individual within a locality. It reflects regional exclusivity and embodies specific values unique to Turkish society. In provincial areas, being part of the *eşraf* signifies a distinction from others and denotes a higher social class. The term typically refers to families that have lived in a specific region for many years, exerting considerable influence on the local population. These families often play a prominent role in the region's social, economic, or cultural life. Due to their long-standing presence and extensive family ties, *eşraf* families are deeply integrated into the region's fabric (Demir, 2019).

The concept of *eşraf* particularly denotes regional exclusivity or recognition, which holds significance in this context. Being part of the *eşraf* in a city indicates a distinction from others and generally signifies a certain level of prestige within that society. *Eşraf* is associated with residing in a specific geographical area and having deep-rooted ties to that region. It implies that the *eşraf* often assumes leadership, guidance, or advisory roles within the community and is typically seen as the guardian of local culture and traditions (Demir, 2019). Some families are known as landowners, while others are recognised as influential capital groups in the industrial sector. Certain families may also play an active role in education and cultural activities, while others are notable for their religious or political backgrounds and the capital they possess. Each family's status and reputation within the community are shaped by these factors and assessed based on their contributions to the social structure (Özsan, 2010).

The concept of *yilli* shares similarities with *eşraf* regarding long-term residency, deep-rooted family background, distinguishing oneself from others, and exclusivity, yet it differs in key ways. While *eşraflık* is often defined through economic capital, allowing individuals to join the *eşraf* over time as their wealth increases, this dynamic does not apply to *yilli* identity in Kayseri. For example, industrialists from Hacılar—a district of Kayseri—who have made substantial investments and accumulated considerable

²¹ For more sources for detailed information about the concept of *eşraf*, see: Mardin, Ş. (1973). Center-periphery relations: A key to Turkish politics? *Daedalus*, 102(1), 169-190.

²² <https://sozluk.gov.tr/?ara=e%C5%9Fraf>

wealth,²³ have never been considered *yilli*, despite their economic standing. Regardless of financial status, *yilli* individuals hold authority within the city. Although this has long been discussed as a local myth, it is essential to recognise that Kayseri has historically experienced relatively little migration. In areas predominantly inhabited by Kayseri residents, *yilli* have remained the majority. Even those who pursued education in other cities have often returned. Given this historical continuity, it is unsurprising that *yilli* individuals remain actively involved in commerce, municipal governance, and institutional leadership, playing a crucial role in decision-making processes concerning the city.

In addition to examining whether a phenomenon like *yilli* exists in other Anatolian cities through various sources, I also explored this question through individual interviews. As a faculty member at Abdullah Gül University's Architecture Department, I discussed the topic with students who had moved to Kayseri for their university education. I received the same response each time: they had not encountered a similar phenomenon in their hometowns. Despite their limited interaction with city life, they still perceived the presence of being *yilli* in Kayseri. I posed the same question to interviewees, who consistently emphasised that being *yilli* is unique to Kayseri and that *yilli* share a culture of economic and social solidarity within urban life (I_30, I_21). For example, one interviewee illustrated this solidarity through *oturma* culture (Figure 3.1): "Ahmet Ağa's son is getting married, but the boy doesn't have a job. How can we find him one? Everyone is concerned about each other's problems, and it is immediately shared there" (I_26). While interviewees highlighted the urban culture among *yilli*, the question remains whether this culture is truly urban or primarily reflects a sense of belonging to the city without significant differences from rural life. This issue will be explored in the following sections.

²³ To better understand the process of Hacılar's industrialists, see: Cengiz, K. (2013). *Yav İşte Fabrikalaşak*. İletişim Yayınları.



Figure 3.1 *Oturma* tradition between *yilli* men (Source: Photo archive of I_5)

In Kayseri, being *yilli* plays a defining role in social prestige, with family affiliation being a key determinant of status. A person's recognition and respect often stem from their surname and family ties rather than individual achievements. When meeting someone new, locals typically ask, "Where are you from?" If the answer is "I am *yilli*," the next question is often, "Who are you related to?" Among *yilli*, this question serves to identify a person's family, usually through a well-known family nickname. In this context, belonging to a respected family carries more weight than personal attributes or accomplishments (Gürpınar, 2018).

While some *yilli* families have little social or economic capital compared to prominent ones, simply being *yilli* grants a certain status within the community. However, economic standing still plays a significant role in shaping social relations. *Yilli* generally prefer associating with other *yilli* over non-*yilli*, but their social circles tend to be stratified by wealth. In some instances, such as marriage, these unwritten rules may be more flexible.

For example, despite being *yilli*, my family is not prominent in *yilli* circles. Coming from a civil servant background rather than a merchant family, we are positioned in the middle class compared to wealthier *yilli* families. Although I grew up in Kayseri and only left for university, I have never benefited from the privileges enjoyed by economically influential *yilli*. It suggests that being *yilli* is not just about being local but also about

material wealth and the mutual advantages it facilitates within social networks. Therefore, whether rooted in economic status or local identity, being *yilli* remains a central factor in determining social prestige and status in Kayseri. This phenomenon influences the city's daily life on cultural, spatial, economic, and political levels.

***Yilli* Habitus in Kayseri**

To understand the cultural and spatial dynamics that will be analysed in the following chapters, it is necessary to situate the concept of *yilli habitus*. This term captures the historically sedimented dispositions of Kayseri's locally rooted families. Drawing from Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, this formation refers to a durable yet adaptive structuring of practices, perceptions, and values that have emerged through the long-standing presence of *yilli* families in the city. Their way of inhabiting space, organising kinship, conducting rituals, and negotiating status is not merely the result of conscious decision-making or static tradition, but of deeply internalised schemes—what Bourdieu would call the embodied social grammar—that guide action and interpretation without requiring explicit reflection.

The *yilli habitus* is shaped through intergenerational transmission of various forms of capital. Economically, the *yilli habitus* is anchored in intergenerational tradesmanship and small-scale commerce, through which many families maintain economic autonomy and continuity. Rather than large-scale accumulation, the emphasis is on sustaining familiar trade and service networks, often tied to the city's traditional markets and local clientele. Social capital is sustained through dense kinship ties, neighbourhood reciprocity, and informal mutual assistance and recognition systems. Instead of relying on formal education, cultural capital is embodied in dialect, mannerisms, aesthetic judgements, spatial etiquette, and everyday practices and rituals. These forms of capital converge to generate symbolic distinctions between old and new residents, proper and improper behaviours, and legitimate and illegitimate spatial use, which sustain the *yilli* position within the moral and social order of the city (Table 3.1).

While this *habitus* is shaped by historical continuity, it is not immutable. Processes such as urban transformation, housing standardisation, and shifting family structures pose challenges to its coherence. The *yilli habitus* remains responsive, negotiating these shifts in ways that preserve its underlying logic, even as external forms may change. Although these dynamics are not the focus, they will be addressed in the following analytical sections.

Still, what has been outlined here remains an introductory conceptual orientation. The full texture of the *yilli habitus*—its tensions, improvisations, and lived spatialities—can only be made visible through the following detailed analyses. In this regard, one of the key aims of the thesis is to render the abstract and often elusive notion of *habitus* more intelligible by examining how it operates in and through the everyday life of the *yilli* in Kayseri. The following chapters do not merely apply the concept, but actively contribute to clarifying it through ethnographic attention to local practice, built environment, and symbolic space.

Table 3.1 *Habitus*-based definition of the *yilli* in Kayseri

Type of Capital	Description in <i>Yilli</i> Context	Relevance to <i>Habitus</i>
Economic Capital	Built on intergenerational tradesmanship, small-scale commerce, and property-based investments, sustains economic autonomy and continuity	Anchors occupational identities and economic practices central to <i>yilli</i> distinctiveness
Social Capital	Dense kinship relations and neighbourhood-based reciprocity strengthen local embeddedness and social monitoring	Reinforces the relational logic of belonging and continuity within the community
Cultural Capital	Embodied in dialect, mannerisms, aesthetic judgment, spatial etiquette, everyday practices, and rituals, culture defines legitimacy	Guides perception, classification, and appropriate behaviour in daily spatial practices
Symbolic Capital	Emerges from the convergence of other capitals; expresses itself in local prestige, authority, and normative claims to urban space	Legitimises the <i>habitus</i> through recognition and distinction in the city's moral order

Cultural Capital of *Yilli* Habitus as a Marker of Identity

Yilli of Kayseri, who have lived in the city centre for generations, are deeply connected to the city's history and cultural heritage. This continuity reinforces their social prestige and strengthens their cultural identity. Through their long-established traditions, strong family ties, and deep-rooted social networks, the *yilli* shape Kayseri's cultural landscape.

A defining characteristic of the *yilli* is their tightly knit social structure, marked by family nicknames, economic influence in trade and industry, and adherence to conservative values. These factors distinguish them from other residents and contribute to their dominant role in the city's social and economic life. Strong family bonds ensure that traditions—especially those related to weddings, funerals, and communal

gatherings—are preserved and passed down through generations. These events reinforce social cohesion and reflect the enduring influence of *yilli* culture.

As the leading social group in Kayseri, *yilli* set the cultural norms that others often strive to follow. From engagement rituals to the widespread *oturma* culture, non-*yilli* residents frequently align their customs and behaviours with those of the *yilli*, reinforcing their cultural dominance in the city.

One of the most distinctive features of the *yilli*—who play a significant role in Kayseri’s daily life—is their language. The easiest way to identify a *yilli* is through their speech. Their unique dialect, characterised by specific words, pronunciations, and intonations, immediately signals whether someone is a *yilli*. During the field research, language emerged as a key marker of being *yilli*. Many interviewees emphasised that the way *yilli* speak sets them apart. To illustrate this distinctive dialect, I provide an excerpt from an interview with one of the informants. The passage below highlights notable aspects of the *yilli* dialect, including unique pronunciations and expressions (I_30):

Kayseri’ye **neğader** [ne kadar] ... gelen bizim evde oturdu. Hemen hemen ilk kaloriferli bina bizim o binalar... Mimar ... **diyin** [diye] babamın bir inşaat kalfası ... Ya böyle **şiy** [şey] olmadı ki ... Yatacağın zaman ya çekyat da **yoğudu** [yoktu]. *Sedire* yatak serilirdi... Babam **tarifiynen** [tarifi ile] gidiyor... Benim babam **zenginidi** [zengindi] lafın gelişi... sen gelin **iden** [sen gelirsın gidersin] ... biz **zenginik** [zenginiz] farz **it** [et]... **giri köye gönderin** [geri/tekrar köye gönderirsin]. Başka birini **alın** [alırsın]... Biz ... **abba** [abla] derdik... niye **Abimgil** [abimler] okurken babam... şunu dedi ki bizim **bastırma** [pastırma] sucuk yerinde **bi denesi** [bir tanesi] varsa ... aldı **diller** [derler] ... yani bir de benim **aplam** [ablam] var... o geçen bu geldiğinde hatta ki **şiy didim** [şey dedim] ...²⁴

I would like to share another excerpt from an interview with a different informant, which illustrates this dialect very well (I_25)²⁵:

²⁴ Translation: “Whoever came to Kayseri stayed at our house. Almost the first buildings with central heating were ours... My father’s construction foreman, the architect ... said ... Well, there was no such thing... When it was time to sleep, there wasn’t even a pull-out couch. A mattress would be laid on the sofa... My father followed the directions and went... My father was rich, so to speak... You come and go... Assume that we are rich... You send (someone) back to the village. You take someone else instead... We used to say ‘abla’ [older sister] ... When my older siblings were studying, my father... said this: If there was even one piece of pastırma or sucuk left in our home... they would say, ‘he took it’... And I also have a sister... The last time she came here, I even said something like...”

²⁵ Among the stories shared by the same informant, the phrase “it otu pırasalar” is also widely used in the Kayseri dialect. The term ‘it otu’, generally referring to weeds or unwanted plants, is used in this phrase to describe disliked or despised individuals. The expression, “onlar da kim ki, it otu pırasalar,” roughly means, “Who are they, just weeds and wild plants!”

Zırıl zırıl Kayserili demek. Delicesine Kayseriliyim demek. Zırıl zırıl. Hem de övünmek gibi olsun, Kayseriliyim. Kayserili şivesini anlatan yirmi dokuz harf yok, sadece anlatmayla olur. Şimdi Recep Çalkaner diyor ki “**kavilleşmek**” diyor. Yani “**Kavilleşmek** ne demek?” diyor. Diyor ki randevulaşmak diyor. Ama orada **kavilleşme** Kayserilice, ne demek **Tanküce**. Demek olmayacak. **Niy demek**.²⁶

The *yilli* dialect is deeply embedded in every aspect of daily life in Kayseri, from shopping to social events. It is commonly heard at the market, during conversations among neighbours, and at social gatherings, reinforcing the city’s cultural identity. The way *yilli* speak significantly influences social relations and communication within the city. This dialect is a crucial indicator of social hierarchy and identity among the *yilli*, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening social bonds. More than just a means of communication, the *yilli* dialect serves as a cultural heritage and identity marker, reflecting the city’s historical and cultural richness. Passed down through generations, it remains a key element of the *yilli*’s way of life. I will explore this dialect further as I describe other defining characteristics of the *yilli*.

Yilli people often describe how they can easily recognise fellow ‘*yilli*’ at first glance. They note that this recognition comes from a combination of factors: speech, appearance, and clothing. One informant explained, “I can tell when I see a *yilli*... I can tell from their speech, their look, and their clothing. Generally, a Kayseri woman from my time would be recognised by her *Kula* coat and *Vakko* scarf. In my childhood, everyone had a coat made from *Kula* fabric” (I_7). This description is widespread when referring to *yilli* women.

For *yilli* with a certain status, wearing the *Vakko* brand or high-quality, well-tailored *Kula* fabric (or its alternative, georgette fabric) indicates social class (Figure 3.2). I’ve known since childhood that in Kayseri, women typically wear a headscarf after marriage,

²⁶ Translation: “To say ‘Zırıl zırıl Kayserili’ means ‘madly’. To say, ‘I am madly Kayserili.’ Zırıl zırıl. And it’s like boasting, ‘I am Kayserili.’ There are no twenty-nine letters to explain the Kayseri accent, it’s only done through explanation. Now, Recep Çalkaner says, ‘kavilleşmek,’ he says. ‘What does ‘kavilleşmek’ mean?’ he asks. He says it means ‘to make an appointment.’ But there, ‘kavilleşme’ is Kayserili, what does that mean, Tanküce? It won’t be said. Why, to say.”

It is essential to explain the informant’s use of the term ‘zırıl zırıl.’ While the informant emphasises its Kayserian context, the term is more commonly used to describe villagers. *Yilli* often use the expression ‘zırıl zırıl köylü’ to label someone as ignorant, and this term carries connotations of exclusion and othering (Nacak, 2015). The informant’s statement refers to a linguistic mix in the expression ‘Kavilleşmek ne demek?’ used by a writer, where half of the phrase is in the Kayseri dialect and the other half is in Istanbul Turkish. The informant explains that, instead of saying ‘Kavilleşmek niy demek?’ (in the *yilli* dialect), the sentence was completed with ‘Tanküce’ (a reference to Istanbul affectation) and ‘ne demek?’ (meaning ‘what does it mean?’).

marking their transition to adulthood. This headscarf had no religious significance; it was a marker for married versus unmarried women. It was often tied in a style like those seen in Yeşilçam movies, knotting the scarf under the chin with a tuft of hair visible from the top of the head.



Figure 3.2 Women in *Kula* coats and *Vakko* scarves (Sources: Photo archive of I_1 - left, modified by the author, Photo archive of I_5 - right)

Even after marriage, *yilli* women continued to highlight their hair, often with highlights, which complemented their *Kula* coat and *Vakko* scarf combination. Today, many *yilli* women prefer to wear a turban, perhaps for political or personal reasons, but their brand choice remains unchanged. *Vakko* scarves are still a key part of their style. Additionally, handbags, which have become an essential accessory for modern women, are frequently used to complement the *yilli* woman's outfit, often sporting the *Vakko* brand.

*Yilli*²⁷ structure their life around their “**horanta**” (family) (I_12) and organise their daily routines accordingly. If their house has a *hayat* (courtyard), they often sit for “**ağzını vermiye**” (to watch, to sit with a view) (I_15), following customary practices. One of the

²⁷ A defining characteristic of *yilli* identity is being “*sepli*” (I_11). “*Sepli*” signifies orderliness, tidiness, and good manners—highly valued qualities in Kayseri culture. *Yilli* pay close attention to whether a person's house, clothing or even the way they park their car is “*sepli*.” This standard also judges mannerisms, and those who do not meet it may face disapproval. Another related term is “*kip*,” which describes a sense of organisation. One informant explains that *yilli* are typically orderly and clean, with fewer belongings. Their kitchens reflect this trait. A *yilli* kitchen is characterised by simplicity and organisation—referred to as “*kip*”—in contrast to houses where accumulated items create a cluttered and chaotic space.

most defining traits of a *yilli* is being “**il iyisi**” [el iyisi] (I_25), a term in the Kayseri dialect that means presenting oneself as well-off or respectable in the eyes of others. It does not necessarily reflect their actual wealth but rather their ability to appear prosperous. Many *yilli* adopt behaviours that reinforce this perception. For instance, one interviewee (I_9) explains that some *yilli* live modestly at home, consuming simple meals like bread and onions, and avoiding unnecessary expenses. However, they carefully cultivate an image of wealth and prestige in public, wearing branded clothing or accessories, such as *Vakko* scarves. In contrast, their house attire is often old, torn, or worn out. This behaviour reflects their deep-rooted concern with maintaining social standing and ensuring they are not perceived as falling behind, regardless of their financial situation.

For this reason, *yilli* often criticise themselves for being “**yınnaşık**” (spoiled) (I_29) and accuse one another of being **ostentatious**. They frequently highlight the **obsession with luxury** in Kayseri, arguing that many choices are driven by the need to keep up appearances rather than genuine necessity. *Yilli* believe that much of what is done in Kayseri stems from **a fear of falling behind others**. As one informant explains: “Everyone else moved there—Ahmet Ağa, Mehmet Ağa, and their friends. Then their friends from there moved, too. So, we followed them. We didn’t get the same place, but we got one right next to it” (I_25). This pattern shows how *yilli* often replicate the behaviours of their peers, whether in following traditions, adopting certain lifestyles, or relocating. The primary motivation is social conformity and **constant effort to maintain status and prestige within their community**.

Today, with the influence of social media, such behaviours have become widespread, yet they remain particularly pronounced in Kayseri. Regardless of their financial situation, many people wear brand-name clothes or share photos from luxury places to maintain a particular image. It reflects a broader desire for respect and social acceptance. In Kayseri, where *yilli* identity is marked by specific symbols—such as *Kula* coats, *Vakko* scarves, or gilded tea sets—no *yilli* want to fall behind in these customs. As a result, they allocate their resources to sustain this **display of prestige**.²⁸

²⁸ One interviewee introduced the term “**kertilme**” (I_14) to describe this phenomenon. When asked about its meaning, they explained that it refers to “not behaving naturally.” In particular, *yilli* tend to act “more refined and polished” when hosting guests, displaying politeness and decorum beyond their usual behaviour. It suggests that being *yilli* involves *performing a social role*, in which individuals consciously embody the expectations and norms associated with their identity.

The *yilli* identity holds significant importance in Kayseri, where *yilli* generally perceive themselves as a **distinct, elite group**. However, this perception fosters a socially ethnocentric outlook, reinforcing group divisions within the community. For instance, in a building where wealthy *yilli* families reside, the owner refused to sell an apartment to a non-*yilli* family. This decision was based on the belief that an exclusively *yilli* environment ensures a higher quality of living and increases property value. Thus, the *yilli* identity reinforces the image of a safe and prestigious community, while also contributing to ethnic and economic discrimination (Gürpınar, 2018, p. 70).

This exclusivity is often unconsciously internalised. One interviewee (I_3) noted that they were never explicitly told they were *yilli* but only realised it later in life: “We didn’t recognise it because we were part of it. When we grew up and looked around, we said, ‘Oh, we were like that.’” It highlights how *yilli* tend to socialise primarily within their circles, not perceiving their distinctiveness until interacting with outsiders. As they mature, they begin to feel both **different and special**. The interviewee reflected on this distinction, stating: “Being *yilli* is important to me... I believe Allah created me this way for a reason, but no one is superior or inferior to anyone.” This statement encapsulates the **dual nature of *yilli* identity**—a deep sense of belonging and distinction, and an awareness of broader social hierarchies.

According to an online article (Doğan, 2010), *yilli* perceive themselves as “privileged and noble urbanites”, distinguishing themselves from others whom they label as “villagers” who arrived in the city later. An interviewee shared a childhood memory that supports this perception. They recalled living with their family on Sivas Street in Kayseri but occasionally visiting their old neighbourhood, where their grandmother and great-grandmother resided. They were rarely allowed to play outside and prohibited from interacting with the “villagers” living nearby. This restriction suggests a form of **discrimination**, though it may also be understood through the perspective of **familiarity and trust**.

In an era when Kayseri had not yet experienced large-scale migration, the city was predominantly composed of *yilli* who knew each other, fostering a strong mutual trust. The reluctance to allow children to play with non-*yilli* may have stemmed less from outright dislike and more from a lack of familiarity, leading to a perception of outsiders as untrustworthy. The interviewee reflected on how this childhood experience continues to shape their behaviour, stating: “That effect is still there, of course. We pay attention to the people we talk to...” (I_6). It suggests that the tendency to socialise primarily within

yilli circles persists into adulthood, reinforcing **exclusivity** and a **preference for familiarity** within the community.

Regardless of its origins, *yilli* identity shapes unique social interactions, often rooted in **privilege** and **superiority**. A previous study describes how elderly women in Kayseri frequently ask newcomers: “Where are you from? Who are you?” If the response is “I’m not from Kayseri,” the reply might be “Well, okay”—or, in some cases, “They are people too” (Nacak, 2015, p. 219). While this may seem exaggerated, it is a commonly observed interaction. I witnessed a similar exchange: An elderly *yilli* woman, meeting a new neighbour for the first time, asked: “My dear, where are you from?” When the neighbour replied, “I’m Circassian,” she responded dismissively, “Well, okay.”

The phrase, “Well, okay” or “It’s okay, you’re also human,” carries an implicit **sense of superiority**. The underlying message is clear: “I am the real person; I am the superior one.” While the words acknowledge the other’s **basic humanity**, they also suggest **that yilli stand above them in every other aspect**—socially, culturally, and perhaps even morally. This seemingly simple phrase, therefore, serves as a subtle yet **powerful marker of distinction and exclusion** in Kayseri’s social fabric.

The *yilli* are described as “those born and raised in the city, generally closed to mixing their culture with another’s” (Sarıççek, 2018, p. 75). They form a conservative social group, preferring to interact primarily within their circles. For the *yilli*, “being *yilli*” is more than just an identity—it is a matter of **significance** and **distinction**. Their sense of **privilege** is reinforced by **familiarity** and **social connections**. One informant explained that they feel a **sense of belonging** when entering a space where they recognise familiar people or situations. Meeting another *yilli* creates an **instant bond**, as they share everyday **experiences, values, and unspoken understandings** (I_10). It highlights how *yilli* identity shapes social interactions, fostering a community where shared background and familiarity define relationships.

An informant shared that she had always dreamed of having a Kayserian²⁹ (*yilli*) daughter-in-law for her son. Coming from a tight-knit *yilli* social circle, she particularly wished for her son to marry within this group. However, when this did not happen, she initially felt disappointed but eventually adapted to the situation. She recalled how her

²⁹ While the term ‘Kayserili’ (Kayserian) can refer to anyone living in Kayseri, *yilli* consider themselves the ‘true owners’ of the city. Therefore, when a *yilli* uses the term ‘Kayserili,’ they refer to fellow locals. Even though non-*yilli* people may also live in Kayseri, this term is typically used by *yilli* to describe themselves and other individuals who are genuinely from Kayseri.

son challenged this perspective, telling her that one's birthplace is beyond personal control and that taking pride solely in being *yilli* was misguided. Her husband also reflected on the historical divide between *yilli* and *villagers*, noting that their family had **broken a long-standing social norm** by accepting a non-*yilli* bride.³⁰

The tendency for every community to view itself as superior or distinct is reflected in a collective mindset that strengthens a group's sense of belonging. Each group often emphasises its unique characteristics or achievements to preserve and elevate its identity and values. In the case of the *yilli*, *being Kayserian (being yilli)* has historically been an essential aspect of their identity. However, as Kayseri has grown and become more diverse, this sense of identity has started to fragment. One interviewee mentioned that today, being *yilli* primarily influences matters such as marriage arrangements (I_29). In the larger city of Kayseri, where people from various backgrounds now live, *yilli* distinguish themselves from villagers and other city residents through food choices, holiday celebrations, and marriage traditions like arranged marriages. These practices help them maintain and preserve their cultural identity.

Marriage plays a central role in preserving cultural traditions and excluding outsiders. One interviewee explained that they ensured their daughters marry within *yilli* families. She also mentioned that their son, who is currently single, is dating a girl from a *yilli* family³¹ and takes the matter seriously (I_6). Another interviewee shared that she was raised believing that “*yilli* marries another *yilli*.” Despite moving to another city for university and later to Istanbul for work, she never formed relationships outside of this belief, always knowing she would return to Kayseri to marry a *yilli*. Even today, some elders in the family question the marriages of cousins who married “**dışarılı**” (outsiders) years ago (I_10).

³⁰ The informant further admitted that navigating this change within their *yilli* community was difficult, as they felt a certain pressure regarding how other *yilli* perceived them (I_5). This experience illustrates the deep-rooted distinction between *yilli* and *villagers* in Kayseri and how it shapes social interactions. It also highlights how *yilli* identity plays a decisive role in personal and family decisions, especially in matters as significant as marriage. Ultimately, the situation reveals a broader social dynamic: while *yilli* often perceive their identity as a source of pride, they may also engage in exclusionary attitudes, reinforcing social divisions. Additionally, it underscores how *yilli* frequently make personal choices with a “what will others say?” mindset, prioritising community perception even over deeply personal decisions.

³¹ In Kayseri, some informants have noted that when girls see someone, the topic is usually kept private and not openly discussed, as it is considered taboo. Even if the girl is involved with someone, the relationship is typically introduced through a matchmaker, and families prefer to remain silent about it. The situation is only disclosed once there is an official agreement. This practice protects the family's reputation, avoids adverse external reactions, and prevents the girl's name from becoming publicly known.

Among *yilli*, the criticism of those who marry outside the community is quite common. As previously mentioned, they place great importance on marrying fellow *yilli*, driven by the concern of ‘what will others say?’ One interviewee, married to someone from Kayseri’s countryside, shared that she faced criticism for her marriage. Since it was based on mutual agreement rather than the traditional arranged method, others viewed it as the reason she was not married to a *yilli* (I_8).

My mother is *yilli* because her father is *yilli*, even though my grandmother is from the countryside (as being *yilli* is inherited through the paternal line). However, my father is from the countryside.³² Whenever I mentioned that my mother is *yilli*, people would always ask about my father. Once they learned that my father is from the countryside, they would question how my mother, a *yilli*, could have married him. This questioning is widespread for daughters, as *yilli* identity is inherited through the father. While my grandmother’s non-*yilli* background is not heavily scrutinised, my father’s lack of being *yilli* often becomes a concern.

Yilli, as a conservative group, prefer to socialise within their community and tend to be closed off toward outsiders. For *yilli* women, being *yilli* means belonging to a well-established family and living in their hometown while adhering to customs and traditions. They often describe interactions with other *yilli* as more sincere, as engaging with ‘one of their own’ fosters warmth and trust. *Yilli* believe they will always find a connection with fellow *yilli*, whether as relatives or acquaintances, creating an initially friendly atmosphere. Tradition plays a significant role in guiding how *yilli* should interact with one another (Gürpınar, 2018, p. 71).³³

Yilli generally avoid sending their children to study outside the city, even if they achieve high marks. This conservative attitude is rooted in the limited environment they grow up in, attending specific schools and shopping at certain places. Although there have been exceptions in recent years, the general trend remains. For example, many female participants I interviewed for my thesis had received their university education in Kayseri. Statements like “I scored very high in English, but my father didn’t send me outside”

³² Since my father is from a village in the Felahiye district of Kayseri, he is considered a villager, and by extension, I am also a villager.

³³ During the fieldwork for the thesis, I had an experience highlighting the strong communication network among the *yilli*. When I visited a *yilli* house for an interview, someone said, “I heard you were at ...’s house recently.” Additionally, some people recognised me at the *oturma*, where women are familiar with one another. The news that I was working on *yilli* and had visited several of them quickly spread among the group. This moment made me realise how quickly even the smallest information can travel within the *yilli* community through their tight-knit network of acquaintances.

(I_3) and “I entered first at Erciyes Business, but they didn’t send me outside” (I_4) illustrate this.

Some families send their male children outside the city for education, and others base this decision on the field of study. One interviewee explained, “My husband told my children he wouldn’t send them to study outside for a regular profession. If you become a doctor, or maybe a pharmacist or dentist, I would support your education outside, but not for regular professions” (I_6). It reveals that *yilli* prioritise prestigious professions and are willing to break their norms if necessary. Their approach reflects a selective attitude, prioritising their children’s future success and security, particularly in stable, high-status careers. It also shows how *yilli* organise their lives strategically, managing their resources and opportunities to ensure their children’s success.

Traditions and practices are essential foundations of a society’s social structure, passed down from generation to generation. These customs define community identities, strengthen social bonds, and foster a sense of belonging. Shaped by historical processes and cultural interactions specific to each geography, customs play a crucial role throughout life, from birth to death. They are especially significant during milestones like weddings, funerals, holidays, and other special occasions, as they reinforce social unity and help individuals define their identities. Additionally, customs preserve cultural heritage, connect individuals to the past, and ensure its transmission to future generations. For the *yilli*, these customs hold value in maintaining and shaping their social fabric.

Gürpınar (2018, p. 38) states, “Kayseri traditions are almost on the same level as religion for *yilli* in organising their lives.” *Yilli* feel a strong obligation to follow these traditions, even when they may not align with their logic, driven by the concern of “what will others say.” These traditions are seen as “indispensable” and are repeatedly practised due to social pressures such as “if they did it, I must do it too” or “if they have it, I should have it as well” (p. 73). Examples of *yilli* customs include wedding traditions, funeral customs, *oturma/dünürlük* practices, congratulatory rituals, and holiday celebrations.

In *yilli* culture, marriage has a crucial role in preserving identity. Wedding traditions are among the most significant and meticulously followed customs. The wedding process typically unfolds in several stages: courtship, *small coffee*, *big coffee*, *düzen*, engagement, *dünürlük* (organised by the bride’s side), *kahn*, dowry (Figure 3.3), hammam, henna night, wedding ceremony, and *dünürlük* (organised by the groom’s side) (I_1, I_6).³⁴

³⁴ In *yilli* culture, marriage typically begins when a girl enters high school, prompting visits from potential suitors. Historically, intense social pressure encouraged girls to marry before age 19, with fears



Figure 3.3 Presentation of dowry (Source: Photo archive of I_5)

of becoming a “spinster.” Matchmaking is generally initiated by *yilli* women, who seek suitable partners from other *yilli* families; non-*yilli* suitors are rarely considered acceptable. Suitors customarily leave a card at the girl’s home, sometimes accompanied by a photograph. If the family wishes to decline, the mother typically responds that the daughter is “too young,” a polite refusal that the father may repeat if the candidate is deemed unsuitable. It triggers a detailed investigation into the suitor’s family background, financial status, and moral standing. Older male relatives may discreetly visit the suitor’s workplace to observe his appearance and behaviour. If the impression is favourable, further inquiries are made through mutual acquaintances. Upon a positive evaluation, the groom visits again with his mother and elder female relatives, allowing the prospective couple a short private conversation. If both sides agree to proceed, the groom’s close male relatives visit the girl’s father’s workplace for a *small coffee*. It is followed by the *big coffee*, a public announcement involving about 50 guests, traditionally hosted at the girl’s home. The groom’s side provides specific refreshments: rolled cakes, almond cookies (*acıbadem*), sesame sticks, chocolate, and coffee (I_6). Before the engagement, a ritual shopping trip (*düzen düzmek*) is held, where the couple purchases undergarments and clothing for one another. The engagement ceremony usually occurs at the girl’s home, but is increasingly held at event venues. Between the engagement and the wedding, families host alternating *dünürlük* gatherings to strengthen kinship ties, often including extended family, friends, and neighbours. Wedding week begins on Monday with the *kalın*. In the morning, elders visit the groom’s house for prayers; the bride’s dowry is displayed in the afternoon, followed by a gathering with her friends. Tuesday is *hammam* day, when the bride’s side hosts a bathhouse event and distributes personalised soaps to guests. On Wednesday, the dowry is transported to the groom’s home—or, more recently, to the couple’s new home—and the groom’s family comes to view it. Separate henna nights are held that evening: young men (excluding the groom) bring henna and nuts to the bride’s house and leave; the groom’s female relatives stay to celebrate. The bride’s henna is applied, and some is sent to the groom. The wedding takes place on Thursday—the only proper day for a *yilli* wedding. Following the ceremony, the groom’s family continues *dünürlük* visits to reinforce ties. While these customs remain central to *yilli* identity, their timing and format have increasingly adapted to contemporary lifestyles.

As someone with one side of my family being *yilli*, I've never experienced such a detailed wedding process. Although I've occasionally participated in some customs due to invitations, I've always found the complete process exhausting. It likely stems from my upbringing and worldview. *Yilli* families raise their children—especially daughters—within this cultural framework, so these customs and rituals are often embraced and enjoyed.

Interestingly, some informants who once found these customs unnecessary or tiring in their youth have come to see their importance as they age. One interviewee explained, “When you're young, it seems silly, but as you grow older, you realise it's important. For example, the prayer before the wedding now holds more meaning. Older people who can't attend the wedding or henna night come to the house for this prayer and give their gifts there” (I_4). Another respondent shared, “*Düniürlük* continues, and I enjoy it. Relatives get to know each other, and families merge, whether it's the relatives of the bride or the groom” (I_7).

One informant expressed dissatisfaction with the decline of the *düniürlük* tradition since the pandemic, highlighting that only close relatives are now invited. She regretted the loss of many aspects of *düniürlük* and the reduced emphasis on “*el alem*” (public perception). She explained, “For example, ‘*el alem*’ was a kind of discipline. Now, it's become more abstract and less meaningful. Though we sometimes struggled, ‘*el alem*’ was a societal discipline.” Through these words, the informant conveyed her concern about the erosion of traditional social norms and the sense of order they provided.

During *düniürlük*, the bride dresses in fancy outfits and jewellery, often changing several times to display the *düzen* prepared for her. One informant (I_9) described how the event, though filled with social obligations and pressure, can feel exhausting and meaningless. She explained that while the ritual involves getting ready, serving cakes, and following traditions, it ultimately feels aimless, leaving her with the sense that she did nothing but show up.

Yilli families are firmly attached to their traditions, often following them without considering logic, religious appropriateness, or financial constraints. A notable example is the custom of gifting a *fışeklik*, a decorative piece containing gold sets, to the bride (Figure 3.4). Although intended for the bride, it is seen as an investment in the family's son. One interviewee (I_8) described it as a competition and a display of ostentation. Some families even rent *fışeklik* sets for engagement ceremonies to outdo each other in showiness, returning them after the wedding.

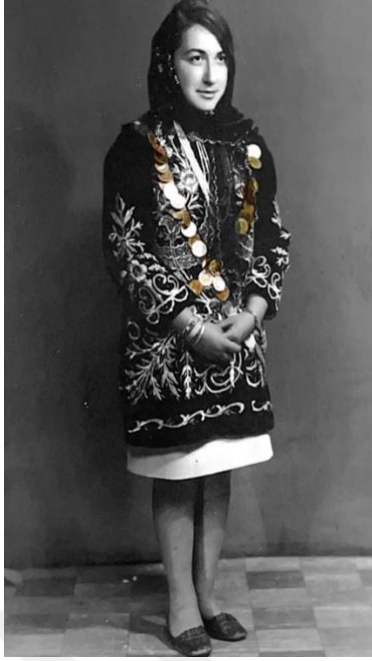


Figure 3.4 *Fişeklik* on brides (Source: Photo archive of I_5, modified by the author)

The dowry chest is a significant component of wedding customs among the *yilli*. Although modern concerns about space and furniture compatibility have led many to store these chests in vineyard houses or workplaces, they remain as important as the items in a bride's dowry. Intricately carved from unique wood by skilled artisans, these chests are among the few cultural artefacts that have endured alongside other preserved traditions.

Funeral customs in Kayseri are of great significance among *yilli*, alongside wedding traditions. While there have been some changes in recent years, particularly with an increasing emphasis on ostentatiousness, the core practices have largely remained intact. A key aspect of funerals is the mosque. For *yilli*, funerals typically depart from the Cami-i Kebir (Great Mosque) in the city centre, while non-*yilli* are generally associated with the Hunat Mosque. The choice of the mosque, as well as the cemetery, serves as an important distinction, with *yilli* typically being buried at the Asri Cemetery, Gate 1.

I recall my family facing criticism for holding my *yilli* grandfather's funeral at Hunat Mosque, merely for the sake of convenience for attendees. Considering he was buried at Gate 4, I suppose my family's *yilli* status is now up for debate (!).

Funeral customs in Kayseri extend beyond the ceremony itself, fostering a strong sense of community support. One of the most meaningful traditions is the practice of neighbours and relatives sending meals to the bereaved family throughout the week,

alleviating the burden of cooking during a time of grief.³⁵ By Thursday, the funeral house fills with close friends and family. When space becomes limited, neighbours open their doors, turning the funeral into a communal event for the entire apartment building or street. That evening, relatives organise a meal for all acquaintances to gather. After the evening prayer, the Thursday prayer is recited, and gradually, the family is left alone. However, visitors check in periodically for forty days to ensure the family is not isolated.

Following the funeral, the family stays home during the next religious holiday (whether Ramadan or the Sacrifice Feast) and refrains from visiting others. Instead, people see them to offer condolences once again. This period of mourning is referred to as the “first holiday” in my surroundings, though some sources also call it the “mourning holiday” (Papuşcuoğlu, 2022, p. 127).

Another essential custom related to funerals is the postponement of a planned wedding or seeking permission from the bereaved family if a close relative passes away. If wedding invitations have already been sent, the wedding may still take place with the family’s consent, but it will be more subdued out of respect for the mourning. Sometimes, a wedding and a funeral might fall on the same day, in which case the wedding proceeds without excessive celebration. These practices reflect the community’s strong respect and social obligation (Papuşcuoğlu, 2022, p. 117). While great care is taken to avoid upsetting the grieving family, they, in turn, show consideration to ensure the efforts and preparations of others are not wasted. This mutual respect helps maintain social harmony while balancing tradition with practicality.

Eid traditions, which are also linked to funeral customs, are deeply observed in Kayseri. The city takes on a distinct atmosphere during Ramadan, although this has begun to change in recent years. Daily life slows down, and some businesses even close for the month. At *iftar* time, the city falls silent, making it the perfect moment for a traffic-free walk through the streets. During Ramadan, relatives frequently invite each other for *iftar*, setting large tables with traditional dishes that embody the spirit of the month. Two essential dishes for Ramadan in Kayseri are *bamya* (okra) soup and *sucuk içi*. *Sucuk içi*, as its name suggests, is made from the seasoned filling of sausage but is consumed in its minced form, cooked in a pan. Unlike regular *sucuk*, it is exclusively eaten during Ramadan, making it a special seasonal delicacy.

³⁵ Due to increasing displays of wealth, this custom has begun to change. Rather than receiving meals from the community throughout the week, the bereaved now host those who come to offer their condolences.

Eid morning and the greeting ritual hold a significant place in urban life. The day begins early, with men attending the Eid prayer. A central tradition is serving *nohut yahni*, a lamb and chickpea stew, where the chickpeas are peeled and split. This dish is essential to the morning meal, symbolising togetherness. One informant emphasised its importance, stating that no matter where they are, they always find a way to have *yahni* on Eid morning (I_4). During the Festival of Sacrifice, another custom dictates that men do not shave until after the sacrifice, following the Eid prayer and the ritual, they shave before sitting down for the celebratory meal.

Kayseri's rich culinary heritage is deeply tied to its identity (Şahin, 2010), with iconic dishes like *pastırma*, *sucuk*, and *mantı* remaining essential despite changing dietary habits. Pastries also play a significant role, with variations of *mantı*, *içli kete* (a stuffed pastry popular during *sahur*), and *katmer*, a breakfast staple, preserving the city's traditional flavours.

The *yilli* identity is deeply tied to generational continuity in the city centre, reinforcing their cultural significance and social standing. *Yilli* families shape Kayseri's cultural fabric through strong social networks—often distinguished by nicknames—traditional values, and active involvement in trade. Their conservative outlook and close family ties further define them, while their distinctive dialect and accent serve as immediate markers of their identity.

In *yilli* culture, social events such as weddings, funerals, and holidays are vital to reinforce community identity and a shared sense of belonging.³⁶ Weddings follow specific rituals, with *yilli* families prioritising marriage within their group to preserve cultural continuity. Funeral customs also reflect *yilli* identity, as certain mosques and cemeteries are preferred. Social competition is evident in various aspects of life, from weddings to other gatherings, where status and prestige are emphasised. *Yilli* tend to socialise within their community, maintaining a sense of exclusivity and viewing their traditions as distinct from those of outsiders.

³⁶ For more detailed information on traditions, see:

Altuncuoğlu, N. (2012). Kayseri'de hamam kültürü ve Kayseri düğünleri. In *Türk kadınının sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel hayata katılımı (Kayseri örneği: 1923-1950)* (pp. 122-131). Erciyes University.

Gürpınar, S. (2018). Örf ve adetler. In *Kayseri'nin yerlisi olmak: Geleneksel bir aidiyet biçimini üreten etkileşim örüntüleri* (pp. 39-68). Erciyes University.

Chapter 4

Yilli in the City of Kayseri

This section explores Kayseri's urban development through the framework of the concept of *habitus*, emphasising how the city's transformation is not only a physical but also a social process. The relationship between the *yilli* and urban space is closely examined by analysing how long-established residents respond to and shape the city's changing spatial dynamics. Urbanisation is a multi-layered phenomenon that restructures physical environments, alters social relations, and reshapes everyday life. In this context, the *yilli* are not merely passive subjects adapting to urban change, but also active agents whose cultural dispositions influence how these transformations unfold.

Tuna (2017) analyses the fundamental dynamics, historical development, social structures, and economic organisation of urbanisation, comparing modern and traditional cities. The modern city, closely linked to the Industrial Revolution, became a centre for non-agricultural activities like trade and industry. In contrast, traditional cities, particularly with the spread of Islam, developed as hubs for commerce and religion. The formation of the modern city progressed from ancient Greek and Roman civilisations through the Middle Ages, culminating in the Industrial Revolution, which reshaped urban centres around trade and industry (Tuna, 2017).

Various thinkers have offered different explanations for the historical, social, and economic development of cities. Karl Marx saw urbanisation as rooted in production relations and class struggle, where cities emerged as centres of non-agricultural labour, shaped by property systems tied to specific modes of production. Henri Lefebvre expanded this view by emphasising that urbanisation was not just a result of industrialisation but a broader social and cultural transformation as societies shifted from rural to urban life. Henri Pirenne, in contrast, highlighted the role of trade and the merchant class, arguing that the growth of cities was driven by commerce and industry, leading to the dominance of the bourgeoisie (Tuna, 2017).

The Industrial Revolution reshaped the economic structure of modern cities, with the bourgeoisie and industrial class becoming dominant. It led to a significant growth of non-agricultural activities, transforming cities into industrial hubs. As labour divisions expanded, class distinctions within cities deepened, and the spread of industrialisation from city centres to the outskirts weakened rural connections. City centres evolved into focal points for trade, industry, and administration, with large cities becoming centres of industrial and commercial activity. Modern urbanisation promoted the development of independent economic and social centres, distinct from rural areas, fuelled by the growth of trade and industrial hubs. The democratisation process shifted urban governance from aristocratic families to the people, strengthening the autonomy of cities. This shift reshaped urban social structures, allowing greater participation from diverse social classes in economic and political life. The structural transformation following the Industrial Revolution increased the influence of the working class and industrial bourgeoisie, thereby altering the core elements of urbanisation (Tuna, 2017).

Louis Wirth (1938) argues that urbanisation is not just a form of settlement but a distinct **way of life**, shaped by the city's population size, density, and heterogeneity. These elements influence social relationships and behaviours. The large population size in cities leads to superficial, temporary relationships, increasing anonymity. Despite physical proximity, density creates social distance, reduces personal space, and fosters specialised roles. These factors disrupt traditional social structures, increasing mobility and instability. Heterogeneity allows diverse social groups to coexist, but can also lead to social fragmentation.

Wirth argues that the size of the city prevents individuals from knowing all other urban dwellers, leading to a shift from primary to secondary relationships. People interact not as individuals but through specific roles, such as a supermarket cashier or an apartment doorman. These interactions are superficial, based solely on roles, rather than personal connections. Driven by utilitarianism and efficiency, urban life leads to the formation of homogenous groups, transforming the city into a “mosaic of social worlds.” The density and heterogeneity of city life make transitions between groups more difficult, while social strata further segment urban life. As a result, urban living weakens social bonds, increases anonymity, and fosters individualism, reshaping social structures and cultural norms.

The “modern city” today is a complex and dynamic entity shaped by industrialisation, technological advancements, and social transformations, as Wirth noted.

With the rise of the bourgeoisie, rural connections weakened, and non-agricultural activities became more prominent. The division of labour reshaped social relationships, establishing a unique order within urban spaces. Economic and spatial changes of industrialisation have turned the modern city into more than just a living space—it fundamentally alters lifestyles, social relationships, and spatial organisation.

The “city” and “urbanity” concepts are now primarily associated with post-industrial cities, while traditional cities often fall outside this framework. Modern urban identity emerged with the rise of the bourgeoisie, in opposition to landowners, and urbanisation developed through the conflict between feudal lords and new social classes engaged in trade. However, this distinction was less pronounced in traditional cities, and the local elite played a central role in shaping urban space within existing social and economic networks.

Traditional cities have followed a different development path from modern urbanisation. However, as part of the capitalist system, they contain elements in their urban spaces like those in modern cities, making it sometimes difficult to distinguish between them. In Turkey, for example, cities, including Kayseri, share characteristics with modern cities regarding economic, institutional, and spatial structures. For instance, when airport signs are removed or while travelling on highways, it becomes challenging to determine whether the city is traditional or modern just by observing its industrial facilities and traffic flow.

Modern cities are designed to meet spatial needs, but the extent to which the modern urban lifestyle has been culturally internalised remains debated. The modern individual has evolved from traditional societal structures, transitioning from serfdom to a free, independent person. In modern cities, individuals form social relationships within impersonal structures, guided by legal and rational rules, rather than through personal ties. According to Marx, individuals are shaped by production relations; Durkheim views them as specialised through the division of labour, while Weber emphasises integration through rational authority. These individuals operate within societal frameworks, adhering to legal structures and traditional authorities, and exercising their individual will within the social system. The existence of the modern individual is crucial for an organic, solidaristic society defined by a complex division of labour (Özmen, 2021). While cities in Turkey physically reflect their modern counterparts, it remains uncertain whether the social and cultural realisation of the modern individual has been fully achieved.

Modern urbanisation is based on a post-industrial reality. However, in Turkey, this transformation is still ongoing, leading to societal confusion. While modern societies debate what lies beyond the modern city, we are still unsure if we can truly consider ourselves urbanites. This uncertainty is evident in contradictions, such as the struggle to disconnect from rural practices while adapting to urban life, viewing urbanity merely as a status symbol, and associating it with modern superiority. Additionally, the relationship with the city becomes a way to construct a new identity, breaking away from the bond with the land. Still, this search for identity often stems from an incomplete sense of belonging.

In Turkey, urbanisation is neither thoroughly modern nor entirely traditional; rather, it is a continuous process of transformation and reconstruction. Kayseri, historically an urban centre due to its location, still experiences an ongoing ambiguity between the modern and the traditional, a situation that remains relevant to the city today.

Turkey's urbanisation process has been shaped by modernisation, following a universal standardisation policy, but it carries many uncertainties. Capitalist production relations have blurred the boundaries between urban and rural areas, spreading urban culture into the countryside. However, Turkey's urbanisation experience differs from the universal model. While adopting a modern urban model, the country faces confusion about adapting to or resisting this change. Although the formal aspects of urbanisation have mainly been implemented, a strategy for internalising this transformation has not been developed. It has led to both physical and social-cultural conflicts. Cities have become modern, yet social groups remain uncertain about adjusting to the new structures.

In this context, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* provides a critical framework for understanding social practices in situations where the cultural order does not fully function (Özmen, 2021). Just as Algerians developed improvisational practices in modern French society, the *yilli* of Kayseri have created new practices within the modern urban context. This study examines the homogeneous social structure of *yilli*, whose identity, shaped by economic power and social capital, plays a significant role in determining urban dynamics.

4.1 Modernisation of Kayseri

Kayseri has long been a crossroads of trade routes, maintaining its economic and cultural significance throughout history. Each era has shaped the city's spatial and social

fabric from the Hittites to the Romans and Byzantines, and later from the Seljuks to the Ottomans. During the Ottoman period, Kayseri's urban structure was centred around guild organisations and neighbourhood culture. With the proclamation of the Republic, the city experienced industrialisation, migration, and spatial expansion. The establishment of the Tayyare [Aeroplane] Factory (1926) and the Sümerbank Textile Factory (1935) further solidified its industrial identity. By the second half of the twentieth century, Kayseri had become one of Anatolia's key production hubs, driven by entrepreneurship and capital accumulation. This transformation reflects the broader dynamics of urbanisation and modernisation in Turkey, where state-led development and cultural continuity often coexist in tension.

Across Turkey, housing and urban planning were restructured in line with Western-oriented modernisation ideologies. Traditional Ottoman-Turkish houses were increasingly portrayed as backwards and unhygienic, making way for modernist forms defined by cubic volumes, reinforced concrete, and functional layouts.³⁷ Especially through the apartment³⁸ form, housing became a tool for reorganising privacy, gendered space, and everyday life.³⁹ This shift implied progress, comfort and a symbolic break from vernacular spatial logics.⁴⁰ The 1965 Condominium Law further accelerated speculative apartment development.⁴¹ These ideals were institutionalised through state-sponsored architectural training abroad and the appointment of European planners and educators, reinforcing a systematic departure from traditional forms.⁴² In this context, housing

³⁷ See Bozdoğan (2001) for a discussion of how modernist architectural ideology in Turkey was closely tied to the nation-building project and aimed at creating hygienic, rational, and standardised living environments that reflected the ideals of a secular Republic.

³⁸ "The word 'apartment' comes from the French 'appartement,' meaning 'a separate unit within a residence.' This word is derived from the Late Latin 'appartimentum,' meaning 'division, share.' It was formed from the Latin verb 'appartire,' meaning 'to divide, to share,' with the addition of the suffix '-ment.'" <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/apartman> The term 'apartman' in Turkish is misunderstood. The original French meaning, or the English equivalent of 'apartment', refers to an independent living space within a building called 'daire' in Turkish. However, in Turkish, 'apartman' is used to describe a building that contains multiple apartments. In French, this would be called 'immeuble d'appartements,' in English, it is called an 'apartment block.' In other words, 'apartman' has replaced the term 'apartment block,' while 'daire' corresponds to 'apartment.'

³⁹ On the ideological and sociocultural implications of apartment life in Turkey—including changes in notions of privacy, communal living, and spatial belonging—see Pulat Gökmen (2011); Balamir (1994).

⁴⁰ See Bertram (2008) for an analysis of how discourses of hygiene, cleanliness, and modernity were mobilised to delegitimise traditional housing forms, and Öncel (2010) for the early architectural shift in Istanbul from wooden homes to apartment blocks in the Galata-Beyoğlu area.

⁴¹ For an account of the legal and economic turning point introduced by the 1965 Condominium Law and its impact on the speculative apartment economy, see Bozdoğan (2001); Balamir (1994).

⁴² See Tekeli (2010); Bozdoğan (2001) on the state's role in sending young Turkish architects to Europe in the 1920s and inviting foreign architects such as Taut and Egli to institutionalise modernist principles in architectural education and planning.

served not merely as shelter but as an ideological instrument of social transformation. Understanding Kayseri's evolution thus offers insight into how modernisation reshapes cities, preserving identities and often reconfiguring or eroding them through spatial change.⁴³ Having established this national context, the following section turns to Kayseri to examine how these broader transformations manifested locally.

4.1.1 Urban Development of Kayseri

With a history dating back to before the Common Era, Kayseri has always been a city at the crossroads of trade and military routes. It has hosted various civilisations and Turkish principalities since the Roman period and was an important city during the Seljuk Empire. During the Seljuk period, cities were typically divided into three parts: the castle, the city, and the outer areas. In Kayseri, this division included the Inner Castle, the area around the Great Mosque and *İçerişar* (enclosed by the castle walls), and the outer neighbourhoods, such as Hunat, Hacıkılıç, Güllük, Lale Mosque, and surrounding areas. As the population grew and tradespeople needed more workspaces, the outer neighbourhoods expanded and developed (Cömert, 2006, p.54).

Kayseri, with its rich cultural heritage and urban fabric shaped by layers of history, particularly during the Ottoman and Republican periods, has evolved significantly. The city, originally centred around its castle, gradually expanded over time. Despite its current linear form, it still connects to the centrally located castle. Although highly developed during the Seljuk period, Kayseri received little investment in the Ottoman era. However, following the establishment of the Republic, the city grew rapidly due to state investments and urban development plans. Key developments, such as the Tayyare [Aeroplane] Factory (1926) and the Sümerbank Textile Factory (1935), along with surrounding settlements, spurred growth, particularly toward the north with the influence of the railway. Despite this expansion, the city retained its compact form. As the compact structure became insufficient, the 1975 urban development plan encouraged linear growth along the east-west axis, allowing the city to expand while preserving its central core.

The transformation of Kayseri between 1882 and 1945 occurred as part of the urban modernisation process that began in the late 19th century and accelerated in the early years of the Republic. Sönmez & Alper (2012) examine this transformation through two

⁴³ For further reading on the transformation of housing and urban space in modern Turkey, see also: Pulat Gökmen (2011); Öncel (2010); Bertram (2008); Balamir (1994); Tekeli (2010); Bozdoğan (2001).

primary urban forms: the traditional Ottoman city structure that prevailed in the late 1800s and the modern city form that emerged in the early Republican period. Investments made during the Republican era and the first urban planning project prepared in 1945 significantly reshaped the city, creating a clear distinction between these two urban forms. This transformation led to a departure from the city's organic and traditional fabric, highlighting the stark differences between the pre-Republic and post-Republic periods.

While urban planning activities in Kayseri can be traced back to the Tanzimat period (Çabuk, 2012), significant planning efforts began after the Republic was established. The city's development followed plans drawn by experts for this purpose. Çabuk (2012) identifies the 1933 Çaylak plan as the first urban development plan, marking the beginning of structured urban planning in Kayseri. Over time, the city's urbanisation evolved in distinct stages, expanding in various directions in line with broader national trends (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012).

Kayseri maintained a compact settlement form until the mid-20th century. However, urban development plans and infrastructure investments during this period led to a shift toward a more linear structure. Yücel et al. (2020) highlight that transportation and land use improvements transformed the city, replacing traditional neighbourhoods with new residential areas shaped by modern urban planning.

Kayseri's urbanisation has been significantly transformed due to industrialisation. Onsekiz (2016) identifies three key industrial growth periods—1923-1960, 1960-1980, and post-1980—that reshaped the city's structure. With the emergence of new production areas and workplaces, spatial organisation evolved, leading to distinct functional regions. Sönmez (2012) emphasises that industrialisation altered the economy and reshaped daily life and housing culture. Between 1930 and 1970, housing structures were transformed by urban development, socio-cultural changes, and technological advancements, blending the city's traditional architecture with modern urban dynamics.

The period between 1950 and 1970 was a significant turning point in Kayseri's housing architecture, according to Oral (2006). Traditional Kayseri houses were modernised during this time, gaining a new architectural identity, yet maintaining strong ties to traditional culture. This evolution is an important example of the interconnectedness of urban development and housing architecture. The urbanisation and industrialisation processes in Kayseri brought economic transformation and reshaped urban spaces and daily life.

Sahabiye neighbourhood, a key urban landmark in Kayseri, is one of the city's first examples of modernist housing concepts. Güler (2019) discusses its significance in the urban transformation process, highlighting how Sahabiye connects the past with the future. Blending historical and modern urbanisation, this area is a crucial example in understanding Kayseri's spatial development.

Studies on Kayseri's urban development are essential for understanding the city's growth. Changes in neighbourhoods like Sahabiye reflect how urban memory has been shaped and the social impact of spatial transformations. The timelines and mappings used to analyse these processes are based on the data from these studies.

Kocatürk and Yücel (2012), referencing Tekeli, argue that Kayseri's planning process aligned with Turkey's post-Republic urbanisation, starting from the declaration of the Republic. They identify four key periods in Kayseri's 20th-century spatial transformations. The first is the **National Investment Period** (1923-1945), during which government investments were made without a local plan. It is followed by the **Entry into the Planned Period** (1945-1975), characterised by renovations in the existing fabric and a transition to a grid layout with geometric cubic buildings. In the **Second Planning Period** (1975-1986), the city's structure became more linear, with increased density and height, reflecting its transition to an industrial and service city, alongside the rise of mass housing and cooperatives. **From 1986 to the present**, Kayseri has experienced its most significant spatial development and transformation (Figure 4.1).

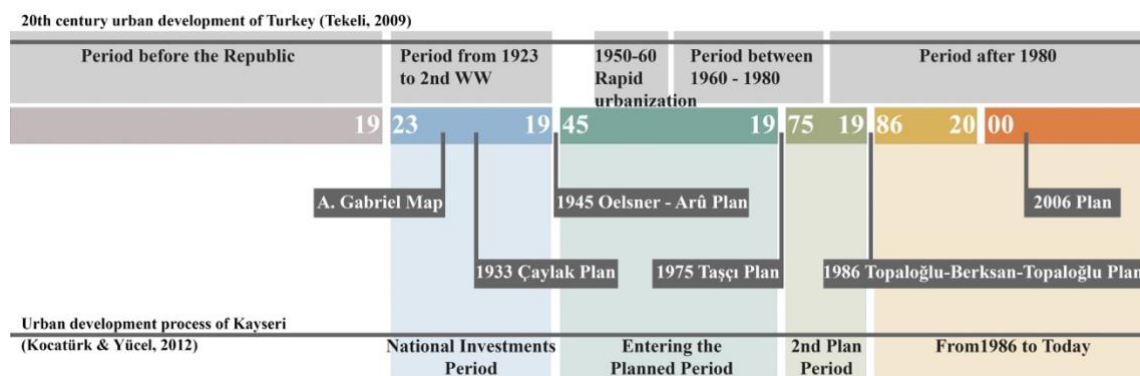


Figure 4.1 Urban development timeline in Turkey and Kayseri

As a fact, the building regulations proposed in these plans—such as plot arrangements, permitted building heights, and typological preferences—played a significant role in reshaping the urban landscape. Each planning period introduced distinct structural norms that disrupted existing spatial continuities and led to pronounced morphological and social shifts within the city. Therefore, this study adopts a similar

periodisation to examine how changing planning norms produced specific architectural forms and reconfigured everyday life.

The urban transformation of Kayseri can be traced through various sources. The city's first map, drawn by A. Gabriel (1927-1929), shows the organic layout with the Inner and Outer Castle walls and key Seljuk and Ottoman monuments. In 1933, Engineer Burhanettin Çaylak created the first urban planning map, proposing several main roads. While Çabuk (2012) considers this the first urban planning map, Yücel et al. (2020) note that the first comprehensive urban plan was the Oelsner-Aru Plan, approved in 1945. This plan introduced a modern layout with zoning decisions that deviated from traditional patterns. From the 1950s onwards, new modern residential areas emerged outside the traditional settlement, while the city centre within the walls began undergoing renewal. In the 1960s, influenced by the Oelsner-Aru Plan, new modern neighbourhoods with two- or three-story, gardened houses appeared near the Sümerbank Textile Factory and major transport routes. By the 1970s, apartment living gained momentum with further economic investments, marked by higher buildings and a shift towards block-style construction. The Taşçı Plan of 1975 laid the foundation for a single-centred city structure, emphasising the city centre as the central business area, along with higher buildings and the initiation of mass housing projects (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012).

The Taşçı Plan is significant for its vision of Kayseri's metropolitan development. It proposed expanding the city centre as a business district, prioritising the service sector, and relocating industry to the outskirts, reshaping the urban landscape. Between 1950 and 1980, the traditional fabric of the city began to fade, though not entirely lost. During this period, new residential and commercial areas developed along the east-west axis and to the north of the city centre (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012). The 1986 Topaloğlu-Berksan-Topaloğlu Plan marked the peak of spatial development and transformation in Kayseri, promoting high-rise and detached apartment buildings. The 2006 urban plan, building upon the 1986 plan, further shaped the city's growth (Yücel et al., 2020) (Figure 4.2). While some aspects of the plans have been modified, the city has developed mainly according to these projections. Today, their effects are visible in new settlements and transformed areas, with the city expanding along the east-west axis and preserving the central business district.

Urban development process of Kayseri (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012)

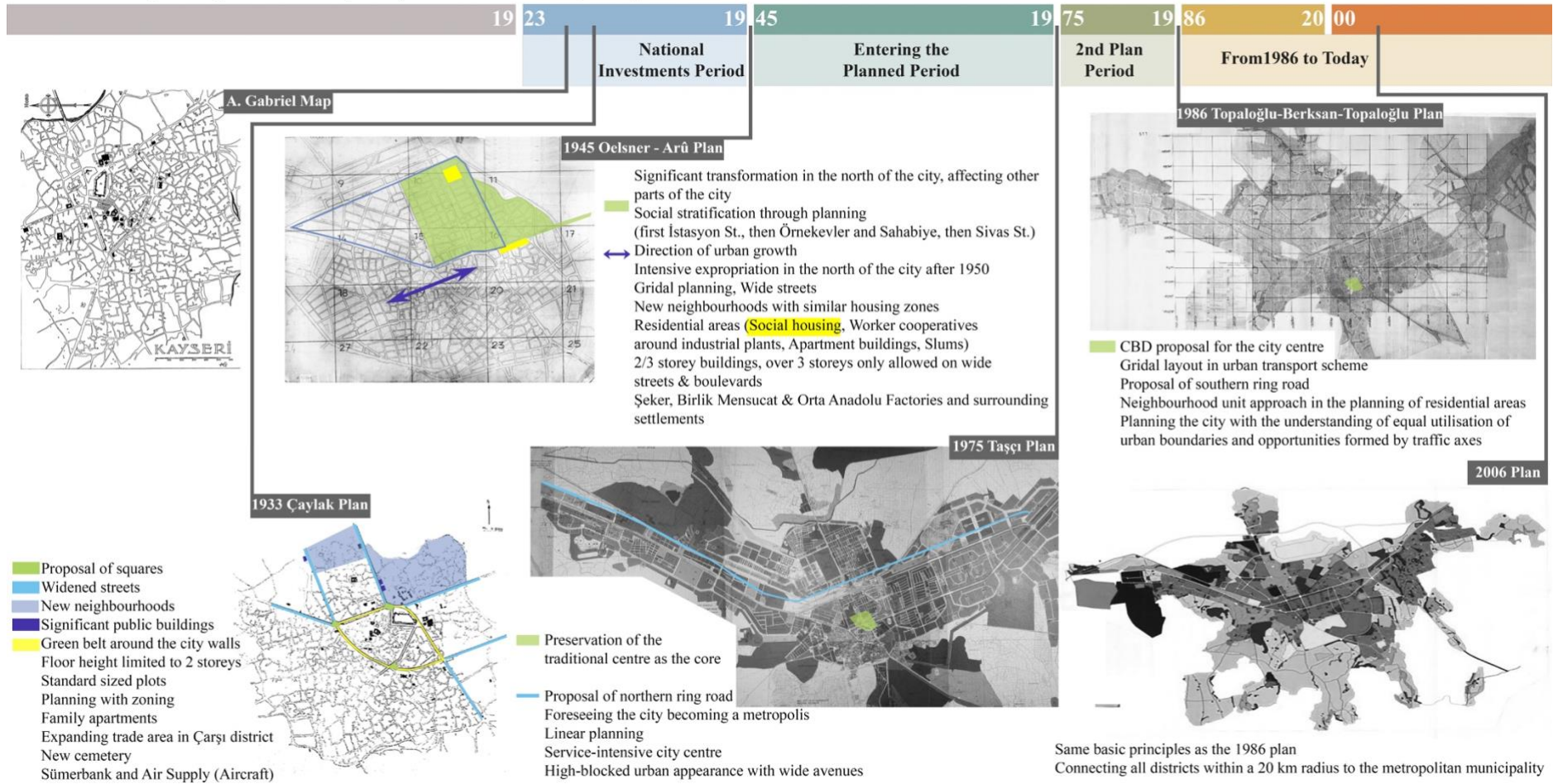


Figure 4.2 Summary of Kayseri development plan applications (Sources: Demir & Çabuk, 2013; Asiliskender, 2008; Tekinsoy, 2011; Çabuk, 2012; Sönmez & Arslan Selçuk, 2021; Yücel et al., 2020; Yılmaz Bakır et al., 2017)

Kayseri's urban development has largely followed development plans, but local factors may have also played a role. For example, the decision to develop the Sahabiye neighbourhood after the 1945 plan was influenced by the nearby railway and investments around Sümerbank, which facilitated expansion in that direction. However, it's unclear whether this decision was purely based on technical planning or influenced by individuals or groups with land interests in the area. The city's outskirts were not limited to Sahabiye, as investments in Aydınlikevler to the west could have supported expansion there. Despite this, urban growth primarily extended from the centre toward the eastern axis, toward Sivas. The western area, though developed, has been shaped mainly by industrial buildings and lower-segment housing for workers.

Kasap (2017) notes that urban planning in Kayseri has been shaped by legal regulations as well as economic, political, and social dynamics. While public administration directs land acquisition and investments through development plan amendments, this approach disrupts long-term sustainable urbanisation. The process has also been influenced by decisions made by local actors, alongside central planning.

Kasap highlights legal and practical challenges in urban planning during the Osman Kavuncu period. Flexible methods for expropriating road areas, land consolidation, and subdivision practices hindered changes to existing urban plans. Article 18 of the zoning law also created issues in defining common areas. Ambiguities in parcelling practices allowed authorities to avoid expropriation costs by altering zoning plans, making implementing long-term, holistic urban planning difficult.

Kasap's findings highlight that urban planning in Kayseri is not merely a technical process but is shaped by economic and political interests. The city's practices demonstrate the strong influence of local governments, investors, opinion leaders, and regional interest groups on planning decisions. A rumour I heard illustrates this dynamic: the mother of a long-serving mayor reportedly told women in an *oturma* how fortunate her son was, as every piece of land he bought eventually had a road built in front of it. Such stories reinforce suspicions of favouritism in urban planning. It hinders the development of a long-term, holistic approach and raises serious concerns about spatial justice and sustainability.

These factors indicate that central authorities, local governments, investors, and regional interest groups have shaped Kayseri's urbanisation, significantly influencing planning decisions.

4.1.2 Housing in Kayseri

As in many other Anatolian cities, the neighbourhood has been a significant social and spatial unit in Kayseri. It has functioned as part of the urban fabric and a space of solidarity, tolerance, and mutual understanding. Neighbours have maintained strong social and economic ties, fostering a deep sense of unity. Families have shown respect and responsibility toward one another, forming warm and close-knit relationships within their streets and neighbourhoods (İmamoğlu, 2006) (Figure 4.3). In these neighbourhoods and streets, where life was centred around human interaction and strong neighbourly relations, people from different religions and cultures lived together,⁴⁴ sharing similar lives in similar houses (Ateş, 1997).

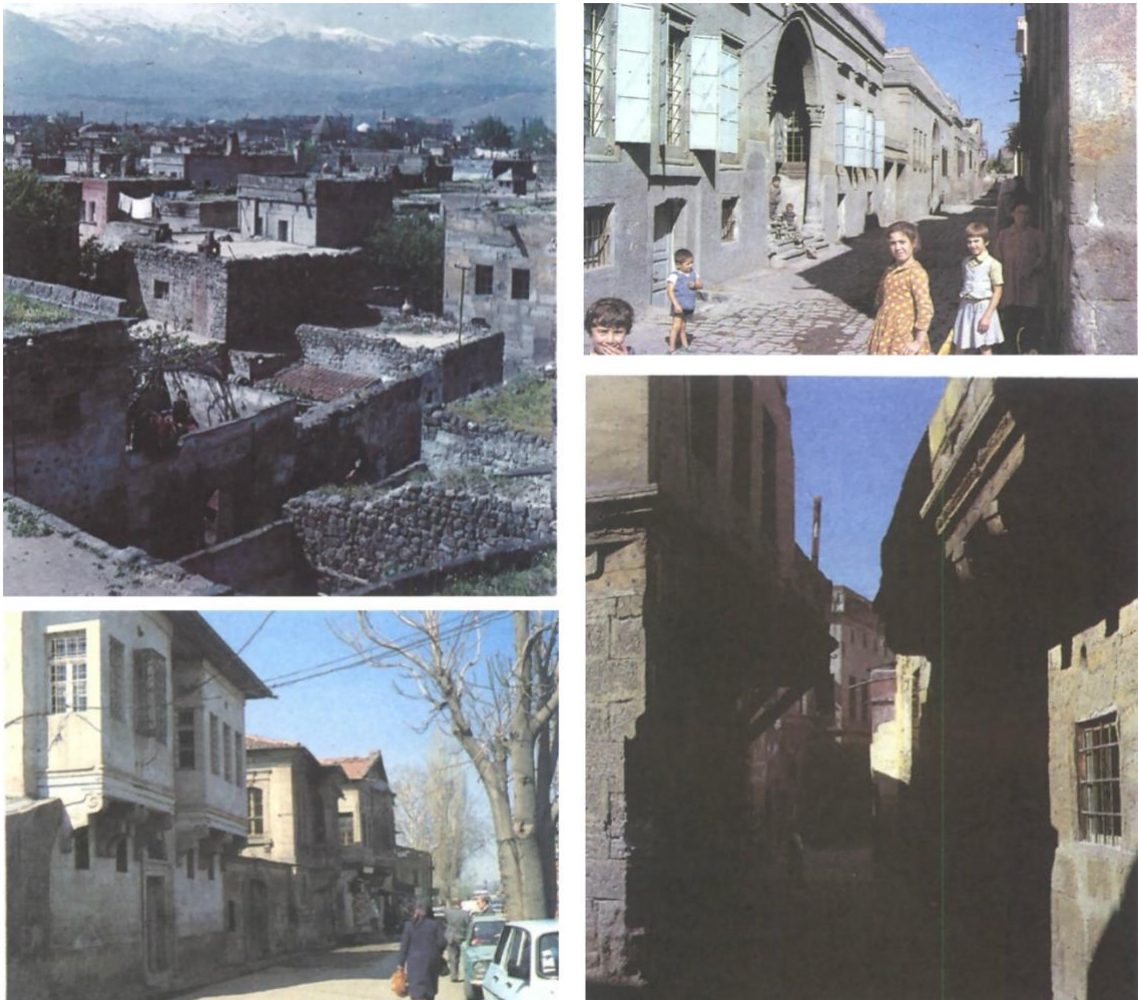


Figure 4.3 Traditional streets of Kayseri_1950s, 1970, 1989 (Source: İmamoğlu, 2006)

⁴⁴ It should be noted that Armenian and Greek communities—along with, according to some sources, Jewish communities—once lived in the city and maintained neighbourly relations with the Muslim population. However, these communities gradually left the city due to Republican-era policies. In this study, *yilli* refers to the Muslim group that remained in the city during that time

In his comprehensive study on the historical development of the Turkish house, Bektaş (2013) identifies climate and sunlight as primary factors shaping its design. He emphasises that these houses were built in harmony with nature, reflecting a lifestyle that respected the natural environment rather than treating it as a resource for personal use. The Turkish house existed as part of the natural flow, coexisting with all living beings.

This principle of environmental harmony is also evident in the traditional Kayseri house (Figure 4.3, Figure 4.6), which was shaped by geographical and cultural factors. While the city's cold winters, the orientation of Mount Erciyes, and the need to maximise sunlight influenced its form, cultural values—particularly Islamic traditions and the emphasis on privacy—played a more defining role. The house's structure integrated daily life with cultural norms, giving it a distinct identity. Table 4.1 summarises the key geographical and cultural features of the traditional Kayseri house. As the table illustrates, specific characteristics of the traditional house reflect environmental adaptation, whereas many others are direct expressions of cultural values and everyday life practices.

Table 4.1 Design principles of traditional Kayseri house (Compiled from Çakıroğlu, 1952; Ateş, 1997; Özkeçeci, 2004; İmamoğlu, 2006; Çelik, 2017b and the accounts of interviewees within the scope of the thesis)

GEOGRAPHICAL / TECHNOLOGICAL	CULTURAL	
* Orientation with consideration to Mount Erciyes * Erciyes also served as a natural guide for aligning buildings toward the qibla (the direction of Mecca) * Orientation to the north to provide insulation against heat during hot seasons (the sofa door and windows usually face north, contributing to a cooler interior environment)	Simple modest design; * Reflects a belief in the transience of worldly life, emphasising humility and spiritual values over material display * Architectural and interior elements were understated, aligning with cultural and religious ideals of modesty Introverted design of house; * Designed to be inward-looking, focusing on internal courtyards and private spaces rather than outward-facing facades * Protecting the privacy of both the homeowners and neighbours * Fostering a sense of security and seclusion	* Houses were built asymmetrically, growing organically over time based on the changing needs of the family. * Additions were made incrementally, rather than according to a fixed or symmetrical plan
Approach to conserving natural resources: * Sun: Used for water heating and drying various items * Flat Roof: Utilised primarily for drying purposes; according to İmamoğlu (2006), flat roofs were mostly used by Christian households * Cellar: Served as natural cooling by storing snow and preserving perishables * Well: Provided a source of cold water for household use	Separation of <i>harem</i> & <i>selamlık</i> <i>Harem</i>; * The main living quarters for the family, including service units such as the kitchen, storage, and bathing areas * Positioned away from the street to ensure privacy <i>Selamlık</i>; * Typically located near or in the outer <i>Hayat</i> (courtyard), especially if the house had multiple courtyards	<i>Sofa / Selamlık</i>; * The most prominent room in the house in terms of size and architectural emphasis * Held symbolic value through its scale, proportions, and ornamentation * Served as the showcase of the house, reflecting the family's status and hospitality * Functioned as a multipurpose space: main entrance, guest reception area, living room, place of worship, and occasionally a bedroom for elderly family members * Allowed supervision and control of the house * Strongly associated with the outside world
Carrying water from the fountain		<i>Harem</i> room; * Used as a daily living space (like today's living room) * <i>Sedir</i> [Ottoman-style built-in sofa] * <i>Yüklük</i> [built-in storage]: necessary items (beds, floor tables, prayer rugs) are brought out as needed and put away when no longer in use * <i>Gusülhane</i> (built-in bathing area) * Rooms were designed for families, not individuals * Multipurpose use: space was used for daily activities, sleeping, praying, etc. — the entire family would sleep together
<i>Zerzemi</i> in basement (to have cold storage space) – Usually under the <i>sofa</i> and <i>tokana</i>		
Use of upstairs in spring/summer Use of downstairs in winter	Separation of dirty & clean area; * Outside toilet to keep sanitation separate from living spaces * Shoe removal in the <i>Sekialtı</i> (the entrance area under the stairs or threshold) to maintain indoor cleanliness * <i>Tokana</i> (kitchen): includes <i>ocaklık</i> (stove) area along with the <i>Sekialtı</i> and separate sitting part, dividing dirty and clean zones	<i>Hayat</i> (courtyard); * Enclosed by high walls for privacy * Rooms and windows oriented toward the courtyard * Used for daily activities, except during cold weather * Functioned as an outdoor living space * Served as a communal area for the extended family
Wooden/iron shutters on the windows protect from cold in winter and sun in summer	Small opening to outside / or no opening at all Lattice/Shutter in the upstairs window for privacy/security	Two Door Knockers: * The upper knocker was used by men, while the lower one was intended for women and children—each produced a distinct sound, allowing those inside to identify the visitor's gender

The traditional house's layout reflects daily life, with the *hayat* as its central space and the core of household activities. Since extended families live together, this communal area functions as the primary gathering space (Figure 4.4). Most daily tasks occur here except during cold weather, necessitating enclosing walls to ensure privacy (*mahram*). All rooms (*harem*) are connected to the *hayat*. The *sofa*, the largest and most significant space, serves as both a reception area and a place where male guests are entertained. Its interior is carefully arranged for these purposes. The house's layout often includes tiered levels, *seki* and *sekialtı*, **distinguishing clean and dirty areas**, differentiating **between areas of use and circulation**.

When a family member marries and forms a new nuclear family, an **additional room** is built. These rooms are multifunctional and used for sleeping, eating, drinking, and praying. Cupboards provide storage for items like beds, blankets, and other necessities. Due to the absence of plumbing, there are no bathrooms; instead, a hammam is used for bathing. Small built-in bathing areas (*gusülhane*) allow for washing when needed, though they hold limited water. Given the technical constraints of the time, toilets were placed outside, in a distant corner of the courtyard (*hayat*), reinforcing the spatial separation of unclean areas. Overall, the design of the traditional house is a direct reflection of domestic life and cultural values, structured to accommodate these practices best (Figure 4.5).

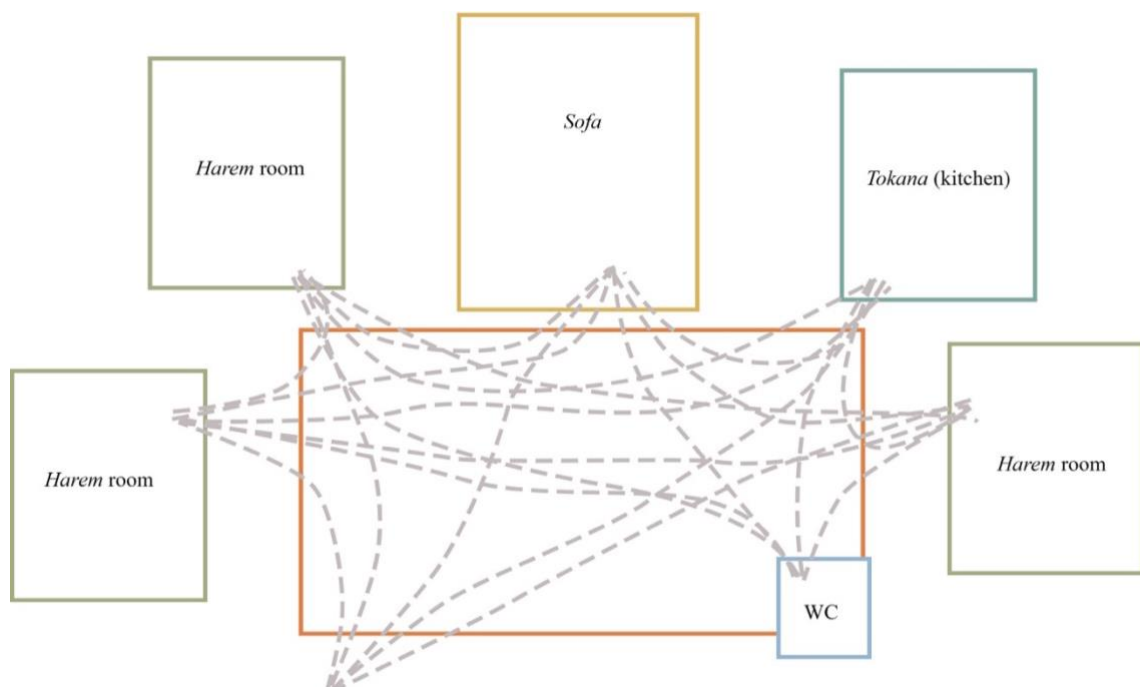


Figure 4.4 Movement map in *Hayat*

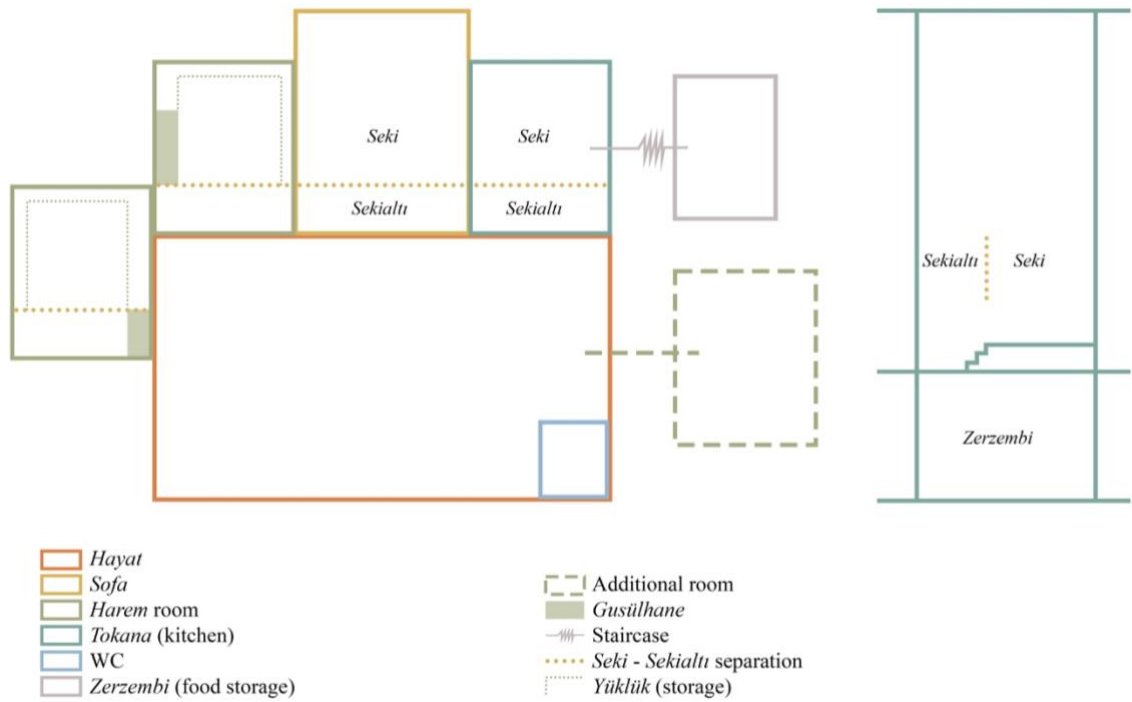


Figure 4.5 Graphical representation of the traditional Kayseri house

The traditional Kayseri house is an inward-oriented structure, modestly integrated into the dense urban fabric and symmetrically organised around a courtyard or garden (Figure 4.6). This courtyard house form, common across Iran, the Middle East, and Mediterranean countries, has also been widely adopted in Anatolia and Kayseri, with design variations adapted to different lifestyles. Kayseri houses are composed of square and rectangular prisms at varying heights. Key spaces, such as the *sofa*, are taller, while flat roofs are the norm. Ornamentation on façades is minimal (İmamoğlu, 2006). The design emphasises simplicity and the use of natural materials, shaped by economic factors and a cultural belief in the transience of worldly life. Resources are used efficiently—nothing is wasted. The sun is harnessed for heating water and drying, while snow and underground cellars provide cooling (Özkeçeci, 2004).

In response to the local climate, houses are typically oriented to minimise heat exposure rather than align with street patterns. Most houses face north or are at least partially open to the north, a preference that stands out. Thick stone walls, often lined with wooden panelling, offer effective insulation against temperature extremes (Çakıroğlu, 1952). Life in traditional Kayseri houses differs markedly from that in modern dwellings. Due to the construction techniques and cultural practices of the time, rooms are designed as independent units, each with distinct proportions and atmospheres.

These simple, prism-shaped spaces reflect spatial richness through their variety in size and character (İmamoğlu, 2006).

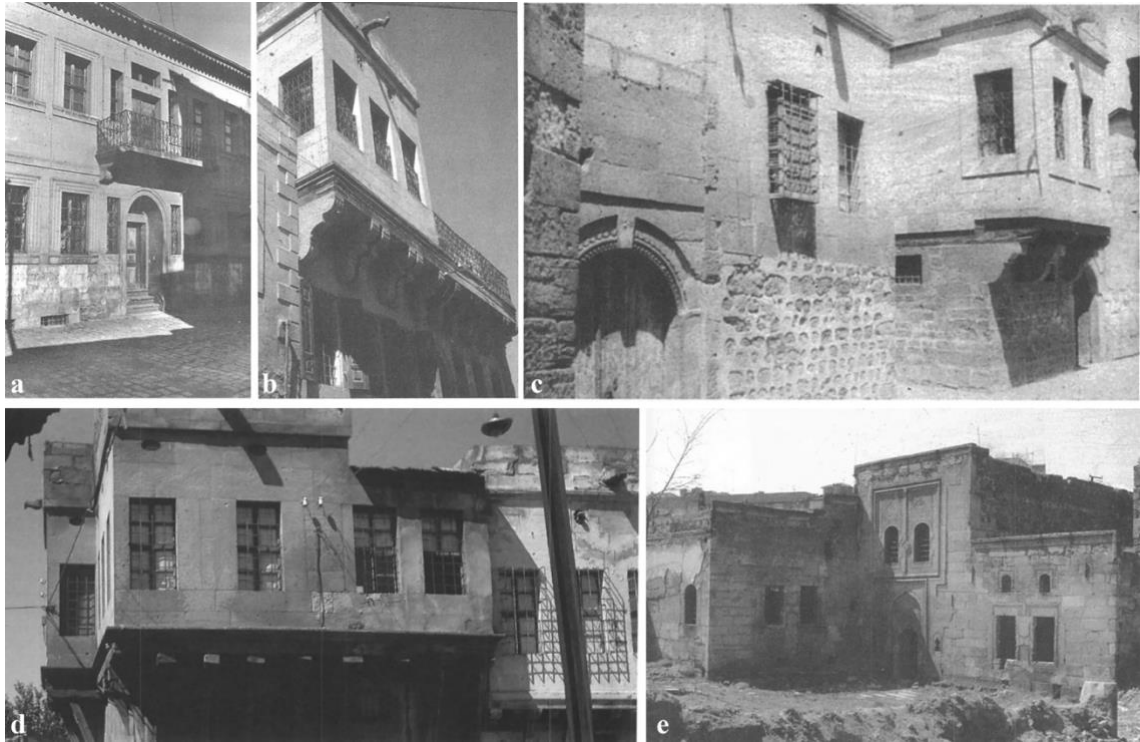


Figure 4.6 Traditional Kayseri house (a.Nedim Bey house b.Kadir Bey house, c.No-name d.Hacı Ahmet Ağa house e.Mollaoğulları house, Sources: İmamoğlu, 2006; 2014)

The Islamic concept of privacy (*mahram*) is evident in traditional housing. This privacy was not established through individualisation but through architectural measures designed to protect family life and uphold communal norms (Çelik, 2017b). A defining aspect of these houses was the emphasis on safeguarding women's privacy. It was achieved through specific design features: high courtyard walls, absence of ground-floor windows facing the street, latticed upper-floor windows, and orienting living spaces away from street view. Windows were generally small and few, protected by iron bars or wire mesh. Street-facing windows were additionally secured with wooden or wrought iron shutters, which provided insulation against the weather but primarily ensured security and privacy. Traditional Kayseri houses were also spatially divided to reflect social customs. The *harem*—reserved for women and family—contained the main living and service areas. The *selamlık*, by contrast, was designated for receiving and hosting male guests (İmamoğlu, 2006). This spatial separation reinforced the cultural emphasis on gender privacy and social order within the house.

The traditional house (Figure 4.7) in Kayseri was more than a physical shelter—it was shaped by the rhythm of daily life and fostered a vibrant social and cultural environment that met the needs of all household members, including children, older adults, guests, and visitors (Çelik, 2017b). A defining feature of these houses is the courtyard, referred to as *avlu* in Turkish [*havlu* in the *yilli* dialect], or *hayat*. Serving as the geometric and functional centre of the house, the courtyard was the primary living space where most daily activities took place. Traditional houses are inward-facing, with rooms arranged around the courtyard and oriented toward it, ensuring functionality and privacy. Some houses included multiple courtyards, reflecting the internal division of the house. The courtyard in the *harem* (family section) was called *içeri hayat* (inner courtyard), while the one in the *selamlık* (guest section) was known as *dışarı hayat* (outer courtyard). High courtyard walls provided privacy from the outside while facilitating communal life within. Courtyards often featured covered spaces such as kiosks [*köşk*] and canopies used for various purposes, including as stables or carriage shelters. Service areas like the kitchen, pantry, ablution room, and bath were typically located within or adjacent to the courtyard (İmamoğlu, 2006).

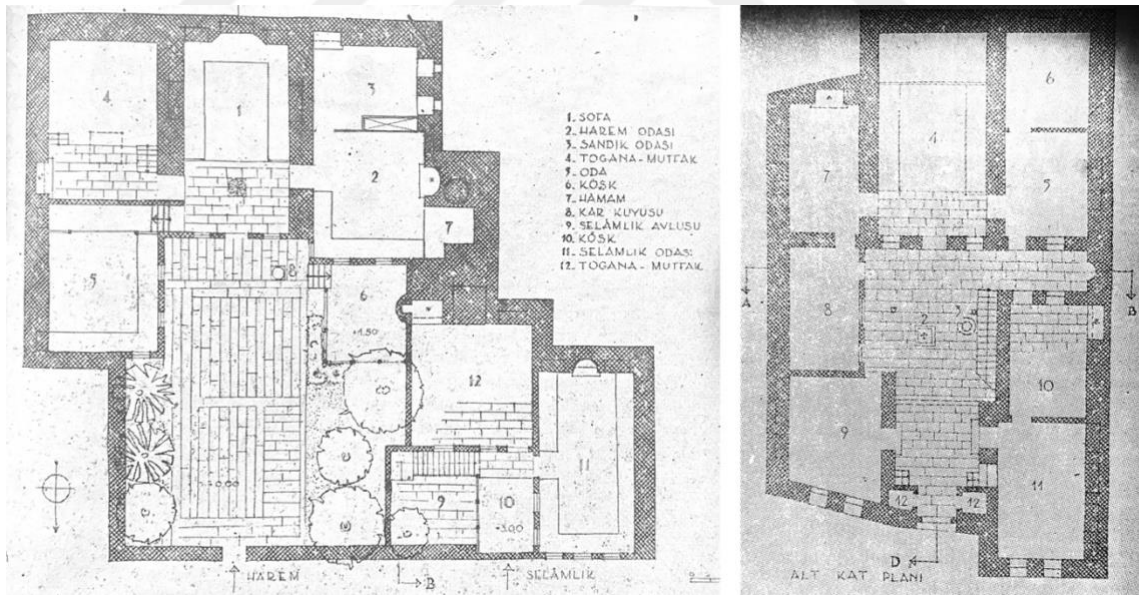


Figure 4.7 Plan examples of traditional Kayseri house (Source: Çakıroğlu, 1952)

Traditional Kayseri houses typically feature three key spaces: the *sofa*, *harem*, and *tokana* (kitchen). The *sofa* is the most important room in the house, serving various functions such as an entrance, reception area, living room, place of worship, and bedroom for the elderly. This large, rectangular space, which opens to the courtyard, acts as the central hub of the house, enabling shared living among family members and providing

access to other rooms. Adjacent to the *sofa* are the *harem* (living and sleeping quarters) and the *tokana* (kitchen). The house is generally organised across two levels: the *seki* (raised platform) and the *sekialtı* (lower level). In the *sekialtı*, there is a designated area called “taşlık” or “çağ,” used for washing activities and for removing shoes before entering the main living areas. Shoes are placed on the surrounding shelves (*terek*), creating a clean transition into the *seki*. The height difference between the *seki* and *sekialtı* typically ranges from 50-75 cm, with the wooden *seki* serving as the primary sitting area (Çakıroğlu, 1952; Çetin, 2021; İmamoğlu, 2006; Şahin, 2010) (Figure 4.8).

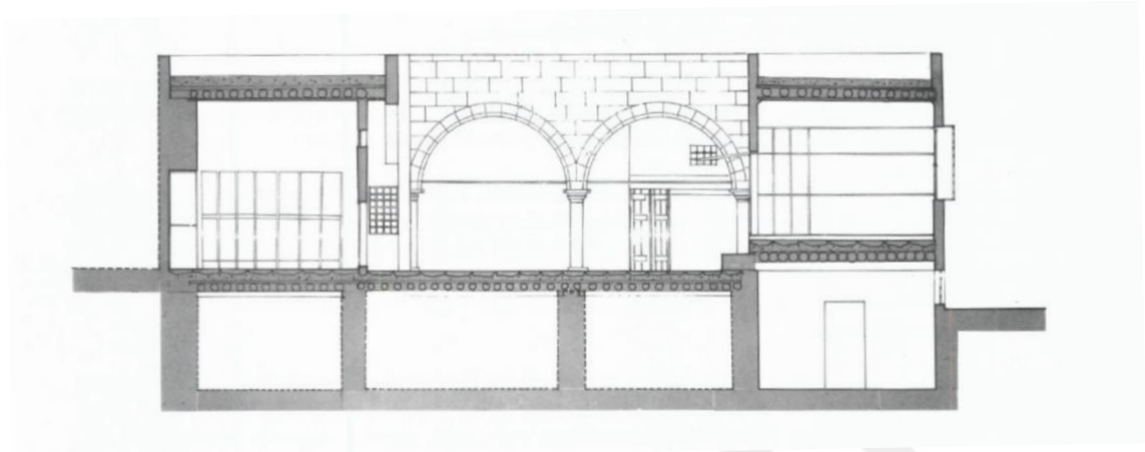


Figure 4.8 Section example of traditional Kayseri house, Çayırağası house (Source: İmamoğlu, 2006)

Until the 19th century, houses were typically designed with gardens at the front, side, or back. In those with front or side gardens, direct access to the garden was provided from the street. In houses with larger gardens, the *harem* and *selamlık* sections were arranged separately. In contrast, houses with back gardens had entry through the *sofa*, which led to the garden. Over time, as the need for more space arose, the layout and structure of the gardens evolved (Ateş, 1997). Families would build new rooms at one end of the house when additional space was needed. For example, when the son of a well-off family married, a new room would be added next to the existing ones, and a closed hall or corridor would connect these rooms. Traditional houses also included a basement (*zerzembi*). In two-story houses, the upper-floor rooms and, if present, pavilions were used during spring and summer, while the lower floors were utilised in winter. The basement typically included a stable, often connected to a hayloft, and storage areas for grain, flour, and food. In wealthier houses, there was also a designated area for servants

to sleep, while coachmen stayed in the loft area called “tahtalı”, located in the basement or stable (İmamoğlu, 2006).

In traditional Kayseri houses, rooms are multifunctional, serving purposes such as sitting, sleeping, dining, and praying. After each use, items are neatly stored away. Bedding and quilts are placed in built-in cupboards (*yüklük*), floor dining tables (*yer sofrası*) are removed after meals, and prayer rugs are laid out when needed. Light, portable furniture enhances the minimalist and spacious feel of the rooms. Until the late 19th century, Western-style furniture was uncommon, and people typically sat on cushions on the floor. However, as Western influences grew, wealthier families began incorporating furniture like chairs, tables, and sofas into their houses (İmamoğlu, 2006).

The way of life in traditional Kayseri houses, shaped within a cultural framework, underwent a profound transformation with the establishment of the Republic, like other Anatolian cities. This shift not only changed the urban landscape but also transformed housing structures. After the War of Independence, Kayseri experienced a period of stagnation, but industrialisation in the 1930s sparked renewed growth. Following World War II, the rapidly developing city saw significant transformations in a short period. Starting in the 1950s, most traditional neighbourhoods, particularly south of the Inner Castle, were demolished and replaced with grid-planned central business districts and apartment blocks. The once-traditional neighbourhoods gradually gave way to new construction, turning the city into a vast construction site (İmamoğlu, 2006).

State investments in Kayseri, starting in the 1930s, played a crucial role in shaping the city’s urban life and culture. These investments led to the development of housing complexes in factory areas, as well as the construction of cinemas, sports facilities, schools, and halls, which helped spread modern lifestyles (Çelik, 2017a). The first significant shift occurred with the Sümerbank Textile Factory housing, which introduced a completely new housing structure compared to the traditional urban fabric of Kayseri. These new housing areas, developed along major transportation routes such as Sivas Avenue, Atatürk Boulevard, and İstasyon Avenue, were characterised by geometric planning and the use of modern construction materials. Sahabiye and Örnekevler neighbourhoods are prime examples of this transformation. Developing new housing areas, along with wide roads and sharp geometric forms, contributed to the creation of a modern urban fabric. Traditional stone buildings were replaced by brick and reinforced concrete apartment blocks. These apartments were designed in a detached layout, making the housing form more outward-facing and complemented by narrow front, side, and rear

gardens. These structures became a significant part of Kayseri's urban development, representing the shift from traditional detached houses to apartment living (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012).

The new housing areas developed around the city's newly built facilities featured grid plans and garden city layouts, initiating a renewal process in urban residential spaces. Houses with gardens, positioned along wide and orderly streets, were seen as innovative for their time. One notable example is the Sahabiye Neighbourhood, located near the city centre. It was planned as part of the 1945 Oelsner-Aru plan, featuring a structured street layout with two- or three-story residences (Alemdar, 2010; Asiliskender & Özsoy, 2010).

The housing phenomenon in Kayseri underwent significant transformation from the late 19th century to the 1950s, influenced by Westernisation. This period can be seen as a preparatory phase for apartment living. However, the construction of apartments did not directly replace courtyard houses. Instead, traditional courtyard houses were transformed into Western-style, symmetrical, outward-facing buildings. Narrower front, side, and rear gardens replaced the courtyards. Although building heights increased, the urban fabric maintained a human-scale proportion. Rather than expanding houses by adding rooms, fixed, rectangular-plan apartments began to be constructed. This transition marks the shift from courtyard houses to apartments with central hallways. From the 1950s onward, stone was replaced by brick and reinforced concrete in residential construction, and apartments were typically built with 3 to 4 floors. This period symbolises the shift from detached houses to apartment living. With the opening of wider roads and boulevards, the height of buildings gradually increased, and apartments began to appear, especially around the Municipality Blocks (Oral, 2006; Kocatürk, 2009; Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012; Yücel et al., 2020).

In the early 1970s, much of Kayseri was still composed of traditional one- to two-story, flat-roofed rubble stone buildings, despite the emergence of some modern neighbourhoods. With increasing migration and the spread of informal housing, urban development became a pressing issue. In response, the 1975 Taşçı Plan was implemented to give Kayseri a metropolitan character. It transformed the city's landscape, characterised by wide streets and high-rise apartment blocks (Tekinsoy, 2011; Yücel et al., 2020).

Several factors may explain the high-rise buildings on major boulevards. The ability of cooperatives to cover land costs likely encouraged construction in these areas. The municipality might have supported landowners to help them profit while offering those with limited financial means the opportunity to acquire housing through cooperatives.

Ultimately, however, it appears that landowners benefited the most. The economic advantages of apartments also stem from several factors. Sharing common expenses, such as maintenance and heating, made apartment living more affordable than individual houses.

Additionally, building more floors reduced construction costs, making apartments a more economical option despite rising land prices. The municipality may have benefited by reducing infrastructure and service costs. The municipality likely played a key role in the popularity of major boulevards. With its guidance, the public adapted to this new urban layout. The development of wide roads, increased vehicle traffic, and modern urbanisation may have offered an appealing experience. The rise of bazaar culture along the boulevards also contributed to greater street activity, further enhancing their attractiveness. The preference for houses facing the boulevards may have been driven by the desire to be closer to social life and human movement.

Since the 1970s, as apartment sizes and the number of floors increased, middle and upper-income groups began to prefer living in these areas. While detached housing units remained prominent, the number of apartments per floor in apartment buildings also grew. After the 1980s, following the 1986 plan, architectural coherence within building blocks was lost, and individual high-rise buildings emerged within large blocks. Road widths expanded, and the open spaces around the buildings were adapted for parking and garden areas. This period also saw the development of spaces that, compared to the 1960s and 1970s, exceeded the human scale. The “block parcel” solution, widely implemented in Kayseri, led to developments with no surrounding garden spaces. As a result, housing unit sizes and the number of apartments per building increased, and building heights reached up to 15 stories (Kocatürk & Yücel, 2012; Yücel et al., 2020).

Since the 1980s, the transformation of the housing fabric became more pronounced in the 1990s, with a notable shift in architectural style. High-rise apartment buildings initially concentrated along boulevards began to spread to the inner parts of the city, changing its spatial character. These buildings moved away from traditional living culture and became more profit-driven. The municipality’s influence on urban development continued, but the cooperative model weakened and was replaced by the build-and-sell approach. Landowners not only earned cash income but also started acquiring apartments, creating new negotiation opportunities for contractors. It led to a short-term, profit-focused transformation that benefited landowners rather than users. Additionally, the

construction sector, seen as a growth engine for national production and employment, saw the rise of new capital groups driven by political factors.

The spatial transformation in Kayseri during urbanisation has sparked debate regarding its impact on urban culture. While new apartments and luxury buildings replacing old historic stone houses may seem to improve urban life, the loss of historic civil architecture and streets has caused an irreparable loss of memory for the city (Çelik, 2017c). The city now appears built on significant destruction, with wide boulevards and modern structures lacking historical continuity. 20th-century buildings stand beside 12th-century structures, and Seljuk-period buildings are overshadowed by large hotels and apartment complexes (Korat, 2009). Like many ancient cities in Turkey, Kayseri has lost valuable architectural and cultural heritage.

As older generations transitioned from the difficulties of old houses to more comfortable apartments, they viewed this change as a privilege, inadvertently contributing to abandoning the city's historic neighbourhoods. The prestigious old neighbourhoods were left behind by *yilli*, becoming areas inhabited by outsiders. Over time, these houses were neglected and became unattractive, resulting in the abandonment of both the buildings and the way of life they represented (Özkeçeci, 2004).

4.2 *Yilli* in the City

The transformation of Kayseri's urban space cannot be understood without considering the role of cultural dispositions that shape behaviour across both public and private realms. In traditional contexts, culture provides a stable framework for action; however, in situations of uncertainty—such as those introduced by rapid urban modernisation—*habitus*, as an internalised system of dispositions, assumes a guiding role. The modern city, structured around capitalist imperatives and codified regulations, imposes formal expectations on behaviour. Yet, in Kayseri, the coexistence of traditional cultural norms with emerging urban structures has produced visible tensions. While individuals may disregard official rules in public settings—for example, ignoring traffic regulations—they may simultaneously uphold unwritten cultural codes, such as refraining from smoking in front of elders. These contradictions illustrate how *habitus* continues to shape conduct, even within ostensibly rationalised urban environments.

Rather than being limited to public space, these dynamics are deeply entangled with the broader spatial transformations experienced across the city. One prominent feature of modern urban development in Kayseri is the proliferation of apartment buildings, which embody the spatial logic of modernity. For the *yilli*, whose cultural framework is rooted in older neighbourhoods defined by kinship proximity, gendered spatial practices, and informal codes of conduct, adapting to apartment life has entailed negotiating a series of spatial and behavioural adjustments.

Although the primary analytical focus of this study is on housing, the influence of the *yilli* community on the urban scale remains substantial. Accordingly, the research adopts a multi-scalar perspective, tracing the spatial manifestations of *habitus* from city-wide distributions to domestic arrangements. Interviews as part of the fieldwork reflect this scope, encompassing not only accounts of private life but also perceptions of neighbourhood change, urban transformation, and shifts in everyday spatial routines. The study captures both continuity and rupture in spatial practice by engaging with individuals who have lived in traditional houses or experienced the transition to modern housing environments. Demographic diversity—including age, gender, occupation, and familial background—was considered when selecting interviewees, allowing for a nuanced exploration of how *habitus* operates across different generational and social positions (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Table of the Interviewees⁴⁵

N	Age Group			Gender	Education	Work Status	Family Occupation		Income Level	Family Lineage	
	Young (30-50)	Middle age (51-70)	Elderly (71-90)	Female / Male	High School / Vocational College / University	Work(ing)ed / Not (W / NW)	Civil Servant / Worker	Trade / Industry	(Low / Middle / High)	Father family (FF)	Both families (BF)
I_1		M		F	VC	W	CS/W		M	FF	
I_2			E	F	HS	W	CS/W		H	FF	
I_3	Y			F	U	NW		T/I	H		BF
I_4	Y			F	U	NW		T/I	H		BF
I_5			E	F	HS	NW		T/I	M (FMR-H)		BF
I_6		M		F	HS	NW		T/I	M (FMR-H)		BF
I_7		M		F	HS	NW		T/I	M (FMR-H)		BF
I_8	Y			F	U	W		T/I	M		BF
I_9	Y			F	VC	W		T/I	M		BF
I_10	Y			F	U	W		T/I	M		BF
I_11		M		F	HS	NW	CS/W		M		BF
I_12			E	F	HS	NW		T/I	M (FMR-H)		BF
I_13			E	F	HS	NW	CS/W		M		BF
I_14	Y			F	U	W		T/I	H		BF
I_15		M		F	HS	NW		T/I	M		BF
I_16	Y			F	U	W	CS/W		M		BF
I_17		M		F	U	W		T/I	H	FF	
I_18			E	F	HS	NW		T/I	M		BF
I_19		M		F	HS	NW	CS/W		M		BF
I_20		M		F	HS	NW	CS/W		M	FF	
I_21		M		M	HS	W	CS/W		M		BF
I_22	Y			M	U	W		T/I	H	FF	
I_23	Y			M	U	W	CS/W		M	FF	
I_24		M		M	U	W	CS/W		M	FF	
I_25			E	M	VC	W		T/I	M		BF
I_26		M		M	HS	W	CS/W		M		BF
I_27			E	M	HS	W		T/I	M (FMR-H)		BF
I_28			E	M	U	W	CS/W		M		BF
I_29		M		M	U	W		T/I	H	FF	
I_30			E	M	HS	W		T/I	H	FF	

The table presents the socio-demographic characteristics of 30 interviewees who participated in the study. It captures essential variables such as age group, gender, education level, work status, family occupation, income level, and family lineage, offering insights into the social structure and internal diversity within the *yilli* community of Kayseri. Participants are primarily distributed across three age groups: young (30–50), middle-aged (51–70), and elderly (71–90). In terms of education, the interviewees' backgrounds range from high school (HS) to vocational college (VC) and university (U), indicating varied access to formal education across generations and genders. While older participants more frequently hold only high school degrees, younger respondents and those with professional occupational ties are more likely to have completed higher education. Most respondents are female, reflecting the gendered nature of domestic knowledge and memory. Regarding employment, a clear divide is observed between

⁴⁵ FMR-H refers to families that formerly had high income levels.

those currently working (W) or have worked in the past, and those who have never worked (NW), a particularly gendered distinction among female participants. Family occupations are broadly categorised into civil service/worker (CS/W) and trade/industry (T/I), reflecting the historical economic duality within the city. Many respondents come from families engaged in trade or industrial activities, suggesting a close tie to Kayseri's long-standing commercial tradition. Income levels vary between low, middle, and high, with a considerable concentration in the middle-income bracket. A few participants are noted as having middle income with a reference to "former high" (FMR-H), indicating a downward shift in socio-economic status over time, a dynamic often associated with urban transformation and inheritance fragmentation. The final column addresses family lineage, distinguishing between those whose ties to Kayseri stem from the father's side only (FF) and those whose both maternal and paternal lineages (BF) are rooted in the city. Most respondents belong to the latter category, underscoring the intergenerational embeddedness of the *yilli* identity. Overall, the table reveals that while the *yilli* identity is rooted in historical continuity and urban centrality, it is also marked by gendered experiences, occupational diversification, and class-based stratification. These factors shape how participants relate to their neighbourhoods, engage in urban life, and position themselves within the socio-spatial hierarchy of Kayseri.

***Yilli* Identity: Space and Continuity**

Kayseri Castle has a two-layered structure consisting of inner and outer walls. Although the city gradually expanded beyond the walls, the people continued to live within them for a long time and defined their identity through this; being from within the walls was regarded as being local (*yilli*) of the city. The area enclosed by the outer castle walls in the city is referred to as *İçerişar*⁴⁶ (Figure 4.9). The historical city centre of Kayseri, *İçerişar*, has undergone many different processes since the Roman period. Despite the general expansion of the city in the east-west direction from the mid-20th century onwards, *İçerişar* has managed to maintain its central character. In other words, even as the city expanded, *İçerişar* has served as the urban core. An examination of Kayseri's urban plans reveals that, regardless of how much the city has grown, it has preserved its core structure in the city centre⁴⁷ (Figure 4.10).

⁴⁶ According to some sources, the original term *İçerişar* is "İçeri Şehir" (Inner City), referring specifically to the area within the walls. Over time, this expression evolved into *İçerişar* in the Kayseri dialect.

⁴⁷ Although the core structure of the city may appear to be preserved, this primarily applies to the outer city walls, not the traditional fabric within. The preservation effort has focused more on maintaining

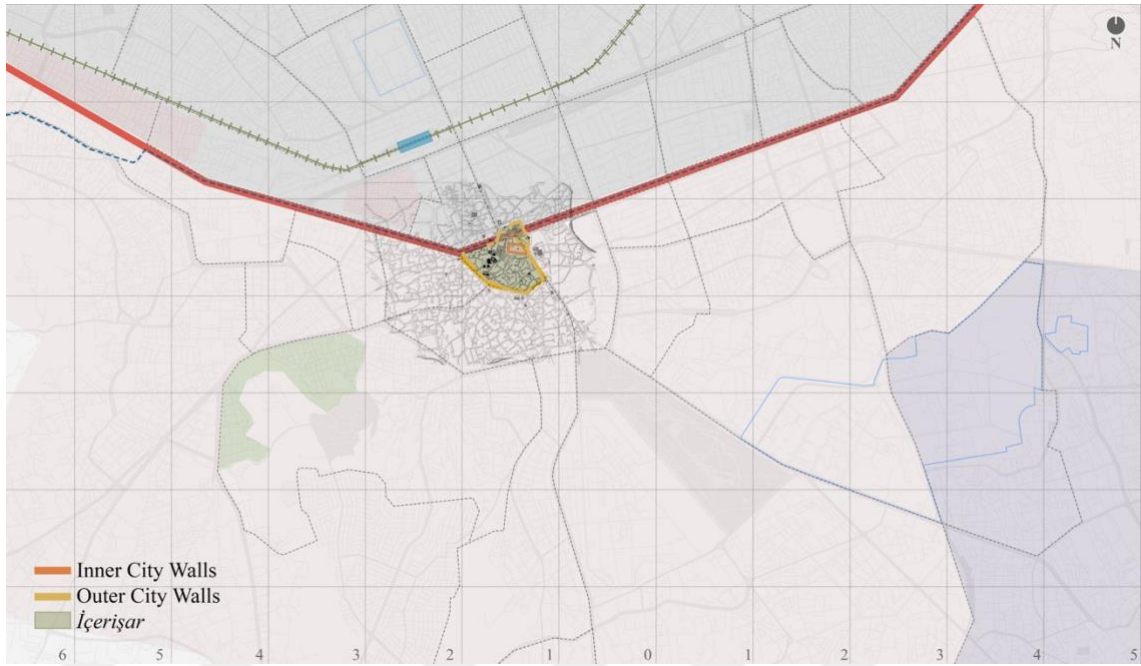


Figure 4.9 Citadel, Boundaries of Bailey & İçerişar (created by overlaying the 1929 Gabriel map and the current city map)

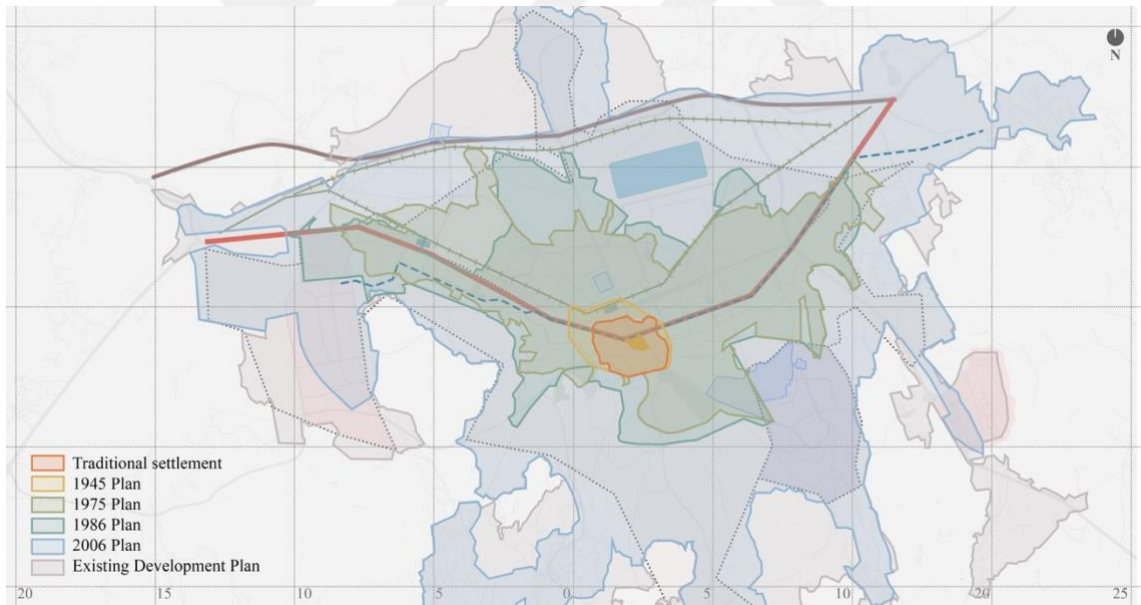


Figure 4.10 Borders of Kayseri Development Plans

Yilli of Kayseri define themselves as being from *İçerişar*, referring to individuals whose families were born and lived within the city walls generations ago. As *yilli*, they consider themselves the “true owners” of the city. During the Seljuk period, as the city

the perception of the city centre rather than the holistic conservation of its historical and traditional elements. The importance of preservation in Kayseri is not yet fully understood. As a result, there is no equivalent to the *Altstadt*, *Citta Vecchia*, or *Old City* found in European cities.

expanded beyond the walls, new neighbourhoods developed around them, making the area inside the walls and the surrounding neighbourhoods the city's oldest settlements.

Definitive information about the inhabitants of Kayseri can only be obtained through official records such as population censuses. Today, the group that identifies as “*yilli*” refers to the “Ancestry Information” available through e-Government, which typically spans 6-7 generations. However, before these records, it is unclear who lived in the city, where the ancestors of the *yilli* came from, or whether they were always in the city centre. While it might seem that the presence of the city's inhabitants dates back to the Seljuk period (or even earlier), concrete data only extends as far back as the 1830s. Studies on neighbourhoods date back to 1570 but do not provide direct information about the residents.⁴⁸ Similarly, it is difficult to link the names from before the Surname Law to those of current residents, making it challenging to establish a clear connection to the city's population history.⁴⁹ Despite gaps in historical data, it is clear that for at least two hundred years, a group of people has been born and raised in the city centre. Population records trace their origins to the walled area and surrounding neighbourhoods.

In Kayseri, being *yilli* refers to coming from the neighbourhoods inside and around the city walls. One interviewee (I_6) described that her family, spanning multiple generations, has always lived in the heart of Kayseri, with no connections to areas outside the city. She emphasised that her roots trace back to *Kaleiçi* (inside the castle), portraying herself as one of the true inhabitants of the city. However, when considering the city's size about two hundred years ago, it is vital to understand how far people could have lived from the castle or its surrounding area. In a once relatively small city, it was natural for people living close to each other to form strong social bonds. This proximity likely led to intermarriage and strong ties between families, making it unsurprising that those living in the same area developed close familial connections.

Being defined as *yilli* means belonging to one of the region's strongest groups of tradespeople, artisans, and merchants. It involves having a family lineage in Kayseri, with grandparents and earlier generations rooted in the city centre as property owners (Alyanak, 2015). *Yilli* trace their origins to the inner walls and have historically identified themselves through the neighbourhoods they inhabit. Since the city began to experience migration, *yilli* have maintained a distinction between themselves and newcomers, often drawing a clear line between ‘*yilli*’ and ‘villagers.’ According to Çelik (2017a), this

⁴⁸ Demir & Çabuk, 2013.

⁴⁹ Cömert, 2006.

distinction is tied to the process of *yilli* settling in specific neighbourhoods, leading to the emergence of the “us vs. them” mentality. While this spatial segregation can be found in other Anatolian cities, it is particularly deep-rooted and defining in Kayseri. The “ghetto-style migration” process, which started from Sahabiye and extended to Fevzi Çakmak, Sivas Street, and Alpaslan, continues to perpetuate this tradition.

Interviewees explained the question ‘Who is regarded as a *yilli*?’ by referring to being from the centre, within the city walls, or by identifying specific neighbourhoods. For example, one of the interviewees (I_27), who says that the *yilli* are those born in the city’s old neighbourhoods, defines these neighbourhoods as follows: Hacıkılıç, Tabaklarönü [Dabaklarönü], Çorakçılar, Cürcüller [Cürcürler] Neighbourhood, behind the Kayseri High School, Kasımlı [Hacı Kasım] Neighbourhood, Hunat Neighbourhood, Hasinli Neighbourhood, Çifteönü, Tavukçu Neighbourhood ... (Figure 4.11).⁵⁰ Another interviewee (I_25) stated that the *yilli* of Kayseri are believed to originate from the oldest generations⁵¹ who lived within the city walls, starting from Düvenönü. This area once had walls, although they have since been destroyed. This region, which includes the area around the current train station, the two gates, and the castle, is regarded as the original boundary of the city.⁵² Those born and raised in this area are considered Kayserians. Over time, as families grew, they moved beyond these walls.

⁵⁰ The interviewee mentioned the neighbourhood names as they were remembered or pronounced. The names in parentheses are their actual names, referenced from Demir & Çabuk (2013).

⁵¹ When he refers to the oldest generations, he uses the term “dibi dabanı” (meaning ‘the deepest part’) in Kayseri dialect, which refers to ‘the oldest generations of the family.’

⁵² The boundaries defined by the interviewee refer to the outer city walls.

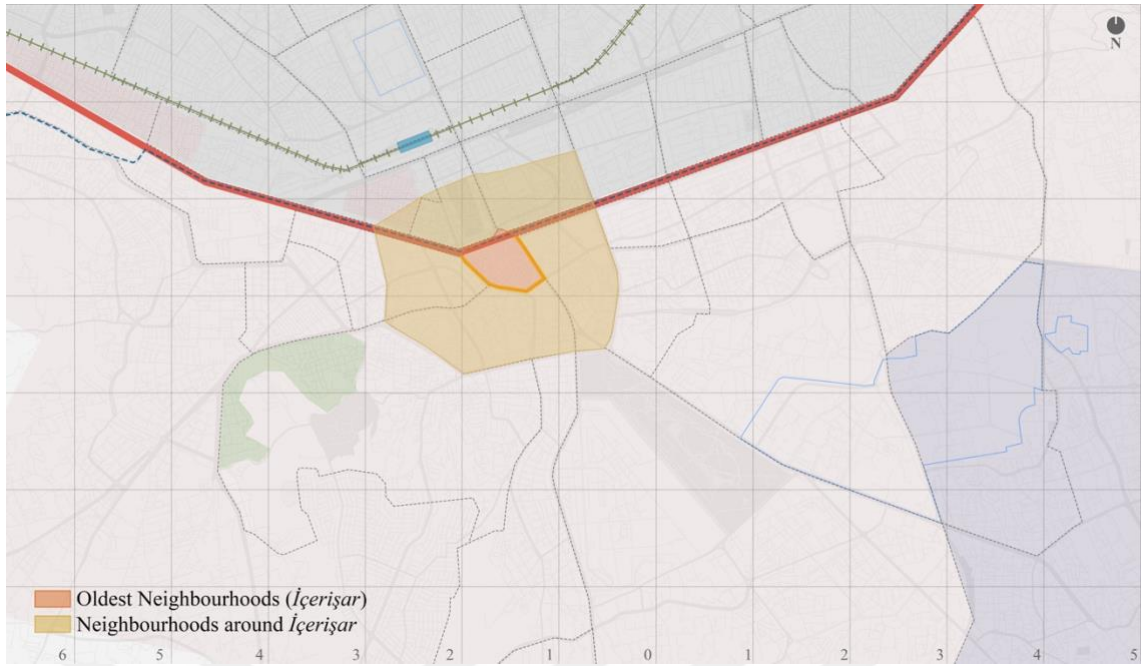


Figure 4.11 Origin neighbourhoods of *yilli*⁵³

Neighbourhood and Social Hierarchy

The concept of being *yilli* in Kayseri is primarily defined by a specific geographic location—the historical neighbourhoods in the city centre, particularly those within the old city walls. For *yilli* individuals, their sense of identity and belonging are deeply rooted in these neighbourhoods, shaping their connection to the city’s social, cultural, and economic structures. Thus, being *yilli* is not just about living in a particular area but also about being integrated into the fabric of that area’s history and social life.

However, the identity of being *yilli* could be a constructed one. The oldest available data on the city’s residents only dates back about two hundred years. This means that the people now identified as *yilli* may have arrived from outside the city only a few centuries ago. The absence of detailed knowledge about their exact arrival and their longer presence in the city compared to more recent settlers might have allowed them to form a sense of belonging gradually. In this sense, the identity of being the ‘true inhabitants’ of Kayseri may be something that has been built over time, rather than an inherent characteristic from ancient history.

⁵³ The map marks the current boundaries of the native neighbourhoods, which have emerged from merging several smaller neighbourhoods from the past. These boundaries, as referenced in Demir & Çabuk’s (2013) book *Türk Dönemi Kayseri Kenti ve Mahalleleri* [Turkish Period Kayseri City and Neighbourhoods], have also been confirmed by the interviewees. Some of the neighbourhoods mentioned by the interviewees fall within these boundaries.

In Kayseri, the *yilli* identity is closely linked to specific urban spaces and significantly shapes how individuals relate to the city. This identity is constructed through a strong connection to certain central neighbourhoods, which serves as the basis for distinguishing “us” and “the others.” Those who reside in these central areas are included in the “us” group, while individuals from outside these neighbourhoods are regarded as “the other.”

An anthropologist who is not originally from Kayseri but has lived there for many years (Z. N. Nahya, personal communication, July 10, 2024) shared her insights on the *yilli* identity. According to her, *yilli* define their sense of belonging and identity through urbanity. For them, territorial ties are not about rural land or specific regions but the city itself. In this sense, being *yilli* is synonymous with being urban. Their identity is rooted in a system based on money, trade, and the social relationships that emerge from these dynamics. As a result, the way *yilli* form and maintain social ties differs significantly from the social interactions typical of villagers.

I am someone whose roots are connected to the *yilli* and who has lived among them, except during my university years. Because of this, I’ve always experienced being *yilli* from the inside. Throughout my life, I have heard the distinction between *yilli* and villagers, but due to my insider perspective, I never considered it from the other side. After this interview, I had a personal realisation. The term ‘villager’ has always been used in this comparison, and it is inherently a spatial definition. In this sense, ‘being *yilli*’ means being ‘urban.’ *Yilli* see themselves as urban, and, as a result, they consider themselves the ‘true owners’ of the city. They define their identity through this urban lens. Given Kayseri’s long history, which stretches back to the Roman era, it is understandable that the concept of being urban plays such an essential role in shaping *yilli* identity.

Kayseri has maintained its identity as a city for centuries, developing a unique sense of belonging. *Yilli* work to preserve and pass down this cultural identity, which is rooted in space, by excluding those who are not part of it and passing it through generations. Although the distinction between *yilli* and villagers can be divisive, it remains an important way for people in the city to define each other and establish their social positions (Alyanak, 2015). Many anecdotes in the city reflect this pejorative situation. In one such story, in a small apartment building, all the residents are *yilli* except for one person. While everyone else is referred to by name—such as Hikmet Hanım, Fatma Hanım, or Ayşe Hanım—the non-*yilli* person is simply called “the villager” (Nacak, 2015).

Being a neighbourhood resident rather than a villager, feeling a sense of belonging to the city centre, and identifying with a specific neighbourhood—these elements define what it means to be *yilli*. For this reason, the neighbourhood one belongs to holds great significance for *yilli*. All their roots trace back to *İçerişar*. However, as the city grew and families expanded, they began settling in neighbourhoods outside the city walls. Today, they still identify themselves by these neighbourhoods, using labels like “Hunatlı” (from Hunat), “Hacıkılıçlı” (from Hacıkılıç), or “Gülüklü” (from Gülük), among others. Even though many of these neighbourhoods were abandoned by the *yilli* due to urban transformation, they still consider themselves connected to them. As the city expanded, *yilli* established new neighbourhoods, living in areas that eventually became desirable. Due to both municipal development decisions and their preferences, the neighbourhoods they moved to became sought-after locations. Over time, all the *yilli* relocated to these new neighbourhoods (Figure 4.12).

The *yilli* initially lived in traditional neighbourhoods in the city centre. During the modernisation period, they began moving toward Sahabiye, one of the first neighbourhoods established in the Republican era and shaped by the city’s first development plan. There, they built family apartments. As the city expanded, they continued along the newly developed Sivas Street, settling in cooperative-style or row houses. Following the 1986 zoning plan, they relocated to apartment blocks in the Alpaslan neighbourhood, and later to the Köşk neighbourhood, which emerged along its periphery. In recent years, *yilli* who prefer detached houses have moved to Çaybağları (Erenköy), while others have settled in Yakut, one of the city’s newly developing areas.

To trace the intra-urban movement of the *yilli*, the neighbourhoods where interviewees have lived were added to the mapping. As the map (Figure 4.12) shows, the *yilli* tend to relocate within a specific set of neighbourhoods, following a consistent spatial trajectory across generations (Table 4.3).

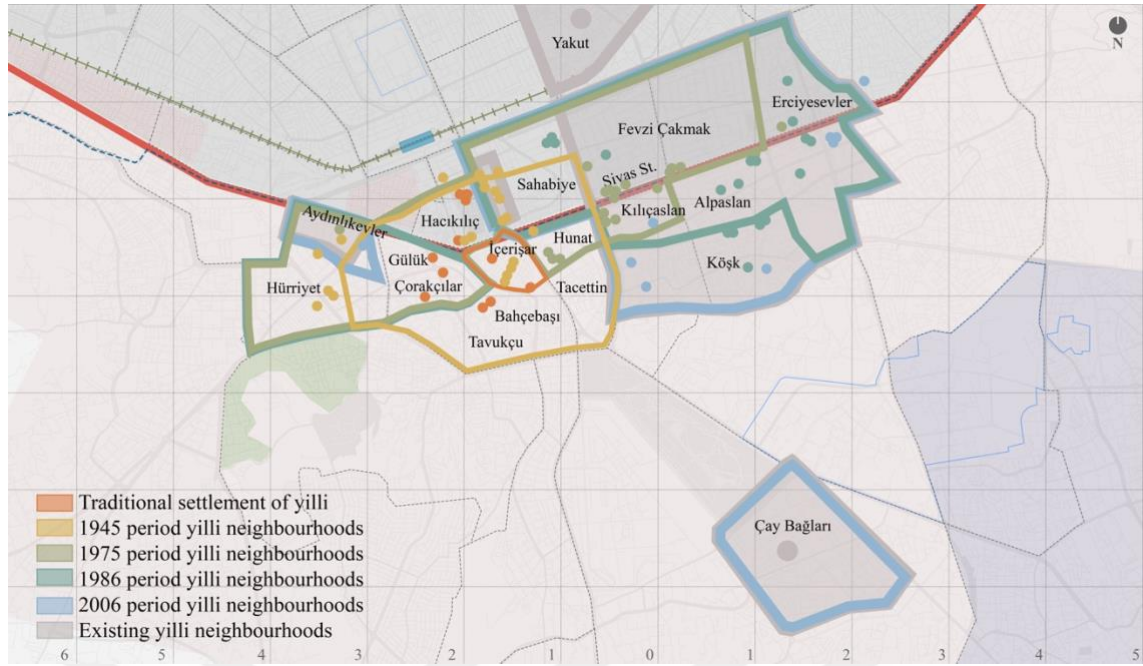


Figure 4.12 Movement of *yilli* within the city (boundaries) & Neighbourhoods of interviewees (circles)

Table 4.3 Table of *yilli* neighbourhoods according to development periods

Traditional neighbourhoods	Neighbourhoods during 1945 plan period	Neighbourhoods during 1975 plan period	Neighbourhoods during 1986 plan period	Existing neighbourhoods
<i>İçerişar</i> and surrounding area	Sahabiye Örnekevler Aydınlıkevler Hürriyet Güllük Hunat Hacıkılıç Tacettin ...	Sivas Street Sahabiye Örnekevler Aydınlıkevler Hürriyet Güllük Hunat ...	Alpaslan Erciyesevler Sivas Street Sahabiye Örnekevler Aydınlıkevler Hürriyet Güllük ...	Çay Bağları Köşk Yakut Alpaslan Erciyesevler Sivas Street Sahabiye Aydınlıkevler ...

Supporting İmamoğlu's (2006) argument that the neighbourhood concept in Kayseri is rooted in unity, solidarity, tolerance, and understanding, interview participants in this study also emphasised these values in their reflections (Figure 4.13). One interviewee (I_15) described relationships with neighbours as being like those with relatives, recalling that as a child, she believed their neighbours were family. She depicted a life of constant togetherness—meals cooked in one household were shared with others, and outings were often made collectively. Similarly, another participant (I_3) noted the strength of neighbourly ties in their former neighbourhood and added that they keep in

touch with those neighbours today. They shared memories of growing up with the neighbours' children "like siblings," noting that when one child received a newly sewn outfit, similar ones were made for the others. Life in the apartment, they said, felt like "a single house, a single family," where even personal troubles were shared among residents.

Another interviewee (I_19) shared a similar experience, recalling how they used to play with the neighbour children during childhood. She mentioned that whenever they got hungry, they would simply eat at whichever neighbour's house they happened to be at. She also recalled how neighbours would spend time together in the apartment garden, often engaging in small-scale production activities. When *yufka* (thin flatbread) was being prepared, it was even offered to passers-by on the street.

It illustrates a strong sense of trust within the neighbourhood. People felt secure with their immediate neighbours, other residents, and even strangers passing through the street. Open communication among everyone seemed to be the norm. When all interviewees were asked if there was a particular feeling from the past that stood out in their memories, many responded with words like "warmth" and "sincerity," especially when reflecting on their childhood neighbourhoods and the relationships they had with neighbours (Figure 4.13). Three key words emerged when participants described their childhood neighbourhoods: *safe*, *sincere*, and *warm* (Figure 4.26).

However, this sense of community was not exclusive to the *yilli*. In times when urban populations were smaller and most people knew each other within their neighbourhood, such trust and sincerity were common among all residents. The close-knit social environment shaped by familiarity and mutual recognition played a central role in defining neighbourhoods in this way.

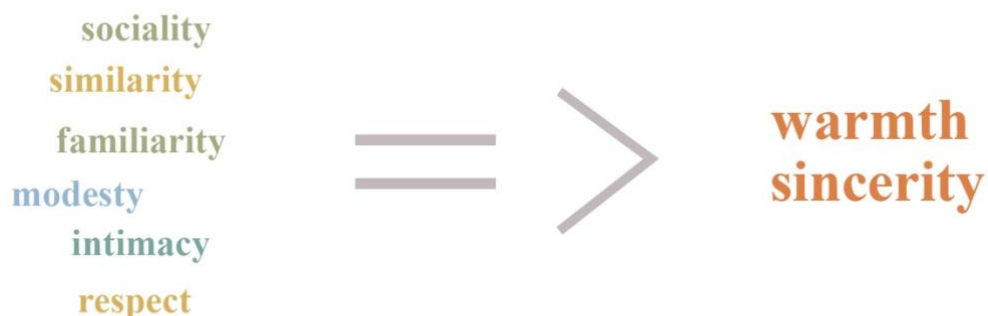


Figure 4.13 Feelings about childhood neighbourhoods and their underlying meanings

In the traditional urban fabric of Kayseri, neighbourhoods were characterised by narrow, organically shaped streets (İmamoğlu, 2006). These streets facilitated various forms of social interaction, such as neighbours gathering and children playing together. Moreover, since the city was not as vehicle-dense as it is today, these streets offered a safer environment. One interviewee (I_1) recalled that during their childhood, not only were the streets safe, but the absence of cars also allowed them to play freely. This example highlights that, beyond physical safety, the neighbourhood environment was more human-scaled, allowing people to navigate the streets more freely and comfortably than is possible today.

In contrast, contemporary Kayseri features wide boulevards constructed by the municipality to address traffic problems. However, due to the lack of speed control, these roads have evolved into highway-like structures within the city. They now act as physical barriers between neighbourhoods, disrupting social interaction and distancing the city from its former human-scale character. Over time, the city's development plans—both in terms of road networks and the establishment of new neighbourhoods—have contributed to increasing spatial and social stratification.

However, it is essential to recognise that the narrative and information presented should not lead to the perception that the municipality alone is to blame. The municipality is, in many ways, a reflection of local politics and collective choices. While *yilli* often express nostalgia, it is crucial to acknowledge that they elected the mayors and municipal administrations responsible for these changes, supported the transformation processes through land-based profits, and largely remained passive during the demolition of old neighbourhoods. Moreover, local opinion leaders played a role in legitimising and advancing these urban transformation efforts.

It reveals a contradiction in the expressions of longing voiced by the *yilli*: a sentimental attachment to the past coexists with active participation in, or at least tacit approval of, its transformation. To better articulate this paradox, returning to Korat's (2009, p. 27) observation is fitting: "Kayseri has always been alongside the ever bigger and louder flowing water."

Patterns of Urban Movement

The *yilli* of Kayseri strongly prefer physical proximity in their relationship with the city, typically staying close to the city centre and their family networks. They value being near their relatives, especially mothers and siblings, which results in concentrated settlement patterns within specific urban zones (I_9). Although the city's overall

settlement area has expanded, the *yilli* reside in relatively small areas. One interviewee (I_5) described their experience of living in a familiar location, noting that they were born, grew up, and married all within a triangle-shaped space no larger than 70–80 meters (Figure 4.14). Another participant (I_8) reflected not only on their residential area but also the limits of their daily routine, stating, “I was born near Forum... I grew up around Sivas Street, near Alpaslan Park... I studied at Besime Özderici and Melikgazi High School (Figure 4.15). Our boundaries are always clear. Beyond that area, I don’t know...” This statement highlights the clear, often generational boundaries that define the city’s spatial experience of many *yilli*.



Figure 4.14 Living area of the Interviewee_5



Figure 4.15 Living area of the Interviewee_8

The *yilli*, who have shaped their identities through neighbourhood boundaries over time, continue to reside in the city centre and its familiar zones, even as the city expands. This attachment to familiar places is deeply embedded in their collective consciousness, acting like a ‘leash’ that keeps them anchored. One interviewee (I_8), whom I often encounter daily, mentioned that she is unfamiliar with the district when I talk about my house in Talas. Despite Talas being only 5 km from the city centre and located on the boundary of Melikgazi, a central area where many *yilli* live, it falls outside her perception of the city. Separated from Melikgazi by Erciyes University and predominantly a student area, Talas is not regarded as a liveable place for the *yilli*. A similar sentiment was shared by a *yilli* family, whose son, after returning to Kayseri from university, briefly lived in Talas but felt uncomfortable. He expressed his discomfort by saying, “Dad, buy me a house in the centre; I’m embarrassed to say I’m living in Talas” (I_22).

The relationship among the *yilli* in the city has become a community-oriented dynamic, marked by isolation based on factors like status and lifestyle. It has fostered a conservative, inward-focused structure, with their attitudes and behaviours reinforcing the divisions between different groups.

This situation can be compared to Tönnies’ (1887, cited in Günerigök, 2019) distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. These concepts were developed to analyse social structures and are valuable tools for understanding societal changes over time. *Gemeinschaft* (community) is characterised by solidarity, emotional bonds, and organic relationships, relying on close connections such as tradition, kinship, and neighbourhood. In this type of society, personal commitments are central. According to Tönnies, the family is the most basic example of *Gemeinschaft*, where individuals act with loyalty and dedication, internalising community values (Günerigök, 2019).

On the other hand, *Gesellschaft* (society) represents a more modern social structure, characterised by individualism, rationality, and interest-driven relationships. It is closely tied to capitalist economies, bureaucratic governance, and urban life. In this system, relationships are formed based on functionality and utility, with decisions grounded in conscious calculations and cost-benefit analyses. In modern society, the close-knit relationships of traditional communities give way to more professional, rule-based interactions (Günerigök, 2019). Tönnies argues that these two structures are not mutually exclusive but can coexist and overlap within social life. It is particularly evident in modernisation processes, where both traditional and modern social structures coexist.

Examining the relationships of the *yilli* through Tönnies' concepts, they may outwardly appear as individuals of modern urban society, or *Gesellschaft*. However, their daily relationships reflect the characteristics of *Gemeinschaft*. While they meet the demands of modern urban life and make rational decisions in self-interested situations, their social interactions remain rooted in a sense of community and fellowship. They preserve a conservative structure, socialising in closed circles, marrying within their group, and engaging in trade with one another. They prefer specific neighbourhoods and apartment buildings to protect their *Gemeinschaft* and keep outsiders at bay. In present-day Kayseri, with the city's growing population and diversity, complete isolation from outsiders is no longer possible. Nonetheless, they maintain this separation by living within defined neighbourhood boundaries.

As is evident, the *yilli* have historically lived and socialised within a limited environment. In the process of urban growth in Kayseri, they initially settled in the city centre before gradually expanding to newly developed neighbourhoods to the north. Their adaptation to these new areas is largely attributed to **modernisation**, as the modern facilities and housing in these neighbourhoods address many of the challenges faced in traditional houses, making them widely considered **modern** by the city's residents.

Although these new neighbourhoods were quickly embraced for their modern amenities, they also evoked mixed feelings due to their perceived distance from familiar surroundings. For instance, Sivas Street—developed after Sahabiye—eventually became one of the city's most popular areas, yet it was initially considered quite remote. My mother recalled that her mother cried upon moving to a new house on Sivas Street, feeling like she was leaving her neighbourhood behind. The distance between their house in Sahabiye and the new house was only about 1.5 kilometres. The section of Sivas Street up to the Fuzuli Street intersection was the first to become densely populated, but even that was once seen as distant. As more people settled there, the perception of remoteness gradually shifted outward, with areas beyond Fuzuli Street coming to be viewed as far.

Here, moving away from the city centre seems to dominate. Although the distance—walkable in about 20 minutes—may appear short, it was perceived as far due to its gradual departure from the familiar urban core and the absence of development or construction at the time (Figure 4.16). Similar perceptions arose regarding the Alpaslan neighbourhood, which expanded after Sivas Street (and is partly seen as its extension), as well as the later-developed Köşk and Yakut neighbourhoods. About six years ago, one interviewee's son bought a house in the Yakut neighbourhood, which was a sparsely

populated area with only a few scattered buildings. When he shared the news, the mother felt unsettled [she lives in the Alpaslan neighbourhood]. The neighbourhood seemed remote and unfamiliar (Figure 4.17). She recalled thinking that her son “araya gitti” [this expression was introduced earlier in the *Habitus* section]. The distance felt not just physical but emotional, tied to a sense of leaving the known behind. Over time, however, she adjusted, and what once felt like a distant, empty place gradually became part of her everyday life.

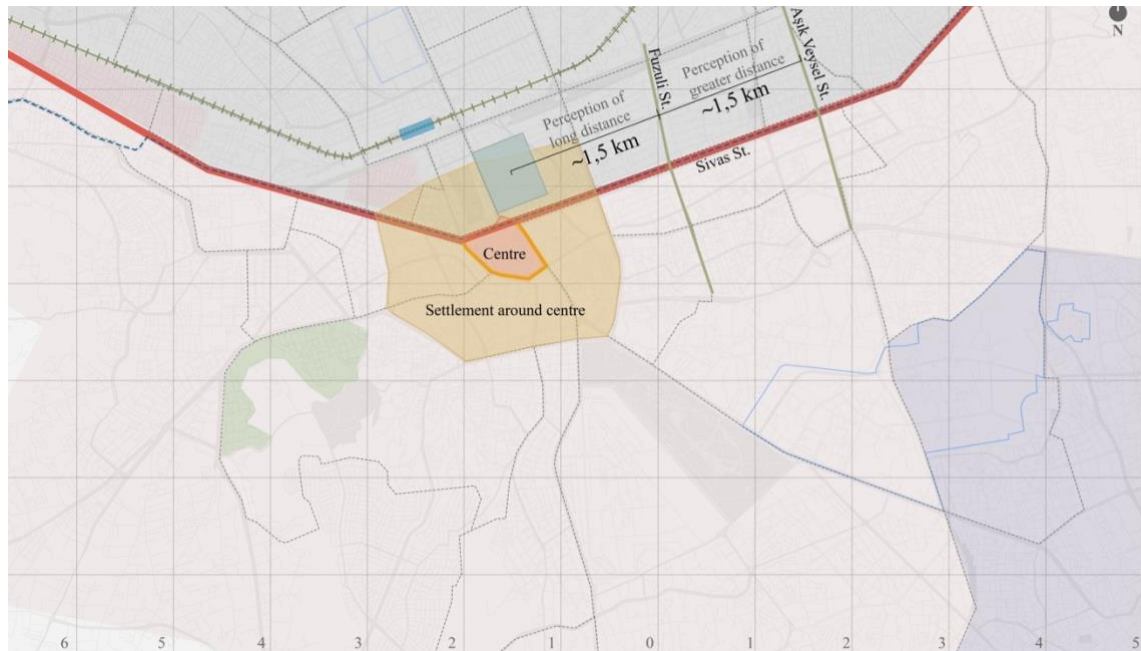


Figure 4.16 Distance perception of *yilli*

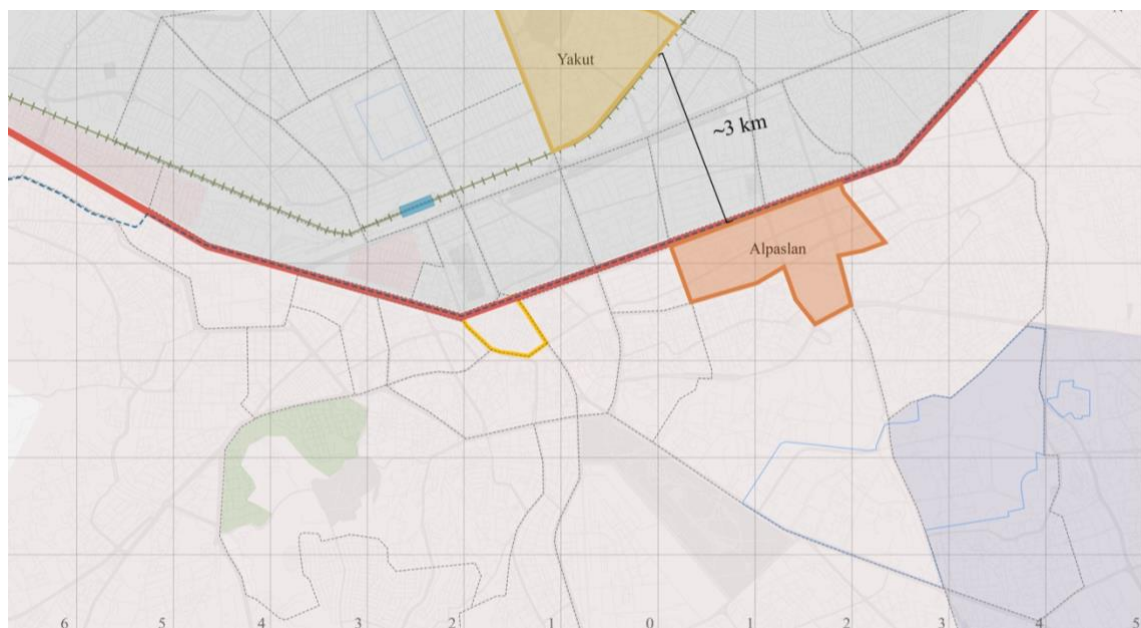


Figure 4.17 Locations of Alpaslan and Yakut neighbourhoods

Other interviewees also emphasised the significance of perceived distance. One, for example, shared that while searching for a new house, they explored many options near their current neighbourhood, Kılıçaslan, but ultimately ruled out Gültepe, even though it wasn't geographically far. She also recalled closely examining the early development of Alpaslan neighbourhood, remarking that it “feels distant from Yıldırım Beyazıt onwards” (I_10) (Figure 4.18). Similarly, another interviewee shared her experience of relocating from her house in Alpaslan neighbourhood to an apartment just 900 meters farther from the city centre. Despite the short distance, she felt overwhelmed and upset, expressing how far it seemed and wondering why she was moving there (I_6).

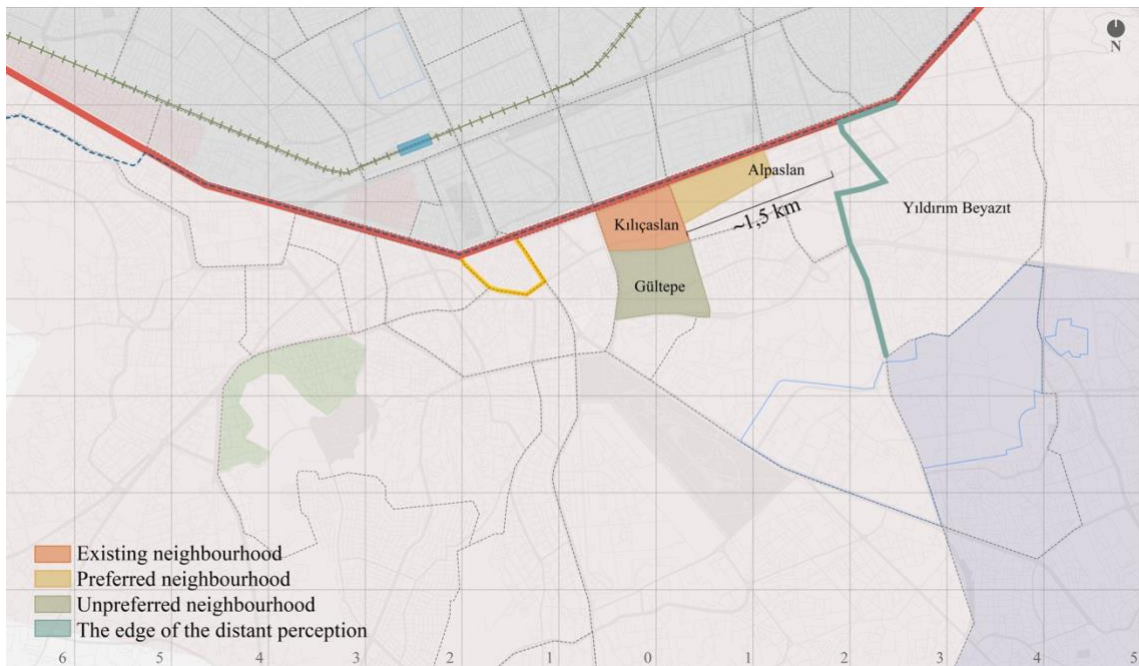


Figure 4.18 Interviewee's perception of neighbourhoods

Although the *yilli* perceive even short distances as far, it is evident that this perception is created mainly in their minds. A good example of this imagined distance is the Gülkent housing complex, located on the city's outskirts, 12 km from the city centre and surrounded by no other settlements. Considering that even 1.5 km can sometimes feel like a great distance to *yilli*, Gülkent's relatively greater distance does not hinder its popularity. It is because the housing complex was built explicitly for *yilli*, allowing them to create their neighbourhood and isolate themselves from outsiders. At the time it was built, only *yilli* were included. Status and social stratification play a more significant role here than the perceived distance. As a result, the issue of distance becomes secondary, and Gülkent has become a preferred location (Figure 4.19).



Figure 4.19 Gülkent Houses

As shown, the imaginary boundaries in the minds of the *yilli* shape their living spaces, with any area outside these boundaries considered “distant.” Their distance perception is directly tied to the city centre and their original neighbourhoods. Consequently, the *yilli* are often reluctant to move away from the centre, and as seen in the case of Talas, they may even fear it. However, the physical space they wish to remain close to no longer exists in the city centre. The area where they once defined their identity has been demolished and expropriated due to urban development practices, replaced by a grid-planned layout devoid of historical significance.

Community, Modernity, and Internal Contradictions

During the fieldwork, interviews with *yilli* revealed that their moves to new neighbourhoods were largely driven by a desire to stay current with the city’s growth and modernisation. As Kayseri developed, *yilli* sought to keep up with contemporary living standards by relocating to modern, popular residential areas. For example, Sahabiye Neighbourhood, the first modern settlement of the Republic era, transformed the city’s appearance. Eager to stay modern, *yilli* began settling in the area. Wealthier families even had family apartments constructed there, where they lived for many years. Sivas Street emerged in the 1960s and became another desirable area, characterised by cooperative-built housing. When it was first developed, Sivas Street offered centrally heated houses, providing a “modern lifestyle” that attracted many *yilli*. Over time, as other new neighbourhoods developed—offering modern amenities, a sense of novelty, and larger living spaces—*yilli* continued to move in. As the first *yilli* families settled in these new

areas, others followed suit, motivated to keep up. Eventually, these neighbourhoods became the new centres of attraction in the city.

Some interviewees pointed to political factors as a key influence behind the changes in neighbourhoods and settlements due to urban development. During the modernisation phase of the city, the mayor at the time, Osman Kavuncu, played a significant role in encouraging wealthy *yilli* to buy land in areas designated for development and to build “**modern**” structures there. One interviewee summed it up by saying, “Kayseri will modernise now” (I_29). Another interviewee recalled that the municipality purchased their old house on Sivas Street, near the historical centre, in the direction of the Hunat neighbourhood, to construct municipal blocks. In exchange, the municipality provided land in Sahabiye. The interviewee explained, “Sahabiye became very luxurious and modern, the place where the wealthiest Kayserians went. We didn’t go there willingly, but after we moved, it became a place where only the wealthy *yilli* flocked to” (I_5).

As the interviewee mentioned, new urban development areas were introduced to the city’s residents to meet the growing needs of roads and population. Since most of the city’s population at the time consisted of *yilli*, these areas were essentially directed towards them. However, over time, the movement of some *yilli* to these new neighbourhoods influenced others to follow suit. *Yilli*, wanting to stay **aligned with others, modernise, and keep up with the trend**, began moving to these areas. Significantly, the interviewee highlighted how the wealthier individuals settled in these neighbourhoods first. It reflects how the *yilli* view themselves as distinct, with higher social status, and how they distinguish themselves from others by associating with specific spaces.

Another interviewee (I_1) explained that civil servants, who began settling in the city then, were attracted to the Sahabiye neighbourhood because it was a newly developing area. The neighbourhood had become modernised, with two- or three-story houses, and the presence of civil servants elevated its status. It made Sahabiye a desirable place for both the *yilli* and civil servants. Interestingly, *yilli*, who typically feel uncomfortable living alongside outsiders, seemed to prefer those with higher income and education levels over villagers when such coexistence became unavoidable.

As seen in the interviewee statements, **modernisation** holds great significance for the *yilli*. New neighbourhoods and houses are closely linked to the concept of **modernisation**. One respondent, who grew up in an apartment and was unfamiliar with traditional neighbourhood life, shared how their relatives followed suit and moved into

apartments as well, saying, ‘They also started **modernising**...’ It illustrates how the *yilli* associate moving into new spaces with modernisation. However, while they believe they are modernising by adapting to new surroundings, their mindset often struggles to align with the process entirely. For them, modernisation is mainly about keeping up with evolving technology and using status symbols—afforded by their income levels—to display their success.

As the city received migrants and its previously homogeneous structure changed, *yilli* began distinguishing themselves from the newcomers—civil servants and workers—by using wealth as a form of modernisation. Urban identity is defined in many cities by adapting to modern urban culture. Still, in Kayseri, it is more about displaying wealth through new possessions like large houses, brand new model cars, and other status symbols. While *yilli* who have “modernised” by moving to new neighbourhoods and acquiring material goods often resist adopting the broader modern urban culture, especially in terms of their traditions and values. For instance, due to strong community ties, they may not marry their daughters off to outsiders. Some families, even those who have modernised in terms of education and career, may marry their highly educated daughters to men with less education and lower cultural capital, simply because he is a local and wealthy. In this way, they maintain their wealth and use conspicuous consumption to set themselves apart.

Conspicuous consumption, defined by the American thinker Thorstein Veblen (1899, cited in Güleç 2015), suggests that consumption is not solely aimed at fulfilling physical needs, but also at signalling social status and prestige. Veblen argued that the upper classes purchase luxury items to display their wealth, while the lower classes attempt to improve their social standing by imitating this style of consumption. The core characteristic of *conspicuous consumption* is that individuals buy goods and services not for their inherent utility, but to display their financial success and social position. Veblen emphasised that an individual’s status in society is closely tied to their wealth, and making this wealth visible is key. As a result, the symbolic value of items takes precedence, with expensive jewellery, luxury cars, branded clothing, and grand residences serving as clear indicators of material wealth and social status.

Conspicuous consumption goes beyond material goods; it also includes how individuals spend their leisure time as a marker of status. Participating in luxury vacations, attending cultural events, or being part of exclusive clubs are all indicators of this type of consumption. For example, a person on a winter vacation in Uludağ for

snowboarding removes their mask and goggles when the sun appears to tan. When asked why, they explain, “Let it be obvious that we have money,” highlighting that not everyone can afford such a vacation. They believe tanning in winter, only possible on a ski trip, signals their financial ability to enjoy such luxury (Özmen, 2017, p. 54).

Leaving aside the influence of social media, modern lifestyle culture in Western societies has taught individuals that conspicuousness is shameful. As a result, even factory owners in European countries may drive cars that are 25-30 years old. Similarly, someone who earns a high income and is a factory worker may live side by side in a house on the same street. However, this is not common in Turkey. In our country, those who suddenly become wealthy tend to be ostentatious and display their newfound wealth.⁵⁴

Today, especially with the influence of social media, it’s no longer necessary to have a lot of money to showcase activities, places, or meals. Whether wealthy or not, everyone is influenced by *conspicuous consumption*, exaggerating their spending abilities, sometimes even with debt or credit, and flaunting their experiences. As I mentioned in the context of traditional housing, Turkish society has traditionally been shaped by Islamic culture, which generally promotes a modest lifestyle. However, this has changed in recent years, and flaunting wealth and spending has become a new cultural trend.

Conspicuous consumption, while now more widespread in Turkish society—especially with the rise of social media—has long been ingrained in Kayseri’s daily life. One interviewee (I_9) pointed out that using platforms like Instagram to showcase wealth is nothing new, as this tendency has been present in Kayseri for quite some time, almost as if its roots are deeply tied to the city itself. As I have previously discussed, the migration to the city and the *yilli*’s efforts to assert their identity and set themselves apart from others are closely linked to this phenomenon. Despite frequently criticising this behaviour, *yilli* continue to practice it.

During the research, I have not pinpointed the exact origin of conspicuousness in Kayseri. However, it seems that a gap or void may influence this. In Ottoman society, when only Istanbul was considered urban and the rest of Anatolia was seen as rural,

⁵⁴ This situation is also depicted in films. For example, in the 1974 film *Köyden İndim Şehire*, four brothers, after finding gold, exchange it for cash in the city and buy suits. When they return to their village wearing the suits, they belittle the people from their hometown with phrases like “these village kids.” The Turkish saying “Cıvıv yumurtadan çıkmış, kabuğunu beğenmemiş” (the chick has come out of the egg and doesn’t like the shell) aptly describes this behaviour, referring to those who forget their roots and become disdainful. The fact that the characters in the film are from Kayseri adds a layer of significance.

lifestyles and religious practices were broadly similar, with little differentiation. For the *yilli* in Kayseri, space and money became the primary means of distinguishing themselves from rural migrants. Initially, they differentiated themselves through their sense of space, but as money emerged as a factor, it became the key tool for distinction. The *yilli* likely used their wealth to set themselves apart, leading to conspicuous consumption. Some exaggerated customs, like those in the marriage proposal ritual, may have developed to reinforce this distinction.

Conspicuous attitudes in customs and daily practices manifest in choices such as neighbourhood selection at the urban level and decoration or furniture preferences within houses. These expressions are most visible in the domestic space. Unlike individuals influenced by the modern Western lifestyle—who tend to design their houses based on personal needs and deeper values—practices in Turkey often remain more surface-level. For example, even those with substantial wealth may buy two adjacent apartments and merge them by removing the dividing wall, prioritising size over thoughtful design. Such improvisations, also observed in Kayseri, are among the key traces this study aims to examine.

With modernisation, issues of **status** and **prestige** became increasingly crucial in Kayseri. The *yilli* elevated the **prestige** of neighbourhoods simply by moving into **modern** areas—an observation frequently emphasised in interviews. One interviewee (I_28) recalled how his father, driven by a desire for status, borrowed money to build a house in Sahabiye, viewing it as a symbol of upward mobility. However, as newer areas like Sivas Street developed into **modern** neighbourhoods, Sahabiye began to lose its appeal. Another interviewee (I_5) noted that a relative even mockingly called it the “Cuba Neighbourhood,” highlighting its decline. The *yilli* quickly shifted to these emerging areas, forming new social clusters and repeating the same cycle.

One interviewee (I_6) states that the transformation occurring in the city over time is based on three main factors: the desire for **modernisation**, an **attraction to what is new**, and the **trend of larger houses** becoming fashionable. She notes that in Kayseri, *yilli* are seen as pioneers of modernisation, and others tend to follow wherever they settle.

Another interviewee described the evolving areas of the city as follows: “After Bahçebaşı, Aydınlıkevler and Sahabiye emerged. Then came Sivas Street... Later, Sivas Street also declined, and Alpaslan and Köşk neighbourhoods took its place. These became first-class areas, while the left side of the road—meaning the Kocasinan side—became second class” (I_30). The “left side of the road” refers to the neighbourhoods on the

northern side of Sivas Street. Although apartments along Sivas Street gained popularity due to their central location, the north side attracted less attention. While the city initially expanded northward during the modernisation period due to railway investments, this development trend gradually shifted in the opposite direction.

The railway passing through the northern part of the city centre appears to have played a significant role in shaping development patterns. Although the Kocasinan district has not been highly preferred, it has developed up to Kocasinan Boulevard, while areas beyond the boulevard remain underdeveloped. In recent years, however, Yakut neighbourhood—located within Kocasinan and north of the railway—has begun to attract interest from the *yilli*. Until recently, construction in this area was limited, but its development has gained momentum as one of the few vacant zones near the city centre (Figure 4.20).

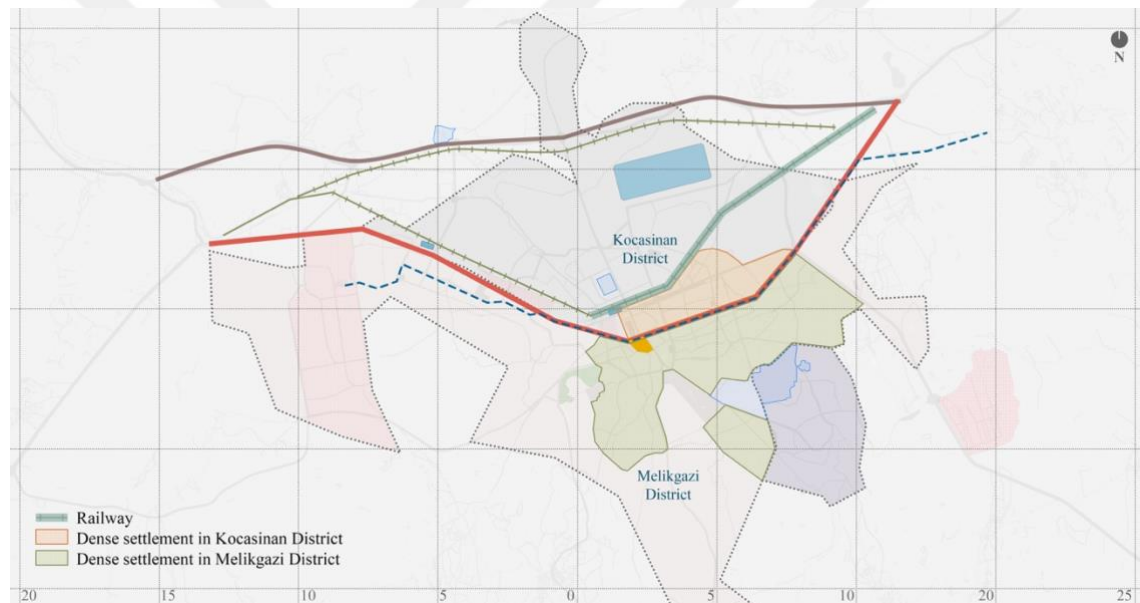


Figure 4.20 Sivas Street and railway as borders of the districts Kocasinan and Melikgazi

To better understand the impact of the railway on urban development, Argıncık (in Kocasinan) neighbourhood offers a compelling example. In the 1960s and 1970s, during a wave of labour migration, the area was settled by migrants from eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. Made up largely of detached houses with gardens, Argıncık has remained relatively unchanged, even as much of the city has transformed into apartment blocks. The neighbourhood's proximity to the railway and an industrial zone made it less desirable, which, along with limited municipal intervention, contributed to its underdevelopment. Another key factor is its demographic composition—primarily migrants from provinces like Yozgat and Sivas, and a significant Circassian population.

A similar pattern is seen in Yıldırım Beyazıt (in Melikgazi) neighbourhood, which also received migrants during the same period. Residents built and lived in detached houses with gardens. Still, the neighbourhood's location in the Melikgazi district—south of Sivas Street and bordering the prestigious Alpaslan neighbourhood—allowed it to undergo some urban transformation over time. Nevertheless, it never fully attracted the *yilli* population due to its early associations with migrant residents. As one interviewee remarked, “It’s considered far from Yıldırım Beyazıt onwards” (I_10), marking it as the edge of acceptable residential space for the *yilli* (Figure 4.21).

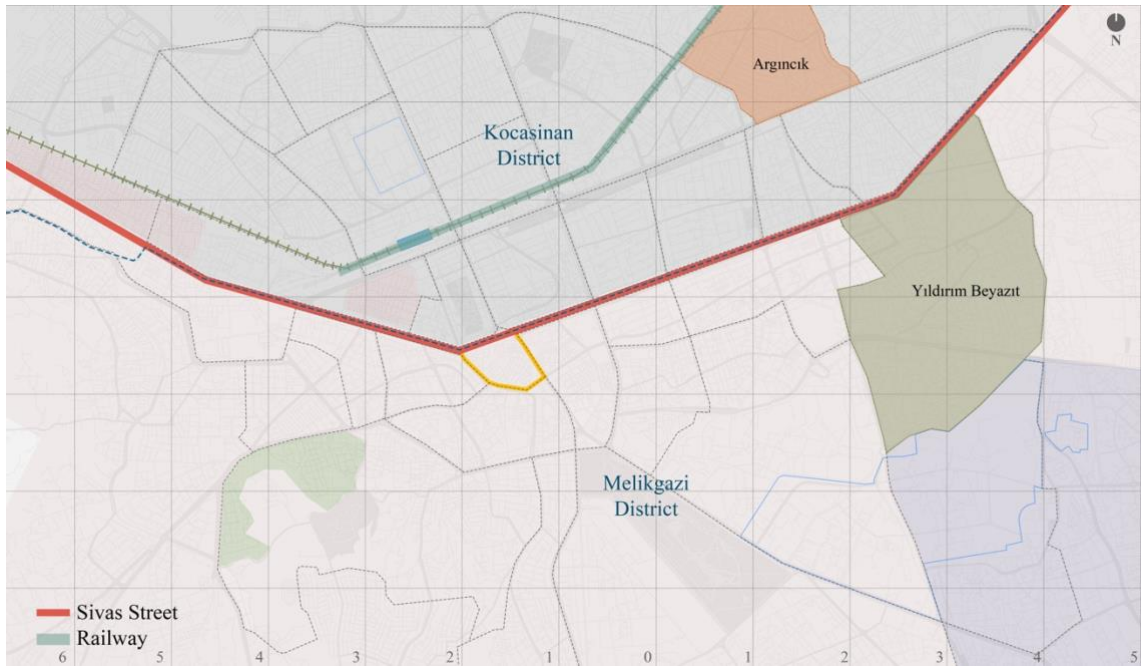


Figure 4.21 Argincik and Y. Beyazıt neighbourhoods on different sides of Sivas Street

Just as there are imaginary boundaries within neighbourhoods, the city is divided by invisible barriers. Talas, with its military and university zones, is effectively separated from the rest of the city. Student dormitories are placed on the far side of these boundaries, distanced from more desirable areas, yet with easy access to the city centre. The Anayurt neighbourhood in Talas, densely populated by students, seems completely disconnected from the city's core. Sivas Street also marks a significant dividing line within the city centre. If we consider the street section, the first zone, the area of Fevzi Çakmak neighbourhood up to the Kocasinan ring road, would form the second zone, with the area beyond the ring road as the third zone. It creates a sort of internal zoning system within the city itself.

As more *yilli* and other city residents moved toward the Melikgazi district, located on the southern side of Sivas Street, and possibly due to the micro-politics within the city,

municipalities focused their investments and planning on this area. As one interviewee noted, the areas belonging to Kocasinan have remained “second-class.” Sivas Street is a key axis that directly connects to the city centre, cutting through the middle of the city and creating a significant boundary between the Kocasinan and Melikgazi districts. Its central location, positioned between the two largest districts, allowed it to maintain prominence for a long time. However, with the construction of a tram line running through the street, its significance has diminished, reducing its status as the city’s most prominent centre.

Sivas Street, which held significant importance in Kayseri for many years, became a place of gathering and a symbol of prestige through a natural social construction process. The street’s popularity was driven by the limited transportation options of the time and its proximity to central locations like squares, making it a favoured spot for *yilli*. Tradespeople used the street to travel between their houses and workplaces, highlighting its pedestrian-friendly development. The introduction of apartment-style houses on Sivas Street marked a turning point in the city’s history, enhancing its value and **prestige**. These buildings represented **modernity** and **status** (Gültekin, 2019) (Figure 4.22). Since the 1970s, living on Sivas Street has become a symbol of prestige in Kayseri, particularly in the city’s relatively closed societal structure. One interviewee shared that thirty or forty years ago, “very elite”⁵⁵ people lived there, and their residence there carried a sense of respect and sometimes arrogance (I_11).

⁵⁵ The issue of elitism also requires attention here. The “elite” individuals mentioned by the interviewee refer to wealthy local families. However, the term “elite,” derived from French and typically used to describe a select, wealthy, educated ruling class, may not fully capture the meaning in our context (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-turkish/elite>). In a society that differs anthropologically, applying the term can be problematic. For example, a neighbour in my building mentioned that they chose our housing complex because it was considered “very elite.” It suggests they perceive themselves as elite and believe they deserve to live in such a complex. However, this “elite” neighbour (!) is often seen socialising on the stairs at the building’s entrance, which contradicts the expectations of what being “elite” entails.



Figure 4.22 Sivas Street in 1990s (Source: Kayseri Municipality)

One interviewee shared how they built their apartment on Sivas Street, emphasising its prestige. The apartment was constructed through a cooperative model, where friends financed it. The interviewee noted that only *yilli* were selected for this project, highlighting the conservative and exclusive nature of the *yilli* community. This example sheds light on the process of neighbourhood formation and the importance of status in selecting neighbours. The interviewee further explained how they and others in their circle of friends formed a group of ten people to build twenty-two apartments, inviting only carefully chosen *yilli* as neighbours, reinforcing the idea of exclusivity and **status** within the community (I_28).

Sivas Street has been a central hub in Kayseri for many years, serving as a transportation route and a pedestrian-friendly social space. Until the 2000s, it was a vibrant area where people gathered to socialise, walk, visit acquaintances, and enjoy casual conversations. Its proximity to the city centre made it a popular spot for mutual visits and neighbourhood interactions, creating strong social ties among residents. In the evenings, the street was filled with families walking, conversations taking place from balconies, shopping from street vendors, and casual chats, leaving a lasting impact on Kayseri's socio-cultural memory.

Since the 2000s, various municipal implementations have weakened the socio-spatial continuity of Sivas Street. To accommodate increasing parking demand, trees that once provided shade for pedestrians were removed, and the areas were converted into parking spaces. Additional trees in the median strip were also cut down during the tram

line construction, which began in 2004. The construction of underpasses and the tram line disrupted pedestrian connections along the street, while the increased vehicle traffic further diminished its vibrancy. As a result, areas like Alpaslan and Köşk neighbourhoods, located further from Sivas Street, became more attractive. Over time, the street's social vibrancy faded, and people began to move to these new, more desirable neighbourhoods (Figure 4.23, Figure 4.24).

A rumour shared by someone who lived in Kayseri for a short time claims that the tramway was intentionally built to “kill” Sivas Street and revitalise the Kayseri Park shopping centre, which opened in Alpaslan neighbourhood in 2006. Despite Sivas Street being a key commercial area with bakeries, bookstores, and other businesses, no major brands chose to open there. Instead, they opted for the shopping centre. The tramway construction diminished the street's social identity and caused a significant loss of its commercial character. While the municipality asserts that the tramway was a long-planned necessity, the rumour reveals possible micro-political dynamics, suggesting that political and commercial interests might have influenced urban development decisions.



Figure 4.23 Change of Sivas Street (Sources: F. Yaman & Kayseri Municipal archives, as published in Tozoğlu & Sönmez, 2008)



Figure 4.24 Existing situation of Sivas Street: predominantly cars, with few pedestrians (Source: Wikipedia)

In summary, *yilli* tend to cluster in specific neighbourhoods, influenced by imaginary boundaries they have created, and show preferences for certain buildings within these areas. Previous studies on the city have examined how these preferences contribute to social stratification, status, and spatial segregation. It was observed that *yilli*, typically from the middle-upper and upper classes in terms of education and income, prefer neighbourhoods like Alpaslan, Köşk, and Erenköy. These areas, known for their luxurious houses and high status, are also favoured by non-*yilli* high-ranking officials and bureaucrats (Saraçoğlu, 2023).

Yilli, while taking advantage of modern city opportunities and engaging in relationships driven by micro-politics (such as profit and self-interest), may believe they are modernising. However, they have not fully embraced true modernisation. Through community-based relationships, they maintain conservative structures, avoid integrating outsiders, and socialise within their group. It results in spatial separation and **social stratification** in their daily actions, customs, and consumption practices. Although they preserve their **status** and **prestige**, their **modernisation** is shaped by personal

understanding, emphasising **upgrading** and **ostentation**. When interviewees, who described their former neighbourhoods as “safe,” “friendly,” and “warm,” were asked about their reasons for moving, they emphasised terms like **prestige**, **modernisation**, **advancement**, and **luxury** (Figure 4.25, Figure 4.26).

As observed, the perception of the old neighbourhoods is often described using terms reminiscent of Yeşilçam films, conveying a sense of nostalgia and warmth. In contrast, the characteristics of the current neighbourhoods tend to focus on **Upgrading** and **Ostentation**, highlighting a shift toward status and modernity (Figure 4.27).



Figure 4.25 The change in the street scale (Sources: Kayseri Municipality)

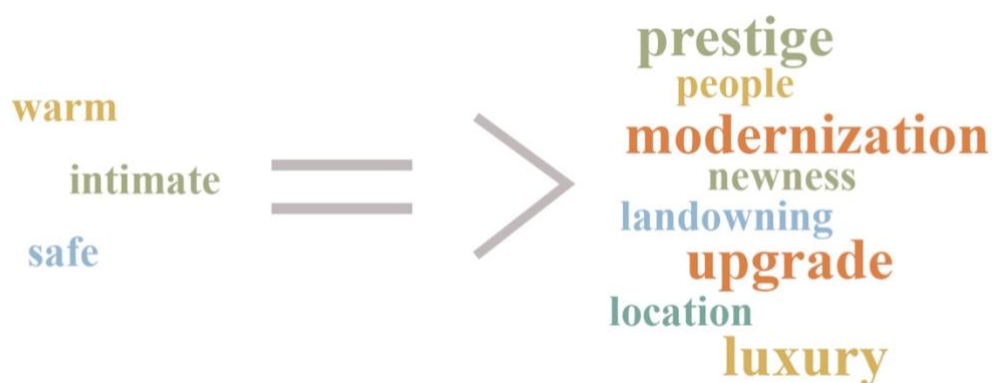


Figure 4.26 The transformation of feelings toward neighbourhoods: From childhood to the present

upgrade

ostentation

Figure 4.27 The underlying meanings behind feelings toward the selection of current neighbourhoods

Ritual, Memory, and Everyday Urban Practices

Vineyard houses hold significant cultural importance for *yilli* in Kayseri (Figure 4.28). According to Alyanak (2015), owning a vineyard house and a shop in the Grand Bazaar is another defining characteristic of being a *yilli*. Halit Erkiletlioğlu (2012), a prominent scholar of Kayseri and its history, identifies three main criteria for being considered a true Kayserian: being born in Kayseri, marrying someone from Kayseri, and owning a vineyard in Kayseri.⁵⁶ In contrast to the tradition in western Turkey, where the summer months are spent alternating between winter and summer houses, Kayseri's vineyard culture involves seasonal migration between the city house and the vineyard house (Akşit et al., 2011). This unique tradition, known as “migrating to the vineyard” or simply “the migration” (Yeğenoğlu, 2011), is tied to the changing seasons. Families migrate to the vineyard as the weather warms in spring and vineyard-related work intensifies. As the weather cools and preparations for winter begin, they return to the city in autumn. The term “migration” is significant because it encapsulates the seasonal movement inherent in the vineyard culture.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ According to Erkiletlioğlu (2012), being born in Kayseri implies being born in one of the city's central neighbourhoods. Marrying someone from Kayseri typically refers to women who marry Kayserian (*yilli*) men. The reverse—Kayserian women marrying non-*yilli* men—is relatively rare. Additionally, owning a vineyard in Kayseri holds more profound cultural significance.

⁵⁷ Today, life has become more comfortable, and people often send their old furniture to their vineyard houses when upgrading their primary houses. As a result, vineyard houses are now maintained as secondary houses, making it easier to transition. People can move directly from their city houses to their vineyard houses, needing only a simple cleaning before settling in. In contrast, this process was much less comfortable in the past. Before moving to the vineyard, families would undergo a period of intense preparation in their city houses. They would pack, cover, and store away their belongings while transporting some items intended for use in the vineyard house. At the end of the season, everything, including food prepared for winter, would be brought back to the city. Due to the lack of modern transportation and the difficulty of travelling between the vineyard and the city, families would remain there for the entire season. Only the head of the household would commute to the city for work. This extended absence from the city led to the practice being called “migration.”

This information is compiled from interviewees' narratives and various sources, including Yeğenoğlu (2011) and Altuncuoğlu (2018).

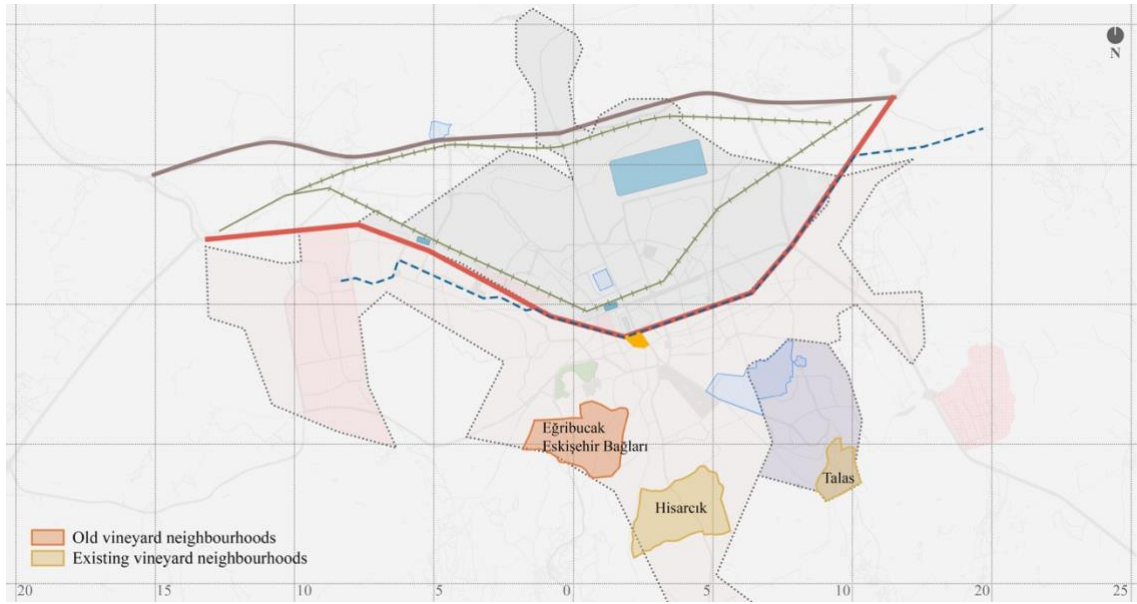


Figure 4.28 Vineyard neighbourhoods of *yilli*

During the fieldwork, some interviewees explained that the origin of the vineyard culture in Kayseri is linked to the leather tanning industry, which was once prevalent in the city centre. The tanning process caused an unpleasant smell and attracted flies, making the area uncomfortable, especially in summer. Historical records and maps support this, and the Tanners' Bazaar (*Debbağlar Çarşısı*), located near the outer castle, still serves as a reminder of the industry in the region. According to the interviewees, the intense summer heat in Kayseri made it common for people to escape the city by migrating to their vineyard houses. The unbearable conditions in the city made those who stayed behind, enduring the heat and flies, objects of pity.

In contrast, those who migrated to the vineyards were seen as fortunate. Over time, this vineyard migration practice became an important cultural tradition for the *yilli* of Kayseri. As the city expanded, vineyards shifted from more distant locations like Eğribucak and Eskişehir Bağları to areas closer to the city, such as Hisarcık and Talas. This shift mirrored the broader pattern of people moving to newer, more desirable locations both in the city and in the vineyard regions.

Viticulture has long been an integral part of Kayseri's cultural heritage. The intense summer heat led residents to migrate to their vineyard houses, where they could enjoy a cooler environment and prepare food supplies for the winter. These vineyard houses have significant social importance. They serve as spaces where people can unwind and recharge, hosting various social events such as weddings, henna nights, and dinner gatherings. Young people use the vineyards to meet with friends, while older adults

engage in viticulture and other hobbies. The size and upkeep of a vineyard are now seen as a mark of prestige (Şahin, 2010).

While viticulture was once primarily associated with *yilli*, it has become a shared practice embraced by many segments of Kayseri's population. The fact that vineyard culture, once exclusive to the *yilli*, is now practised by anyone with the means to do so indicates that it has become a central part of the city's dominant culture. Additionally, some individuals not originally from Kayseri but have lived in the city for many years also own vineyard houses. It is often seen as an attempt to integrate into the city's social fabric (Nacak, 2015).

Historically, *yilli* have been associated with the *Çarşı* (bazaar)—a space that was once both their house and their place of work. The area known as the “*Çarşı*” is *İçerişar*, located within the outer castle walls. As the city expanded and *yilli* moved to new residential neighbourhoods, the role of the space within the outer walls shifted. It evolved from a mixed-use area with residential and commercial functions into an exclusively commercial hub. Today, workplaces of *yilli* are primarily located in the *Çarşı*, at the heart of the city centre. However, with the rise of shopping malls in recent years, commerce has partially shifted away from the *Çarşı* to these newer spaces. As a result, many *yilli*—most of whom are tradespeople—have either moved their businesses or opened new branches elsewhere in the city. This shift is also reflected in shopping habits. For generations, the *Çarşı* has been a central place for shopping in Kayseri. People would come to the *Çarşı* to find everything they needed. Specifically, *Kazancılar Çarşısı*, located within the outer walls, is a market that houses all the jewellers and remains the central location for gold and foreign currency transactions.

The aroma of freshly ground coffee from *Billur Kahve* (Billur Coffee), located at the corner of *Kazancılar Çarşısı*, fills the area and irresistibly draws people in. It's impossible to visit the *Çarşı* without catching the scent of this coffee. For a true Kayserian (*yilli*), no coffee compares to *Billur*'s—every trip to the *Çarşı* includes buying a cup of their freshly ground coffee. *Yilli* prefer their coffee ground to be a unique blend, and the staff at *Billur Kahve* knows their regular customers so well that they immediately prepare the blend tailored to each person's taste.

As the name implies, Bankalar Street (Street of Banks) is where financial transactions are conducted. In the *Çarşı*, essential local foods such as *pastırma*, *sucuk*, and cheese are purchased from a variety of speciality shops, each with its loyal clientele. A visit to the *Çarşı* is incomplete without stopping by Divan Patisserie—one of Kayseri's

two most renowned patisseries. Divan holds a special place for the *yilli*, known for its always-fresh pastries, homemade lemonade in the summer, and constantly simmering sahlep in the winter. Even those who now meet most of their shopping needs at modern malls continue this ritual: whenever they visit the old *Çarşı*, they stop at Divan. Divan Patisserie has expanded its presence by reflecting the adaptation to modern urban life. It opened a branch in Alpaslan Neighbourhood—one of the city’s most desirable residential areas and a popular choice among *yilli*—thus maintaining its connection with long-standing customers in a new setting (Figure 4.29).

Divan Patisserie—an establishment that holds an essential place in the city’s contemporary urban memory—and *Hisar Patisserie*, which is almost as old, continue to operate today. However, some venues that once played a significant role in Kayseri’s social life have disappeared. One such place that lives on in the memory of older generations is *Zümrüt Patisserie*, which is still fondly remembered and frequently mentioned. Similarly, *Beğendik* markets, which introduced Kayseri to supermarket shopping by opening large stores in various parts of the city, became a preferred shopping destination, especially among the *yilli*. As can be seen, with the withdrawal of *yilli* from the city centre, many once-popular places have either closed or relocated to other areas. However, *Çarşı* has been less affected by this change, and the shops there have continued to operate as before.

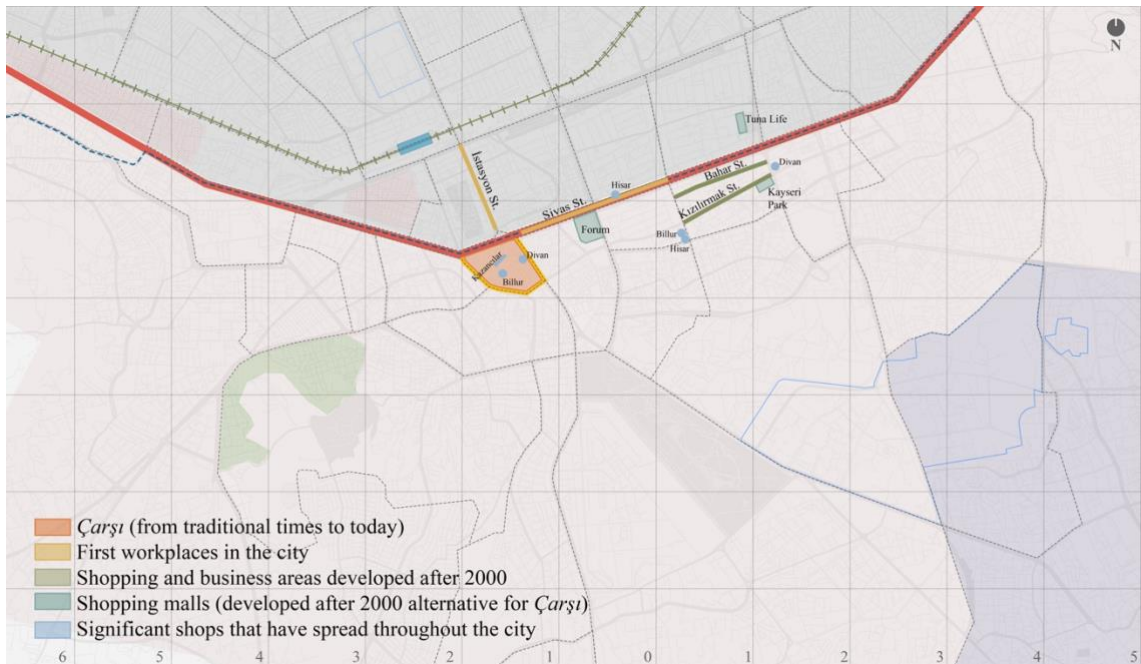


Figure 4.29 Businesses and shopping places of *yilli*

Funerals and cemeteries are among the most striking spaces where the spatial dimension of being *yilli* is strongly felt. While this may seem like an unusual observation, Kayseri is one of the clearest instances where the distinction between *yilli* and villagers is visibly reinforced. At the heart of *İçerişar*—the city centre and historical core of the *yilli* population—stands *Cami-i Kebir*, also known as the Great Mosque. Built during the Seljuk period as the city’s main mosque, it has maintained its central importance. Because of its location in *İçerişar*, *yilli* not only lay claim to the city itself but also regard this mosque as theirs. As Papuşcuoğlu (2022, p. 88) notes, “In Kayseri, the funeral of *yilli* is held at *Cami-i Kebir* Mosque, and they are buried in the *Asri* Cemetery. On the other hand, those who are not *yilli* are taken from *Hunat* Mosque and buried in other cemeteries.” What is referred to as “other cemeteries” points to different entrances of the *Asri* Cemetery. This cemetery is large, and its main entrance is reserved for *yilli*. Individuals not *yilli* are buried in other sections of the same cemetery, accessed through these alternative entrances.

This issue remains highly controversial. Funeral practices reflect a socially acknowledged differentiation between *yilli* and non-*yilli*. However, there are also burial plots belonging to non-*yilli* at the first entrance of the cemetery. While this distinction may have been more pronounced in the past, it is gradually losing relevance with the ongoing growth and transformation of the city. A common belief is that burial plots at the first entrance are not sold to non-*yilli*. The noticeable concentration of *yilli* graves reinforces this perception. However, this may be less about exclusion and more about historical practice—*yilli* families may have purchased multiple plots in the past to ensure they would be buried together. Therefore, rather than being a result of active restriction, this spatial pattern likely reflects past decisions, indicating that various factors are at play in how cemetery spaces are used.

In contrast, the distinction regarding funeral practices at the mosque remains clear and significant. Despite urban challenges such as congestion, heavy traffic, and the narrow streets of the *Çarşı*, *yilli* remain highly sensitive about holding funerals at *Cami-i Kebir*. This long-standing preference, however, has begun to shift since 2018 with the opening of the *Hulusi Akar* Mosque, located within the *Asri* Cemetery. This new mosque offers convenient access, ample parking, and has quickly become a status symbol. These qualities have made it an appealing alternative, and *yilli* are increasingly drawn to it. In other words, *yilli* are now gravitating toward more prestigious and accessible locations for their funerals as well (Figure 4.30).

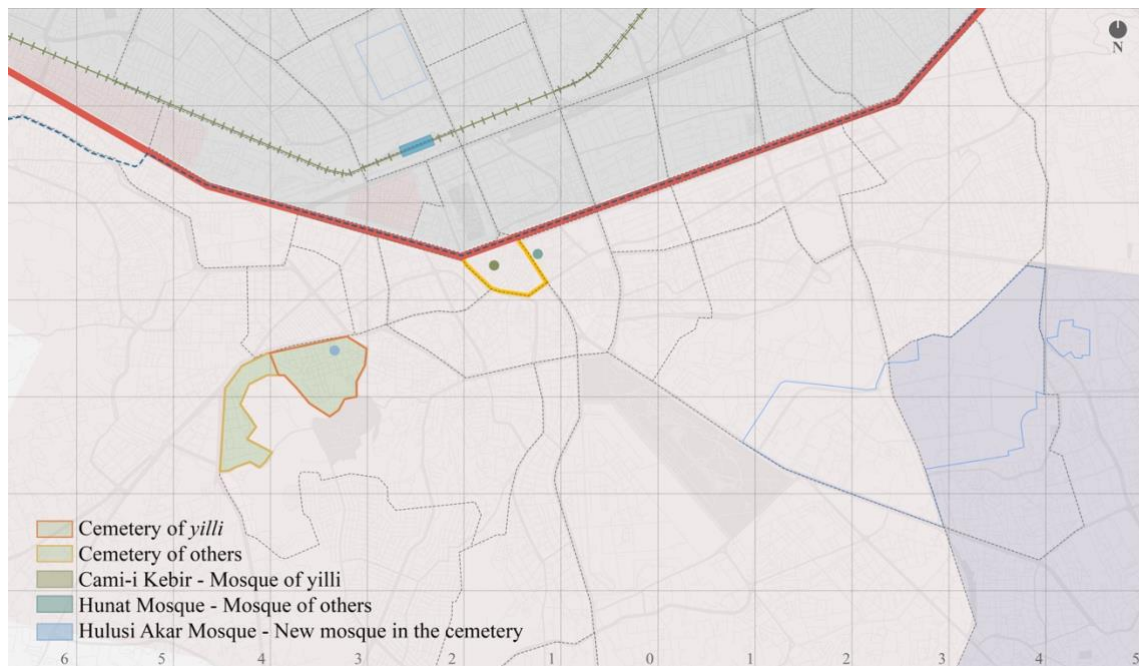


Figure 4.30 Mosques and cemeteries of *yilli*

The relationship *yilli* have with the city can be defined by their continuous connection to the centre. They are born in the centre, study in the centre, shop in the centre, live in the centre, and die in the centre. No matter how much the city grows or changes, *yilli* remain rooted in the urban core. Historically, they have always been at the heart of the city, with little deviation from the central neighbourhoods or their origins (Figure 4.31, Figure 4.32). Even though residential areas may no longer be situated in the immediate centre, *yilli*'s workplaces and preferred shopping venues still lie in the heart of the city. A life disconnected from the centre is difficult to imagine for *yilli*, as the city centre continues to play a vital role in their daily existence.

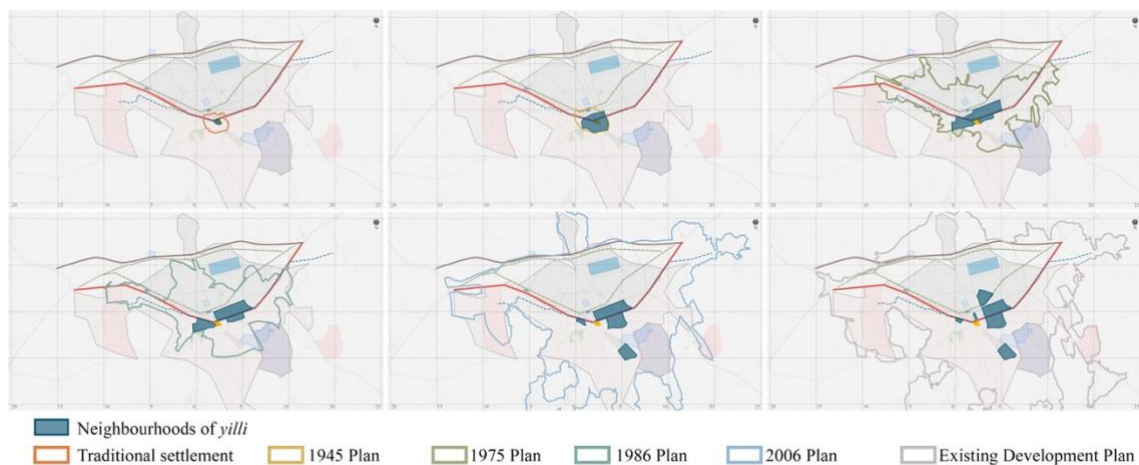


Figure 4.31 The area inhabited by *yilli* within the boundaries of the city

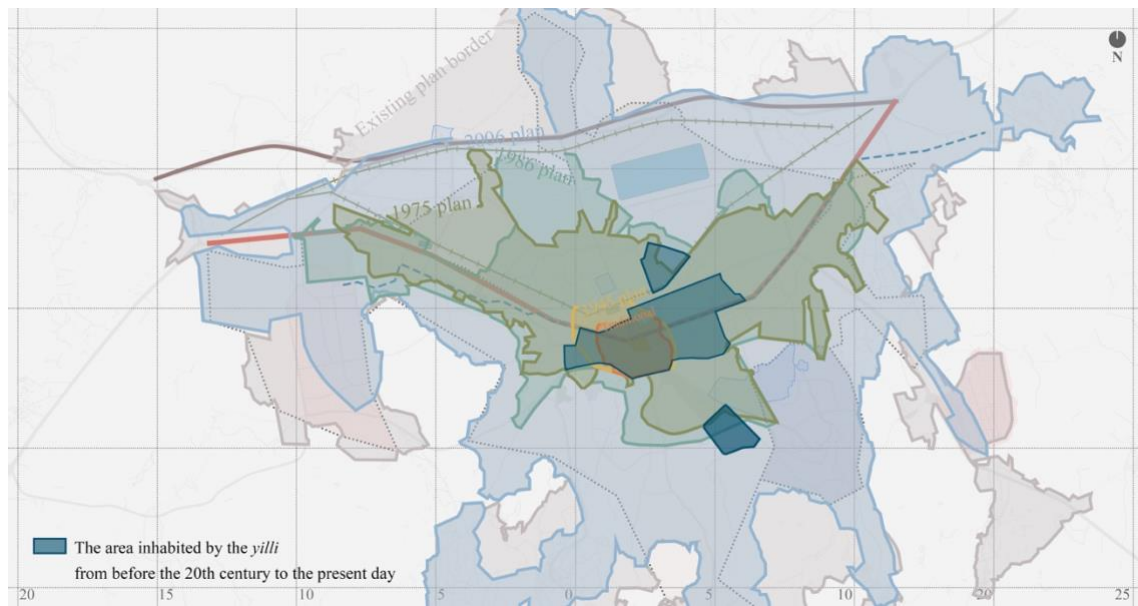


Figure 4.32 The overlaid display of the area where *yilli* have lived within the city boundaries⁵⁸

Habitus and the City: Overview and Insights

This chapter has explored how *yilli* identity is spatially embedded and socially reproduced through historically shaped dispositions and differentiated urban experiences. Drawing on the concept of *habitus*, the discussion has shown that urban belonging among the *yilli* is not merely based on geographical rootedness but is continually reconstructed through spatial practices, intergenerational narratives, and neighbourhood-based social distinctions. This sense of belonging is further reinforced by a **collective identity** that manifests in shared values, symbolic markers, and a strong tendency toward intra-group solidarity. Rather than acting as isolated agents, *yilli* individuals often navigate urban life as part of a tacitly coordinated social bloc, shaping their choices in housing, education, and marriage through mutual observation and comparison. The tension between tradition and modernity emerges not as a binary but as an ongoing negotiation in the lived experience of the *yilli*, shaped by internal contradictions, performative social roles, and the moral weight of collective expectations. In this context, habitus operates not only as an individual disposition but also as a shared logic of practice that reinforces local hierarchies and sustains a sense of distinction vis-à-vis outsiders.

⁵⁸ The area where *yilli* live within the city is relatively small compared to the city's overall boundaries. These boundaries, however, are defined by the development plans. Residential settlements are primarily concentrated east of the city centre, spanning a 20 km axis in the east-west direction. The development plan extends this boundary to a 40 km axis. In the north-south direction, settlements are concentrated along a 15 km axis, with the development plan boundary extending to 36 km.

The accompanying data (Table 4.4) offers insight into the emotional and symbolic meanings attributed to different urban places by *yilli* participants. Traditional neighbourhoods—such as the *çarşı* or older districts—are frequently associated with warmth, intimacy, and safety. These areas carry affective weight, rooted in sensory memory, intergenerational narratives, and embodied familiarity. In contrast, newer residential areas that emerged through urban modernisation are consistently associated by participants with upward mobility, prestige, and modern lifestyles. These neighbourhoods are viewed not as sites of loss or alienation, but as desirable spaces marked by comfort, social standing, and aspirational modernity.

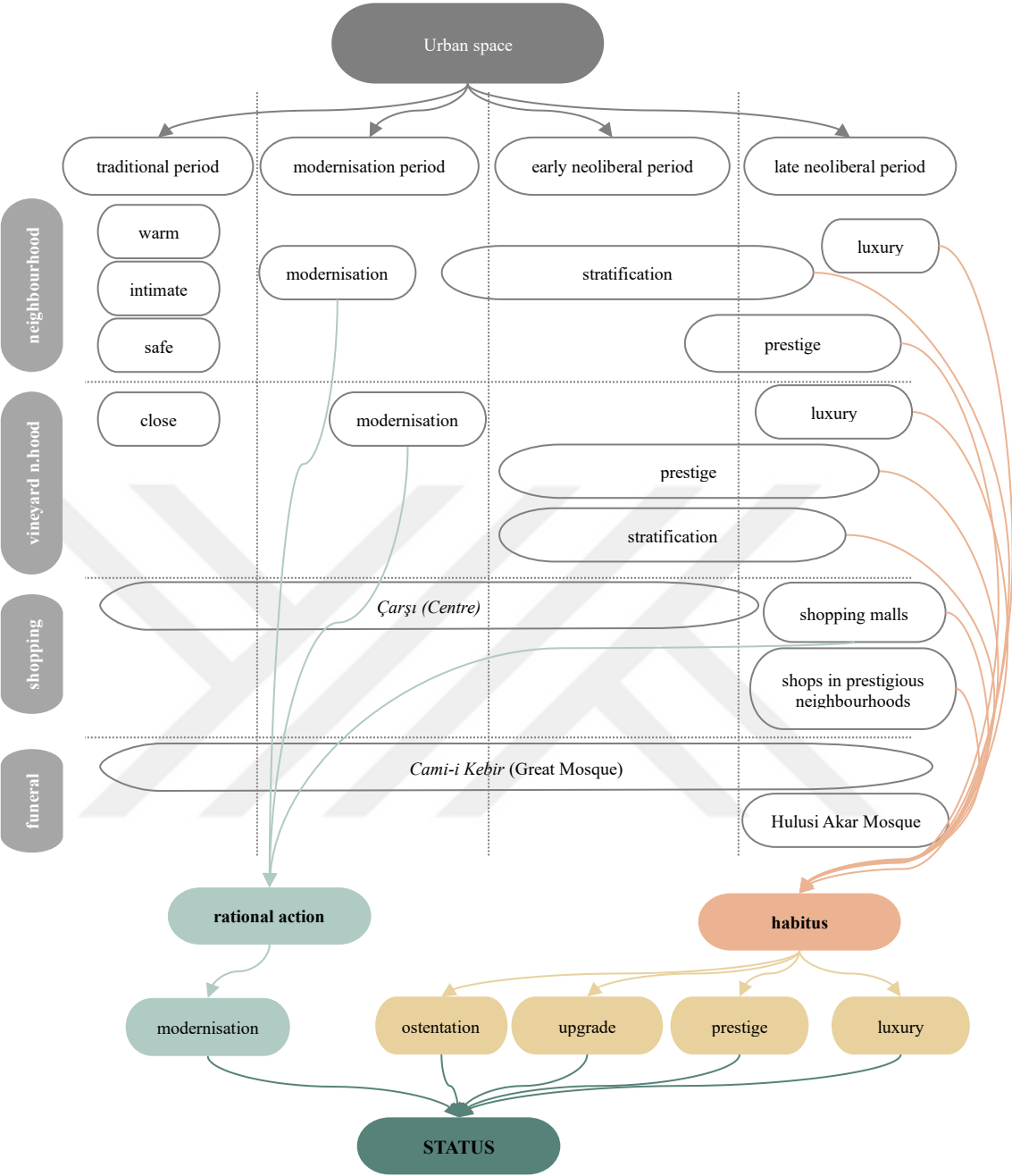
While one might expect such transitions to involve a sense of rupture or emotional detachment from earlier modes of living, the narratives collected in this study predominantly describe these areas in affirmative terms. This contrast between analytical assumptions and participants' interpretations is itself revealing. It suggests that modernisation and spatial mobility are not necessarily experienced as culturally disruptive but can be embraced as extensions of locally meaningful aspirations.

Moreover, places central to everyday routines—such as mosques or the *çarşı*—have also undergone symbolic transformation. While formerly serving primarily religious or functional roles, they are now embedded in circuits of consumption and display, becoming part of the city's performative economy of status and visibility.

These patterns reflect how urban space in Kayseri has become stratified physically and symbolically. The spatial memory of the *yilli* is shaped by a dual logic: one rooted in embodied traditions and community life, and another oriented toward prestige, differentiation, and urban distinction. This duality captures the tensions of modern belonging, where space remains both a site of continuity and a terrain of shifting social meanings.

The chapter provides a conceptual and empirical foundation for understanding how urban space operates as a site of continuity and disruption for *yilli* identity. It demonstrates that the transformation of Kayseri's urban fabric cannot be fully understood without attending to the everyday negotiations through which space becomes meaningful, and through which inherited dispositions are reactivated, challenged, or reconfigured. The following chapters will build on this multi-scalar perspective, moving from neighbourhood-level attachments to domestic spatial arrangements, to further trace how cultural memory, social stratification, and *habitus* intersect in the lived spaces of the *yilli*.

Table 4.4 The changes in urban space related to *Habitus*



Chapter 5

Housing Culture of *Yilli*

5.1 *Yilli* in the House

This section focuses on housing as more than just a shelter—instead, as a space where social practices are produced, negotiated, and reproduced. It investigates how the *yilli* organise their domestic environments, how daily life is embedded in spatial routines, and how historically inherited dispositions shape these practices. Analysing changes in housing provides critical insight into how the transformation of domestic space reflects and reinforces broader shifts in the *yilli habitus*. Ultimately, the section aims to clarify the role of housing in structuring identity, belonging, and spatial order at both individual and collective levels.

In line with the study's overarching objective, this chapter follows the spatial traces of *habitus*, seeking to understand how inherited cultural dispositions become embedded in the physical layout, use, and transformation of the house. Through an analysis of evolving spatial hierarchies, room functions, and circulation patterns, the chapter explores how everyday life practices are both shaped by and inscribed into architectural form. Special attention is given to the transformation of traditional interior configurations under modernising pressures, revealing the persistence of cultural codes and the improvisations and negotiations that emerge in response to changing lifestyles.

Building section

Examining the spatial changes in *yilli* houses through the building section reveals that these transformations align with the broader ruptures in urban development. The city's buildings can be categorised into traditional houses, family apartments, cooperative/row houses, and apartment blocks. As new neighbourhoods developed, building types evolved, and structures progressively increased in height.

An urban-scale analysis of two interviewees' housing histories (I_1, I_7) highlights the transformation of *yilli* living spaces. Both interviewees grew up in traditional houses in the city's historic neighbourhoods, and later moved into family apartments as these

became common. They eventually experienced “modern” apartment living on Sivas Street before settling in their current houses in the Alpaslan neighbourhood. Their narratives, drawings, and descriptions provide insight into Kayseri’s urban transformation. A simple graphic representation would clearly illustrate this progression (Figure 5.1).

The shift in housing follows a clear trajectory: traditional one- or two-story houses centred around *hayat* (courtyard) gradually gave way to family apartments. These apartments marked the first disruption in the connection with the ground. While ground-floor units retained some access to gardens, upper floors maintained only a visual relationship with outdoor spaces. Despite this shift, the human-scale structure still allowed limited interaction with the garden.

The connection to the ground was severed entirely with the move to Sivas Street apartments. These eight-story buildings reshaped the city skyline and significantly reduced interaction with the street. The apartment blocks built after the 1986 urban plan further distanced the city from a human-scale environment, contributing to the decline of neighbourhood life.

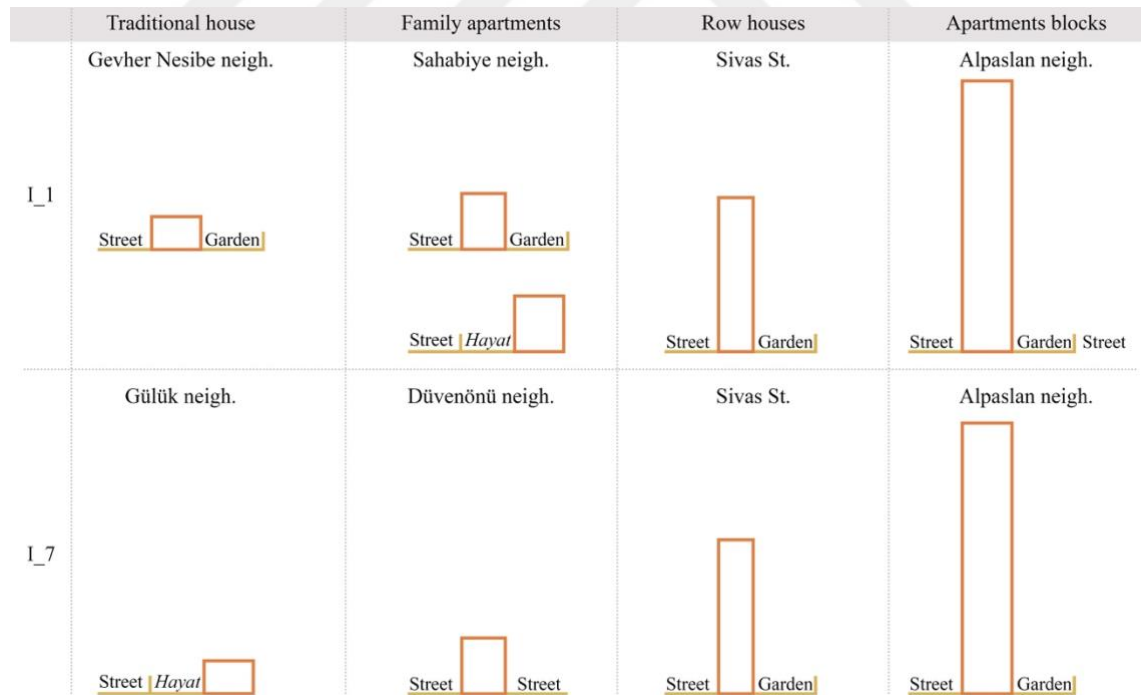


Figure 5.1 Change of houses on an urban scale

As mentioned earlier, this study seeks to explain the changes at both the city and housing scale from the perspective of *yilli* families, relating them to *habitus*. However,

this does not imply that every action is driven by *habitus*, nor can all actions be solely explained by it. As noted earlier, culture plays a role in shaping behaviours, and *habitus* becomes evident only when culture is not actively shaping actions. For instance, marriage customs are clear—whether through arranged marriages or courtship, in our culture, a girl is always asked for by her father. While exceptions exist, they cannot be used to generalise.

These patterns, however, are individual practices and reflect the logic of **collective identity**. Within the *yilli* community, decisions are often made with a heightened sensitivity to communal perception, shaped by mutual comparison and shared moral expectations. Collective identity reinforces the continuity of these customs and amplifies the symbolic consequences of deviating from them.

The changes in the city skyline may also be influenced by factors other than *habitus*. Max Weber's theory of social action is relevant here. Weber (2023) categorises social actions into four types: purposive-rational, value-rational, emotional, and traditional action. This classification helps us understand the motivations behind individuals' actions. Purposive-rational action involves consciously selecting the most efficient means to achieve a specific goal, focusing solely on the outcome. Value-rational action refers to actions taken by religious, moral, or ideological values, even if they disregard the consequences. Emotional action includes spontaneous and often uncontrollable actions driven by immediate emotions. Traditional action involves actions based on cultural norms and habits, usually performed automatically and without questioning.⁵⁹

In such tightly knit communities, traditional action often merges with a collectively upheld sense of propriety. The individual acts not just from internalised norms, but from an awareness of shared codes and collective scripts that define what is appropriate or acceptable.

When relating Weber's classification of social action to culture and *habitus*, traditional action seems closely associated with culture. In traditional action, individuals act within the framework of habits and cultural norms, often performing actions

⁵⁹ Purposive-rational action is entirely goal-oriented and independent of emotional or traditional factors. In value-rational action, an individual acts in accordance with a specific value system, treating adherence to those values as an end. For example, acting for justice, loyalty, or faith without regard to the cost is a clear example of value-rational action. Emotional actions, driven by feelings such as anger, love, fear, or excitement, are often spontaneous and uncontrollable. Although they may sometimes be rationalised to alleviate emotional tension, they are typically unconscious and automatic. Traditional actions result from past continuity and are guided by cultural norms. Weber notes that such actions can acquire a value-rational dimension if an individual consciously commits to them.

automatically without questioning, much like being influenced by culture. *Habitus*, in contrast, aligns more with emotional action, arising from internal impulses. Bourdieu was influenced by Weber, but he developed his definition. The type of action Weber refers to as rational action differs from these. In rational action, individuals make calculations and act based on them, without needing culture to guide their behaviour. Therefore, not every inclination of individuals can be solely attributed to *habitus*.

Still, the boundary between individual and collective, or between embodied dispositions and normative scripts, is often blurred, particularly in communities where social distinction and belonging are closely tied to shared spatial and symbolic practices.

This study aims to uncover the underlying reasons behind spatial transformations, from the city to interior spaces. While *habitus* plays a dominant role in these changes, there are instances where its influence is absent. One such example is the phenomenon of modernisation. Modernisation, driven by technological advancements and economic pressures, is an inevitable reality that individuals must adapt to. This adaptation often leads to rational action, such as the shift from traditional houses to family apartments with plumbing and central heating, as seen on Sivas Street. This transition, based on the conditions of the time, was a rational decision to increase comfort.

The significant change in the city skyline is likely driven by an external factor, making it a form of rational action, likely motivated by profit. Apartment construction, which is more economical in some cases, may have been influenced by the pursuit of profit, especially in the 1960s and 1970s when economic growth was a national priority. In this context, landowners—likely the wealthy *yilli* merchants of Sivas Street—could easily profit by investing in apartment construction. These individuals had the wealth to invest, while those from rural areas lacked the resources for land ownership and primarily needed housing. It created an opportunity for apartment development, allowing landowners to profit by selling apartments and expanding their wealth. Additionally, as these landowners sold apartments, they likely invested in new plots in developing areas, further increasing their profit potential. This situation benefited both the landowners and the municipality, providing services to the growing urban population.

Consider a housing complex in Kayseri, which was likely built on what was once farmland in a remote part of the city. Wealthy *yilli* individuals probably purchased these plots from their original owners. When the complex was completed, most of the homeowners were *yilli*. When contacted about an apartment, they would confirm which one they owned from among the many in the complex. Selling the land was highly

advantageous for the original owners, as they received a lump sum payment, which would likely have been more than they could have earned by farming the land. For the buyer, purchasing the undeveloped land at a low price provided a significant advantage, leading to ownership of 10-15 apartments in the newly built complex.

The wealthy, in this case, the *yilli* who are also merchants, likely increased their wealth by purchasing land and profiting from rents, widening the gap between them and others. It would have contributed to the change in the city's skyline, as landowners sought to maintain their status within the city. It, in turn, represents a very rational form of action.

Another rational reason for adapting to this situation could be the desire for a better view. Upper floors are often preferred for this reason, but the origin of this fascination with views remains unclear. For those who once lived in courtyard houses surrounded by high walls, it is uncertain why views have become so desirable. Moreover, given that the entire city has been transformed into apartment buildings, the view they sought may not be as appealing as expected (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 View from the author's house — if it can be called a 'nice view' (!)

From an anthropological perspective, it can be noted that Turks tend to prefer higher positions.⁶⁰ Behaviours such as looking down on others, showing off one's resources, and seeking to establish superiority complexes are common among Turks. A similar mindset

⁶⁰ For example, in Japanese culture, it's the complete opposite. Due to respect for each other, people always make sure to come to eye level when speaking. If one person is taller than the other, they will bend down to the other's level to avoid appearing disrespectful or looking down on them.

could explain the preference for higher floors in buildings. For instance, when Turks find a scenic spot by the roadside, they often stop to take photos, enjoy romantic moments, or drink—behaviours that reflect a desire to “look down” on their surroundings. Among *yilli*, there is also a concerted effort to distinguish themselves from villagers, asserting their superiority through wealth, neighbourhood, or social standing. This drive for superiority may contribute to the increased attraction to high-rise buildings.

A simple market survey in Kayseri would reveal that the first and top floors are sold at lower prices due to the belief that they cannot be adequately heated. A few floors above the first floor are sold at slightly higher prices, but after the fourth or fifth floor, the price increases significantly, with the top floors being the most expensive. It alone demonstrates that higher floors are considered more valuable, or at least more preferred. The fact that upper floors are valued more in buildings where all materials, facades, etc., are the same warrants further attention. In this context, it seems reasonable to link this preference to people’s desire to see themselves as superior and to “look down” on their surroundings.

For example, after the February 2023 earthquakes, some low-rise buildings emerged in Kayseri. These buildings, primarily constructed due to development plan requirements, have since been marketed as *horizontal architecture* following the earthquake. Some individuals have paid substantial amounts for these houses. In this case, it can be seen as a rational action, as the reality of the earthquake is a significant factor. People concerned about future quakes may be willing to pay the requested amounts for added security. However, as mentioned earlier, in buildings unrelated to such concerns or those that may not align with the residents’ lifestyle, individuals who adapt to them may still prefer the upper floors. This preference could stem from a desire to establish superiority or to “look down” on others.

As mentioned earlier, not every transformation or situation in the city may be related to *habitus*. Alternatively, while every situation could be connected to *habitus*, it may not be empirically uncovered within the scope of this study, not due to methodological incompetence, but due to structural limitations regarding available conceptual tools and local research infrastructure. The capacity to diagnose *habitus* presupposes a dense, cumulative field of empirical and interpretive studies. In many Western contexts, such a body of work exists. Bourdieu introduced the concept of *habitus* through ethnographic fieldwork among the Kabyle Berbers in Algeria, where social structures were tightly coupled with symbolic and spatial orderings. When he attempted to apply the same framework to French bourgeois society, the analogy did

not hold similarly. The French case lacked the same anthropological consistency, which led Bourdieu to refine his method through surveys and statistical analyses of taste, education, and lifestyle.

Sociologists studying French society have since developed methodological tools based on these empirical foundations, and theoretical progress has emerged by layering new studies onto established research. However, such a conceptual infrastructure is still underdeveloped in the Turkish context, particularly for interpreting everyday practices through the framework of *habitus*. As a result, this study does not aim to confirm or extend prior research but instead offers an exploratory investigation. Even if *habitus* underlies many social patterns, it may remain partially invisible due to the lack of compatible data, comparative typologies, and long-term field engagement.

This difficulty is amplified in social settings where collective identity is central in shaping perceptions, practices, and symbolic hierarchies. In such environments, individual actions are often embedded in shared moral economies and enacted through group-level expectations, making isolating *habitus* from the social logic of belonging harder.

There appears to be a *habitus*-driven pattern influencing preferences for high-rise buildings, although its complete structure remains complex. The data suggest that this inclination is linked to symbolic and economic distinctions. Market conditions reinforce this pattern: higher floors are typically more expensive, and many interviewees explicitly stated a preference for upper levels. Those residing on lower floors often cited financial limitations or the unavailability of higher units at purchase.

A potential scenario related to *habitus* involves the sense of *mahram*.⁶¹ Lower floors, which are closer to the parking lot and public spaces, might be avoided due to concerns about compromising *mahram*. It could explain why people tend to prefer upper floors. In modern buildings, where heat loss is no longer a concern, larger windows that let in more light may inadvertently breach the concept of *mahram*. While Western dwellers often use fewer curtains and embrace large windows, in our houses, thicker curtains are used to maintain *mahram* by blocking views. To address these concerns, moving to the upper floors might be seen as a solution, as it creates more distance from public spaces like the ground level and the parking lot. This instinctive preference for upper floors could stem from a desire to keep family members, especially wives and

⁶¹ The concept of *mahram* should not be conflated with the English notion of “privacy.” This distinction will be further elaborated in the *harem-selamlık* division section.

daughters, out of sight from passers-by. Additionally, it may allow for more freedom on balconies, which may explain the common practice of closing balconies today to maintain *mahram*.

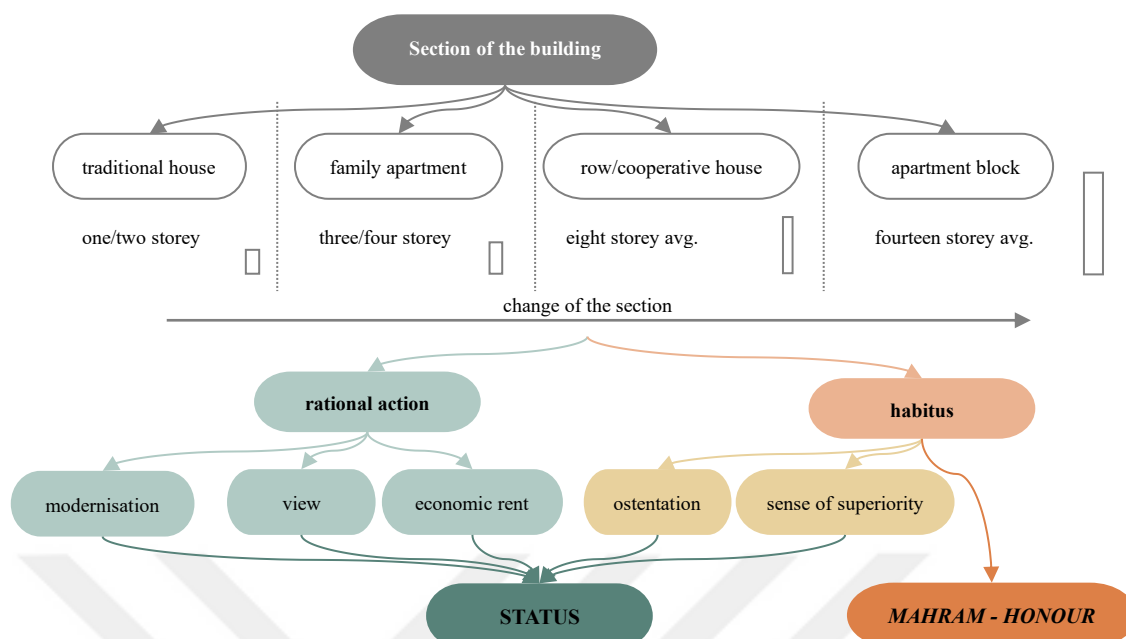
In summary, the urbanisation process in Kayseri has led to significant changes in building layouts, transitioning from traditional houses to family apartments, cooperative/row houses, and high-rise buildings (Figure 5.3). Modernisation, economic necessities, concerns about social status, and cultural habits have driven this transformation. Traditional houses were designed around courtyards and gardens, creating a strong connection with the ground. However, this connection was partially disrupted with the shift to family apartments. The apartments on Sivas Street marked a complete severance from the ground, and with the introduction of apartment blocks, the city's scale shifted away from a human-centred scale.



Figure 5.3 Examples of traditional Kayseri houses (İmamoğlu, 2006, image clarified with ChatGPT), family apartments (Oral, 2006), row houses, and apartment blocks

The fundamental factors driving this transformation seem to be rational. However, the changes in building layouts and the emergence of taller structures in each era also appear to be influenced by factors related to *habitus*. At this point, concepts such as the desire for superiority linked to status, the search for a view, and concerns about *mahram* come into play. While rational actions are driven by modernisation and economic necessities, *habitus*—shaped by social hierarchy and cultural codes—plays a decisive role in spatial transformation (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 The changes in building section related to *Habitus*



Size of the house

One of the key transformations in *yilli* houses is the change in size. Traditionally, they lived in large houses, later moving to family apartments that, while smaller, still offered spacious living areas. However, with the transition to cooperative housing on Sivas Street, they had to adapt to significantly smaller spaces.

Influenced by modernisation, family apartments preserved certain cultural elements and allowed user interventions. Since the *yilli* financed these houses and intended to maintain an extended family living, they built them to be large and suited to their needs. In contrast, cooperative housing on Sivas Street, shaped by standardised designs and external involvement, limited their ability to modify layouts, forcing them to adapt to smaller, predetermined spaces.

Over time, the large living areas of traditional houses gradually shrank, particularly in houses along Sivas Street, before expanding again in later periods. Some family apartments built in Sahabiye remained spacious, but by the 1970s, houses, especially those on Sivas Street, became noticeably smaller. Large apartment units—possibly a key factor in Alpaslan Neighbourhood’s desirability in the following years—gained prominence. Ranging from 200 to 300 m², these apartments became highly preferred by the *yilli*. Ateş (1997) suggests this reflects an attempt to recreate the spaciousness of traditional houses in modern housing. However, whether habit alone explains this preference remains open to discussion.

Through the framework of *habitus*, the large size of traditional houses originates from the need for extended family living. In traditional *yilli* houses, interconnected units expanded over time as rooms were added for married children. It is unsurprising that the *yilli* sought to maintain this cultural practice. Several interviewees confirmed this, recalling years spent living with their in-laws and their spouse's unmarried siblings. Accustomed to extended family life, the *yilli* continue to require spacious houses. Since adding rooms to apartment blocks is no longer an option, they now meet this need by choosing large apartments and adapting rooms according to household needs.

Hospitality, a defining feature of Turkish culture, may also influence housing preferences. Many *yilli* consider it impolite for guests to stay in a hotel, believing genuine hospitality means welcoming them into their houses. This cultural value likely contributes to the preference for large houses, ensuring ample space for children, relatives, and visitors. Many *yilli* those who originally moved to larger houses due to their growing families continue living in these spacious houses even after their children move out. They repurpose these extra rooms when alone, transforming them into Quran reading rooms, prayer rooms (I_6), laundry rooms, or playrooms for grandchildren (I_1). This adaptability echoes the multifunctional nature of rooms in traditional houses, preserving a key aspect of the past in modern houses (Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4 Empty rooms are repurposed for various uses, such as prayer or storage

Another factor could be ostentation, a theme I have continuously emphasised. Some *yilli* may use the size and luxury of their houses as status symbols, turning their large houses into objects of display and distinction. While the cultural need for spacious living

exists, this desire can also be amplified by the urge to showcase wealth and status. Some interviewees support this idea. For instance, when I asked one interviewee—who believes the *yilli*'s fascination with large houses is purely for show—why people feel the need to display, he attributed it to the perception that Kayserians are “*yınnaşık*” (spoiled) (I_29).

This connection to display is also evident in the names given to apartment blocks. For example, one of the most prestigious residential complexes in the Alpaslan neighbourhood, where many *yilli* moved upon its construction, is called *Çırağan Complex*, evoking the grandeur of *Çırağan Palace*. Similar patterns can be observed in many apartments where *yilli* reside, with numerous buildings named using the suffix “... *Konağı*”, referencing traditional mansions and reinforcing the association with status and prestige.

This situation again highlights how the *yilli* position themselves in a distinct and elevated place. Viewing themselves as the true owners of the city, they metaphorically assume the role of its “sultan,” residing in the palaces and mansions they believe they rightfully deserve. In doing so, they differentiate themselves from villagers, whom they implicitly regard as their subjects. This attitude can be understood through the framework of the master-slave dialectic, where identity and status are constructed in opposition to the “other.”

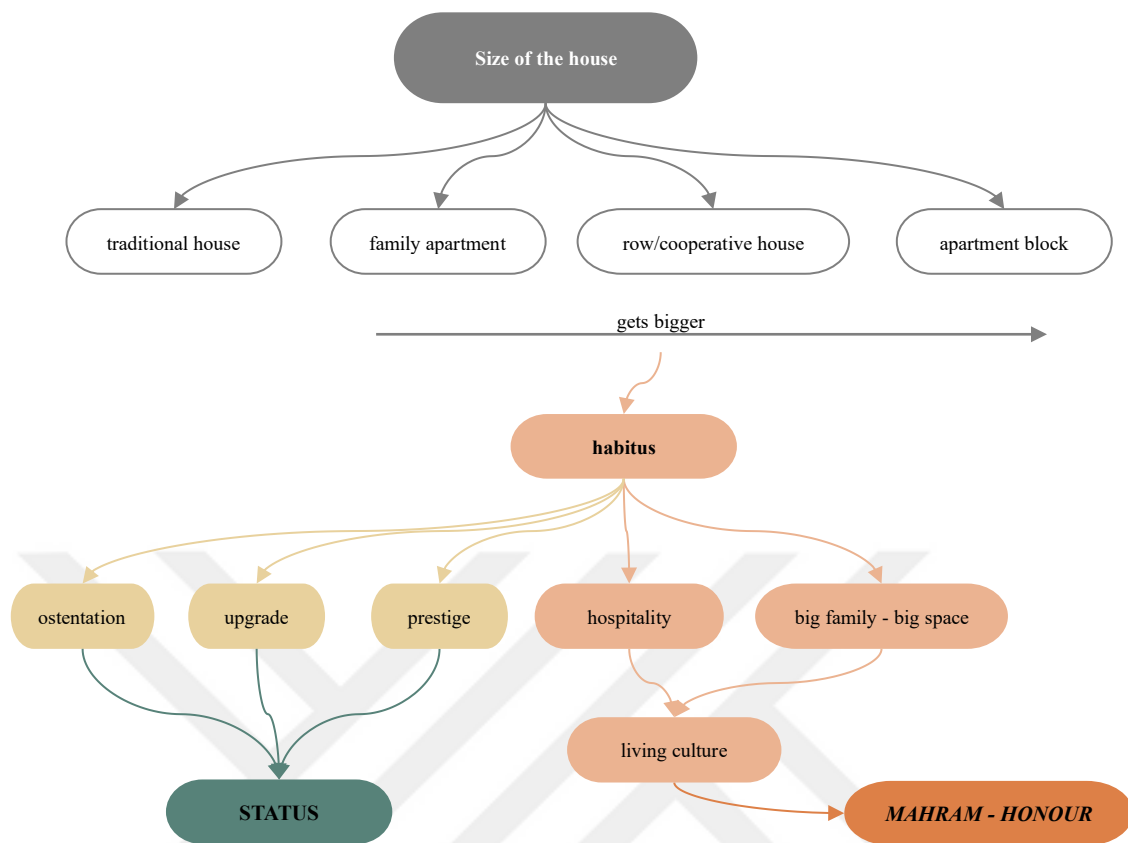
Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic explores the struggle for self-consciousness and recognition. According to Hegel, self-consciousness cannot develop in isolation; it arises only through interaction with another self-consciousness. This interaction begins as a struggle for survival, where each consciousness must deny the autonomy of the other to assert its independence. Self-consciousness emerges when it is recognised by the other. In this dynamic, one consciousness submits to the other, becoming the slave, while the other assumes the position of the master. The master benefits from the enslaved person's labour, while the enslaved person submits to the master's will in exchange for life. However, over time, the enslaved person gains true freedom through their labour and interaction with the natural world, while the master becomes dependent on the enslaved person's recognition. The enslaved person, in turn, becomes more independent and self-conscious. Hegel frames this as a struggle between life and death: the master risks death, while the enslaved person faces the fear of it. Despite this, the relationship is interdependent. The master depends on the enslaved person's labour, while the enslaved person's labour leads to self-consciousness and the potential for freedom. This dialectical process unfolds through recognition and non-recognition. Ultimately, the master loses

independence by relying on the enslaved person's labour, while the enslaved person discovers their value and gains self-determination (Chanter, 2016; Podhorodecki, 2021; Gray & Johnson, 2022; Dill, 2024).

Suppose we return to the *yilli*, who were once subjects of the sultan. In that case, they now position themselves as masters in his absence, engaging in practices such as living in lavish mansions and residing in estates surrounded by high walls. This ostentatious display is not just an attempt at material superiority but also a desire to reproduce the hierarchical structure of the past. Seen through Hegel's master-slave dialectic, this group, once slaves to the old order, now assumes the role of the master, carrying traces of the past into the present. They create exaggerated spatial and social distinctions to make their new status visible.

In short, there have been significant changes over time in the housing preferences of the *yilli* in Kayseri. The transition from traditional large houses to family apartments, and then to smaller cooperative houses on Sivas Street, saw a decrease in the size of houses. However, the shift to apartment blocks has resulted in a return to larger houses. The primary motivation behind their journey within the city, **modernisation**, has also manifested as a new type of modernisation in these large houses. As some *yilli* moved into these new large houses, others quickly followed suit, aiming to **keep up with the times, modernise**, and claim their place in the **status display** window by settling in these new neighbourhoods and houses. While there is a long-standing habit of living in large houses within the **culture**, large houses are also seen as a tool for **status** and **ostentation**. The names given to the apartment buildings evoke associations with palaces and mansions, emphasising *yilli*'s privileged position in the city. It reflects the *yilli*'s perception of themselves as the true owners of the city and their efforts to distinguish themselves from other groups (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 The changes in the size of the house related to *Habitus*



Morphology of the house

The most significant change in the spaces inhabited by the *yilli* has occurred in the morphology of the house. The space, which has evolved from the traditional house into today's housing, has undergone various changes in its floor plan and structure. As mentioned earlier, the traditional house had a layout centred around *hayat*, where all spaces were connected to everyday activities. The traditional house, shaped by the living culture, was moulded according to the user's needs. The best example of this is the addition of new rooms when the need arose. The *yilli*, who could organise the traditional house according to their needs, encountered new materials, technologies, and apartment buildings with modernisation. As discussed in the urban development process, the municipality encouraged the construction of these structures using the latest technologies in newly opened areas within the city, and the *yilli* quickly adopted these *buildings*. After the 1945 urban plan, the Sahabiye Neighbourhood, which was developed for housing, became a hub for family apartments. Some residents were given land in exchange for their expropriated houses, while others moved there to keep up with the trend, as it became a neighbourhood where the *yilli* began to settle.

Wealthy *yilli* families primarily built these family apartments. Although initially unfamiliar with constructing these new buildings, they actively participated in the process. Interviewees explained that the planning and design of the family apartments often referenced examples from Istanbul. Engineers from their families or the city were familiar with these examples and led the planning efforts.

Despite the unfamiliarity with the apartment building type due to modernisation, the *yilli* ensured the new structure aligned with their lifestyle. While the new houses were fixed and no longer evolved as the traditional house did, they intervened in the construction to create centrally planned houses that mirrored the *hayat*-oriented structure of the traditional house. The central hall, replacing the *hayat* (courtyard), became the focal point for daily life, connecting all rooms. Like the *hayat*, this space hosted various activities and, when needed, also served functions such as sleeping, like *harem* rooms. One interviewee summarised their life in the family apartment as follows (I_7): Their house had three rooms and a large hall. The living room featured two divans where her grandparents slept. There was also a guest room [*salon*], a common feature in Kayseri houses, and the parents' bedroom, where she slept with her parents. When a sister was born, a *somya* (simple bed frame) was added in the hall for her to sleep on. The small bathroom had a storage area above it, accessible by a staircase from the kitchen, where her mother stored items.

Several key differences stand out when comparing the family apartment to the traditional house. The traditional house is made of stone materials, organically shaped, and designed for growth, while the family apartment is a fixed-plan structure made of reinforced concrete. In the traditional house, the central space (*hayat*) is open-air, whereas in the family apartment, the central space (the central hall) is enclosed. In the traditional house, the largest space is the *sofa*, which is notably higher than other rooms. In the family apartment, the largest space is the *salon* (guest room), though it is not as distinctively large as the *sofa*. The fixed ceiling height in the family apartment limits the size of the *salon* compared to the *sofa* in the traditional house. Another significant change is the relocation of the toilet from the exterior to the interior of the family apartment. Additionally, the traditional house does not have a shared washing area, with the *gusülhane* (a built-in bathing area for cleansing) located within a room. In contrast, the family apartment introduces a shared bathroom. The balcony is another new feature of the family apartment that did not exist in the traditional house.

When viewed in terms of general characteristics, the family apartment resembles modern housing. For instance, some floor plans have a small hall attached to the parents' bedroom for added privacy. However, this architectural type, newly adopted from the West, has been influenced by the traditional housing culture of the *yilli*. As a result, elements such as a central hall, storage areas above the bathroom or kitchen, and built-in cupboards (*yüklük*) in some houses, set it apart from typical modern housing.

The changes in the cooperative houses, or row houses as referred to in some sources, mainly located on Sivas Street, have made their layout more aligned with modern housing concepts than family apartments. In these houses, the central hallway seen in family apartments has been altered, and the area where the front door opens has become a small entrance, functioning only as a greeting space. A notable difference in these houses is the introduction of a bedroom hall. Like Western modern houses, a more private corridor is accessed from the living area, and the bedrooms are reached through this space. The addition of the bedroom hall and more precise spatial definitions brings this layout closer to modern housing standards (Figure 5.5).

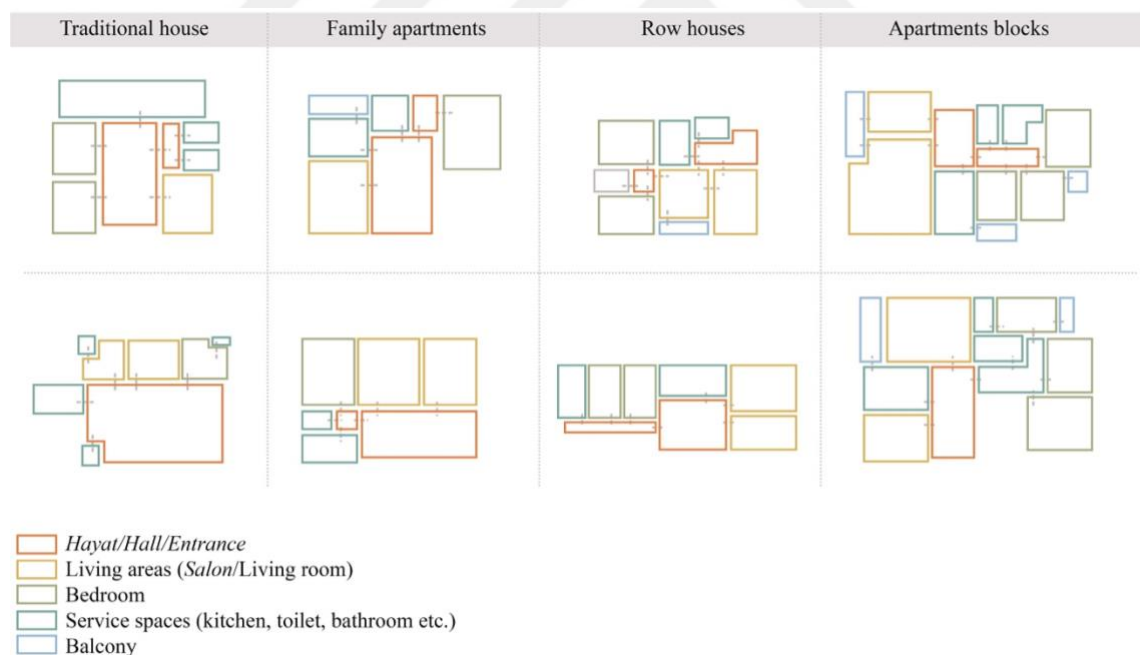


Figure 5.5 Morphological differentiation in houses from traditional houses to apartment blocks

In *Moscow Diary* (1986), Walter Benjamin explores Moscow's spatial structure, housing system, and living environments during his stay. He examines the housing arrangements through a comparative perspective, contrasting them with modern housing concepts. When discussing Moscow's housing, Benjamin highlights the model of

capitalist individualisation. In modern capitalist societies in Europe, housing reflects private property and individualism, with the organisation of space serving to reproduce relations of production and social hierarchies.

In modern capitalist cities, housing is not just a shelter but a crucial element of property, status, and the accumulation of economic capital. Capitalist urbanisation divides housing into specialised spaces that isolate residents from production processes and public social life. Spatial separations reinforce the division of labour within the family, and the house's architectural layout plays a key role in shaping relations of production and reproduction. This structure, aligned with the capitalist mode of production, emphasises individualisation and private space while sidelining social solidarity and collective living practices.

Capitalism functions to prevent the organisation of individuals and fragment society. At its core is the bourgeoisie, with politics being essential to its operation. Politics requires organised action, and organisation is linked to politics. Therefore, capitalism resists collective action by fostering fragmentation, extending beyond politics into everyday life, including the house. For example, religious spaces are designed as large, open areas to promote communal worship, as faith is a shared experience that cannot be divided. Similarly, extended families live together in shared spaces where individual rooms are unnecessary in rural life. This communal approach contrasts with the individualism promoted by capitalist society.

Fragmentation also occurs on an urban scale. Neighbourhoods are divided, and workers are placed in distant areas to prevent communities from uniting. By dispersing the working class, it becomes harder for them to organise and collaborate. This fragmentation extends to the house, where family members are isolated, and individualism is promoted. Children are taught to socialise in schools shaped by capitalist ideology, preparing them to become the individuals the system desires.

The design of capitalist spaces further limits social interaction. Hallways in houses are narrow, discouraging casual conversations, while living areas are condensed into a single room. The rest of the house is arranged to encourage individuals to retreat into their own space. As a result, the modern person comes home, says "hello," eats, and then retreats to their room. This structure has been deliberately designed by capitalism to minimise social relationships.

This pattern can also be seen in heating systems. In traditional houses, a central stove provides warmth for everyone in a shared space, whereas modern systems heat each

room separately. It is not just a technical choice but a strategy to isolate individuals from communal areas. If people only sleep in their room, they may not need to heat it. However, aiming to prevent communal interaction, the capitalist system organises each space individually to privatise and personalise the environment. This spatial separation is not about comfort but about reinforcing isolation.

In this context, traditional lifestyles and housing designs are conducive to collective living. Extended families would gather in the central space of the house—the *hayat*—to form social bonds. Interviewees who experienced traditional houses often fondly recalled evenings spent around the fire in the *iskembi* (a type of hearth), sharing warmth and conversation. Similarly, in houses heated by stoves, especially in family apartment buildings, the central hall would be warmed, and the other rooms would heat up through the warmth transferred from this shared space. As a result, family members would naturally gather around the stove, spending time together and reinforcing communal living through the house's design. Several middle-aged interviewees consistently described the modern trend, where family members spend time individually in separate rooms, as “unfortunate” or “negative.” While individualisation was rarely experienced in traditional stove-heated houses, modern radiator-heated houses tend to isolate individuals, weakening familial bonds and the shared experience of daily life.

Another notable aspect of life in family apartment buildings is that the family members and all residents tended to live more collectively. Individuals accustomed to the “inward-facing” lifestyle of traditional houses continued this way of living even after moving into family apartments, often sharing space with extended family or familiar neighbours. As a result, the sense of shared domesticity and communal living persisted, despite the change in architectural form. Interviewees recalled that in family apartment buildings, they often left their doors open, and residents freely came and went from one another's houses.

However, this sense of collective living gradually diminished with the advent of cooperative housing complexes, where more formalised, individual-oriented lifestyles took root. *Yilli*, who had previously lived with relatives and acquaintances in family apartments, lived with strangers in the new cooperative housing along Sivas Street. In these modern houses, more aligned with contemporary housing planning, residents began to lead more inward, nuclear-family-oriented lives, symbolised by the closing of their front doors. It marked a shift away from the collective lifestyle they had once known.

The layout typically features a two-part living area between the entrance hall and the bedroom corridor in cooperative houses, where life is more inward-oriented than in family apartment buildings. One of these living spaces is larger and closer to the main entrance, while the smaller one connects to the bedrooms via the bedroom hall. This spatial arrangement reflects and reinforces a more segmented, private mode of domestic life. The living area, connected to the kitchen and toilet through the entrance hall and to the bedrooms and bathroom via the bedroom corridor, also opens to the street through a front balcony, effectively functioning as the central space of the house. A door planned between this living area and the larger one creates a sense of separation, assigning the larger space the role of a formal *salon*.

Compared to the layout of a family apartment building, where the front door opens directly into a central hall, the living space in cooperative housing is pulled further into the interior of the house. As a result, the living area—now transformed into what we might call the “inner *salon*” or “inner *hayat*”—is shielded from potential privacy risks that might arise in an apartment shared with strangers. Additionally, it is separated from the *salon*—where male guests are typically received—by a door, positioning it in a location that aligns with notions of *mahram*.

The cooperative housing predominantly built along Sivas Street closely aligns with the modern housing concept. The inward-facing structure of traditional life has evolved in the modern context into a more open daytime life and a more private night-time life (Ateş, 1997). This shift has led to the creation two distinct functional spaces, separated by transitional zones: the entrance hall and the bedroom corridor. This arrangement reflects the functional separation of spaces typical in modern housing. Technological advancements, such as plumbing and the introduction of appliances like refrigerators, have introduced new conveniences and prompted a reorganisation of domestic space based on specific functions, further solidifying the shift toward a more individualised and compartmentalised way of living.

These houses, particularly in their organisation around the space I describe as the “inner *hayat*,” represent a hybrid form. While the apartment structure is influenced by Western modernisation, the cooperative housing units differ from family apartments in that the user has no direct influence over the layout. However, it seems that the architects or engineers who designed them, sharing the same collective cultural consciousness, ensured that these houses were still compatible with the local way of life. Alternatively, the space—originally intended as a *salon-salomanje* (En. dining room, Fr. salle à

manger), typical in Western housing models and often depicted in Yeşilçam films—was reinterpreted by *yilli habitus*, which lacked a formal dining room culture. It thus transformed into an “inner *hayat*.” In this way, although the modern house was designed according to Western standards, it became hybridised through the practices and reinterpretations of its users (Figure 5.6).

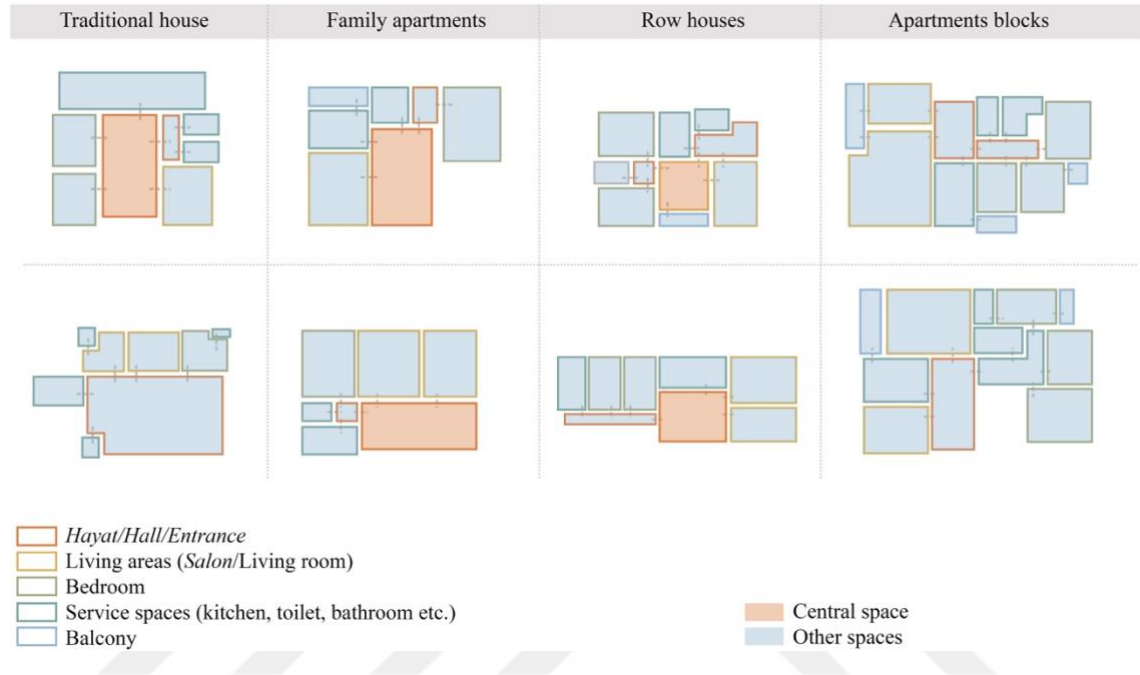


Figure 5.6 The disappearance of the central space

The apartment blocks built along Sivas Street represent a residential typology that aligns with the modern housing model, where each space is functionally defined. These units, some ranging from 200 to 300 square meters, have a floor plan that separates daytime and nighttime zones. The daytime zone includes the entrance hall, which connects to the kitchen, living room, *salon*, and restroom. The bedroom corridor, accessible from the entrance hall, leads to the bedrooms, bathroom, and, if present, additional spaces such as a laundry room. All distinct functional spaces are accessed through two transitional corridors: the entrance hall and the bedroom corridor.

In family apartment buildings, the central hall served as both a living and a reception area. However, cooperative housing introduced a specialised entrance hall, designed solely as a reception space. While the entrance hall remains in apartment blocks, it has grown, now encompassing the scale of a living space. As part of the daytime zone, it has become the central area for daytime activities. Nevertheless, as the central hall once

did, it still functions primarily as a transitional space and the main point of entry, rather than evolving into a space for daily life and activity.

The use of corridors in apartment buildings first emerged in the early 1930s in structures built around Şişli, Taksim, and Nişantaşı. The front section typically consisted of one or more *salon* units in these buildings, while the back section featured bedrooms and a bathroom aligned along a corridor. The kitchen was positioned between these two zones. The front part of the house was designed as an accessible, public area, while the rear part was organised as a private zone, closed off from the outside world (Pulat Gökmen, 2011). The bedroom hall, or “night hall,” plays a key role in providing privacy and contributing to the spatial segmentation of the house (Figure 5.7).

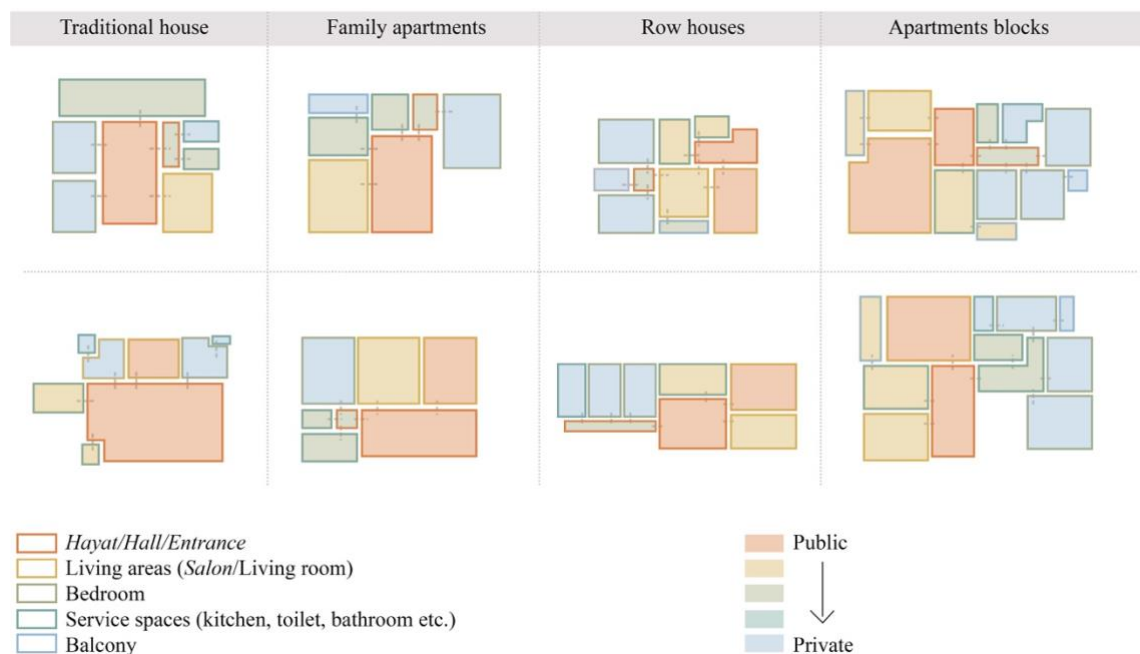


Figure 5.7 Changes in domestic privacy

In contemporary houses predominantly inhabited by *yilli* (as seen in many cities), houses are generally divided into two main parts: the first part includes the entrance hall and the rooms connected to it, while the second part consists of the bedroom hall, accessed through the entrance hall, and the spaces attached to it. The spaces connected to the entrance hall include the living room, *salon*, kitchen, and toilet, while those connected to the bedroom hall consist of the bedrooms and the shared bathroom. Due to the complete functional separation of spaces and larger sizes, these houses are typically designed as 4+1 units (three bedrooms, one living room, and one *salon*) or larger, with each household member normally having a separate room.

In the houses along Sivas Street, the bedroom hall is typically small. It serves primarily as a transitional space, separated from the daily living area by a door to ensure privacy. In contrast, in larger houses that emerged in later periods, the bedroom hall becomes part of a more distinct, separate world. In some houses, the bedroom corridor extends and shifts direction, creating even more private spaces and further reinforcing spatial separation and hierarchy. These corridors provide insulation between rooms, contributing to individualising intra-household relationships (Kurt, 2021).

As individuals move through these spaces, progressing from public to private via various thresholds, the once-communal relationships of families who gathered in the *hayat* of traditional houses or the central hall of family apartments have shifted toward individualisation. This transformation becomes more pronounced as children grow up and leave the house, with even the remaining spouses spending time in separate rooms of their choosing (Figure 5.8).

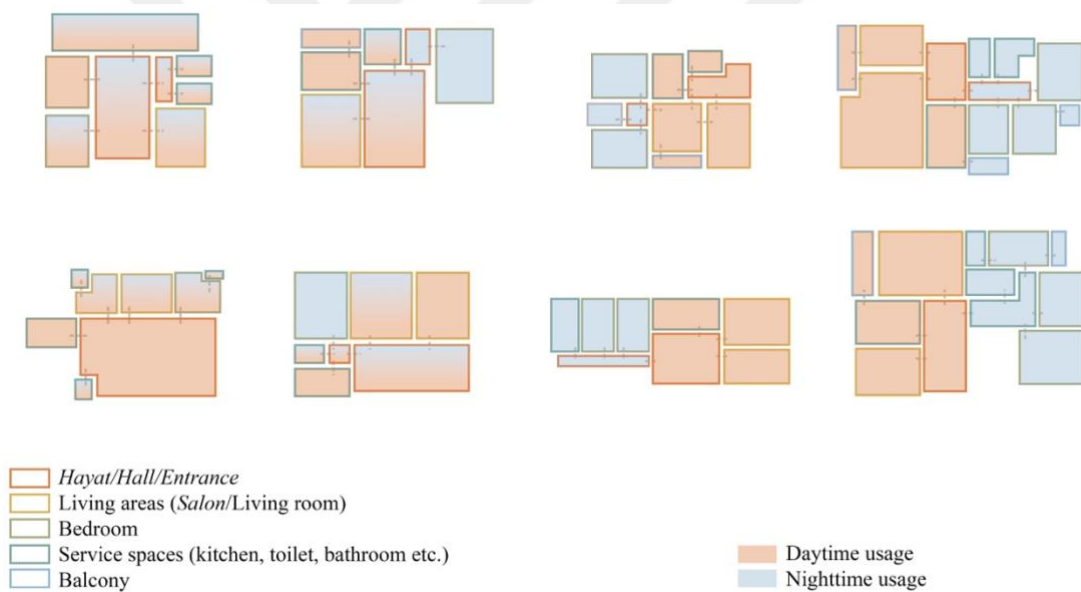


Figure 5.8 Changes in space usage across daytime and night-time

From traditional houses to modern dwellings, the spatial section of the house has undergone a significant transformation. While the structure's section has shifted from horizontal to vertical, the house's spatial section has moved in the opposite direction—from vertical to horizontal. In traditional houses, the layout was typically a one- or two-story structure with a basement, with vertically interrelated spaces. Features such as *seki* (raised platforms) and *sekialtı* (under-platform) created internal vertical stratifications, fostering a sense of vertical connection even within individual rooms. In contrast, with

the advent of family apartments, residences began to occupy individual apartment building floors, leading to the loss of these vertical spatial connections (Figure 5.9).

One of the most striking aspects of family apartments is how they adapted the traditional extended family lifestyle to a new housing form. In traditional houses, additional rooms would be constructed to accommodate the growing needs of the family. In family apartments, this logic was translated into adding extra floors. An interviewee (I_28) shared that in the family apartment his father had built in Sahabiye, his grandfather lived on one floor, his own family occupied another, and the top floor was pre-constructed for him to move into once he got married. In this way, the horizontally expanding section of the traditional house was reimagined as vertically stacked floors in the family apartment. This transformation reflects how modern housing structures adapted traditional concepts of familial space while retaining the multi-generational living aspect.

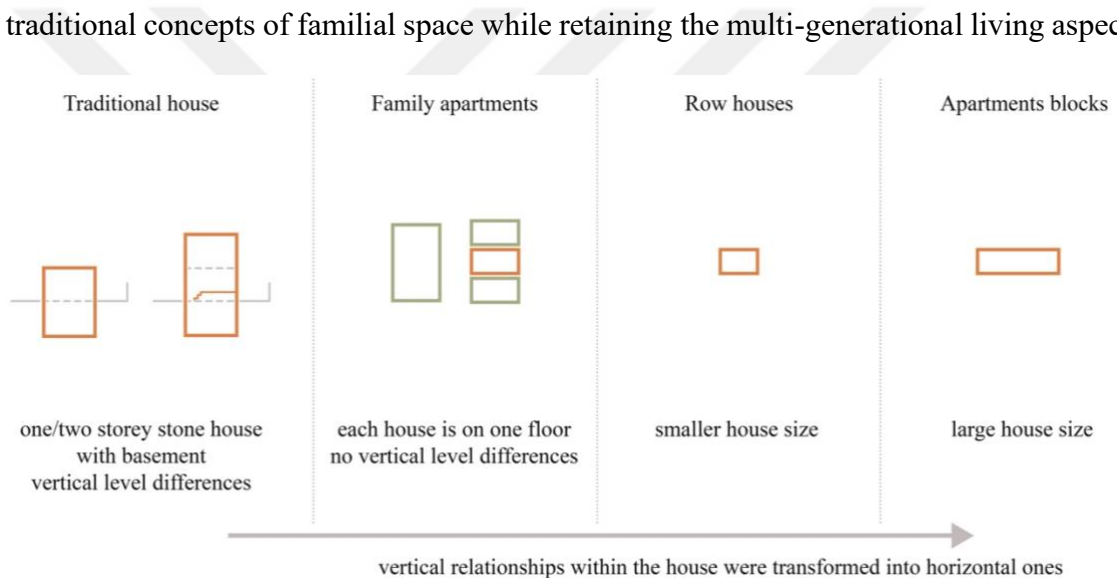


Figure 5.9 Change of house section

In the traditional house, *yilli* were accustomed to having immediate access to a private open space or garden outside their door. However, they adapted to apartment living relatively quickly. The rationality brought by modernisation is the primary reason for this smooth transition. Although this new housing typology did not fully align with their established lifestyle and cultural practices, *yilli* embraced it with ease due to its comfort and modern amenities. When I asked the *yilli* about this transition, almost all mentioned that they did not have difficulty adapting to apartment living because of the modern structure. Upon further inquiry about any challenges they faced living in these dwellings, which did not fully align with their traditional lifestyle, they expressed

satisfaction with the apartments' comfort. They emphasised that they did not experience any significant adaptation issues.

Although *yilli* quickly adapted to apartment living due to its comfort and convenience, they have not fully adjusted to the social dynamics required by the modern housing system, despite having lived in it for over fifty years. In contemporary apartment life, relationships tend to be more distant, and those who adopt an individualistic lifestyle are less engaged in neighbourly interactions than in the past. While *yilli* embraced each new housing type with a desire for modernity and to keep up with current trends, they now tend to lead a more introverted life within the apartment setting. However, their past habits are activated once they establish connections with their neighbours. In these instances, they act with a spirit of solidarity reminiscent of the extended family structure. These social habits—*habitus*—when met with favourable conditions, reproduce themselves and reawaken past social behaviour patterns, reflecting the resilience of traditional ways of living within the modern context (Figure 5.10, Figure 5.11, Figure 5.12).

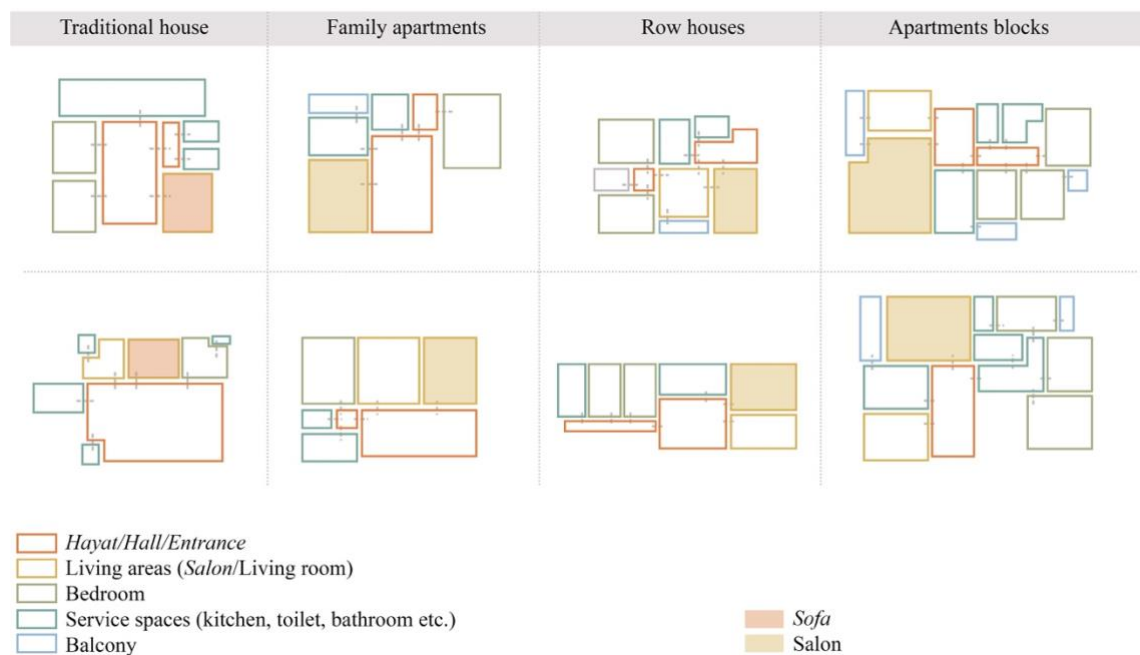


Figure 5.10 The transformation of the *sofa* into the *salon* in apartment layouts

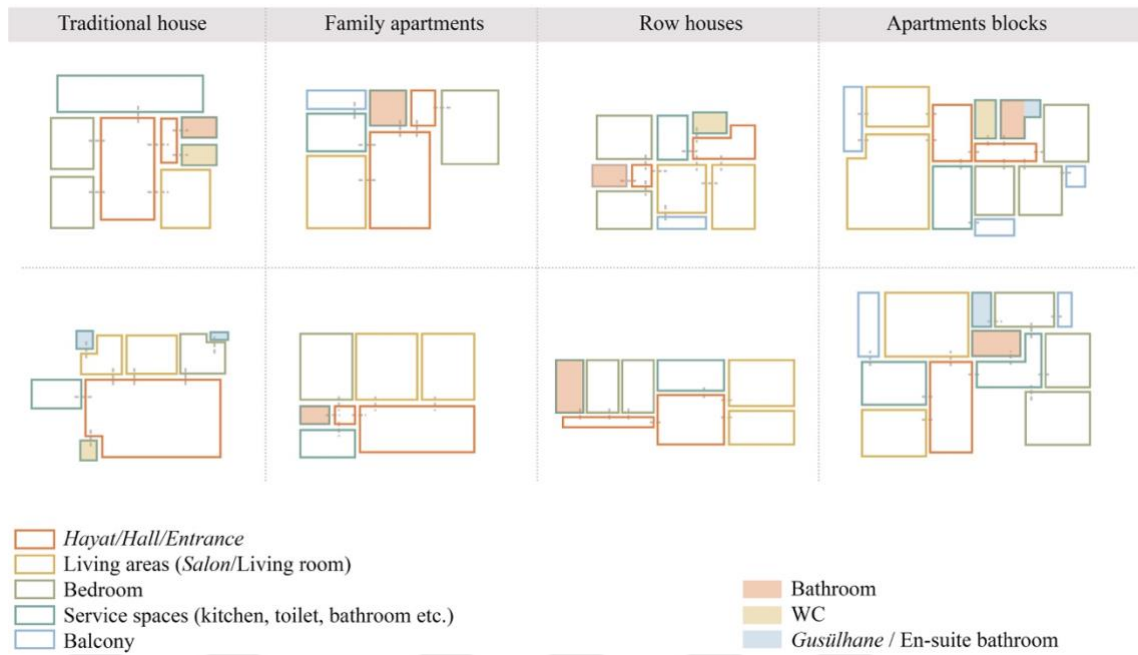


Figure 5.11 The relocation of the bathroom: the WC was moved inside the house; the *gusülhane* was first lost, then reinterpreted as an en-suite bathroom



Figure 5.12 The re-signification of *zerzembi* (storage space)

Human nature often relies on habits to find the quickest solutions. The mind functions almost like a “button,” activating reflexes based on the situation and pressing the appropriate one to resolve it. For example, a person accustomed to an individualistic lifestyle may initially withdraw into their own space in the presence of a stranger. However, as trust and familiarity grow, old habits can resurface.

In apartment life, this dynamic is evident. Neighbourly relations are initially distant, but over time, they resemble the older neighbourhood culture. People started placing items on balconies, leaving children with neighbours, and using shared spaces as if they were their own. Someone who once lived in isolation may gradually reintegrate into a more communal lifestyle as their relationship with neighbours deepens. It happens through small, yet significant steps—using a neighbour’s storage space, placing belongings on the rooftop, and sharing common areas. As the boundaries between spaces blur, past habits are revived. When faced with opportunities that evoke old ways of life, individuals unconsciously return to familiar social codes. Forgetting promotes individualisation, but remembering pulls them back into the communal routines of the past.

Some individuals, forgetting that the apartment is a shared space open to everyone with equal participation expected, treat it as if it were their own private house with a garden. It reflects spatial perceptions and habits inherited from the past. The way residents socialise with neighbours in apartment buildings mirrors this mindset. For instance, behaviours like placing chairs in stairwells or corridors are small but clear signs of individuals perceiving shared spaces as extensions of their private domains.

While visiting one of the interviewees, I witnessed two others—who lived in the same building—sitting in front of their doors, cracking sunflower seeds on chairs and a small table they had placed there. Though they explained that they did this because it was hot outside and the apartment was cooler, it was clear they were treating the shared space of the building as their private area.

Such behaviours transform apartment living into a kind of family apartment arrangement. In these settings, where doors are often left open and shared spaces are used collectively, residents recreate, at the apartment scale, the neighbourhood culture they once knew. It reflects a continuation of social habits rooted in the past, manifesting as a form of communal living within the structure of modern residential spaces.

Small reflections of this perception are often seen in daily behaviours. For example, placing a trash bin at the apartment entrance or leaving shoes outside the door are actions rooted in this mindset. The underlying logic behind these habits is: “Shoes are not brought inside because this isn’t part of the house—it’s an extension of the garden.” However, the apartment corridor is meant to be a shared space. Yet, the individual does not fully internalise this and continues to act based on past habits. These behaviours indicate that

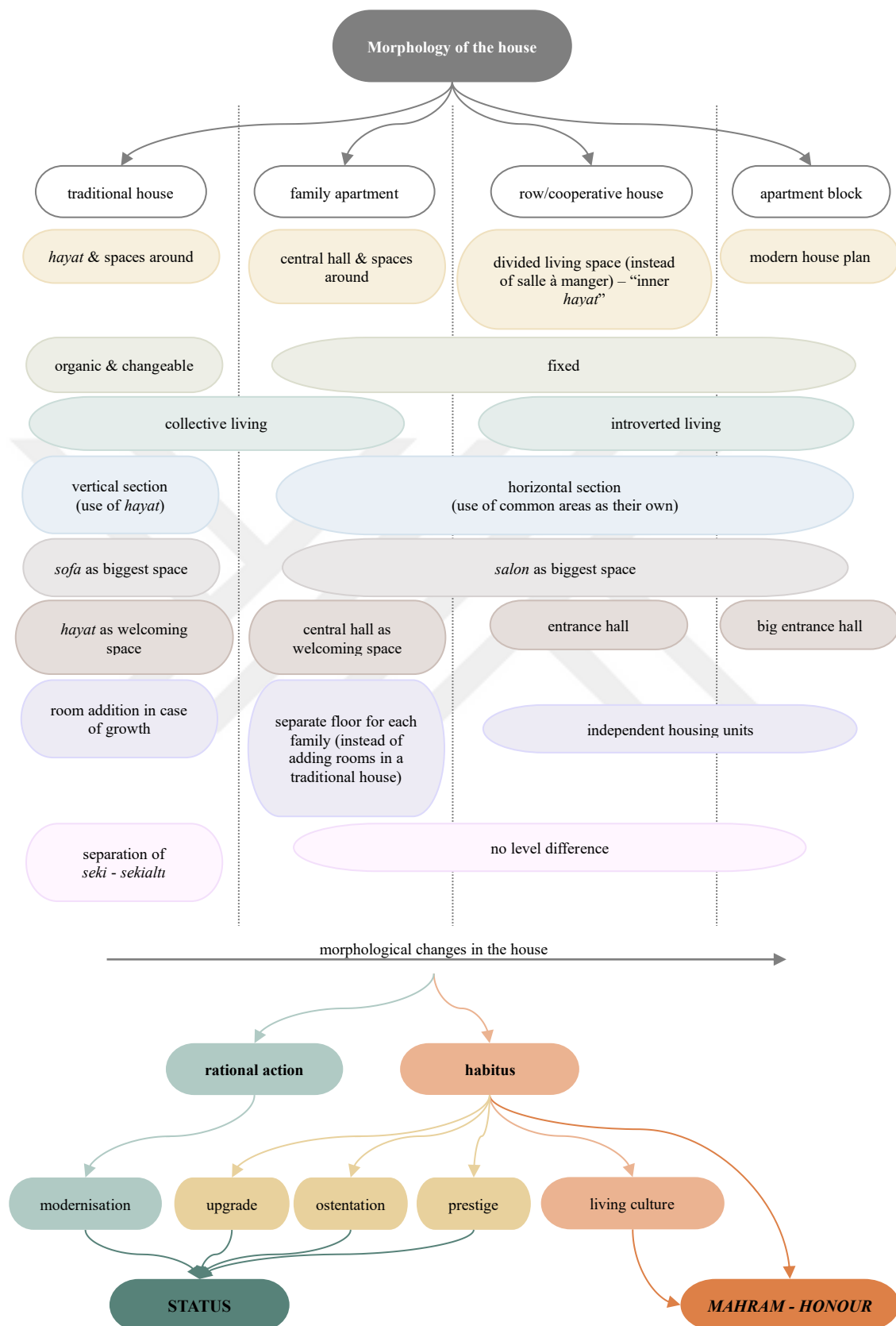
the person's perception of space has not fully adapted. They still view the corridor as a separate living area, struggling to accept it as a space for communal use.

This mindset offers valuable insights into how an individual's perception of space is shaped and how they instinctively interact with shared areas. In traditional village life, the boundaries of the house were clearly defined, while gardens and outdoor spaces were seen as more flexible and communal. This habit has persisted even after the transition to urban life, taking on new forms in apartment settings (Table 5.3).

For instance, practices like perceiving the corridor beyond the doorstep as a garden, leaving trash outside the door, or hanging laundry on the building's façade reflect this continuity. These behaviours are not simply individual habits but are also spatial practices passed down through generations. People subconsciously place shared apartment spaces according to their previous way of life, treating them as extensions of their private domain.

While the balcony is technically part of the house, it is often viewed not as an interior space but as an extension of the garden. However, some individuals—especially those who have adopted a more Western lifestyle—have begun to alter this perception, choosing to dry their laundry on the balcony or using drying racks indoors.

Table 5.3 Morphological changes of the houses in Kayseri related to *Habitus*



Separation of *Harem* – *Selamlık*

The separation of male and female spheres, a reflection of the Islamic understanding of social life, has long been a defining characteristic of Kayseri society. Men typically inhabited a male-only world, focused on livelihood activities like shopping and organising *oturma* (social gatherings) with other men. In contrast, women lived in the interior world of the house, where they were primarily responsible for domestic duties and caring for children. This division of labour was mirrored in the spatial organisation of the house, which was designed to support and reinforce these distinct roles.

The *harem–selamlık* division is a form of spatial segregation rooted in the concepts of *mahram* and social order in Ottoman and Islamic societies. The *harem* represented the private living space for women and family, while the *selamlık* was where male guests were received, and public interactions occurred. This division has remained a significant element in the housing spaces of *yilli*. Despite its transformation, the practice persists today in a modified form. In this arrangement, male visitors are restricted from certain areas of the house, maintaining privacy and separation. Family life, particularly the activities of women and children, typically occurs in the *hayat* (courtyard) and the *harem*, which serve as spaces isolated from the outside world. One of the key cultural symbols reflecting this division is the door knocker (noted in Table 4.1), which serves not only as a feature of the traditional Kayseri house but also of the broader Turkish house (Kurt, 2021). These door knockers, producing distinct sounds, allow the household to identify the visitor's gender. If the guest is male, the household can prepare the *harem* area accordingly, preserving the necessary boundaries and privacy (Çakıroğlu, 1952).

In the traditional house, the *harem*—where women and children could move freely and carry out daily tasks—was clearly defined and separated from the *selamlık*, where male guests were received. In some traditional houses, the *selamlık* section was entirely separate from the rest of the house, while in others, it was incorporated into the *sofa* (central hall or sitting area). Upon examining the plan types of traditional houses, it becomes apparent that in some instances, the *sofa* was connected to the *hayat* (the semi-open living area) and directly linked to the street. Serving as the entrance area, a reception space, and even a guest room, the *sofa* (İmamoğlu, 2006) traditionally functioned as the space where male guests were welcomed. One interviewee recalled that his father, a tradesman in the grand bazaar, would host male gatherings among fellow tradespeople in this space (I_7).

The traditional *harem–selamlık* distinction has evolved with the shift from traditional houses to family apartments. In the new apartment layout, the function previously served by the *selamlık* or *sofa* was replaced by the modern *salon* (living room), a space that did not exist in traditional houses. In family apartment floor plans, where all rooms open onto a central hallway, the largest room became the *salon*, assuming the function of the old *selamlık/sofa*. Consequently, a modern *harem–selamlık* distinction emerged between the *salon* and the rest of the house, marking a spatial and functional transformation in contemporary dwellings (Figure 5.13).

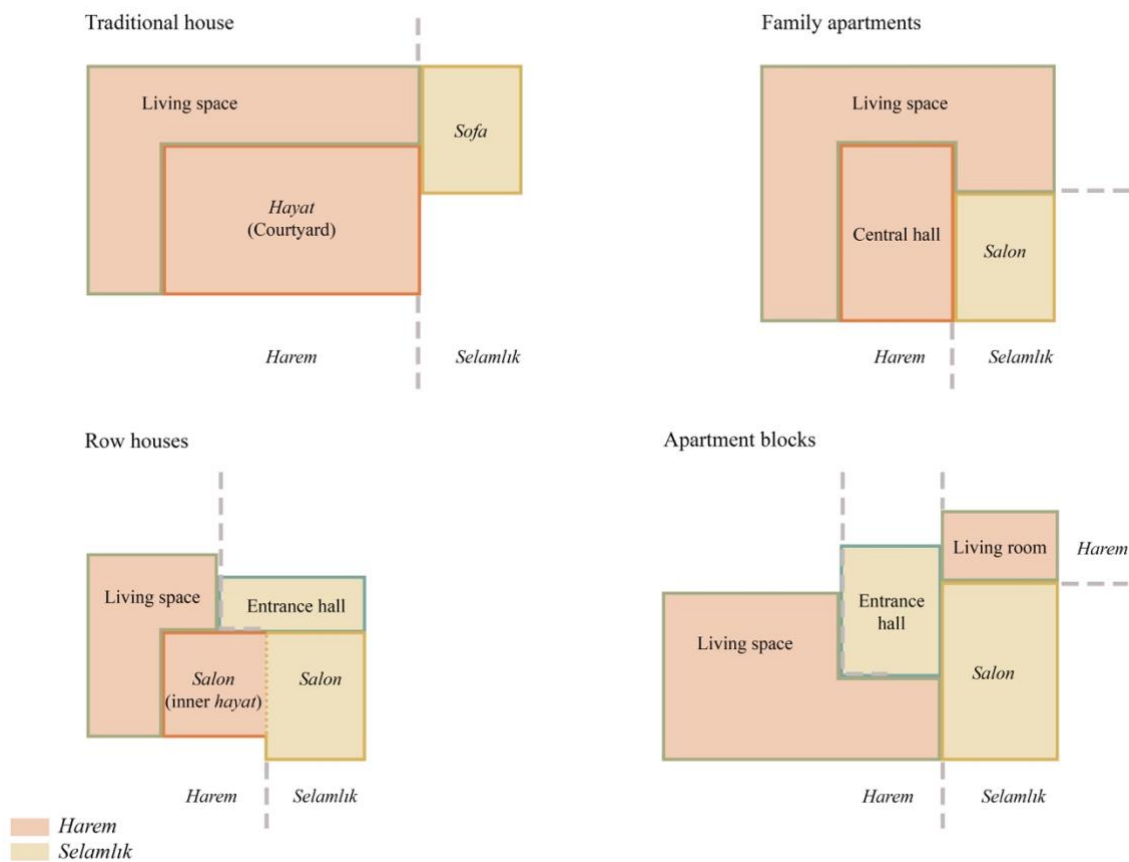


Figure 5.13 Change of *harem – selamlık* relationship

Traditional influences persist in contemporary guest-hosting practices, particularly in continuing the *harem-selamlık* arrangement. The separation of male guests and women—either by accommodating them in different spaces, such as the *salon* and daily room (living room), or by forming distinct seating groups within the same room—reflects this longstanding tradition (Ateş, 1997). During fieldwork, many interviewees mentioned that, even in settings where both men and women gather (*oturma*), they still tend to sit separately, with men often being hosted in the *salon*. This practice is seen as a

continuation of tradition for older, more conservative interviewees. Most younger interviewees also stated they sit separately, but explained this mainly due to the noise created by children. Women usually sit in the living room with the children, while men gather in the *salon*. Some even mentioned that men sometimes use enclosed balconies, often for smoking. While these explanations seem practical, the decision to occupy separate spaces, despite the ability to socialise together by moving the children to another room, suggests a continuation of past habits. Similarly, some younger female interviewees expressed feeling more comfortable sitting separately from men. It reflects the traditional notion of the *harem*, where women and children could live more freely in the absence of men.

Since the emergence of family apartments, the distinction between *harem* and *selamlık* has become less pronounced than in traditional houses. In some traditional houses, access to the *selamlık/sofa* required passing through the *hayat* (courtyard), maintaining a clear spatial separation from the rest of the house. However, in apartment housing, the *salon*—which assumes the function of the traditional *selamlık*—is typically accessed by passing through areas of the house designated for women. In the case of family apartments, which were some of the earliest forms of apartment living, daily life centred around the hall, and anyone wishing to enter the *salon* would pass through this central space, becoming momentarily part of the household's everyday activities.

A solution to this issue was implemented in Sivas Street houses, where a door was placed between the *salon* and the inner *hayat*—a term I use to describe the central living space, like a central hall. By shifting the inner *hayat* further into the house, a sense of *mahram* (privacy) was established between the *salon* and the other parts of the house. However, in today's modern housing morphology, the *salon* is designed similarly to family apartments, opening directly into the entrance hall and other daily living spaces such as the kitchen and living room. As a result, every guest entering the *salon* inevitably passes through the household's daily life. Unlike in family apartments, however, daily life no longer occurs in the entrance hall. Instead, a bedroom hall creates a more gradual transition of privacy within the house to make it easier to distinguish the private and communal spaces easily.

Examining the reasoning behind the *harem-selamlık* separation closely aligns with the concept of *honour* that Bourdieu identified in his study of the Berber tribe. The core motivation behind this arrangement is the sense of modesty and propriety (*mahremiyet*),

but this should not be mistaken for the English notion of “privacy”. While privacy⁶² emphasises an individual’s personal life and confidentiality, the Arabic-derived term “mahremiyet” stems from “mahram”, meaning “forbidden” or “sacred.” Its root, *hrm*, is associated with restriction and boundaries. Thus, “mahremiyet” conveys a sense of protection and sanctity rather than mere secrecy.⁶³ Similarly, *harem*,⁶⁴ derived from the *hrm* root, refers to a sacred or restricted space. In Turkish and Islamic culture, spaces are traditionally divided into *harem* and *selamlık*, with the *harem* being a space where male access is restricted. The sense of modesty underlying this restriction is deeply tied to concepts of *honour*. For this reason, the term “mahram” has been chosen over “privacy” in this study, as it more accurately reflects the cultural and moral dimensions embedded in this concept.

The term “*namus*” (En. honour), associated with moral rules and social values⁶⁵, is regarded as a core family principle. Within this framework, women are expected to be chaste, uphold the family’s honour, and conform to social norms. At the same time, men are responsible for protecting their families and maintaining their strength and honour. In a culture shaped by these expectations, the traditional house is designed with the *mahram* at its core. The strict separation of *harem* and *selamlık*, the high walls enclosing the living space, and the absence of street-facing windows all reflect these cultural values in the spatial organisation of the house.

However, with modernisation and the transition to modern housing, *yilli* have adapted their living arrangements to accommodate traditional and contemporary life. The persistence of the *harem-selamlık* separation—where the *salon* assumes the role of the *selamlık*, and men and women continue to socialise separately—demonstrates how this cultural logic continues to shape housing practices today.

For individuals who place the sense of *namus* (honour) at the centre of their lives, encounters with outsiders create discomfort, prompting them to take precautions. In traditional houses, this is reflected in the construction of high walls, while in modern

⁶² The meanings of “privacy” in the dictionary are “someone’s right to keep their personal matters and relationships secret” and “the state of being alone” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/privacy>)

⁶³ It is derived from the Arabic word *mahram* (مَحْرَم), which comes from the root *hrm* and means: (1) forbidden, taboo; (2) a person who has permission to enter a restricted area or a confidant. <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/mahrem>

⁶⁴ It is borrowed from the Arabic word *haram* (حَرَم), meaning “forbidden or sacred area, sanctuary, especially the area surrounding the Kaaba.” <https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/harem>

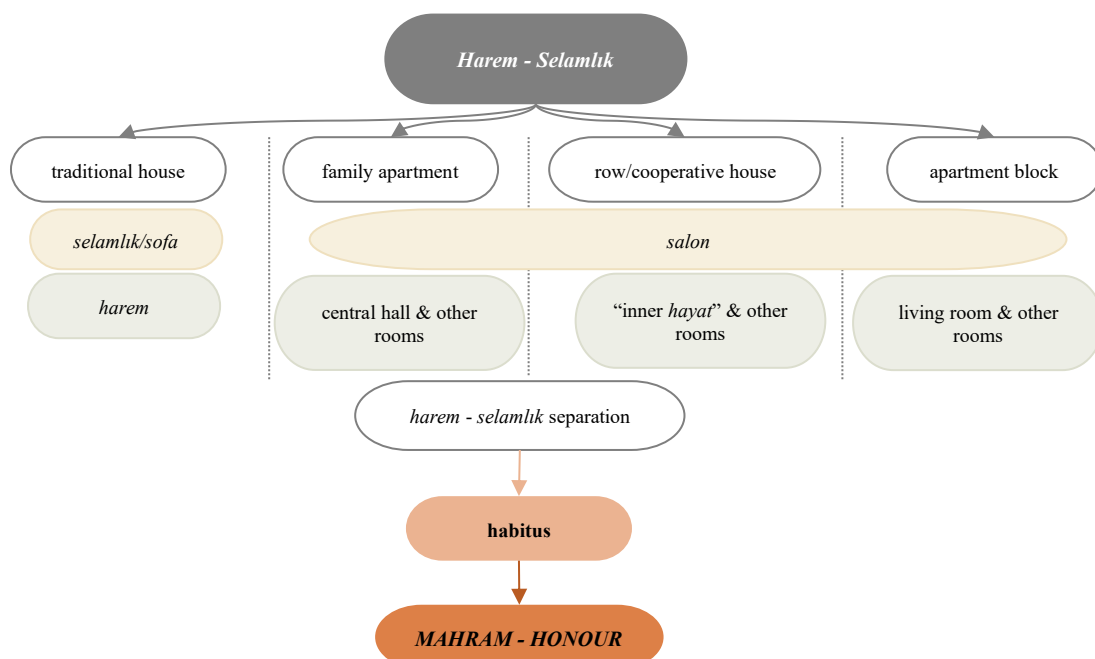
⁶⁵ <https://sozluk.gov.tr/?ara=namus>

houses, it manifests in the use of curtains. One interviewee (I_6), when asked about where *mahremiyet* (privacy) begins in their house, explained that different levels of *mahremiyet* (privacy) exist within the house. According to her, the outside door serves as the first boundary for unfamiliar men (such as delivery workers and building staff), the entrance hall as the second boundary for unfamiliar women, and the bedroom hall as the third boundary of privacy within the house. Although modern houses do not have strict hierarchical spatial separations, such classifications persist, and spaces continue to be used following the *mahram* culture.

In summary, the architecture of traditional houses in Kayseri has been shaped by the *harem-selamlık* separation. While modernisation has made this distinction more flexible, it remains influential due to social customs. In modern houses, the *salon* functions as the *selamlık*, where male guests are hosted, while the rest of the house serves as a space for women and children, like the traditional *harem*. Although male guests generally do not enter the inner parts of the house, this restriction is more flexible for women and children.

The practice of socialising women and men in separate spaces continues today, especially within more conservative groups. This spatial separation is rooted in the concept of *mahram* and reflects a sense of *honour*, like the one found among the Berbers. The *harem* acts as a boundary that protects the honour of women and family, while the *selamlık* represents the honour of men, functioning within the public sphere (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 The changes of *harem – selamlık* related to *Habitus*



Evolution of *Hayat*

The traditional house is designed around the concept of *hayat*, with all rooms connected to the central living space where daily activities predominantly occur, especially during warmer seasons. The *hayat*, perhaps the most significant area for women, started to change or even disappear with the transition to family apartments and the detachment from the land. However, due to the cultural need for such a space, various solutions have emerged to address this need.

With modernisation, the family apartment emerged as a building type where the central hall is the focal point of daily life. Upon entering the apartment, all other rooms open into this central area. This space, which has taken on the role of the traditional *hayat* (central living space), remains the heart of the house, where activities such as sitting, eating, working, and even sleeping (in larger households) take place.

By the 1970s, the central hall began disappearing in houses along Sivas Street. Instead, a small entrance hall led to spaces divided into two parts: the *salon* and the living area, which could open into each other. A transition from this living area was made to the bedroom hall, a feature that became more common during this period, though it had appeared sporadically in family apartments before.

In houses built before 1980, the use of double-winged doors between rooms (Kurt, 2021) was common, and this practice was also applied in these houses (Figure 5.14). The living area, consisting of two parts, was linked this way, allowing them to be isolated when needed. The section closer to the outer door served as the *salon*. At the same time, the other living space, associated with the bedroom hall, functioned similarly to the central hall in family apartments, effectively becoming the “inner *hayat*”. This area, where daily life was mostly centred, was situated between the bedroom hall, balcony, and kitchen, occupying a central position. The *salon*, the largest room in the house, was located directly across from the entrance door and connected to the outer door via the entrance hall. When the door between the *salon* and the other living space was closed, communication with the rest of the house was cut off, preserving the *mahram* within the house.



Figure 5.14 Double-winged doors between rooms (Source: Photo archive of I_5)

The ability to open and isolate the spaces between the living areas through the door provides a flexible solution that meets the needs of the existing living culture. Given the importance of *oturma* in *yilli* culture, combining these two spaces to create a larger *salon* works well. A *salon* capable of accommodating up to 50 people was planned for large gatherings, with the daily living area incorporated into the *salon* to provide ample space for guests. When separate *oturma* for men and women are needed, the door can be closed, maintaining the balance between *mahram* and *namahram*. However, in all the houses I visited on Sivas Street, including my family's house, where this planning concept was implemented, the doors have been removed, making the relationship between the two spaces continuous. Interestingly, even though the door has been removed and the spaces are now integrated, the area still defined as the *salon* is only used when there are guests. The physical boundary that once existed is now maintained symbolically, and the space is not used for daily activities.

With the transition to apartment blocks, the clear separation between the day area (entrance hall and connected spaces) and the night area (bedroom hall and private spaces) has led to the complete disappearance of the central space that once defined daily life. In these modern houses, the living room has become the designated space for family activities, but it no longer holds a special, central position in the layout. Instead, it functions as one of the daytime spaces that opens into the entrance hall.

Interestingly, with the move to apartment blocks, the entrance hall has grown significantly, almost matching the size of a living room. It now resembles a central space

for daytime life, though its function is primarily a greeting and transitional space. In addition to the examples I have observed, some interviewees mentioned placing a dining table in the entrance hall, transforming it from a mere passage area into a more integrated space for daily life. This adaptation reflects the *habitus*, stemming from an ongoing need to interpret a space as central. While this usage remains relatively rare, the noticeable expansion of the entrance hall underscores the continuing desire for a central space within the house (Figure 5.15).

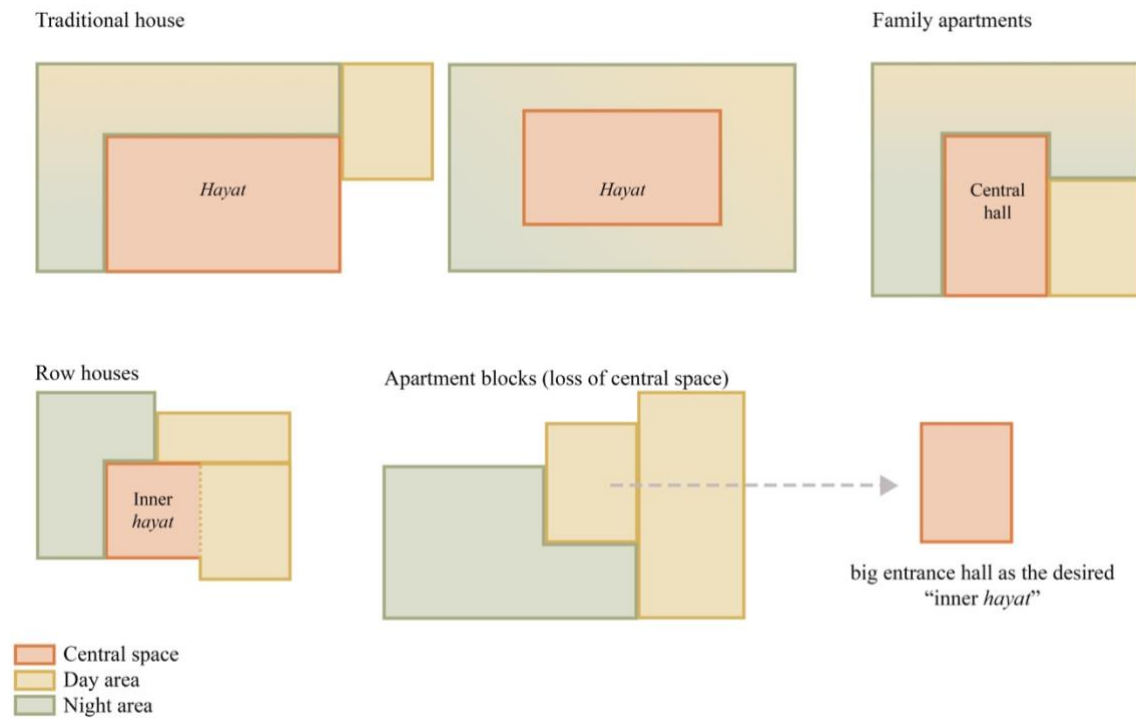


Figure 5.15 Evolution of *Hayat*

One space that might have taken the place of the *hayat* in today's housing is the balcony. However, a specific context exists for placing the balcony in this role. In discussing the traditional house, I emphasised the centrality of the *hayat*, where all spaces were oriented toward it, and activities like those in the kitchen or bathroom passed through this central area. The balcony, however, does not hold such a central position. Therefore, it can be said that with the transition to modern housing, the concept of *hayat* has largely disappeared, and it continues to have significance only for a few users in the entrance hall.

One of the most used spaces in contemporary houses, the balcony can be seen as an extension of the *hayat* in the traditional house, as it is the only space that connects with the outside. "The difference between *hayat* and the balcony, in a sense, is that the balcony

is an 'exit space,' while *hayat* serves as a space of integration between the outside (nature and the city) and the inside (family and individuals)" (Kurt, 2021, p. 205). Although the balcony is not centrally located like *hayat*, it serves as a meeting place and a unifying space for the whole family, especially on pleasant days. However, the relationship between the outside and the soil is limited. While *hayat* directly connects with the soil or ground, the balcony's relationship with the outside is only visual. The balcony functions as a transitional space between the interior of the house and the outside world, linking the two realms (Kurt, 2021). As a private space belonging to the house, particularly on upper floors where the connection to the ground is severed, the balcony establishes a relationship with *hayat* as a more intimate open area. In the private space of *hayat*, surrounded by high walls, the woman, who connects with the open air, also engages with the outdoors within the boundaries of her house on the balcony. While it may not directly replicate *hayat*, the balcony evokes its essence through specific characteristics.

However, the balcony, in its widely adopted form across the country, is being transformed into an enclosed space by most users. According to Tanyeli (2011, cited in Kurt, 2021), adding a balcony to every apartment and gradually incorporating this space into the interior reflects historical continuity. This process is rooted in a cultural legacy that is not accustomed to spaces like balconies, which traditionally provide a transition between private and public areas. As a result, the discomfort associated with merging these private and public spaces on the balcony is alleviated, and integrating the balcony into the house becomes a natural progression.

As Tanyeli points out, it is reasonable to attribute the discomfort caused by the transition between private and public spaces on the balcony to the sense of *mahram*. A balcony located on the facade of an apartment, directly connected to the street, can create an uncomfortable situation, especially for conservative women. In search of light and fresh air, the user, guided by their *habitus*, transforms the balcony into *hayat*. For those without a garden or other outdoor space, the balcony becomes where they breathe, smoke, and drink tea. On the balcony, they form their only connection with the outside world.

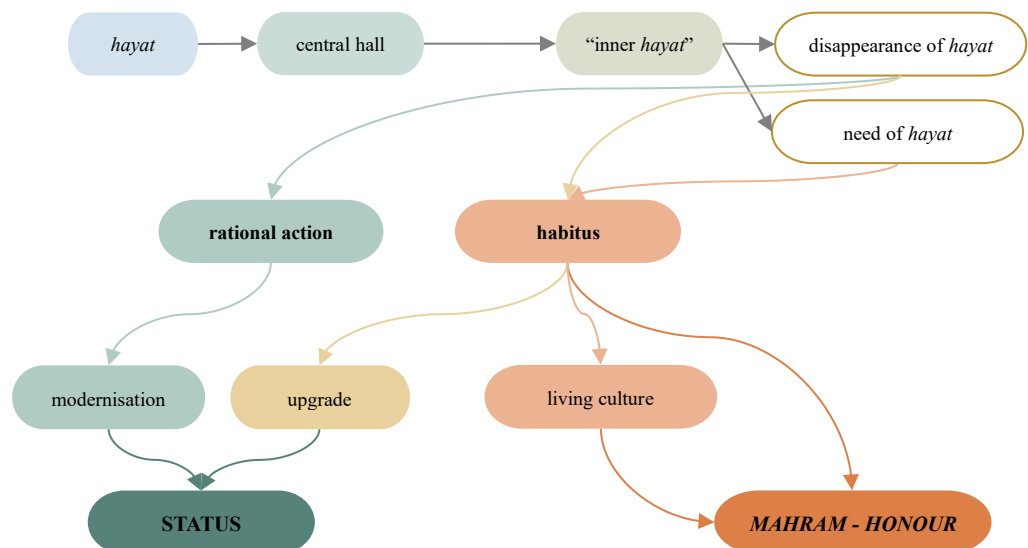
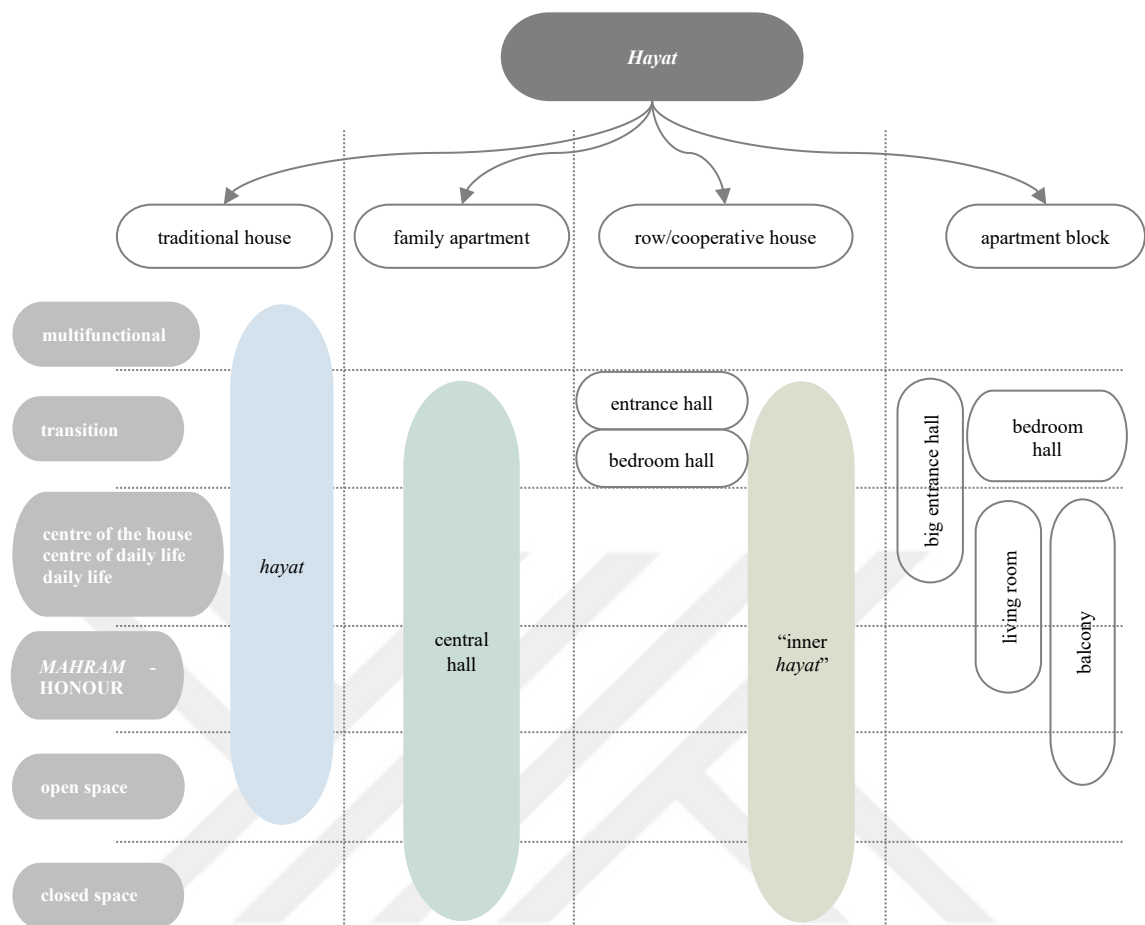
Interestingly, people use the balcony not as a threshold to the outside world but more like an interior courtyard. It can also be observed in villas; in houses with gardens, people often surround their gardens with high walls to isolate themselves from the outside. The reason for this is that these individuals feel uneasy in public spaces. They still view strangers as a threat and act to protect their *mahram*. The outside world, in this sense, represents a potential risk. As a result, spatial arrangements are shaped accordingly.

Yilli who build their own detached houses in the modern world, enclosing their gardens with walls and transforming them into *hayat*, act in line with their sense of *mahram* and *honour*. In this context, by closing their balconies to create a space for smoking during the winter or to fulfil their sense of *mahram*, they effectively transform the balcony into a new room within the house. This shift completely removes the balcony's resemblance to *hayat*.

In summary, *hayat* was the heart of family life in traditional Kayseri houses. With modernisation, this role was taken over by the central hall in family apartments. However, since the 1970s, the central hall has gradually disappeared in apartment layouts, leading to the separation of the *salon* from other spaces. In modern apartment blocks, the clear division between daytime and nighttime areas has led to the complete disappearance of a central space. While family life continues in the living room, it no longer holds a special position. The expanded entrance hall now functions only as a reception and transition area. This expansion indicates the continued need for a central space rooted in the **living culture**.

Today, the balcony has become an alternative to *hayat*, serving as an extension of indoor spaces. However, it cannot function as a central space and thus cannot fully replace *hayat*. Initially rooted in *mahram*, *hayat* has evolved into the central hall and, later, into the “inner *hayat*” space. The expansion of entrance halls in apartments reflects a continuing need for such a space, but the true ***mahram*** centre of the house, *hayat*, has disappeared in modern housing planning (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 The changes in *Hayat* related to *Habitus*



From *Sofa* to *Salon*

Kurt (2021) notes that the position and function of the *sofa* within the house are like the English *living room* or the French *salle à manger*. He highlights that this space has transformed over time. In the 1960s, influenced by modernist architecture, *sofas* in smaller houses were replaced by the entrance hall and corridor to create more living space. However, the situation differs when considered in the context of traditional Kayseri houses. In Kayseri houses, the *sofa* has been replaced by a *salon*. Starting from the family apartments, the *salon* has taken over the functions of the traditional *sofa* or *selamlık*, including receiving guests and hosting (Table 5.6).

In traditional houses, the *sofa*, which was the public face of the house, seems to have adapted to contemporary life by changing its name and character, continuing to serve its function today (İmamoğlu, 2010). The *salon*, which reflects the modern-day version of the *sofa*, is a space where all guests, whether intimate or formal, can enter. With this characteristic, it is the most public area of the house after the entrance hall. The *sofa*, the most valuable space in traditional houses, does not contain many pieces of furniture. It stands out more for its spatial size and the detailed craftsmanship in the materials rather than the items inside. In contrast, in the *salon* of *yilli* houses, which is considered the most valuable room today, the craftsmanship and decoration of the space have been replaced by the emphasis on furniture and displayed objects.

Table 5.6 Similar features of *Sofa* & *Salon*

<i>Sofa</i>	<i>Salon</i>
Separate space of the house	Separate and less used room of the house
Most valuable space of the house (with its decoration)	Most valuable room of the house (with its decoration & furniture)
Biggest space of the house	Biggest room of the house
Reserved primarily for men while women using rooms in harem	Reserved primarily for men while women using living room
Ready for guests	Always ready for guests

The *salon*, primarily designed for hosting guests, is large enough to accommodate the crowded *yilli oturma*, which, according to some interviewees, can sometimes host up to 50 people. Some *salons* are even decorated with two sets of furniture, as a single sofa set is insufficient to fill the space. In Kayseri, the space equivalent to a *salon* in other parts of Turkey is the living room (or daily living room). This room serves as the centre for daily life and is where intimate social interactions occur. The family's daily activities

unfold in the section of the house that includes the living room, kitchen, hallway, and bedroom.

Ayata (1988) offers a different perspective by dividing the house into two sections based on usage intensity. According to him, the house consists of an “inner house” with high usage intensity and a *salon*, which plays a lesser role in the family’s daily life (p. 5). The family retreats to the “inner house,” where comfort, intimacy, and closeness are prioritised, leaving the *salon*, which occupies about a third of the house, out of daily life. It creates a separate, almost foreign world within the same house. Ayata emphasises that both the “inner house” and the living room primarily reflect the world of women. Women often carry out household tasks in this space, sometimes with the help of guests. The “inner house” is generally seen as a *mahram* space, where women move and reflect on their personal lives. As such, it is typically off-limits to men, except for close family members. On the other hand, the living room symbolises “warmth” and “togetherness” (p. 6).

When comparing the living room and the *salon*, the distinction can be likened to the traditional separation between the harem and the *selamlık*. In traditional settings, male guests are invited to the *selamlık* or the *sofa*, and they are not allowed to enter the *harem* section. A similar situation applies to the living room in contemporary houses. The living room is an intimate space where women can move freely, and it is closed off to unfamiliar men and even unfamiliar women. The living room is reserved only for close relatives, familiar neighbours, and family members.

According to Ayata’s (1988) approach, which divides the house into a *salon* and an “inner house,” the general principle is to host strangers in the *salon*, while close, familiar individuals—those considered “one of their own”—are invited into the inner part of the house (p.6). Although every apartment or house has a *salon*, most families do not use it regularly (İmamoğlu, 2010). Like in the past, when daily life took place in the less showy *harem* room, today, it is spent in the living room. While the living room is used for daily activities, the *salon* is reserved for guests and special occasions such as religious holidays, weddings, ceremonies, meetings, and funerals (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7 Differences between *Salon* & Living room

<i>Salon</i>	Living room
Formal	Intimate
Reserved for guests	Family members
Ceremonies, meetings etc.	Daily life
Space for more people	Space for less people
Valuable furniture	Less valuable furniture
Lifetime furniture	Furniture can be changed
Always clean and tidy	Can be untidy
Kept closed because there was no heating in the past – so being used in summer	Is open because of having stove or the necessity for heating
Kept closed to keep clean	Is open because of being part of daily life

The main reason the *salon* still functions as a separate reception space today is rooted in the concept of *mahram*. As discussed in the *selamlık* section, the *salon* has replaced the traditional *selamlık/sofa* and is now where male guests are hosted. When interviewees were asked whether they sit together or separately during family gatherings in the evenings, most indicated a preference for sitting separately. In this context, the *salon* is generally where men socialise, while the living room serves as a space for women to socialise. According to the interviewees, it is rare for men to be hosted in the living room, except for occasions like watching a match or similar events.

In modern society, the division of socialising between men and women is rooted in *mahram* and *namahram* relationships. Women, considered *mahram* to men, feel more at ease and comfortable in separate spaces where they can act freely. However, not all locals adhere to this pattern; some families allow men and women to socialise together. Despite this, the *salon* remains the most valued space in these houses, reserved for hosting guests, while daily life continues in the living room.

During field research, interviewees also mentioned the distinctions between the living room and the *salon*. One interviewee noted, somewhat reluctantly, that they continued this tradition, using the word “unfortunately” to convey that it was an inherited practice. She explained that larger groups of guests were hosted in the *salon*, while the living room was reserved for fewer, closer individuals, often referred to as “daily contacts,” mostly neighbours. The interviewee remarked that infrequent guests did not

evoke the same sense of intimacy, and as a result, following a local custom from Kayseri, she felt the need to host them in a “better part” of her house (I_6).

Similarly, other interviewees mentioned that their daily lives unfold in the living room, where they spend time with neighbours or close friends due to the more intimate atmosphere. In contrast, the *salon* is used for larger gatherings when people exceed the living room’s capacity (I_4, I_7, I_18). In older neighbourhoods, the strong bond between neighbours, spending time together regularly and viewing each other as extended family appears to persist. Although neighbours no longer keep their doors open as in the past, they still share parts of their lives, entering and exiting each other’s more private spaces.

Some interviewees mentioned that they don’t consciously distinguish between spaces, but their daily practices reveal otherwise. While stating that guests are free to move between the living room and the *salon*, one interviewee mentioned feeling the need to host infrequent guests in the “best” part of the house, a habit passed down from her family. Although it may seem that she doesn’t distinguish much between spaces, she continues this practice. When asked if hosting in the “most beautiful part” of the house is about ostentation, she clarified that it’s not about display but the value placed on the guest. When questioned whether hosting frequent visitors and those she is close to in the living room might suggest they are less valued, she responded that it’s not about worthlessness but intimacy (I_17).

The interviewees’ statements reveal a noticeable confusion regarding the distinction between the *salon* and the living room. This distinction has its roots in the division between the *harem* and the *selamlık* (*sofa*) in traditional houses. However, the concept of *mahram*, which originally defined this separation, no longer fully applies in modern housing. The functional divisions and planning approaches of contemporary housing have altered the role of these spaces. In traditional houses, the harem was a *mahram* space, used for activities like sleeping, bathing, and eating, and was closed off from the men’s world.

In contrast, modern houses allocate separate spaces for these activities, leaving both the *salon* and living room as spaces primarily for socialising. Since both are now intended for social interaction, confusion arises over which space should host which guests. To navigate this, *yilli* have developed their classification system: the living room is seen as a more intimate space for a few people, while the *salon* is viewed as a more formal space for hosting larger groups. The living room is used more for daily activities, while the *salon* is reserved for special occasions.

The confusion expressed by the interviewees is rooted in the concept of *habitus*. The traditional distinction between living spaces and guest hosting areas, influenced by the idea of *mahram*, does not fully translate into modern living, creating this confusion. In today's modern housing and the life of the modernising individual, preserving the *salon* as a separate space is an improvisation born from the gap created by *habitus* (Figure 5.16).

The *yilli* have legitimised the use of the *salon* in their minds, creating a space within the house that remains separate from daily life and is rarely used. This space is always kept clean, closed off, and ready for guests. Unless there is an exceptional circumstance (such as an increase in the number of children, requiring separate rooms⁶⁶), the distinction between the *salon* and the living room is maintained as an unwritten rule. One interviewee criticised a non-*yilli* friend's decision to use the *salon* for everyday activities rather than keeping it reserved for guests. She stated that she could never do such a thing, explaining that this change made her friend's house begin to resemble a "student house" (I_10).

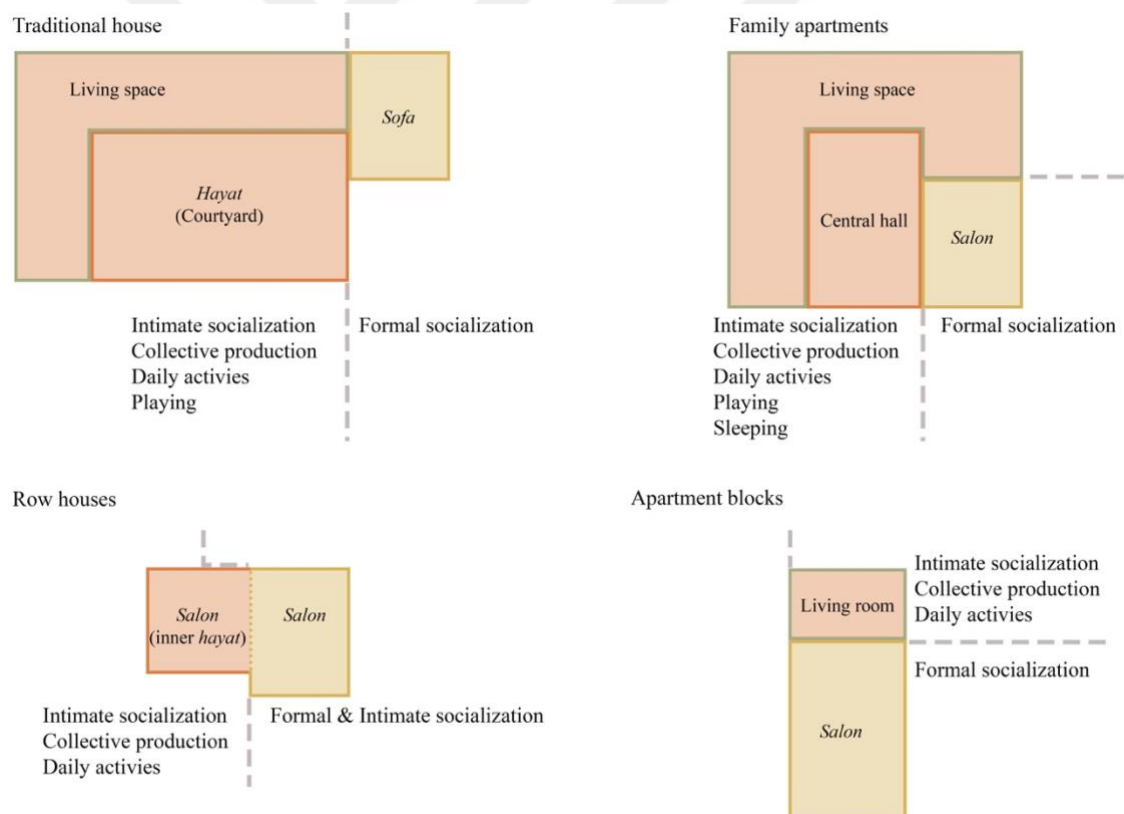


Figure 5.16 Activities in the house

⁶⁶ In the past, the number of children in a household was not considered a significant factor. However, today, parents need to provide separate spaces for their children due to the recognition of children as individuals and increased living comfort.

The *sofa* was the most valuable part of the traditional house; today, the *salon* holds that distinction. As a result, the most prized furniture is placed in the *salon*, and it becomes the space where guests are hosted. This significance has transformed the *salon* into a place for display, where expensive and ostentatious furniture and accessories reflect the homeowner's wealth. The space is carefully arranged to showcase these items in the best possible way, avoiding large empty areas. It has also become one of the areas where status competition is most frequently experienced (Ayata, 1988). Ayata highlights the symbolic meaning of the *salon*, noting that it has evolved from the *sofa*, which once separated *mahram* spaces within the house, into a very different context. The *salon* still retains its function as a space for hosting guests. Still, the perception of it as an ostentatious space, inherited from the *sofa*, continues today, often in an exaggerated form. Consequently, the largest room in the house is furnished with the most beautiful and expensive furniture, positioning the *salon* almost like the showcase of the house. As Ayata points out, this space becomes a stage for **status** competition, where women showcase their skills to others and receive praise (Figure 5.17).



Figure 5.17 The decoration of the *salon* considering **status**

During dowry preparations, furniture referred to as “lifelong” is purchased for the *salon*, with items from Ankara Siteler being the preferred choice. This tradition, which dates to a period when furniture production was not widespread in the city and access to various brands and designs was limited, continues to be practised today. It is where the status competition Ayata refers to comes into play. *Yilli* families, due to their means, choose unique furniture from Ankara that is not found in every house and is designed with distinctive details. This furniture is proudly displayed in the *salon*, the showcase of their house. Items purchased for the dowry are considered long-term investments—“once in a lifetime”—so no expense is spared. These pieces are not changed, even as time passes.

The user, living in a modern house, decorates the interior in a way that contrasts with modernity, despite being in a contemporary environment. The ostentatious furniture chosen for the *salon* often evokes palace culture. As mentioned earlier, *yilli*, viewing themselves as a superior group, tend to furnish their houses with pieces “worthy of palaces.” One example is a *sofa* in one of the interviewees’ houses. Purchased from Ankara Siteler for the dowry, the *sofa* was specially made to seat 10 people. This large piece of furniture reflects the *yilli*’s preference for hosting large gatherings and creating ample seating space for guests, aligning with their tradition of furnishing spacious *salons* with grand furniture.

The large size of the *sofa* in traditional Kayseri houses, designed primarily for hosting guests, likely stems from ceremonial traditions. Before the rise of wedding halls in the 1980s, houses were the primary venues for significant events such as weddings and funerals. *Yilli* have long hosted wedding guests and those attending engagement ceremonies, condolence visits, and the traditional Thursday mourning gatherings following funerals—all within their houses. The *sofa* was likely designed to be spacious to accommodate these often-crowded gatherings. While weddings in warmer weather could occur in outdoor or larger household areas, the *sofa* served as a suitable indoor venue, especially during colder seasons. Today, the influence of these traditions continues in the form of large living rooms, still arranged to host significant gatherings and social events.

Yilli, who welcome guests into their houses and private spaces, have arranged the physical environment accordingly. To separate guests from the *mahram* areas of the house, they designed the *sofa*—a space distinctly set apart by its size, decoration, and separate entrance door. This spatial arrangement may have been intended to emphasise the distinction between *mahram* and *namahram* areas, physically reinforcing their

separation from the rest of the house. This logic continues in modern houses, where the *salon* remains the largest room. Its wide, double-winged, often glass door signals to guests which room is designated for them, making the separation clear at first glance. In this sense, *habitus* has shaped the adaptation of traditional spatial codes into contemporary housing. The living room has become the most prominent and spacious area and a display zone, furnished with the most luxurious items to reflect social value and status.

The defining feature of the *salon* goes beyond its furniture. In addition to placing the most expensive and ostentatious pieces, homeowners carefully coordinate luxurious carpets, silverware, and guest-serving items to match the overall aesthetic. The Vakko brand, for example, holds symbolic importance—not only in *yilli* women's clothing, where the Vakko scarf is a key accessory, but also in the presentation of the house. During one interview, I was served coffee on a gold-gilded tray, accompanied by a Vakko-branded fabric napkin and chocolates—an elaborate presentation that may seem surprising to outsiders. Yet, for *yilli*, such details reflect a broader cultural logic. Just as Vakko signifies prestige in fashion, its presence in the *salon* is a marker of status, taste, and identity (Figure 5.18).



Figure 5.18 Presentation style of *yilli*

The *salon*, almost like a showcase, is a space that must always remain clean and presentable. Even when not used, it is regularly cleaned, its door closed, and it is often perceived—especially by children—as a kind of “temple” (I_23). This formality can create tension within the household. The housewife may restrict access to the *salon*, preventing small children, adult children, spouses, or elderly family members from entering. Using the furniture, staining the upholstery, or accidentally breaking decorative items can spark disputes between the housewife and family members who disregard these unspoken boundaries (Ayata, 1988). One interviewee explained this distinction by highlighting the difference between the *salon* and the living room: the living room, used for daily life, can be messy (I_11), while the *salon* remains untouched, clean and orderly precisely because it is off-limits. Before planned visits, it is cleaned again, reinforcing its role as a formal, guest-oriented space. One interviewee recalled that cleanliness was a top priority in their house, especially in the rarely used *salon*. The room was always cleaned first and immaculate, with special care for the decorative cushions. The children, particularly young girls, were responsible for ensuring the cushions remained undisturbed and the room stayed in perfect condition (Figure 5.19).

The main reason for keeping the *salon* closed was cleanliness, but it may also reflect the stove-heated houses of the past. In many family apartments, heating was provided by stoves, with a central stove in the house that also heated the bedrooms by opening their doors to it. Interviews have revealed that, during this time, *salons* were typically used only in the summer months. The *salon* was closed when no guests were present to prevent heat loss. This habit of keeping the *salon* closed, likely born out of necessity, gradually became ingrained. Over time, the notion of a room that remains clean because it is kept closed took hold.

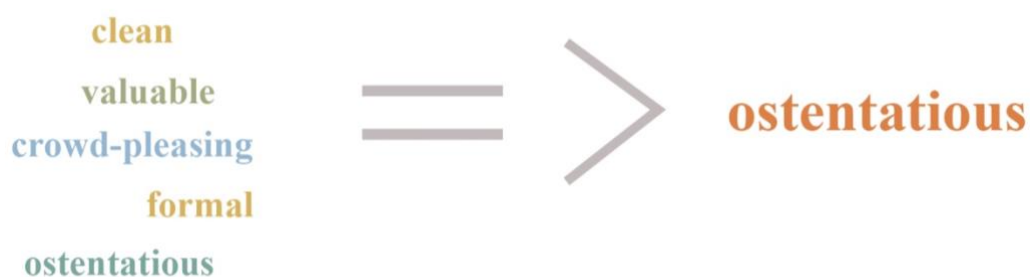
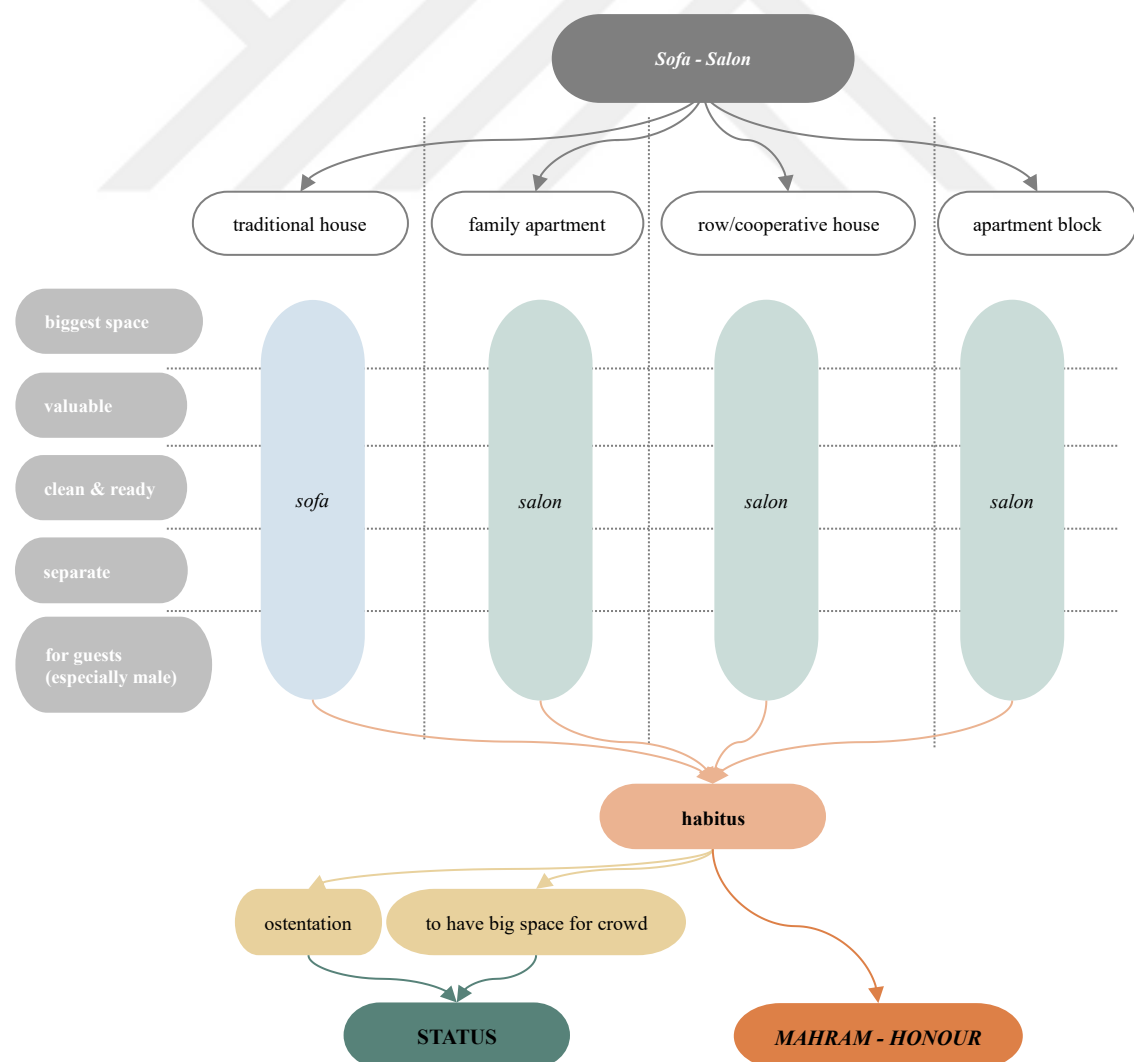


Figure 5.19 Keywords describing the *salon* and their underlying meaning

To summarise, the transition from the *sofa* to the *salon* reflects a shift in the function of domestic spaces. In traditional houses, the *sofa* was the most important room, but it gradually gave way to the *salon*, which became the primary space for hosting guests. Daily life, however, continues in the living room, a more intimate space. This distinction parallels the traditional *harem-selamlık* concept, where the living room was for closer, personal relationships, and the *salon* was used as a more formal setting.

The arrangement of the *salon* as a separate space continues today as a reflection of the traditional concept of *mahram*. Its separation from other areas of the house helps to maintain internal privacy. However, the *salon's* role goes beyond the idea of *mahram*; it has also become a space for **status** and **ostentation**, reflecting the homeowner's economic and social position. Large, stylish, and luxurious *salons*, furnished with high-end furniture, symbolise financial strength and aesthetic taste. In this way, the symbolic value of the *salon* often outweighs its functional use (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 The changes in *sofa* to *salon* related to *Habitus*



Zerzembi (Pantry)

One of the spaces that changed during the transition from traditional houses to family apartments is the *zerzembi* (pantry). In traditional houses, the *zerzembi* was in the basement and primarily used for storing perishable food due to the cold. However, as house layouts evolved and apartments replaced traditional structures, the *zerzembi* gradually disappeared. The main factor in this change was the development of technology, particularly the introduction of refrigerators. **With refrigerators now fulfilling the need for cold storage, spaces like the *zerzembi* were no longer necessary.**

The change in the house's layout, with the loss of vertical layers and the disappearance of the *zerzembi*, reflects a shift in the *habitus* of the household, addressing the pantry's practical needs. The refrigerator now fulfils the need for cold food storage, while a different solution was devised for other items. In family apartments, an area was created above the bathroom and kitchen to store dry foods, reducing the height of the space. These adaptations demonstrate how household practices evolve in response to shifting cultural values and material conditions, showing a transformation in the *habitus* of the house.

However, after the transition to the houses on Sivas Street, pantry space has wholly disappeared. These houses are much closer to modern housing morphology and are less open to user interventions. Without features like the en-suite bathroom or balcony enclosures, residents have had to make do with the interior space of the house.

The transformation of the *zerzembi* in traditional houses into overhead pantries in family apartments, and its eventual disappearance in apartment blocks, highlights the growing need for storage in houses. Although some modern houses have incorporated solutions like pantries, this old habit has been abandoned in many houses. As a result, there is still a continued need for storage space, especially among *yilli* who historically prepared for winter. Despite the significant storage needs in modern houses, there are few practical solutions in contemporary housing. In this context, *habitus* plays a role by prompting alternative spatial solutions to meet these needs (Figure 5.20).

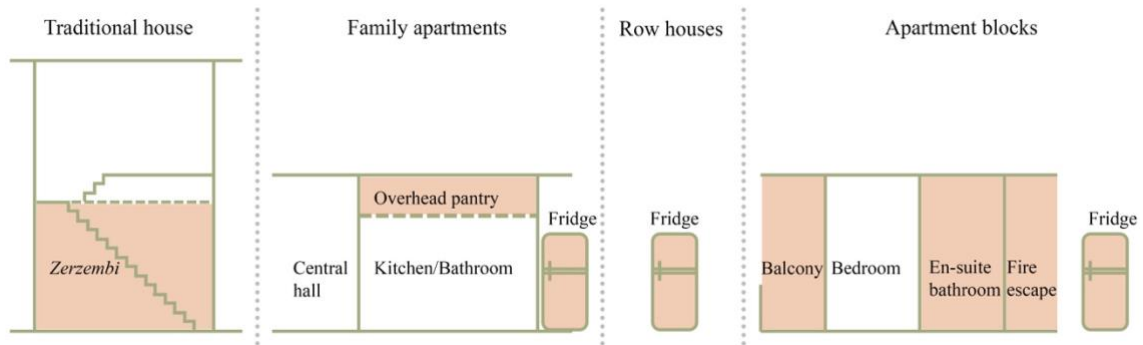


Figure 5.20 Transformation of *zerzemi*

One solution for the pantry is the use of balconies as storage spaces. In houses with at least two balconies, a smaller one, often located at the back of the house (such as in the master or another bedroom), is enclosed to meet storage needs (Figure 5.21). Before retractable glass systems became widespread in large cities and rural areas of Anatolia in recent years, balconies were commonly enclosed with PVC or aluminium windows. It was done to create extra space and store items like durable foods (potatoes, onions) in drawer-based plastic or wooden cabinets mounted on the balcony (Kurt, 2021). This practice is also common in the houses of *yilli*. Though these balconies remain cold even when enclosed, they serve as cold storage areas. Being relatively detached from the main living space and not visible from within the house, these balconies often create significant visual pollution on the building's facade.



Figure 5.21 Balconies as storage spaces

Another space repurposed for the pantry is the master bathroom. *Yilli*, reluctant to throw away old items, often send them to their vineyard houses, creating a constant need for extra storage. As a result, any non-functional space is quickly transformed into a storage area. Just as balconies, seen as inefficient or underused, are converted into storage, en-suite bathrooms are also repurposed when plumbing issues make them unusable. For example, my mother used the en-suite bathroom as a storage area for excess items. One interviewee (I_7) also mentioned using their bathroom like a pantry, emphasising that it had become a habit. In the houses I visited, I observed custom cabinets in en-suite bathrooms used to store items such as ironing boards and laundry baskets.

The modern apartment resident, carrying subconscious habits from the past, often equates the private areas of their house with the *harem*, while associating the shared spaces of the apartment with the *hayat*. Just as the *hayat* was outside the enclosed part of the house, yet still belonged to it, a similar attitude is now extended to apartment common areas. Residents frequently repurpose spaces like fire escape stairs or hallways as pantries. Fire escape stairs have become informal storage areas in today's cities due to their location outside the heated living space, their separation from the visual field of the house, and the perception that they pose no immediate fire hazard (!). These areas are mainly used in winter to store items such as potatoes, onions, or belongings intended for the garden, as well as old items residents cannot part with (Figure 5.22). Like unused en-suite bathrooms, these spaces are quickly transformed into storage to meet user needs. Since fire stairs are accessed through a separate door and are not part of daily circulation, they are not perceived as disruptive or cluttered, especially under the assumption that “there probably won’t be a fire.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Although the fire at Bolu Kartalkaya Ski Resort on January 21, 2025, raised awareness about the importance of fire escape stairs, my experience suggests that such realisations in our society are typically short-lived. Unless another disaster occurs to draw public attention, fire escape stairs are likely to be converted back into storage areas before long.

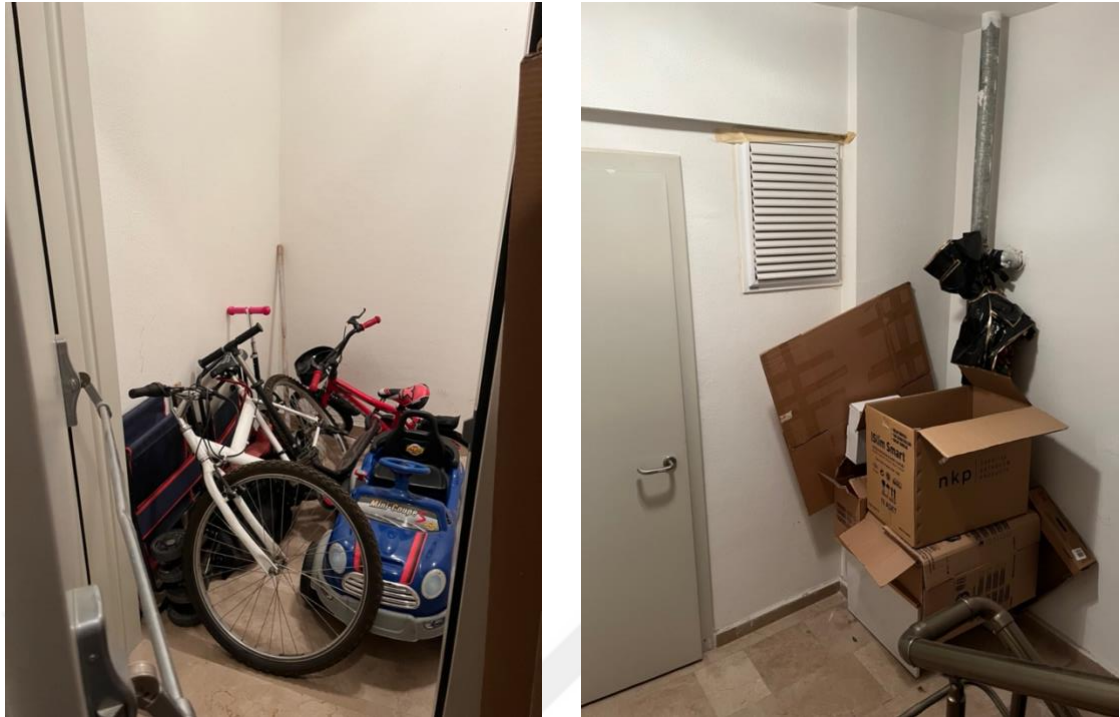
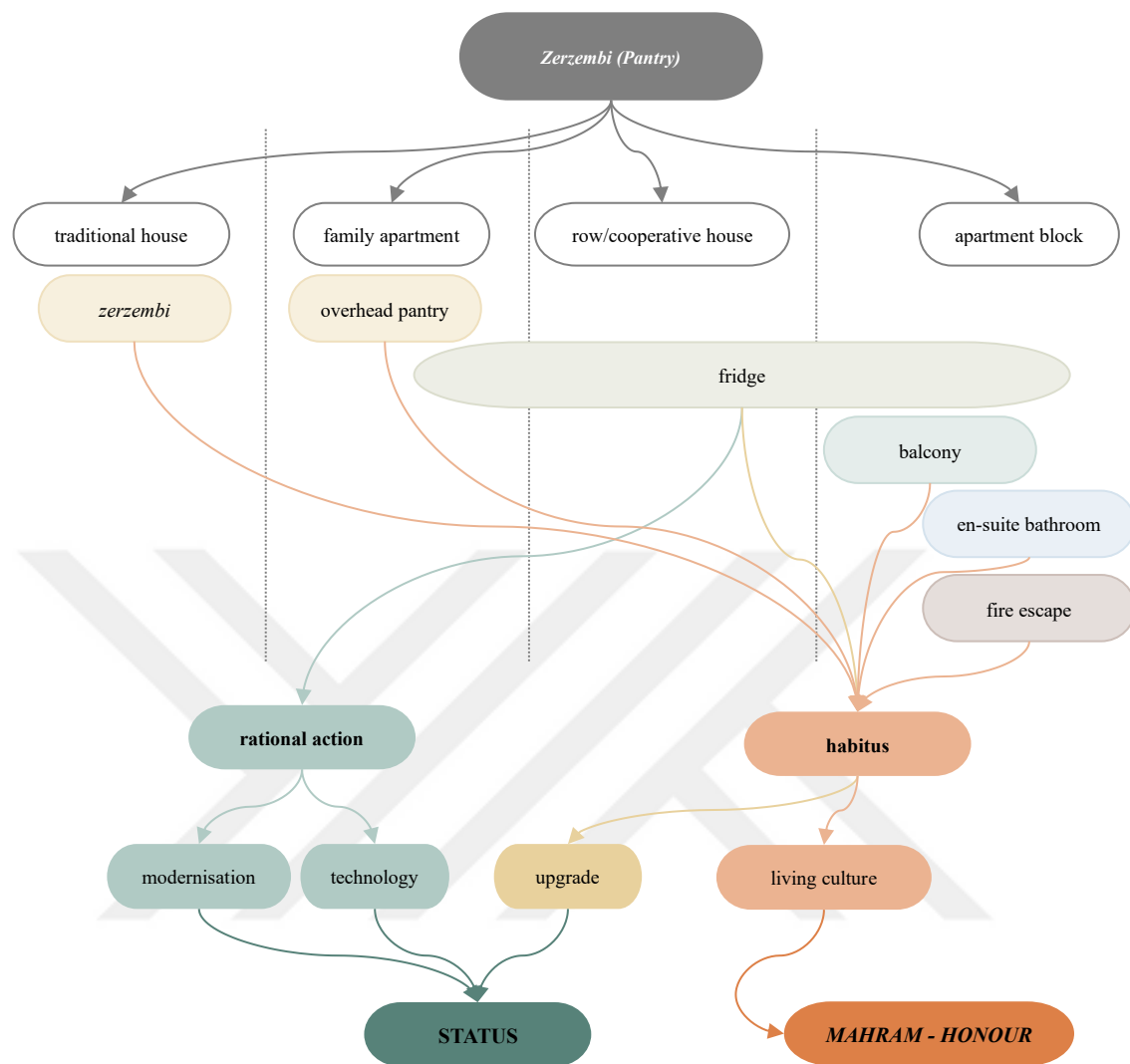


Figure 5.22 Use of fire escape – as pantry or storage space

In summary, the *zerzembi* (pantry) located in the basement of traditional houses lost its function with **modernisation**, the transition to apartment living, and the widespread use of refrigerators. However, as the need for storage persisted, new solutions emerged. In family apartments, overhead pantries were created above the kitchen. In later modern apartments, these spaces disappeared entirely, prompting users to develop alternative methods. One standard solution is the conversion of balconies—especially those at the back of the house—into storage areas, often enclosed and used like a pantry. Similarly, when the master bathroom becomes non-functional, it is usually repurposed for storage, typically housing excess or seasonal items. Additionally, fire escape stairs in apartment buildings are frequently used as storage. As these spaces are cold, out of sight, and perceived as underutilised, residents tend to store food or unused belongings there. This pattern illustrates how storage habits rooted in the past continue to shape new spatial practices, influenced by *habitus* and **living culture** (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 The changes in *zerzembi* related to *Habitus*



Gusülhane – Hammam to Bathroom

The bathroom is one of the spaces that emerged with the transition from traditional houses to family apartments. In earlier houses, the lack of plumbing meant that people had to carry water manually, so bathrooms did not exist. However, with the advancement of technology and the introduction of plumbing, bathrooms became a standard feature in houses.

During the time people lived in traditional houses, as mentioned by interviewees, there was a cultural practice of going to the hammam once a week for bathing. Additionally, traditional houses had a *gusülhane*, a space for cleansing when needed. The *gusülhane*, located within the *yüklük* (a built-in cupboard), could hold a small amount of water and was particularly useful when a trip to the public bath was not possible, especially when water had to be carried manually. However, with the introduction of

plumbing and the emergence of bathrooms in houses, the *gusülhane* gradually disappeared.

With modernisation and technological advancements, water plumbing became accessible in houses, and devices such as electric water heaters and stove-top boilers made it possible to have hot water at home. As a result, **hammam**—once a weekly tradition—was gradually replaced by the **bathroom**. This new space, offering the convenience of washing at home, became a more practical alternative for families (Figure 5.23).

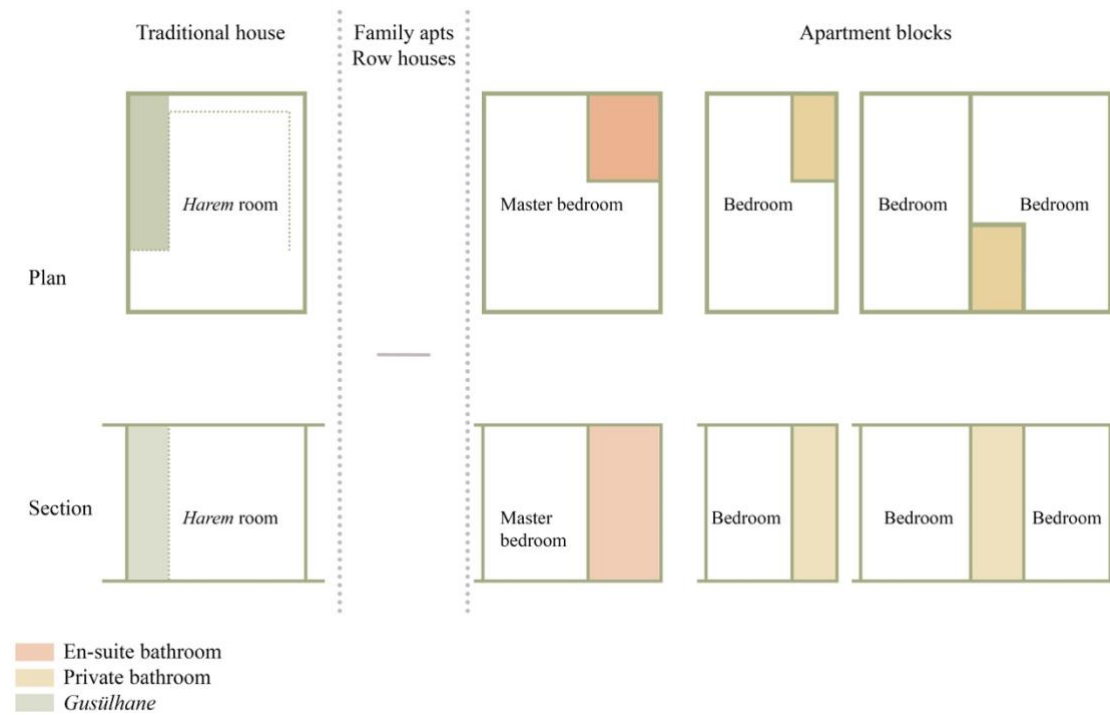


Figure 5.23 Transformation of *gusülhane*

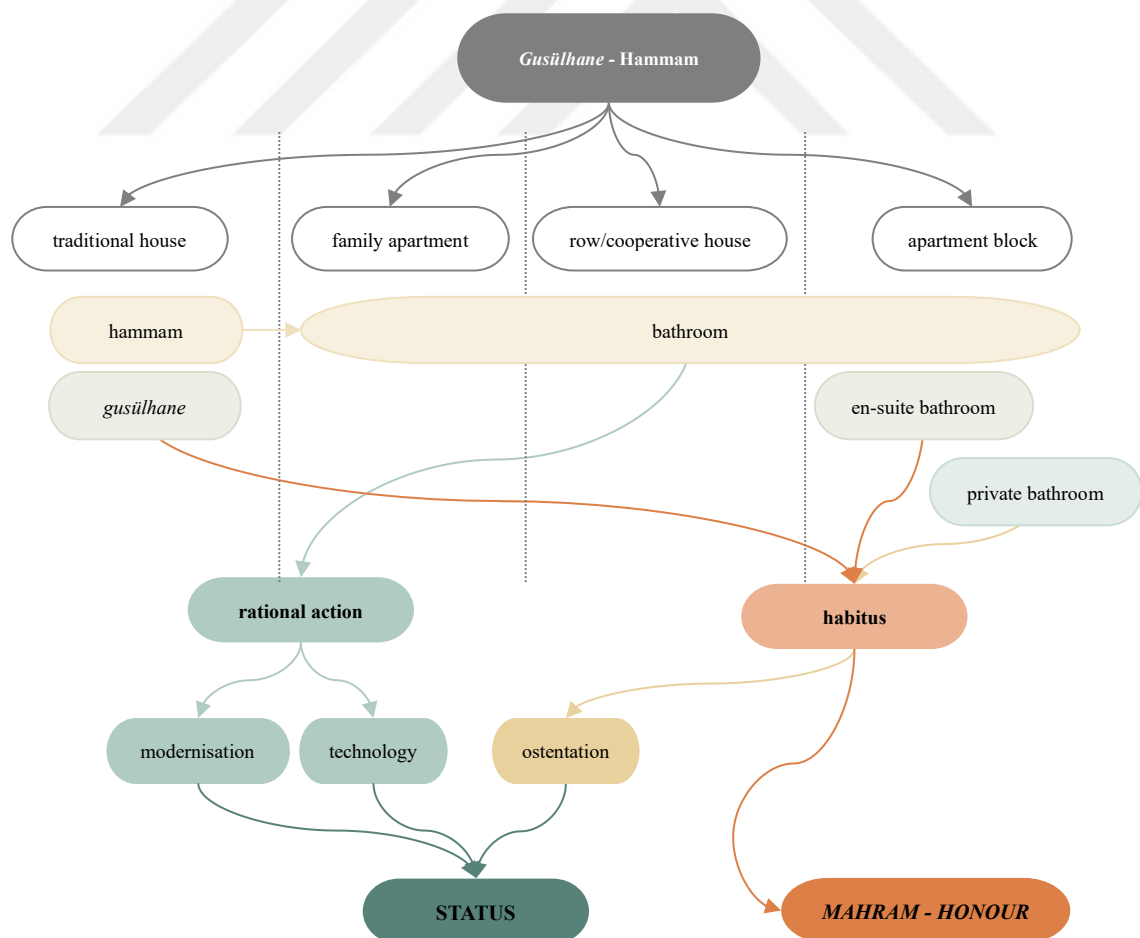
This bathroom-equipped housing morphology continued in family apartments and houses along Sivas Street. However, a new development appeared in apartment blocks: the en-suite bathroom. While reflecting the design trends of the period, it also addresses a specific need in extended family living. As mentioned, *yilli* often reside in extended family structures, where the eldest married son lives with his parents (and unmarried siblings). In this context, the en-suite bathroom within the bedroom provides a *mahram* space for the married couple's hygiene, like the traditional *gusülhane* (built-in bathing area). The master bedroom, with its private bathroom and balcony, creates an intimate space distinct from the rest of the house, further reinforcing this arrangement.

In today's context, where the concept of luxury housing has significantly evolved, private bathrooms are now included not only in the master bedroom but also in other

rooms. While this trend is more common in detached, upscale houses with gardens, it is increasingly adopted in certain apartment buildings. In these cases, the house typically features one shared bathroom and additional bathrooms corresponding to the number of bedrooms. This shift towards individualisation through interior spatial segmentation is further reinforced by these “luxury” designs, which reduce shared use and interactions within the house, leading to fewer encounters and relationships among household members.

In short, due to technological limitations, the *gusülhane* provided a **mahram** cleansing space for *yilli* in a culture where public baths were common. In modern houses, it has been reinterpreted as the en-suite bathroom. With technological advancements, the bathroom has gradually replaced the tradition of going to the hammam. Today, the hammam primarily survives as part of wedding culture. The growing practice of providing a private bathroom for each room reflects a spatial transformation highlighting the evolving notions of **luxury**, **ostentation**, and **status** among *yilli* (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10 The changes in *gusülhane* related to *Habitus*



Interior Space - Furniture

The transition from traditional houses to contemporary residences has brought changes in both spatial design and interior arrangements. Technological advancements, trends, and modernisation have influenced furniture and interior design choices. In an anthropological study based on examples from Konya, Kurt (2021) explores how Turkish houses are organised, emphasising the link between architectural form, daily life practices, and cultural memory. He argues that spaces reflect their inhabitants and that every design choice carries meaning, yet these meanings are not always easily interpreted. Some preferences, such as bathrooms resembling those in shopping malls or the use of beige and cream tones mirroring the formality of public spaces, appear to reflect the effects of globalisation more than cultural tradition, raising questions about their ties to cultural heritage.

This study similarly adopts the perspective that every spatial practice and preference carries meaning. In this context, each element is examined individually, focusing on uncovering the underlying meanings behind these choices and revealing the influence of *habitus*.

In traditional houses, the *sedir* was perhaps the only actual piece of furniture. This built-in seating lined the walls and featured a backrest made from carpet cushions. It remained used in some houses after the transition to family apartments but was gradually replaced by the more practical *somya* (simple bed frame). Unlike the fixed *sedir*, the *somya* served both as seating and a sleeping surface, offering flexibility and portability. As in traditional houses, bedding materials stored in the *yüklük* were brought out at night to convert the *somya* from a seating unit into a bed. Unlike modern houses with distinct functional spaces, early family apartments still had multipurpose rooms, where areas like the main living space served as sitting and sleeping areas.

Another key piece of furniture introduced in the later period of family apartments was the sofa bed (*çek-yat*). Emerging as a transitional item, some remember the sofa bed as part of their experience in family apartments. In contrast, others associate it with the new phase of modernisation, particularly in the Sivas Street residences, which featured central heating, hot water, and elevators. As a **modern** piece of furniture designed for both sitting and sleeping, the sofa bed quickly began to replace the *somya*—and, by extension, the *sedir*—as a multifunctional alternative.⁶⁸ The central hall in family

⁶⁸ In this context, it is notable that the sofa bed (*çek-yat*) spread from Kayseri. While patents for this technology existed elsewhere earlier, its widespread use in Turkey can be traced back to entrepreneurial

apartments (and, in some houses, the living room), which transformed from a daytime living area into a sleeping space at night, likely contributed to the sofa bed's popularity. This piece of furniture provided a practical solution for adapting the space, supporting the multifunctional use of the house.

According to the interviewees, most houses had similar furniture during the transition from family apartments to the 1970s and 80s, though variations existed based on income. "In lower-income groups, there was a culture of *somya*, but as income levels increased, the style and quality of furniture improved" (I_6). The rise of family apartments, symbolising **modernisation**, brought new furniture into houses (Figure 5.24). Just as refrigerators replaced other appliances, items like sofas, which were previously absent, became more common, enhancing the overall style and quality of furniture. However, instead of the sofa sets we know today, individual pieces were used during this period as a reflection of modernisation.



Figure 5.24 Combined use of a *somya* and an armchair, with double-winged doors in the background (Source: Photo archive of I_5)

The evolution of seating, from *sedir* and *somya* to sofa bed, eventually led to the rise of sofa sets in the 1970s. The sofa bed replaced both the *sedir* and *somya* due to its multifunctionality. In contrast, *sofas* and *couches* don't offer storage or the ability to convert into beds, making them less practical for *yilli* accustomed to multifunctional

efforts in Kayseri. The city's keen observation of local living culture and the transformation of the *sedir* and *somya* might have played a key role in the sofa bed becoming a common piece of furniture. (For more information see, Çelikoğlu, 2011)

spaces. Despite this, people have adopted these new items, driven by the desire for modernity and the means to distinguish themselves from villagers, even though they are not part of their cultural heritage.

Some *yilli* take it a step further by purchasing custom-made furniture from Ankara Siteler and spending significant amounts on sofa sets not found in other houses in Kayseri. These high-end pieces are typically chosen for the *salon* and are often part of the dowry. Since they are considered lifelong investments, they are selected for their quality and craftsmanship, with the most extravagant and intricately carved pieces preferred. As one interviewee noted, Kayserians, being merchants, value money and tend to be frugal. They prioritise supporting their children financially but avoid wasting money. Therefore, they prefer a one-time investment in durable pieces that won't require further spending when purchasing salon furniture.

As mentioned by interviewee I_6, when families moved to Sivas Street, individual furniture items began to be replaced by sets, commonly referred to as “carved furniture” (Figure 5.25). Usually found in most houses, these sets consist of intricately crafted sofa sets with carved wooden edges. Typically purchased as part of the dowry for the *salon*, these pieces are considered the most valuable in the house and are meant to last a lifetime, with no expense spared on them. Another interviewee pointed out that the carved *salon* furniture is generally bought from Ankara as part of the dowry and remarked, “It seems normal to us, every *yilli*'s house has that carved *salon* furniture,” emphasising that it became an unwritten cultural norm (I_4).



Figure 5.25 Example of a carved furniture (Source: Photo archive of I_5)

With the city's modernisation, the *yilli*, who have encountered technological innovations and begun living in modern urban spaces, display contradictory behaviour in their furniture choices. Despite claiming to embrace modernity, they prefer carved, crafted, and ornate furniture over minimalist, cubic, or modern designs. This preference for intricate, carved furniture seems influenced by what has previously been described as a wannabe sultan and palace mentality. However, the palace in question is not the simple, minimalist Topkapı Palace, which reflects the belief in the transience of worldly life, but rather the Dolmabahçe Palace. Built under Western influence, Dolmabahçe embodies Baroque grandeur, a style that, for the Ottoman Empire, symbolised modernisation rather than historical context. Similarly, gilded, ornate Western-style furniture in *yilli* houses is seen as a representation of modernity, despite lacking cultural relevance.

As mentioned earlier, this situation appears to be linked to the “master-slave dialectic”⁶⁹ and the tendency to imitate the master, in this case, the sultan. Some interviewees even noted that some people opted for Scandinavian-style furniture during the family apartment period. However, with the increasing popularity of ornate furniture, simplicity was abandoned in favour of a decorative style focused on showiness. In the modern city, while modern buildings are present, the preference for classic furniture reveals that the perception of modernity is deeply intertwined with **status**. This trend is not limited to furniture; it is also reflected in using gold-leaf details in decoration.

People often embrace cutting-edge products and stay updated with the latest trends. Yet, their house decor reflects an emulation of the Baroque aesthetics, akin to the Dolmabahçe Palace. They drive cars like the Tesla or Mini Cooper and opt for the latest iPhone, but in their private spaces, they continue to indulge in a nostalgic reverence for the past. It contradicts pursuing modernisation in public spaces and the longing for historical opulence in private spaces. This tension exemplifies a fundamental contradiction in contemporary views on aesthetics and status.

The showcase became a central element in the modernisation process with the transition to family apartments. Once absent in *yilli* houses, showcases provided a new way to display items, replacing the old habit of storing everything in *yüklük* (built-in cupboard). With its polished, veneer-coated surfaces and intricate design, the sofa shifted from being the focal point to complementing the modernised *salon* layout. The

⁶⁹ One of the best examples of the master-slave dialectic can be found in the film *Banker Bilo* (1980). At the end of the film, Bilo, who has seized all Maho's possessions, begins dressing like him, as he had always admired him, and even takes over his wife.

introduction of the showcase also shifted focus, highlighting the items within the space—furniture, accessories, and decor—rather than the space itself. This transformation modernised the guest-receiving area, once influenced by traditional elements, now filled with new *sofas*, vitrines, carpets, silverware, and other contemporary touches. This shift represents **modernisation** in both space and lifestyle (!).

With the move to Sivas Street, the showcase evolved from smaller, minimal designs to larger, more decorative ones. One interviewee (I_2) described how they replaced their old furniture with custom-made items, such as a Formica dresser, wardrobe, and showcase in the living room. These new pieces, including a custom bookshelf and dining table, replaced traditional, built-in storage and smaller furnishings, reflecting the family's shift toward a more modern and spacious living environment.

The new type of modern housing on Sivas Street and the lifestyle it introduced created a shift in perception for *yilli*. As they moved from the family apartments, where some traditional furniture had already been discarded, to this new environment, certain habits and furniture were left behind, and adjustments were made to align with the modern lifestyle. In the new family apartments, smaller vitrine sets were replaced with larger, more luxurious vitrine sets, and the dining table, which reflected a Western lifestyle and facilitated family gatherings, began to hold a central place in the house. One interviewee highlighted the importance of luxury to the *yilli* by saying, “We also had a small vitrine here, that was a luxury for us” (I_11). In both urban spaces and the house, *yilli* paid close attention to luxury, especially when it came to furniture.

The showcase (vitrine), a furniture piece adopted from the West, serves as a display for items, much like its Western counterpart. However, in addition to the displayed products, family photos are often included as part of the exhibition. Furthermore, as a decorative element, the showcase itself is embellished with needle lace and crochet covers—items that are part of the dowry—placed on its shelves. This Western furniture has been reinterpreted with unique touches reflecting local culture. (Figure 5.26, Figure 5.27).



Figure 5.26 Decoration of the showcase 1



Figure 5.27 Decoration of the showcase 2: Sherbet sets (in the middle) that were once used to serve liqueur are now used to offer *zamzam* water

In contemporary *yilli* houses, the general layout typically includes the “embossed, carved Ankara *salon* furniture” bought as part of the dowry (the bride’s family provides the *salon* furniture set). Living rooms often feature sofa beds, which are used due to the shortage of sleeping spaces, particularly when grandparents live with the family (I_10).

This general arrangement goes beyond the *salon* furniture and sofa beds in the living rooms. The seating layout in most houses follows a similar pattern, with only minor variations. Upon entering the *salon*, the dining table and console are placed to keep the window unobstructed. Windows are always adorned with decorative curtains. While some houses may place a *sofa* in front of the window, armchairs are typically positioned to avoid blocking the view. These armchairs are often angled, facing toward the other furniture, especially the *sofas* (Figure 5.28, Figure 5.29, Figure 5.30, Figure 5.31, Figure 5.32).

Large *salons* are typically furnished with two different sets of furniture, often reupholstered to match, or with armchairs from separate collections to complete the seating arrangement. The ornate furniture is paired with decorative curtains, while glamorous chandeliers enhance the space. Handwoven carpets, among the most valuable items in the dowry, are also an essential element of the *salon* decor.

In the most private area of the house, the bedroom, there is a similar emphasis on grandeur and showiness. Just like the ornate furniture in the living room, the bedroom follows the same approach, maintaining the overall style and decor of the house.



Figure 5.28 Living rooms with sofa beds



Figure 5.29 Decoration of *salons* 1



Figure 5.30 Decoration of *salons* 2



Figure 5.31 Chandelier as component of decoration & Carved bedroom furniture



Figure 5.32 Bedroom furniture with golden details

Among the interviewees, some individuals are *yilli* on the paternal side or come from civil servant families and are also civil servants. The goal is understanding whether those with different family structures embody and practice *yilli* culture and customs. Being *yilli* only on the paternal side does not create a distinction in this context. People from *yilli* cultural backgrounds tend to continue similar habits, practice traditions, and follow comparable house preferences. The distinction becomes clearer, however, when it comes to education, civil service, and work.

Women from civil servant families or those working as civil servants, who are more educated and professionally engaged, tend to prefer simpler, more modern furniture. This distinction is especially notable among middle-aged individuals. While children of merchant families who are educated and professionally active may show some differences, they are still influenced by their upbringing. Even if they prefer more modern furniture, it often remains ornate, gilded, or decorated with gold leaf.

In contrast, individuals from civil servant families, who are more distanced from *yilli* culture, tend to adapt more to modern urban life. They organise their daily lives accordingly, often performing traditions incompletely, avoiding gatherings, and having

different preferences in house décor than other *yilli* individuals (Figure 5.33, Figure 5.34, Figure 5.35, Figure 5.36).



Figure 5.33 Palace-inspired carved *salon* furniture 1



Figure 5.34 Palace-inspired carved *salon* furniture 2



Figure 5.35 *Salon* furniture with golden details



Figure 5.36 *Salon* with modern furniture (house of an educated woman who worked as a civil servant)

Even though the style of furniture and decoration varies according to lifestyle (depending on whether one comes from a merchant family or a civil servant family), the arrangement of the furniture remains the same. Since a single furniture set does not fill the large *salons*, people tend to combine it with components from another furniture set. These additional items are generally placed close to the door. The *salon* is arranged around the main furniture set, with these armchairs positioned near the door, giving the impression that they could be moved out at any moment if needed (Figure 5.30). Another important point is that armchairs are always placed at an angle, regardless of the *salon* or living room furniture arrangement. They are oriented toward the couches to facilitate eye contact between people. Although living rooms are always arranged around the TV, this same seating arrangement is maintained (Figure 5.28): two armchairs angled in front of the windows, with two couches on the sides facing the TV (Figure 5.37, Figure 5.38).

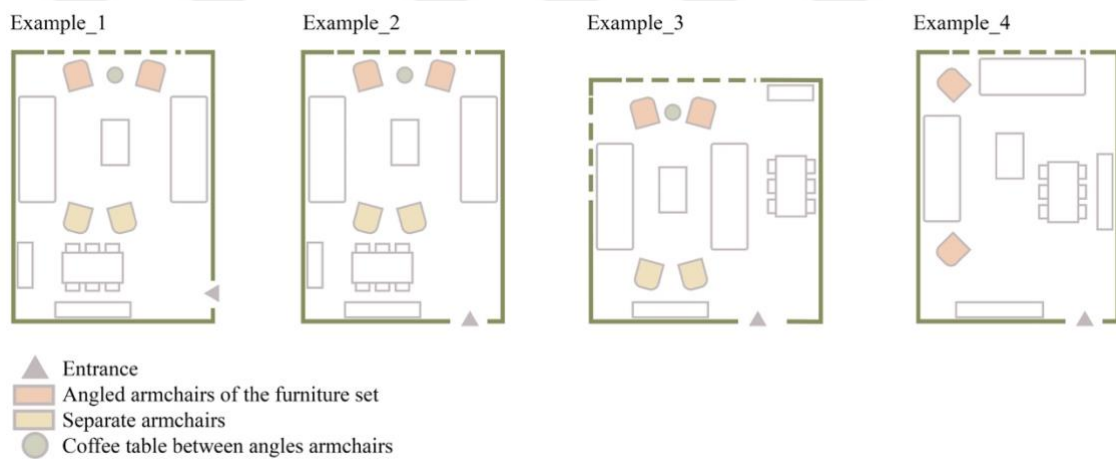


Figure 5.37 Examples of furniture arrangements in the *salon*

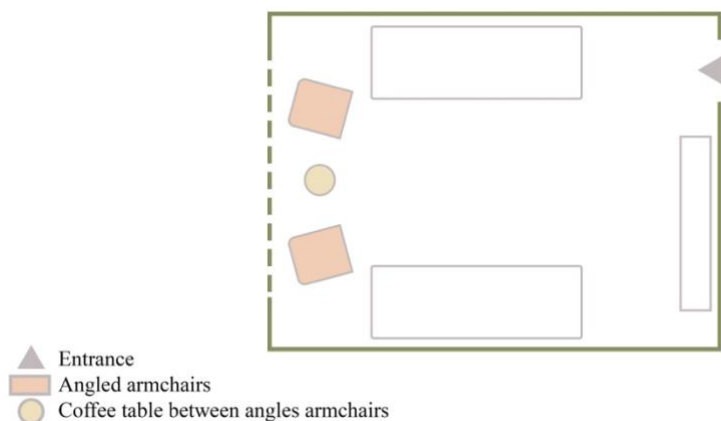


Figure 5.38 Furniture arrangement in the living room

Another significant change in furniture occurred with the transition from the floor table (*yer sofrası*) to the dining table. In traditional houses, the floor table served a dual purpose: eating and preparing food (such as making *mantı*). It was a flexible piece of furniture, brought out when needed and stored away after use. However, with modernisation, the dining table, a Western-style piece of furniture, gradually replaced the floor table and became a permanent fixture in houses.

The dining practice, which once reinforced the power and prestige of French aristocrats, was carried out in specially designed spaces. By the 18th century, dining rooms had become a symbol of social status, even for lower social classes. By the 19th century, dining rooms had become common in Western houses and evolved into a standard element of residential design (Lestienne, 2019). In Western culture, dining is viewed as a feast, taking place in a specially designed space that is an integral part of the house. In contrast, in local culture, eating is more functional and is given special attention only during major events like weddings. As a result, there is no need for a dedicated dining space. Instead, simple floor settings are arranged for daily meals, and once the meal is finished, all materials are put away.

With modernisation, like many elements that have entered our lives, the dining table has also found its place in houses. However, since it does not have a specific place in *yilli* (or Turkish) culture, the dining table does not have a dedicated space. Instead, it becomes a decorative and ornamental element in the living room. Even when guests come, the dining table is rarely used (since there are usually too many guests to fit around it). Instead, it serves as a display of lace, silver, or crystal pieces from the dowry. Like the sofa set, the dining room furniture (vitrine, silverware, console, dining table, and chairs) is often chosen for its carved and gilded features. The more expensive and showier the set, the more it reflects the social status of the *yilli* family. As mentioned earlier in the Sivas Street houses, the space designed according to the modern understanding of a dining room has been transformed into part of the house's "inner *hayat*" because such a space did not exist in the *yilli* culture. As also pointed out before, in some houses, the dining table is placed in the entrance hall, seemingly to decorate the space. The dining table borrowed from Western culture has no counterpart in *yilli* houses. Although the practice of dining at the table has been adopted with modernisation, it has not become a ritual in the Western sense. Instead, the dining table has become a decorative item that adorns the house.

Compared to the dining table [the one from the *salon* set], the kitchen table serves its purpose much more effectively. It has largely replaced the traditional floor table, becoming integral to daily life. While it is used for meals, the kitchen table also retains traditional functions, such as rolling dough and cutting noodles, reflecting cultural practices. In this way, it has evolved from its Western counterpart and adapted to the *yilli* cultural context under the influence of *habitus*.

In the multifunctional spaces of the traditional house, wide and empty areas are designed for both sitting during the day and sleeping at night. This arrangement serves not only a practical, multifunctional purpose but also reflects the historical absence of certain furniture items due to the conditions of the time. The built-in cupboards (*yüklük*), placed in niches around the room, store materials that meet the family's needs. During the day, the family sits on a *sedir* covered with carpet cushions for daily activities. Bedding materials are taken from the *yüklük* at night and spread on the floor for sleeping. The *yüklük* also stores items like prayer rugs and a floor table, which serve additional functions. Through these elements, the harem room is functionally designed to adapt to various activities at any time of the day, ensuring the necessary space for each.

The *yüklük*, a traditional key element, functions as a cupboard by covering niches within rooms and providing storage space. Over time, as apartment living became more common, this architectural feature largely disappeared. However, in family apartments where alterations to the layout were still possible, some examples of the *yüklük* were preserved. In certain houses on Sivas Street, niches have been left intact. These niches have been closed off, much like in traditional houses, and are now used for storage.

The issue of the *yüklük* is interesting. In traditional houses, its primary function was to store bedding and quilts during the day when not in use. While modern houses no longer require such storage—since everyone has their bed and room—the *yüklük* persists. As a result, various parts of the house have been repurposed for storage. For instance, before moving into her current house, my mother had a custom cupboard to address the lack of storage for bedding materials, such as quilts for guests or winter bedding during summer. Since no special niche was created for this purpose in her house, the cupboard is now a fixed piece of furniture in one of the bedrooms, resembling a large wardrobe.

The concept of the *yüklük*, which initially involved creating niches in rooms for storage, has gradually evolved but still exists in different forms. For instance, in family apartments, the niche once embedded in the wall moved above the bathrooms, serving a similar function. Similarly, en-suite bathrooms and relatively unused balconies that open

into bedrooms are also used for storage. In some cases, special cabinets have been built to make these areas functional for storage. Custom storage cupboards are often added in the bedroom hall to meet the family's storage needs. These cupboards may include space for a washing machine and store items like an ironing board, vacuum cleaner, quilts, pillows, and even materials like floor tables for those who maintain traditional habits (Figure 5.39).



Figure 5.39 Custom storage cupboards in bedroom hall

This storage habit extends to various pieces of furniture. For instance, storage beds are valuable for keeping extra items like bedding and quilts. Additionally, even textiles that aren't technically furniture, such as laundry bags (*hurç*), are used to store belongings or dowries of brides-to-be and placed on top of wardrobes (Figure 5.40). This approach utilises the space between wardrobes and the ceiling as a storage niche. Moreover, it's not just above wardrobes that are used; empty spaces in corners throughout the house are also turned into storage areas for items like rugs and laundry bags. Particularly, spaces behind doors are often repurposed to store items like prayer rugs.



Figure 5.40 Gaps in the house used as storage

Kurt (2021) highlights that in traditional Turkish houses, door windows were used to bring sunlight into the *sofa* and other interior spaces. This practice also occurred in Kayseri houses, but with a difference: unlike in Turkish houses, where the *sofa* is centrally placed, in Kayseri houses, the *sofa* is not in the centre. It led to the prominence of door windows in family apartments, where the central hall played a more significant role. Sunlight entered through windows placed above the doors, illuminating the central hall. However, this practice has gradually disappeared in modern houses, where a simpler transition space or entryway has replaced the central hall.

In family apartments, glass on the doors was often placed above eye level to maintain privacy while allowing light into the central hall. In early apartment blocks, the entrance hall served as a simple transition space, not meant for lingering, so it didn't require much sunlight. However, many room doors still featured glass. The *salon* door typically had a large double-winged door with glass that not only provided light but also helped define the space, guiding guests and preventing them from entering the *mahram* areas of the house. Over time, privacy concerns led to removing glass from most room doors, leaving only the *salon* and, occasionally, the living room doors with glass. In one house I encountered, the bedroom door had glass, but to address the *mahram* issue, the resident installed a curtain behind it.

The dowry is one of the most critical components of *yilli* culture and continues to be a key element through which cultural traditions are transmitted and maintained. When interviewees were asked what should be included in a dowry, almost everyone listed the same items, as if they had a standard list. Typically, the dowry is prepared and sent with

a chest,⁷⁰ crafted from wood and often featuring intricate carvings (Figure 5.41). The choice of material, such as walnut or mahogany, depends on the family's financial situation. The items included in the dowry are as follows: 2 hand-woven carpets; 2 wool quilts; 2 cotton quilts; 2 wool mattresses (which have evolved into 1 wool and 1 rubber mattress, i.e., modern ready-made mattresses); 4 pillows; hand-woven prayer rugs; Antep or Maraş-style embroidered covers; lace or needlework; decorative silver items; copper kitchenware (now replaced by a pot set, with even the brand specified); and 2 sets of dinnerware (one for everyday use and the other for guests).



Figure 5.41 Carved dowry chest

The items in the dowry are carefully selected and include specific details. A commonly mentioned item is the *Manchester* carpet⁷¹, a handwoven carpet [called a “floor carpet” ranging from 6–12 m²] named after Manchester, England (Figure 5.42).⁷²

⁷⁰ It has been noted in the interviews that this practice is beginning to change. The dowry chest, which is traditionally large and made of special materials, is no longer preferred by some *yilli*. Reasons for this shift include difficulty finding a suitable place for it in the home, or the chest not matching the other furniture.

⁷¹ Manchester is pronounced as “mun-jess-therr” in the Kayseri dialect.

⁷² In 1907, merchants from Kayseri to Bünyan accelerated carpet production by importing wool and cotton yarn from Manchester, England, and synthetic dyes from Germany. Thus, in addition to carpets woven using natural dyes with traditional methods, carpets woven from Manchester yarn dyed with synthetic dyes also began to be produced (Kayışoğlu Şahin, 2013).



Figure 5.42 Examples of “Manchester” carpet

In addition to items for the married couple’s use, the dowry also includes guest items. For example, many beds and quilts are provided to accommodate overnight guests. One interviewee pointed out that these arrangements are made with guests’ comfort in mind. Another vital element of the dowry is the prayer rug, which is typically divided into two categories: one for daily use and one for guest use. In situations where there are many guests, the need for three or four prayer rugs arises, as mentioned by one interviewee (I_10), since multiple guests may pray simultaneously.

Even dinnerware is designated for daily use and guests. Just as *yilli* carefully prepare the *salon* to welcome and host guests, they also choose items to serve with great care. This practice applies to everyone, regardless of income, although adaptations are made depending on the situation. For example, cutlery sets are often gilded with gold. One informant noted that this varies by income, with wealthier *yilli* preferring gold-gilded products, while those with lower incomes opt for silver-gilded products based on their budget (I_11) (Figure 5.43). The primary concern is not to fall behind in the symbolic consumption race or to remain below established standards. As a result, some families sacrifice in other areas, save from their budget, or even borrow money to keep up with others striving to surpass them (Ayata, 1988). Some interviewees pointed out that there are individuals who, despite eating simple meals like onion bread at home, still follow these rules to appear wealthier to the outside world. These practices reflect their views on **luxury**, **ostentation**, and **status**. Furthermore, with the changes and innovations brought

by time, all the furniture in the house has evolved accordingly, reflecting the *yilli's* adaptation and upgrade in their lifestyle (Table 5.11, Figure 5.44).



Figure 5.43 Golden gilded sets

Table 5.11 Change of furniture in periods

	Traditional houses	Family apartments	Row houses	Apartment blocks
EATING	Yer sofrası (floor table)		Dining table	Kitchen table – intimate Dining table – formal
SLEEPING	Sedir + carpet pillow	Somya / Pull-out couch [çek-yat]	Pull-out couch [çek-yat]	
	Bedding	Bed		
SITTING	Sedir + carpet pillow	Somya/ Pull-out couch [çek-yat]	Sofa set	
		Separate armchairs	-	
STORAGE	Yüklük (built-in storage)			-
	-		Cabinets	Cabinets
			-	Closed balconies En-suite bathroom
TYPES	-	-		Carved sofa set
		Showcase	Furniture set (showcase etc.)	Furniture set (showcase etc.)
MATERIAL	Wood			
		Brass	Formika	Industrial materials



Figure 5.44 Change of furniture in years (Created through AI ChatGPT, with prompts provided by the author)

Everything in the space—ranging from the space itself to the furniture within it, and the items placed on that furniture—holds symbolic meaning and follows a specific application. As Kurt (2021) notes, “Just like some pieces of furniture in the house, some objects are preferred not for their direct functionality, but because of their social or individual representational qualities” (p.179). In this context, *yilli* were asked about the essential items in their houses. While their answers typically aligned with the contents of the dowry, the one item everyone mentioned in common was the presence of decorative silver objects in the house (Figure 5.45).



Figure 5.45 Silver decoration in the *yilli* house

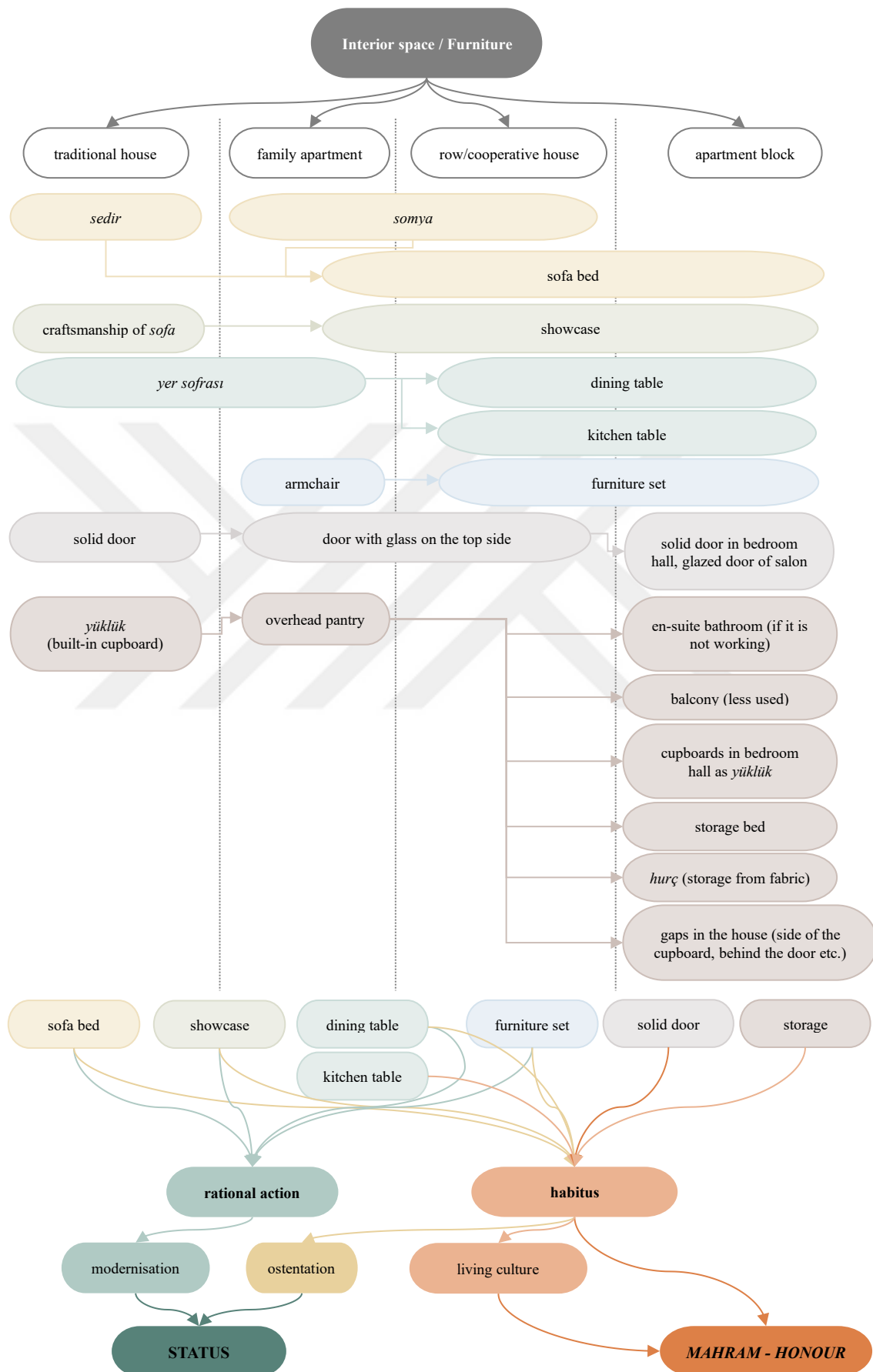
When asked about keeping family heirlooms or mementoes in their houses, the interviewees revealed that they rarely hold onto such items. However, some have transformed and repaired items passed down from their families or their mothers' old houses to continue using them. These creative solutions include repurposed chairs for children's rooms, a display cabinet turned into a coffee corner, and a sewing machine foot transformed into a table. Additionally, some interviewees still use family heirlooms such as sewing machines, dining tables, sauce dishes, and clocks (I_5; I_6; I_8; I_10; I_11) (Figure 5.46).

However, these instances are pretty rare. It seems that most *yilli*, like how they easily let go of old belongings, houses, and habits, also part with items that could be considered family heirlooms. Throughout their **modernisation** journey, *yilli* have moved from traditional houses to family apartments to more “modern” apartment buildings, gradually abandoning habits linked to old ways of life and replacing old furniture with new pieces at each transition (Table 5.12).



Figure 5.46 Family heirlooms or mementoes in *yilli* houses

Table 5.12 The changes of interior space and furniture related to *Habitus*



Technology

The primary reason behind the movement and relocation of *yilli* within the city is undoubtedly technological advancements. Users who once had to carry water from fountains, had outdoor toilets, bathed at the hammam, and cleared snow from their roofs during winter have seen significant improvements in their living standards with modernisation. One interviewee (I_28) compared the facilities in their family apartment in Sahabiye to those in their traditional house, sharing experiences of key changes, such as moving into a house with windows, a kitchen with a refrigerator, and a roof, unlike their previous house with a dirt roof that required snow clearing. He also highlighted the convenience of running water, as they previously carried water from fountains like Hacıkılıç and Orta Mahalle for drinking, while well water was used for other chores like washing clothes. Moving to Sahabiye marked a major shift in their lifestyle.

When examining the changes in amenities between the traditional house and the family apartment, we see that the *iskembi* (a type of stove used to heat a small area where people would gather) was replaced by a modern stove. Unlike the *iskembi*, which could only heat a small space, the new stove is a technological advancement that not only heats but also features a chimney to expel dirty air, keeping the room air clean. As mentioned before, one of the greatest technological innovations was the introduction of refrigerators, replacing the cold storage units known as *zerzembi*. With plumbing installed, houses now had a constant supply of water, eliminating the need for water transportation. Moreover, with the availability of running water, the electric water heater made it possible to bathe at home.⁷³ Finally, thanks to plumbing and technological systems, the toilet was integrated into the house, providing greater comfort for the residents.

The technological advancements in family apartments significantly improved the quality of life and living spaces. *Yilli*, who quickly adapted to these apartments and left their past behind, experienced a similar shift when transitioning from family apartments to the newer types of housing on Sivas Street. The most notable innovation in these houses was the central heating system or radiator. This development eliminated the need to stoke a stove, clean it, and deal with inadequate heating. Additionally, the introduction of water heaters and gas cylinders (with Kayserians commonly associating the first brand, “Milangaz,” with this development) greatly eased daily tasks.

⁷³ One interviewee (I_29) mentioned that he first saw plumbing and hot water coming from a faucet in the Sümerbank Textile Factory housing, and he recalled being so amazed by this innovation that he described it to his mother when his household still used a stove to provide hot water for the bath.

Another key innovation in these new buildings was the elevator. These advancements contributed to the perception of housing in this area as **modern** and **luxurious**. By moving into these buildings, *yilli* aligned themselves with the trend, **upgrading** their living conditions. One interviewee (I_12), who moved into one of the buildings on Sivas Street after getting married, referred to her house as a “luxury building.” When asked why, she described it this way: “...because it has central heating, an elevator, and hot water, and the Sivas Street area itself is considered luxurious, so it was a luxury house...” It illustrates that, beyond the amenities that make the house luxurious, owning a house on Sivas Street—as a prestigious area—became a symbol of luxury.

Field interviews show several factors contributing to the sense of **modernity** in family apartments. These included amenities like central heating, hot water, water heaters, and elevators, as well as architectural features such as large windows, bright living spaces, and layouts with interconnected areas and glass partitions. One participant described their experience moving to a “**modern**” house on Sivas Street, highlighting the convenience of having a water heater for showers anytime. She contrasted this with her previous house, which lacked a proper bathroom, stove, and water heater, so that she would visit the hammam on weekends for a proper bath (I_24).

When asked if they missed living in their old houses, nearly all participants described their apartments as **modern** (Table 5.13) and emphasised past difficulties. One interviewee (I_30) contrasted the comfort of modern apartments with the challenges of living in single-family houses, where space was shared with extended family, bathrooms were absent, and water had to be heated on a gas stove. He expressed that he didn’t miss the old way of living because of the conveniences offered by his current apartment.

Table 5.13 Technological changes in periods

TECHNOLOGY & FEATURE	Traditional houses	Family apartments	Row houses	Apartment blocks
	<i>İskembi</i> [ocak]	Stove / Heating system	Heating system	Heating system
	<i>Zerzemi</i> (cold storage)	Fridge		
		Overhead pantry	-	Closed balcony
				En-suite bathroom
				Fire escape
	Outside toilet	Inside toilet	Inside toilet	Inside toilet
	Transported water	Plumbing installation		
		Electric water heater	Water heater [<i>şofben</i>]	Hot water
	Hamam	Common bathroom		
	<i>Gusülhane</i>	-		En-suite bathroom
				Private bathroom(s)
	-		Elevator	Elevator(s)
	-		Dark kitchen	Kitchen with daylight
	 SENSE of MODERNISATION			

The transition to each new building type offering better amenities was a highly rational choice for *yilli* who had lived in traditional houses with limited resources. With technological advancements, they fully embraced the comfort and **modernity** of the Sivas Street apartments. After this shift, the main technological advancement in the apartment blocks was the availability of 24/7 hot water. These houses, which lacked further technological innovations, primarily differ in apartment size.

The *yilli* view the entire process leading up to the apartment blocks as **modernisation**, but it remains unclear what new conveniences these houses offer. At this stage, the modernity these houses provide has turned into **luxury**, which has become a means of **ostentation**. With houses starting at 200 m² and new neighbourhoods emerging, these houses have become tools of differentiation in a city where everyone has access to the same technological amenities. Initially, the wealthier families were the first to access the houses and opportunities brought by modernisation. Over time, however, these advancements became accessible to everyone. For the *yilli* seeking spatial differentiation, these new, large, and luxurious houses have created the desired environment, allowing

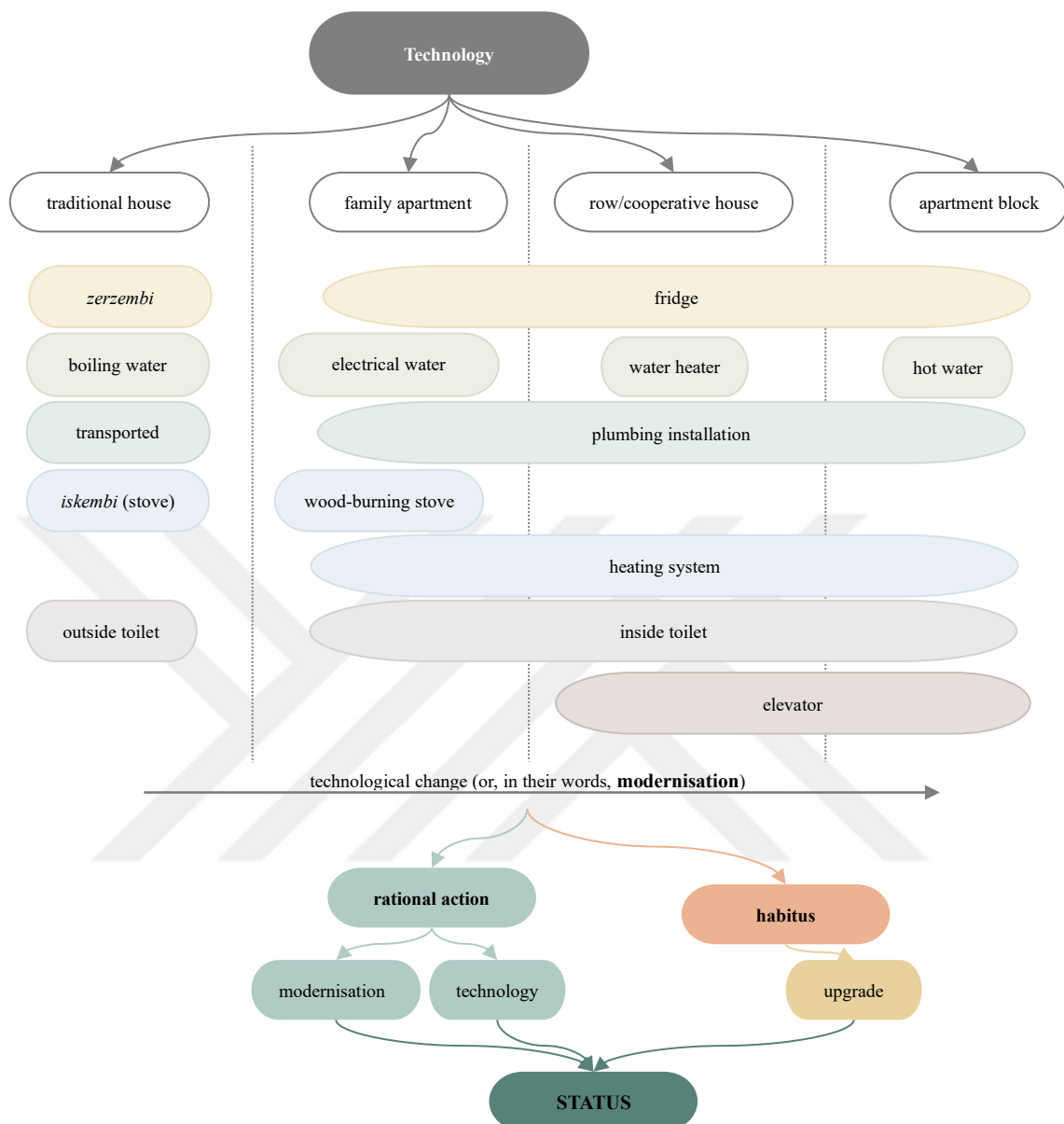
those who moved into the apartment blocks to experience an **upgrade** in their living standards (Table 5.14).⁷⁴

However, due to the desire to catch up with the present and upgrade, *yilli* have severed all ties with the past. Neighbourhoods with traditional houses shaped by their own living culture have been demolished, and later, the first modern neighbourhood of the Republic, Sahabiye, was abandoned. Those who migrated to the city later settled as tenants in the abandoned Sahabiye, and they used these houses, which their owners had abandoned carelessly for new ones, in poor conditions. Finally, because of the enormous wave of migration from Syria, these houses became living spaces for Syrians. Now, with the municipality aiming to evict them through urban transformation, they have started changing. The legacy of the Republic in this city is reflected in the apartment buildings built with the participation of the *yilli* and bearing their last names. Just as these buildings were ignored when abandoned, they were also neglected during the demolition. Instead of preserving this cultural heritage, which carries modern architectural examples, likely for-profit concerns, 20-story skyscrapers are being constructed in its place.

Another symbol of Kayseri, Sivas Street, which is now abandoned, is likely to face a similar fate in the future. Today, these buildings, no longer part of social life, have seen their upper floors transformed into workplaces with permits granted by the municipality. Eventually, these buildings will undergo further transformation. The *yilli*, who have not managed to protect the cultural heritage of Sivas Street, will likely raise no objections, and may even support the process.

⁷⁴ Today's housing offers various solutions to meet the luxury and display needs of locals. For example, features like walk-in closets or dedicated laundry and ironing rooms, typically found in expensive detached homes, can also be found in some apartment buildings. *Yilli* living in these spaces often use these luxuries to showcase their status. Additionally, some *yilli*, aware of global trends and design approaches, elevate their understanding of luxury. One interviewee, for example, described how their custom-built detached house includes a kitchen divided into two sections: a "dirty kitchen" at the back, hidden from guests, while only the clean side of the kitchen is visible (I_3).

Table 5.14 The changes in technology related to *Habitus*



5.2 Chapter Review: Towards the Conclusion

This thesis explores how the *yilli* of Kayseri establish a relationship with space. The objectives have been structured around four main themes supporting the research question: urban development and distribution; housing morphology and transformation; social and cultural habits and spatial experiences; consumption and living space. The data obtained were analysed thematically and classified at city, building, and housing scales, then presented in a table (Table 5.16).

Regarding spatial transformations in the city, it is essential to acknowledge that not all changes can be fully explained through *habitus*. Certain transformations, particularly those driven by technological advancements and the adoption of new opportunities during

the modernisation process, emerged as rational responses to the contextual conditions of the time. Therefore, not all spatial changes are directly linked to *habitus*. In this study, *habitus*-based motivations and rational causes were first examined under separate headings and later reinterpreted within the broader framework of *habitus*.

The relationship that the *yilli* established with the city has been examined historically through a four-stage periodisation: the Traditional period, reflecting the neighbourhood fabric and housing practices of the pre-Republican era; the Modernisation period, shaped by the reforms and spatial transformations following the proclamation of the Republic; the Early Neoliberal period, encompassing urban developments from the 1950s–60s onward; and the Late Neoliberal period, marked by accelerated urbanisation and structural transformations after 1980. This chronological framework enables a clearer understanding of the shifts in housing typologies and how social relations have been spatially manifested over time (Table 5.15).

At the neighbourhood scale, during the Traditional period, relationships with the neighbourhood, street, and housing were characterised by intimacy, security, and a strong sense of community. However, with the onset of the modernisation process, new lifestyles, technological advancements, and spatial preferences began to emerge as indicators of social status. As a result, patterns of intra-urban relocation increased, and new housing typologies and spatial arrangements became closely associated with prestige and the dynamics of social stratification.

Each newly developed settlement area has played a role in reproducing the urban status hierarchy. Over time, these newly inhabited neighbourhoods came to be regarded as more prestigious. As one *yilli* relocated, others tended to follow, contributing to the emergence of socially desirable residential zones within the city. Particularly after the 1980s, large-sized houses increasingly served as symbols of status and wealth, and these areas became spatial manifestations of luxury and social stratification.

A similar transformation has occurred in the vineyard house settlements surrounding the city. Initially established on the urban periphery to retreat from environmental conditions, these neighbourhoods have gradually evolved into more equipped, modern, and prestigious areas. In outer districts such as Hacılar and Gesi, vineyard ownership was traditionally associated with a “villager” identity, whereas in areas closer to the city centre, such as Talas and Hisarcık, owning a vineyard has come to signify social mobility and distinction. Once primarily functional retreats, these spaces

have been redefined as secondary houses, serving as spatial expressions of social differentiation.

Daily interactions with the city have similarly transformed. In earlier periods, routine practices such as shopping or attending funerals were predominantly centred in *İçerişar*. However, in the late neoliberal period, these practices have shifted to the neighbourhood scale and become increasingly intertwined with consumption patterns. Activities such as shopping at prestigious venues in newly developed neighbourhoods or holding funeral ceremonies at prominent mosques have come to serve not only functional purposes but also as markers of social status. Consequently, the everyday use of urban space has become increasingly structured around notions of luxury and ostentation.

These transformations reveal that the *yilli*'s relationship with urban space is at the core of socio-cultural dynamics, particularly **status** construction and spatial segregation, key determinants shaping this interaction.

Changes at the building scale reflect the modernisation process and the social transformations in Kayseri's physical space. During the traditional period, houses constructed with local materials in harmony with the neighbourhood fabric were predominant. However, in the post-Republican era, as traditional lifestyles dissolved and new urban norms emerged, there was a shift toward reinforced concrete structures and apartment living. Initially manifesting as family apartments, this building typology evolved into multi-story blocks with the rise of cooperatives in the 1960s. Particularly after the 1980s, with the surge in luxury housing construction, apartment blocks averaging 14 stories became a dominant feature of the city's skyline.

This structural transformation cannot be solely attributed to technical and functional considerations, such as access to views. As one ascends to higher floors, the desire to create a *mahram* and exclusive living space, distance from the street level, has also contributed to developing new spatial practices linked to social **status** and ostentation. Therefore, the process of change at the building scale should be understood through the rational aspects of modernisation and concerning dynamics such as privacy, prestige, and social stratification.

The transformation at the housing scale can be traced through periodic ruptures, accompanied by changes in both the morphological structure and the use of interior space. During the traditional period, *yilli* families lived in large households designed to accommodate a multi-generational structure, with the flexibility to expand their houses by adding rooms as needed. This model reflected the cultural practices of daily life and

the social structure in spatial form. With modernisation, the shift to apartment living led to a reduction in the size of houses; however, since the 1980s, there has been a noticeable trend toward expanding living spaces again. Physical needs do not solely drive this growth but are also linked to the pursuit of prestige, ostentation, and social **status**. On the other hand, some *yilli* families maintain a multi-generational living model in large houses, which serves as a symbol of status and fulfils a functional role in ensuring cultural continuity.

Traces of the traditional Islamic lifestyle are still evident in modern housing plans. Although the *harem-selamlık* arrangement is no longer directly preserved, the current form of this spatial division continues through the prominent role of spaces like the *salon*. While the open central area of the house, known as *hayat*, has disappeared, some houses still exhibit entrance spaces that, consciously or not, function similarly to past communal areas. Similarly, spaces that once served the need for *mahram*, such as the *gusülhane*, have been reinterpreted in modern houses through en-suite bathrooms or private bathrooms in individual rooms. These examples demonstrate that Western housing typologies have been adapted to local lifestyles, with spatial organisation shaped mainly by the cultural understanding of *mahram*.

Changes in interior design have been influenced not only by modernisation and technological advancements but also by the *habitus*-based dispositions of the users. Furniture types imported from the West have been adapted to local living practices; for instance, objects such as the kitchen table have been re-functionalised to align with traditional dining practices, like *yer sofrası*. It suggests that social structure and cultural habits are crucial in shaping aesthetic and functional preferences.

Technological developments have transformed individual spaces and the settlement structure at the urban scale. Each new technological innovation has played a decisive role in shaping urban space throughout the transition from the traditional period to the present. **From the perspective of the *yilli*, modernisation has been expressed through adopting these developments as tools that enhance daily life.** In this context, the spatial displacement and transformation driven by technology have consistently influenced the evolution of local lifestyles.

The transformation referred to as modernisation is understood mainly by the *yilli* as integrating technological innovations into daily life and pursuing status. Interviewees interpreted the adoption of technical facilities such as plumbing and heating systems as a sign of modernisation, suggesting that the process is primarily seen as a means to enhance

living comfort. However, this understanding of modernisation is not shaped by the internalisation of Western individual identity or contemporary lifestyles but by the desire for ostentation, prestige, and social differentiation. Morphological analyses reveal that this transformation is not a direct model transfer but has occurred through gradual adaptation to the local culture. In the Republican period, *yilli* families, who became part of urbanisation through land acquisition in newly developed areas, used these new settlements to gain social status and class differentiation. Therefore, modernisation emerges as a hybrid process in which the *yilli habitus* is transformed instrumentally yet retains traces of traditional and rural life culture.

Table 5.15 Transformation of spaces

Traditional houses	Family apartments	Row houses	Apartment blocks
<i>Hayat</i> (courtyard)	Central hall	Inner <i>hayat</i>	-
<i>Selamlık / Sofa</i>	<i>Salon</i>		
<i>Harem</i>	Central hall	<i>Salon</i> - Inner <i>hayat</i>	Living room
<i>Tokana</i> (kitchen)	Kitchen		
<i>Zerzemi</i> (cold storage)	Fridge		
	Overhead storage	In house storage	Balcony
			En-suite bathroom
			Fire escape
Hamam	Common bathroom		
<i>Gusülhane</i>	-	En-suite bathroom	
		-	Private bathroom

Finally, to summarise the spatial transformation following the research objectives:

Urban Distribution and Development: One of the basic aims of the research is to analyse how the neighbourhoods of *yilli* of Kayseri are distributed within the city and to examine whether this distribution affects urban development. The analysis reveals that these neighbourhoods serve as tools for social stratification, illustrating the relationship the *yilli* establish with the city. As new neighbourhoods emerge, the *yilli*'s efforts to distinguish themselves from non-*yilli*, or “villagers,” become more evident. This process is further illustrated with maps demonstrating how the *yilli* shape the social structure through neighbourhood choices and how spatial separations have evolved.

Housing Morphology and Transformation: To identify the morphological characteristics of the houses of *yilli* of Kayseri, including size, room layout, and space usage, and to assess how these features have evolved; to investigate whether the

morphological characteristics of the houses currently inhabited by *yilli* of Kayseri are influenced by the traditional Kayseri House; and to explore the impact of living culture on the morphological characteristics of contemporary houses inhabited by *yilli* of Kayseri are the objectives within this scope. The research examines the evolution of housing in Kayseri through morphological analysis, tracing the transformation from traditional courtyard houses to family apartments, cooperative housing, and modern apartment blocks. Although apartment buildings became widespread with the modernisation of urban life, the Western-style housing model was not directly adopted. Instead, some aspects of the traditional house structure were integrated into the new building types. The concept of central space in traditional houses continued with the transition to family apartments and gradually evolved into modern housing.

In contemporary housing, particularly in Kayseri, large *salons* that occupy one-third or one-fourth of the house continue to exist. While *salons* are also present as separate spaces in other regions of Turkey, the size of *salons* in Kayseri is particularly noteworthy. The presence of large entrance halls –as the centre of the daily living area– or spaces like the *salon* indicate that traces of traditional settlement patterns remain in contemporary housing. Despite changes in housing typology, it is evident that traces of *habitus* related to local life culture persist in modern housing.

The morphology of the house has changed significantly and has gradually distanced itself from the living culture of the *yilli*. However, driven by unconscious desires, they maintain old habits through various spatial arrangements and hierarchical distinctions within the interior space. Therefore, contemporary housing designers should consider making certain arrangements around the concept of *mahram* (Figure 5.47).

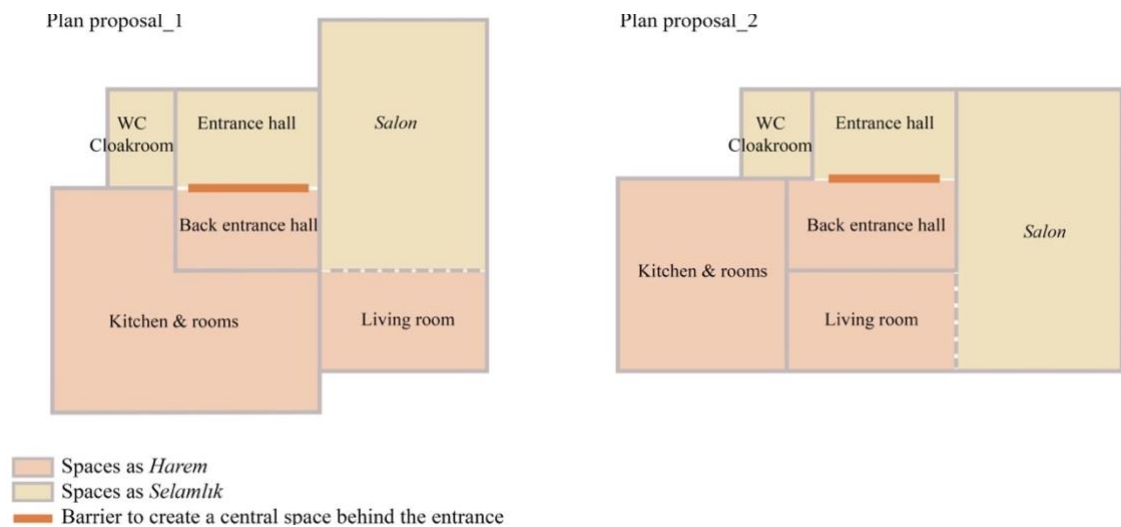


Figure 5.47 Plan suggestion

Social Cultural Habits and Spatial Experiences: The objectives within this scope are to examine the relationship between the cultural habits of *yilli* of Kayseri and their spatial experiences, to analyse how *yilli* of Kayseri shape their housing space under the influence of *habitus* and identify the adaptations they make, and to investigate the socialisation practices of *yilli* of Kayseri within their houses. The arrangement of furniture in the *salon* and the continued use of the kitchen table as a floor dining table (*yer sofrası*) are key examples of these practices. Moreover, the transformation of storage areas—once located above spaces like the bathroom or kitchen in family apartments—into new arrangements, such as using wardrobe tops and attic spaces for storage, is notable. Filling these spaces with items like *hurç* (laundry bags) reflects the adaptation of past living culture into modern housing. Similarly, the continued need for spaces like the *zerzembi* (used for cold storage) has led to the repurposing of fire escapes for this function. Although contemporary apartment buildings provide storage spaces in the basement, the easy accessibility of fire escapes has prompted residents to use these areas for storage.

This situation results in the perception of the floor hallway as an extension of the house, providing a foundation for interventions related to living culture in these areas. Similarly, behaviours like neighbours socialising in the apartment hallway illustrate how social and cultural habits are reinterpreted through space. As a result, housing spaces function not only beyond their physical roles but also as dynamics that embody social and cultural meanings.

Consumption and Living Space: One of the key research objectives is to explore the consumption habits of *yilli* of Kayseri and how these habits shape their living spaces, including furniture choices, decoration preferences, and furniture usage. It includes examining whether the furniture preferences of the *yilli* of Kayseri result from cultural imposition and transmission or if they adopt different solutions to align with their lifestyles and tastes. These consumption habits reflect a shopping and consumption culture driven by the *yilli*'s desire for ostentation and social prestige. They may sometimes reduce daily expenses to prioritise luxury consumption for their houses. Branded products, carefully selected furniture, and gilded presentations have become prominent elements in interior decoration. These habits are particularly evident in the preference for carved or modern gilded furniture.

The analyses conducted within the framework of the research objectives reveal the evolution of the *yilli* of Kayseri's social, cultural, and spatial practices over time. From

the morphological transformation of housing to changes in space usage and socialisation practices, each detail demonstrates how the living culture of *yilli* has been shaped in a spatial context and how adaptation processes have unfolded.

At this point, it is crucial to examine how the *yilli* make sense of the city's social, cultural, and spatial transformations and explore the dynamics behind these changes. As mentioned earlier, modernisation is evident in how the *yilli* establish relationships with space. However, this process is often driven by social motivations such as gaining status, achieving prestige, and displaying wealth. The *yilli* aim to distinguish themselves from others, particularly from villagers and aspire to position themselves within the social hierarchy.

As a result, the spatial relationships of the *yilli* of Kayseri cannot be explained solely through modernisation or rational choices. These relationships constitute a complex whole shaped not only by social dynamics but also by unconscious motivations such as *mahram* and living culture. **Status** and *mahram* play a decisive role in the evolution of space usage, serving as key reflections of the *yilli habitus*. Like how Bourdieu, in his ethnographic study of Algerian tribes, identified that the spatial organisation of their houses was fundamentally structured around the concept of **honour**, the houses of the *yilli* in Kayseri are likewise shaped around the notion of *mahram*. While deeply rooted in local cultural and religious norms, this concept functions similarly to *honour* as it governs visibility, accessibility, and social interaction within domestic space. As a result, when analysing the spatial logic of *yilli* housing, *mahram* should not be seen merely as a religious or cultural rule, but as a central component of the *yilli habitus*—embedded, unconscious, and socially reproductive. In this context, and as supported by existing literature, *mahram* can also be conceptually aligned with *honour*, as reflected in the comparative framework in the table below (Table 5.16).

Table 5.16 Overall change in the *yilli* house

SITUATION / SPACE OF CHANGE		THE PROCESS OF CHANGE				RATIONAL ACTION	REASON	HABITUS-BASED INTERPRETATION		
		Traditional period	Modernization period	Early neoliberal period	Late neoliberal period		HABITUS			
URBAN SCALE	Neighbourhood	Warm Intimate Safe	Modernization Stratification	Prestige Stratification	Prestige Luxury Stratification	Modernization Comfort	Upgrade Prestige Ostentation	STATUS		
	Vineyard house	Close	Modernization	Prestige Stratification	Prestige Luxury Stratification		Upgrade Prestige	STATUS		
		Migration to vineyard house			Secondary house		Becoming wealthier	STATUS		
	Shopping	Çarşı (center)			Shopping malls & shops in prestigious neighborhoods	Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS		
	Mosque	Cami-i Kebir			Hulusi Akar Mosque		Upgrade Prestige	STATUS		
BUILDING SCALE	Building type - Building section	Traditional house	Family apartment	Row/Cooperative houses	Apartment blocks	Economic rent View	Ostentation Enjoying being above, looking down on others	STATUS		
							Going upstairs with a sense of privacy - MAHRAM	MAHRAM (HONOUR)		
	Building material	Stone	Concrete			Modernization Cheaper Easy to build	Upgrade	STATUS		
HOUSE SCALE	MORPHOLOGY	Size of the house	Big	Smaller than traditional house	Small	Very big		Upgrade Prestige Ostentation	STATUS	
								Big family - big space Hospitality Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		PLAN	Hayat & spaces around	Central hall & spaces around	Divided living space (instead of salle à manger) - "inner hayat" + bedroom hall & rooms	Modern house plan	Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
			Organic & Changeable	Fixed			Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			Sofa as biggest space	Salon as biggest room			Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM) Ostentation Prestige	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
			Collective living			Introverted living			MAHRAM	MAHRAM (HONOUR)
			Hayat as welcoming space	Central hall as welcoming space	Entrance hall	Big entrance hall	Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		SECTION	Vertical section (use of hayat)	Horizontal section (using common areas as their own)			Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
			Room addition in case of growth	Separate floor for each family (instead of adding rooms in a traditional house)	Independent housing units		Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			Separation of seki - sekialtı	No level difference			Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			Harem / Selamlık-Sofa	Central hall + rooms / Salon	"Inner hayat" + rooms / Salon	Living room + other rooms / Salon	-	MAHRAM	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		HAYAT	Hayat	Central hall	"Inner hayat"	Loss of Hayat Entrance hall / Balcony	Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
		SOFA	Sofa	Salon	Salon	Salon	Modernization	MAHRAM Ostentation	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
		ZERZEMBİ	Zerzembi	Overhead pantry	-	Balcony En-suite bathroom Fire escape	-	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		GUSÛLHANE - HAMMAM	Gusûlhane	-	-	En-suite bathrom Private bathroom	Modernization	MAHRAM Ostentation	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
			Hammam	Bathroom	Bathroom	Bathroom				
	INTERIOR	SITTING	Sedir (built-in seating)	Sedir (built-in seating) / Somya (simple bed frame) / Armchair / Sofa bed	Somya (simple bed frame) / Sofa set / Sofa bed	Sofa set / Sofa bed	Modernization	Upgrade Ostentation	STATUS	
		PRESENTING	Craftsmanship of Sofa	Ostentation of furniture (showcase - carved furniture)	Ostentation of furniture (bigger size showcase - carved furniture)	Ostentation of furniture & decoration in Salon Opulent drapes Opulent chandeliers Decoration objects	-	Upgrade Ostentation Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR) STATUS	
		EATING	Yer sofrası (floor table)	Yer sofrası (floor table)	Kitchen table	Kitchen table	Modernization	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
					Dining table	Dining table		Ostentation	STATUS	
		STORAGE	Yüklük (built-in cupboard)	Storage loft above the kitchen	Yüklük (built-in cupboard - if there is any space left for it)	En-suite bathroom (if it is not working) Balcony (less used) Cupboards in bedroom hall as yüklük Storage bed Hurç (storage from fabric) Gaps in the house (side of the cupboard, behind the door etc.)	-	Living culture (shapes around MAHRAM)	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		ENTERING	Solid door	Door with glass on the top side	Door with glass on the top side	Solid door in bedroom hall, glazed door of salon	-	MAHRAM	MAHRAM (HONOUR)	
		TECHNOLOGY	Zerzembi	Fridge				Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS
			Transported water	Plumbing installation	Plumbing installation	Plumbing installation				
				Electrical water heater	Water heater [soften]	Hot water	Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			İskembi [ocak] (stove)	Wood-burning stove / Heating system	Heating system	Heating system	Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			Outside toilet	Inside toilet	Inside toilet	Inside toilet	Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	
			-	-	Elevator	Elevator(s)	Modernization	Upgrade	STATUS	

Chapter 6

Conclusions & Future Prospects

6.1 Conclusions

This thesis has explored the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri through a Bourdieusian framework, centring on the intricate relationships between *habitus*, spatial belonging, and urban transformation. By tracing the socio-cultural and spatial practices of Kayseri's long-established local people, the study has illuminated the dynamic relationship between space, identity, and memory in the context of a rapidly changing Anatolian city. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, oral history interviews, thematic mapping, and thematic analysis, this research offers a unique insight into how the *yilli* people negotiate their identity and spatial presence amid changing urban landscapes.

The central question of the study—“How is the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri reflected in the arrangements they make in their living spaces, and what spatial adaptations do they implement under the influence of *habitus*?”—guided the inquiry through both theoretical and empirical terrains.

Findings indicate that the *yilli* identity is deeply spatial. It is not merely inherited through lineage but continuously reaffirmed through specific settlement patterns, neighbourhood preferences, interior arrangements, and collective memory. The study revealed that *yilli* families prefer specific neighbourhoods, even as they move outward from the city centre. This spatial movement—mapped over decades—reflects adaptation and resistance to urban modernisation.

While standardised apartment blocks have replaced many traditional housing forms, *yilli* people continue to reproduce elements of their *habitus* through micro-practices: the layout of *salon* spaces for *oturma*, the preservation of *mahram* spatial divisions, and the symbolic articulation of family prestige through space. Even in modern apartments, distinctions between guest and private spaces, gendered usage of rooms, and inherited domestic rituals persist.

The findings also show that being *yilli* goes beyond spatial rootedness. It functions as a social filter, shaping marriage alliances, economic networks, and patterns of sociability. The *yilli* define themselves not only through where they live but through whom they marry, how they furnish their houses, and whom they allow into their private spaces. Often invisible, this cultural capital is central to their urban identity and social authority.

The theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly the notion of *habitus*, has been instrumental in interpreting these patterns. As the system of durable, transposable dispositions that guide practices and perceptions, *habitus* has enabled this study to move beyond surface-level descriptions of architecture or tradition. Instead, it has allowed for an analysis of how spatial preferences and improvisations reflect deeper structures of social life.

This thesis shows that *yilli habitus* is neither static nor entirely resistant to change. It adapts, improvises, and reasserts itself in new architectural forms. The tension between traditional housing and modern apartment blocks does not signify the loss of *habitus* but its transformation. Through subtle design, usage, and ritual modifications, the *yilli* maintain their cultural distinctiveness.

Notably, the study also highlights how the standardisation brought by capitalist housing production threatens this reproduction. Uniform apartment layouts often clash with traditional patterns of use. Yet rather than simply conforming, *yilli* people engage in spatial negotiations—reassigning room functions and maintaining segregated guest areas—to preserve their social logic within new physical constraints.

It reveals the generative dimension of *habitus*. It is not a passive inheritance but an active force that enables agents to improvise within structural limits. In this way, the housing practices of the *yilli* become a site where social structure and individual agency meet, offering a vivid example of Bourdieu's dialectic between *habitus* and *field*.

The study's methodology combined ethnography, oral history, thematic mapping, and thematic analysis as tools. My position as an insider researcher added further depth to this approach, allowing me to set aside my formal researcher identity and access intimate narratives and unspoken social codes that might otherwise remain hidden. This positionality enabled a more nuanced understanding of cultural meanings and social dynamics grounded in shared experience and trust. By navigating interviews, observations, and spatial analyses from within the community, the research was able to access layers of meaning that might elude an external observer. However, the insider role

also presented challenges—it demanded ongoing reflexivity, a careful balance between empathy and critical distance, and a constant awareness of my embeddedness in the field.

Oral history interviews were significant in transmitting values across generations. Elderly participants often narrated their own life stories and those of their ancestors, thus revealing how memory is embedded in place and practice. Ethnographic observations within houses gave a rich understanding of spatial improvisations that might escape verbal articulation. Thematic mapping provided a visual representation of the urban movements of *yilli* families, demonstrating how their relocations shaped and were shaped by broader urban planning policies. Thematic analysis allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and meanings across interviews and fieldnotes, making visible the underlying structures of everyday life, from spatial routines to intergenerational narratives. These methods collectively created a multi-layered understanding of space, not only as a physical structure but as a repository of memory, identity, and social hierarchy.

From a compact Ottoman town centred around *İçerişar* to a sprawling modern city, Kayseri's urban transformation mirrors broader patterns in Turkish urbanisation. The research shows that the notion of being *yilli* is far more than a label of the origin or a static identity marker. Instead, it is a dynamic, performative, and deeply spatial identity, continuously shaped and reshaped by interactions with space, housing forms, family lineage, and cultural memory. They tend to settle in neighbourhoods that carry social and symbolic weight—first around *İçerişar*, then in areas like Sahabiye, Alpaslan, and now increasingly Çaybağları. Their movement to newer neighbourhoods reflects both a withdrawal from mixed areas and an effort to re-establish cultural boundaries. These relocations, however, do not signify a rupture from their original *habitus*; rather, they trace a form of spatial continuity in the face of modernity's disruptions, allowing cultural practices to be translated and re-embedded in new urban forms.

The findings reinforce how intertwined identity and space truly are. For *yilli* people, being displaced—even to an adjacent neighbourhood—can feel like a rupture in social standing. This symbolic geography is more potent than formal city maps. The perceived distance between *İçerişar* and Çaybağları is not just one of the kilometres but of social stratification and generational negotiation.

What becomes evident through this journey is that the *yilli* do not simply adapt to space; they transform it. The spatial logic they carry—rooted in values of kinship, modesty, hospitality, and intergenerational continuity—manifests itself even in the most

uniform apartment blocks. These housing typologies, initially designed with economic efficiency and modern lifestyles in mind, are reappropriated through cultural improvisation. A room with multiple uses or a living room might remain untouched for months, preserved in pristine condition for rare ceremonial visits. These are not trivial gestures; they are acts of cultural survival.

Moreover, these spatial gestures are not merely about habit or nostalgia. They are mechanisms of power and distinction. They signal belonging within the tightly woven network of Kayseri's social life. For instance, the *salon* is not simply a guest room but a stage upon which family reputation, hospitality values, and intergenerational prestige are performed. Who gets seated where, what refreshments are served, and what stories are told in that space carry symbolic weight.

As such, the research positions the *yilli* not as passive recipients of urban change but as agents engaged in a constant negotiation of memory, identity, and spatial logic. Their resistance to homogenisation is not overt protest but a subtle and enduring choreography of cultural codes, family histories, and embodied practices. These practices form a counter-narrative to dominant stories of urban progress, suggesting that spatial belonging is not lost in transition but rather re-inscribed.

In line with Bourdieu's theory, the study uncovers how the *yilli habitus* is internalised, durable, and transposable. However, it also reveals how *habitus* evolves when it meets new conditions. Children raised in modern apartment buildings continue to inherit a spatial sensibility that teaches them to distinguish between public and private; sacred and ordinary; insider and outsider. They may adopt new tools—digital devices, global aesthetics—but the structuring logic of their domestic life is still guided by inherited understandings of space.

The idea of distinction, central to Bourdieu, is performed through educational or linguistic capital and spatial practices. The configuration of house interiors, the maintenance of family narratives through space, and the ritual use of household objects are all mechanisms through which the *yilli* mark themselves off from newcomers. This symbolic boundary-making is as material as it is cultural.

The use of oral history interviews was critical in uncovering these layered meanings. Interviewees described where they lived or what their houses looked like, and narrated a life philosophy embedded in their houses. Many remembered houses not in terms of square meters or features but in terms of events: weddings, funerals, childhood

games, first guests, first meals cooked. These memories were tied to spaces in profoundly affective ways.

Thematic analysis, which formed a key analytical tool for interpreting interview data, enabled the identification of recurring patterns, meanings, and symbolic references across multiple narratives. By coding the interviews thematically, it became possible to detect how certain spatial categories—like guest rooms, kitchen spaces, or balconies—carried distinct cultural meanings across generations; furthermore, thematic analysis allowed for uncovering hidden assumptions and unspoken rules embedded in *yilli* spatial culture. For instance, the repeated emphasis on modesty in room decoration, the regulation of visitor access, and the layered structure of domestic privacy emerged as core themes through inductive coding.

The findings were not merely descriptive; they illuminated the lived logic of *habitus*. They showed how seemingly minor decisions about room usage or seating arrangements revealed broader social structures and values. The analysis developed in this study provides a framework for interpreting not just the features of spaces but also their meanings and how they function as vehicles for identity and *habitus*.

Similarly, the thematic maps created in this study offered not just spatial data but a visual narrative of displacement, migration, adaptation, and re-rooting. By tracking the movements of *yilli* families over time, it became possible to see the invisible lines of cultural continuity that defy the surface appearance of change. The maps also revealed the spatial strategies of retreat and re-consolidation as *yilli* moved toward areas where they could maintain social control and symbolic purity.

In summary, the conclusions of this research are multifold: First, spatial belonging among the *yilli* is an active and generative process, not a static inheritance. Second, *habitus* continues to operate and evolve even in the face of architectural standardisation. Third, spatial practices are a powerful form of cultural expression and distinction. Fourth, ethnographic, participatory, visual, and thematic methods are essential to capturing the lived complexity of urban identities.

Concluding Reflections on Habitus and the *Yilli* of Kayseri

This thesis has taken *habitus* not as a ready-made explanatory device, but as a question in itself—a tool that illuminates and complicates everyday life's cultural and spatial logic. By grounding the concept in the ethnographic and historical specificities of Kayseri's *yilli* community, the study has demonstrated how deeply embedded dispositions—what Bourdieu terms the *social grammar*—continue to structure social

practices, domestic arrangements, and symbolic boundaries. Yet this very application has revealed the strengths and limits of the *habitus* framework when confronted with the layered realities of contemporary urban transformation.

The *yilli habitus*, as this research has shown, is a historically sedimented mode of being shaped by intergenerational accumulations of economic, social, and cultural capital. It operates through tacit spatial norms, kinship hierarchies, moral evaluations of propriety, and aesthetic codes that are embodied rather than declared. These dispositions give coherence to practices that might otherwise appear fragmentary: the gendered use of space, symbolic boundaries within houses, reverence for burial locations, and modes of speech and hosting. In this regard, the thesis contributes to the sociology of space by rendering the invisible logic of local distinction visible, linking built form, domestic improvisation, and social judgment into a shared field of meaning.

However, the research has also revealed that the *yilli habitus* does not operate in a vacuum. Standardised housing typologies, shifting status economies, the weakening of extended family structures, and the infiltration of new aesthetic regimes have all exposed fractures within this once-cohesive logic. What emerged from the analysis is not merely a *habitus* in adaptation, but a *habitus* in tension—with itself, its spatial containers, and the symbolic regimes through which it has historically maintained distinction. The strategies of improvisation and boundary-making observed in domestic spaces are not just examples of cultural persistence but symptoms of structural strain.

These findings suggest that *habitus*, while powerful in accounting for continuity, may fall short in theorising dislocation, ambivalence, and partial belonging. The *yilli* case thus brings into focus a conceptual limit within Bourdieu's framework: the assumption of internal coherence and temporal stability. This thesis complicates that assumption by showing how a *habitus* may persist not because it entirely 'fits' the present, but precisely because it cannot be easily dislodged. It lingers—sometimes as inertia, sometimes as resistance, and sometimes as quiet contradiction.

In offering an account of the *yilli habitus*, the thesis does more than apply a theory to a case. It positions the *yilli* as both an empirical subject and a conceptual provocation—inviting us to reconsider how cultural continuity is enacted not through harmony, but through struggle, improvisation, and negotiation. In doing so, it contributes to our understanding of Anatolian urban modernity and the ongoing theoretical work of rethinking *habitus* as a site of conflict as much as reproduction.

Integrated Findings from Socio-Spatial Analysis

This thesis has shown that the spatial relationship the *yilli* of Kayseri maintain with their city is complex, multi-layered, and not reducible to *habitus* alone. While *habitus* offers a powerful perspective for understanding persistent dispositions and cultural continuities, many of the spatial transformations observed also arise from rational choices influenced by technological innovations, shifts in housing markets, and adaptations to new lifestyles. The evolution of the urban form, from compact neighbourhoods around *İçerişar* to newly planned districts, follows not only a logic of displacement but also one of symbolic reterritorialisation, where *yilli* families collectively migrate to establish new social strongholds.

At the **neighbourhood scale**, the shift from intimate, close-knit residential clusters to more dispersed, status-oriented settlements reflects a larger transformation in the social function of space. Modernisation processes have not merely introduced new housing forms but have reorganised the social meaning of place. Areas once associated with rural retreats, such as Talas or Hisarcık, have evolved into prestigious enclaves, where vineyard houses signify upward mobility and class distinction. These changing geographies highlight how *yilli* families strategically use space to mark symbolic boundaries between themselves and others, especially “villagers” or non-*yilli* residents.

At the **building scale**, reinforced concrete apartment blocks have replaced traditional courtyard houses, but *yilli* people continue to assert spatial meanings within these new forms. Family apartments and cooperative houses gradually led to multi-story luxury buildings, often averaging 14 floors, where verticality became a marker of privacy and exclusivity. The desire to create *mahram* environments—distanced from street-level exposure—has shaped where *yilli* choose to live and how they inhabit modern architecture. This reinterpretation of space reveals that spatial modernisation is not a direct adoption of Western ideals but a localised transformation in which privacy, hierarchy, and display are negotiated anew.

Even at the **housing scale**, morphological adaptations trace the *yilli habitus*. While modern apartments lack the traditional Kayseri houses’ expandable, multi-generational structure, *yilli* families continue to emphasise spacious *salons*, central hallways, and the preservation of symbolic rooms. Practices such as keeping the *salon* untouched, emphasising the directionality of entrances, and arranging furniture in specific ways illustrate how *habitus* endures through architectural improvisation. Even contemporary houses exhibit modified versions of historical features—like *gusülhane* evolving into en-

suite bathrooms—showing how Islamic values and traditional social codes persist in modern housing.

Domestic life also reveals the enduring power of cultural routines. Storage practices, for instance, have transformed to reflect necessity and cultural memory. Items once stored in *yüklük* or *zerzembi* spaces now find their place on wardrobes or in repurposed areas like fire escapes, extending the boundary of the house into semi-public spaces. This redefinition of thresholds reflects a perception of hallways and corridors as social zones—a spatial logic that draws from communal traditions even within standardised apartment buildings. Similarly, socialisation continues to follow patterns rooted in modesty, gendered access, and ritualised hospitality, maintaining the symbolic hierarchy of family and guest relationships.

The role of consumption is equally vital in shaping space and performing identity. The *yilli* approach to home furnishing is guided by more than taste—it reflects a desire to display status, moral propriety, and cultural alignment. Gilded, carved, or branded furniture is a performative element in spaces like the *salon*, where visual cues signal social capital to guests and kin alike. These consumption patterns also reveal intra-household compromises, where families reduce everyday expenses to invest in high-prestige items for their houses. Here, the house becomes a lived space and a curated exhibition of identity and class aspiration.

Critical Reflections

While this study has shown how *yilli* residents sustain cultural continuity in their spatial practices, it also reveals tensions and contradictions within their relationship to space, identity, and urban belonging. Despite the performative rituals of place-making, the *yilli* do not exhibit a deeply rooted commitment to protecting or preserving the spaces they associate with their identity. Their pattern of withdrawal from older neighbourhoods—without resistance or attempts at preservation—suggests that spatial belonging may be more symbolic than material. In this light, neighbourhood loyalty is a vehicle for social distinction rather than a sign of territorial attachment.

This detachment may partly derive from the *yilli*'s historical identity as merchants rather than landowners. Unlike agrarian communities, whose identities are grounded in a direct relationship with land and production, the *yilli* have historically operated within the logic of exchange and commerce. As such, their relation to land is transactional rather than existential—space is not something to cultivate but to occupy strategically. In this

sense, their neighbourhood choices and relocations express a logic of symbolic capital, not spatial fixity.

The thesis thus argues that any meaningful understanding of urban transformation must account for how communities like the *yilli* live in, interpret, and contest space. Their houses are not just residences but archives of identity. Their neighbourhoods are not just addresses but symbolic territories. Their stories are not just recollections but blueprints for future practices. In this intricate interplay between memory, space, and *habitus*, the *yilli* of Kayseri offers a compelling example of cultural endurance in the modern city.

Yet, this case is not an isolated one. While this study highlights the uniqueness of the *yilli* identity and housing culture in Kayseri, it also reveals that locality is not a singular or isolated phenomenon. In many Anatolian cities—such as Konya, Sivas, and Erzurum—similarly rooted local communities have tried to renegotiate their identities through space in response to modernisation. It suggests that locality is not merely tied to geographic origin but is continually reproduced through spatial practices, social networks, and cultural traditions.

The confusion and contradictions experienced in the aftermath of modernisation—namely, the simultaneous performance of traditional practices alongside claims to urban modernity—are not unique to Kayseri. Across Turkey, the tension between superficial modernisation and the persistence of deep-seated cultural codes is a common phenomenon. The lack of a fully institutionalised urban bourgeoisie, in the Western sense, has contributed to this broader ambiguity regarding urban identity.

Nevertheless, Kayseri's case presents certain distinct characteristics. The city's strong tradition of commerce has shaped the *yilli* identity not through land ownership but through commercial networks and family prestige. Moreover, the *yilli* approach to space—not merely a site of residence but a stage for performing social hierarchy—marks a unique cultural preservation and adaptation strategy. The careful use of *salon* spaces, the symbolic weight of neighbourhood preferences, and the ritualisation of hospitality all illustrate how locals of Kayseri have resisted homogenisation while strategically navigating modernisation.

Thus, the *yilli* identity in Kayseri should be understood as part of the broader patterns of modernisation tensions in Turkey and as a **distinct local case** shaped by its specific historical, economic, and cultural dynamics. Recognising this dual character is crucial for appreciating the multiplicity of urban identities in Turkey and the diverse ways in which local modernities are constructed.

It leads to a set of paradoxes that complicate the *yilli*'s self-perception. First, their domestic and social practices remain rooted in patterns more associated with rural life—extended family households, gendered spatial divisions, conservative moral codes—yet they see themselves as *urban* and modern. Second, this claim to urbanity is often based on a perceived superiority over rural migrants, even though their form of “urbanism” is not tied to civic engagement or spatial permanence. Third, perhaps most ironic, the prestige they seek through urbanity is derived from Western models of urban distinction, even though the Turkish city has never fully institutionalised an urban bourgeois class in the Western sense. While in the West, the urban figure emerged as a societal actor in contrast to the aristocratic landowners of the feudal era, urbanity in Turkish cities has never been established as a distinct, normative identity. Instead, such an identity is more closely tied to the *eşraf* class, which is associated with a particular social and economic power rather than living in the city centre.

In Turkey, the claim to being an ‘urban elite’ rests less on land, legal authority, or intellectual capital and more on a performative class identity centred on aesthetics and consumption. This identity is shaped by visible consumption habits, outward displays of status, and the pursuit of social prestige rather than the more traditional markers of urbanity found in the Western context. Consequently, while the urban figure in the West was shaped through structural tension between the rural aristocracy and the urban bourgeoisie, urbanity in Turkish cities is more about an external search for prestige intertwined with social power and class identity.

It reveals a fourth paradox: despite having no deep connection to land or locality, the *yilli* continue to define themselves through the place. Their *habitus* is not grounded in a stable attachment to a particular geography but in the reproduction of symbolic distinctions, expressed through their houses’ location, layout, and decoration. As Bourdieu (2005) argues⁷⁵, the house is not only an object embedded in physical space but a structure doubly articulated through local norms and class-coded tastes. It becomes both a repository and a display of social difference, legitimised through seemingly neutral aesthetic preferences that function as cultural capital.

⁷⁵ “The house is also a product doubly linked to space and to a particular place in space: conceived as ‘immovable’ property, it is a dwelling which must be built in situ (not ‘prefabricated’); it is, moreover, caught up in local traditions both through the architectural and technical norms imposed by administrative regulation and, above all, through the tastes of potential buyers for regional styles” (pp. 40–41).

Thus, the *yilli* house is a site of domestic life and a strategic space for symbolic accumulation. Following Bourdieu, we can see how even seemingly trivial domestic details—the gilded furniture, the unused *salon*, the branded tea set—serve to reproduce class distinctions under the guise of taste. These aesthetic codes are neither arbitrary nor innocent; they are structured by and serve to reinforce the *yilli*'s position within Kayseri's symbolic hierarchy.

Moreover, this creates a form of urban segregation, not through deprivation but through exclusivity. As *yilli* families cluster in specific neighbourhoods to maintain symbolic boundaries, they reproduce a segregated urban form based on cultural capital rather than formal zoning. The city becomes a map of invisible borders between rich and poor and between those who “belong” and those who are “out of place.”

In this sense, the *yilli* relationship with the city is not one of stewardship or civic participation but of strategic navigation. Space is not cultivated, defended, or preserved—it is consumed, manipulated, and eventually abandoned in favour of new symbolic terrain. What remains is not a coherent urban identity but a choreography of social distinction enacted through ritualised aesthetics and selective nostalgia.

Modernity as Symbol and Misunderstanding

The study reveals that modernisation, for the *yilli*, is not synonymous with Westernisation. Rather than embracing an individualist, secular modernity, *yilli* families engage in a hybrid process: adopting technology and spatial convenience while preserving cultural codes of modesty, hierarchy, and belonging. Integrating heating systems, plumbing, and multi-functional spaces is seen less as ideological change and more as a functional improvement—an enhancement of the traditional way of life rather than its rejection.

Building on this, one of the core insights of the study is the need to critically interrogate how modernisation is practised and perceived by the *yilli* of Kayseri. While structural transformations—such as reinforced concrete housing, high-rise apartments, or domestic technological conveniences—are often seen as signs of modernisation, this study reveals that their adoption does not necessarily signal a transformation in underlying values or social logic. Instead, the material language of modernity has been selectively appropriated and recontextualised within the existing cultural framework. In this sense, modernisation has often served more as a **symbolic aesthetic** than a substantive shift in worldview.

Despite the visible shifts in housing typologies and material culture, traditional life among the *yilli* has not disappeared—it has merely adopted new instruments. What changes is not the structure of life but its *means of expression*. Modernisation, in this context, does not dismantle traditional norms; it retools them. The *salon*, once a site for ceremonial visits in the traditional house, continues to function with the same logic in modern apartments—now filled with imported, gilded furniture but still rarely used except for highly ritualised occasions. Similarly, gendered spatial divisions, notions of *mahram*, and hierarchies of guest reception persist, though they now inhabit the spaces of centrally heated flats with laminate floors and modular kitchens. We observe not the abandonment of tradition but its migration into modern forms.

It reveals a central paradox: while the *yilli* inhabit modern structures, their lifeways remain deeply rooted in inherited values. Technological tools such as heating systems or kitchen appliances are not adopted as symbols of progressive, individualist subjectivity but as instruments to reinforce familiar roles and expectations within the family unit. In this sense, modernity becomes a *vehicle* through which tradition is updated, not replaced. The domestic sphere continues functioning according to long-standing cultural scripts, now reinterpreted through new material affordances. This continuity suggests that what appears as transformation is often translation: a change in *form*, not in *function*.

For the *yilli*, modernisation is frequently equated with comfort, prestige, and status. It is understood not as a rupture from tradition but as acquiring tools that enhance daily life without disrupting long-standing norms. Technologies such as heating systems, plumbing, or modern kitchens are embraced. However, they are integrated into a cultural logic still governed by *mahram* (gendered divisions), kinship hierarchies, ritualised hospitality, and aesthetic codes of distinction. As a result, modernisation appears not as a linear break with the past but as a layering—a surface of change over a persistent traditional core.

While the *yilli* may appear to embrace modernity, the reality is that these modern elements do not signal a departure from tradition. Instead, they often reinforce deeply embedded cultural codes and social hierarchies. This hybridisation of modernity is a nuanced negotiation, where traditional values related to family structure, gender roles, and social stratification continue to shape daily life, even within the context of seemingly modern buildings and technologies (Yürekli & Yürekli, 2012). The *yilli* have not done so much modernising in the Western sense of the term but rather repurposes modern forms

to reflect their cultural practices, often masking these traditions behind the veneer of contemporary architecture and consumer goods.

Thus, while the *yilli* may view their new housing choices as symbols of social progress, they often mark a retreat from the more public, community-oriented spaces of older neighbourhoods, where shared histories and local networks of belonging were more pronounced. Adopting high-rise buildings, focusing on verticality and privacy, signifies not embracing modernity as a progressive force but a shift toward exclusivity. It attempts to assert control over the narrative of belonging by withdrawing into spaces prioritising individual status over collective identity. The spatial practices of the *yilli* in modern settings often reveal a complex, selective adaptation of modernity, where material advancements do not necessarily lead to a more egalitarian or liberal urban fabric.

This tension between modern forms and traditional values speaks to a broader pattern in Turkish cities. Adopting modern architecture and technologies does not automatically equate to dismantling the social structures and norms that shape people's lives. While the material language of modernisation is evident in the new houses and technologies, the cultural logic of these spaces remains anchored in the symbolic practices of the past. In this way, modernity often functions as a tool for perpetuating traditional forms of social distinction rather than a vehicle for genuine social change.

Therefore, while the *yilli* may believe they are modernising, the reality is that the symbolic power of their spatial practices lies not in their embrace of modernity but in their ability to adapt it to reinforce existing hierarchies and maintain their sense of identity. It calls into question the assumption that the outward appearance of modernity is synonymous with cultural or social progress. In the case of the *yilli*, modernisation may be less about embracing new values than strategically using new forms to sustain long-standing ones.

It creates a fundamental tension: while *yilli* residents increasingly inhabit the visual and material forms of the modern city, their domestic and social life remains structured by inherited behaviour patterns. The *salon* remains unused except for formal visits, the household continues to observe gendered spatial divisions, and the house is decorated not for comfort but for symbolic display. The *language* of modernity is spoken through branded furniture, Western appliances, and architectural form—but its grammar is still traditional. Thus, modernisation, in this context, becomes more about performance than transformation.

Crucially, this raises the question: **what does it mean to be modern?** The *yilli*'s adoption of modern forms does not reflect internalised shifts in subjectivity, values, or social imaginaries. Instead, it reflects a strategic engagement with the **representations** of modernity—a curated display that functions primarily to mark class distinction. As Bourdieu suggests, aesthetic preferences and symbolic goods often reproduce social hierarchies under the guise of personal taste or progress. The *yilli* house, with its decorative excess and ritualised functionality, becomes a theatre where modernity is enacted, not necessarily experienced.

Moreover, this dynamic highlights the **multiplicity of modernities**—a concept increasingly recognised in global urban studies. There is no single, unified path to becoming modern. The *yilli* case demonstrates that modernisation can be hybrid, selective, and deeply embedded in the local logic of honour, kinship, and status. Modern tools do not automatically produce modern subjects; they often reinforce existing cultural distinctions through new media.

In this light, it becomes apparent that **modernisation is not always modernity**, and technological advancement is not synonymous with cultural change. The *yilli*'s experience offers a cautionary tale: that the symbolic adoption of modern forms may camouflage persistent inequalities, conservatism, and exclusions. A gilded *salon* does not erase gender hierarchies; a branded kitchen does not dismantle inherited social scripts. What emerges instead is a form of **aestheticised conservatism**—an adherence to tradition disguised in the language of modern progress.

This critical perspective complicates the triumphalist narrative of urban transformation and challenges the assumption that spatial and technological changes necessarily foster social openness or liberal values. The *yilli* case underscores that meaningful change must involve deeper *habitus* structures, not outward expressions. Without this, modernity risks becoming a surface game: impressive in appearance but ultimately hollow in substance.

6.2 Societal Impacts and Contribution to Global Sustainability

The societal implications of this study are far-reaching. At a local level, it provides a deeper understanding of Kayseri's socio-spatial stratification, drawing attention to the

invisible mechanisms of cultural distinction within urban life. It challenges policymakers, planners, and architects to reconsider the assumption of spatial neutrality in housing design and to recognise that culture continues to play a defining role in how people inhabit and make sense of space. The tension between standardisation and cultural specificity is not merely aesthetic or functional but profoundly social.

From a sociological perspective, the thesis contributes to debates on urban inequality, cultural reproduction, and the politics of space. It shows how cultural capital, often viewed in abstract terms, becomes materially manifest in spatial preferences, domestic arrangements, and neighbourhood trajectories. The distinction between *yilli* and non-*yilli* affects who lives where, who is seen as belonging, who has authority in communal decisions, and who is considered “from here.”

The findings also have implications for heritage studies and cultural sustainability. Too often, the focus of conservation efforts is on monumental heritage buildings, artefacts, and urban landscapes, while the intangible dimensions of urban culture are neglected. This research shows that everyday spaces like the living room, the corridor, the dining room, or the balcony hold vital memories and perform essential social functions. These spaces are not simply backdrops to social life; they actively reproduce social norms, values, and identities.

In the global context, the thesis engages with broader questions of sustainability, not only in environmental terms but in cultural terms. Global urbanisation trends often promote models of development that ignore or erase local specificities. Yet, as this research illustrates, sustainable urban futures require cultural sustainability: the capacity of communities to retain and adapt their ways of life in the face of change. The adaptive strategies of the *yilli*—modifying apartments to fit traditional practices, preserving spatial rituals, and maintaining kinship networks—represent forms of resilience that should be recognised, studied, and incorporated into planning discourses.

Furthermore, the insights from Kayseri contribute to a growing body of scholarship on urban identities in non-Western contexts. Too often, urban theory is dominated by examples from Western Europe and North America, leaving aside the rich and complex realities of cities in the Global South. This study offers a grounded, detailed, and culturally embedded account of how urban identity is produced through economic or political processes and everyday domestic life.

The emphasis on oral history and ethnography also aligns with global movements toward participatory research and decolonial methodologies. By foregrounding the voices

of the *yilli*—particularly elders and women—the research democratises knowledge production and acknowledges alternative epistemologies rooted in lived experience. It challenges dominant narratives of progress that equate modernisation with erasure and instead shows how tradition and modernity can coexist, negotiate, and even enrich each other.

In an era marked by displacement, homogenisation, and ecological crisis, the question of what it means to belong to a place—and how that belonging is expressed in space—becomes more urgent than ever. This study offers a powerful reminder that sustainability must be cultural and environmental and that the wisdom of place-bound communities like the *yilli* has much to teach us about resilience, adaptation, and continuity.

This study also contributes to the broader global agenda set forth by the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 9 and 11. By highlighting how spatial design and housing infrastructure intersect with local cultural logic, the research challenges the universality of standardised urban models and advocates for more inclusive, context-sensitive planning, aligning with SDG 9's emphasis on sustainable and resilient infrastructure. At the same time, the *yilli* community's adaptive practices and preservation of spatial rituals demonstrate a form of cultural resilience that resonates with SDG 11's vision for inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities. These findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural sustainability into urban development strategies, recognising that community-rooted knowledge and traditions are not obstacles to progress but vital resources for building truly resilient and equitable urban futures.

6.3 Future Prospects

While the thesis has shed light on many aspects of the *yilli* housing culture, it has opened new questions and potential research directions. One immediate extension would be to examine other cities in Anatolia with strong local cultures—such as Konya, Sivas, or Erzurum—to explore whether similar spatial identities exist and how they differ. Such comparative studies could illuminate broader patterns of urban belonging, cultural memory, and spatial adaptation in the Turkish context and beyond.

Another promising direction is the investigation of intergenerational shifts within the *yilli* community. While this study included multiple age groups, a deeper focus on the younger generation—those born in the 1990s and 2000s—could reveal how globalisation,

education, digital media, and changing gender norms reshape *yilli* identity. Are these individuals continuing the spatial practices of their elders? Are they reinterpreting them in new ways? Or are they moving toward more individualised, mobile, and de-territorialised forms of belonging?

The gendered dimensions of *yilli habitus* also merit further exploration. This thesis touched on issues such as *mahram* and gendered space. Still, a focused feminist analysis could uncover how women sustain and challenge traditional norms through their roles in the house, marriage, and community life. How do women's spatial practices shift with education, employment, and public visibility? What new forms of agency emerge in their negotiations for space?

There is also scope for more interdisciplinary collaborations, particularly with digital humanities, architecture, and urban planning. For instance, creating digital archives, GIS-based memory maps, or interactive models of traditional *yilli* houses could provide powerful tools for scholarship and community engagement. Such initiatives would preserve cultural memory and make it accessible to the broader public and future generations.

In terms of policy impact, the research suggests several avenues. Urban planners in Kayseri and similar cities might benefit from participatory design processes that include local people in decision-making. Housing policies could be adjusted for greater flexibility in spatial layouts, enabling cultural practices to flourish within modern typologies. Educational curricula in architecture and planning schools could include modules on local identity, *habitus*, and vernacular traditions to foster culturally responsive design.

Finally, the research points to the importance of documenting and celebrating local identities in a rapidly changing world. As cities expand and diversify, there is a risk that minority histories and practices—such as those of the *yilli*—will be forgotten or marginalised. This study argues that these histories are worth preserving and vital to understanding the full complexity of urban life.

The thesis concludes with a reflection that transcends its empirical focus. In the placement of a *sofa*, the careful folding of a dowry cloth, the use of a family nickname—there resides a profound logic of belonging, one that links the individual to the community, the present to the past, and the house to the city. These small acts, often invisible to outsiders, are the very threads that hold urban life together. By listening to them, we gain insight into Kayseri's *yilli* culture and learn about the enduring human desire to make a place in the world.

It raises important questions for urban planners and policymakers. How can cities accommodate cultural specificity within standardised planning frameworks? What does it mean to protect intangible urban heritage—monuments, ways of living, social codes, and spatial practices? The findings suggest that participatory planning processes must engage with local *habitus*, recognising that space is not neutral but imbued with meaning.

Moreover, the study contributes to urban anthropology and architectural sociology by describing how cultural capital is reproduced through housing. The *yilli* of Kayseri is not unique in facing the pressures of modernisation. Still, their practices offer a clear perspective on the tensions between tradition and modernity, place and displacement, permanence and adaptation.

While the study has provided a detailed account of the *yilli* housing culture, certain limitations remain. The research focused primarily on individuals who identified as *yilli* and maintained strong ties to traditional practices. It did not extensively explore those who may have distanced themselves from these identities, nor did it deeply analyse the perspectives of non-*yilli* residents on these dynamics.

Further research could expand the comparative scope by exploring other Anatolian cities to investigate whether similar forms of spatial identity exist. While initial inquiries suggest that being *yilli* is unique to Kayseri, broader ethnographic comparisons may reveal parallel structures in other urban contexts. Additionally, future studies might examine how younger generations within *yilli* families negotiate their identities, especially those raised in standardised apartments, educated abroad, or married outside the local network.

Another potential avenue is to explore the gendered dimensions of *yilli habitus* more deeply. While this study touched on gendered space (e.g., *mahram*, guest rooms), a feminist analysis could offer richer insights into how gender roles are spatialised and how women maintain or contest the logic of being *yilli* through their domestic practices.

Finally, digital technologies—such as spatial tracking, GIS mapping of oral histories, and virtual reconstructions of traditional houses—could enhance the visualisation of spatial memory and transformation, offering new tools for research and public engagement.

At its core, this thesis is an exploration of belonging. Tracing the housing culture of the *yilli* of Kayseri has sought to understand how people anchor themselves in place, make space meaningful, and navigate the challenges of change without losing their sense of self. In the quiet rituals of daily life—the use of a shared courtyard, the passing down

of a cooking technique—we find the enduring grammar of identity. In these details, cities remember, and through them, cultural continuities persist.

As Kayseri continues to grow, the question remains: can the city embrace the richness of its past while accommodating the pluralism of its future? The answer, perhaps, lies not only in policy but in practice—in the living rooms, kitchens, and courtyards where identity is performed every day. This study took one such community and listened closely to what its spaces said. It invites future researchers, planners, and citizens to do the same.



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Appendix A. Interview Questions

Profil ve kimlik [Profile and Identity]:

1. Adınız – soyadınız? [Name – surname?]
2. Nerede ve ne zaman doğdunuz? [Where and when were you born?]
3. Kaç kardeşsiniz? [How many siblings do you have?]
4. Medeni durumunuz nedir? Evliyseniz eşiniz ne iş yapıyor? [What is your marital status? If you are married, what is your spouse's occupation?]
5. Çalışıyor musunuz? Gelir durumunuzu nasıl tariflersiniz? [Are you working? How would you define your income level?]
6. Çocuğunuz var mı? [Do you have children?]
7. Hangi okullardan mezun oldunuz? Yabancı dil biliyor musunuz? [Which schools did you graduate from? Do you speak any foreign languages?]
8. Ailenizden şehir dışında okuyan oldu mu? Çocuklarınızı eğitim için şehir dışına gönderir misiniz? [Is there anyone in your family who studied outside the city? Would you let your children study in another city?]
9. Kayseri dışında bulundunuz mu / yaşadınız mı? [Have you ever lived outside Kayseri?]

Yerlilik [Being *Yilli*]:

10. Kayseri'nin yerlisi kime denir? Kayseri'nin yerlisinin belirgin özellikleri var mıdır? [Who is called a *yilli* of Kayseri? Are there any identifying features of a *yilli* of Kayseri?]
11. Kayseri'nin yerlisi olma durumunuz nasıldır? Baba tarafından mı yoksa her iki taraftan mı yerlisiniz? [What kind of a *yilli* you are? Are you *yilli* from paternal side or both sides of your family?]
12. Kökeninizin hangi mahalleden? [From which neighbourhood do you originate?]
13. Yerlilik meselesini / yerli olmayı önemsiyor musunuz? [Do you care about being a *yilli*?]
14. Aileniz geçmişten beri ne işle uğraşıyor? (Tüccar, memur vb.) [What is your family's occupation?]

15. D n rlerinizin yerli olmasını tercih eder misiniz? Kızınız (varsa) G r c ye  ıkartıyor musunuz? [Would you have your daughter (if you have one) see a matchmaker?]

Eski mahalle – Eski konut [Old neighbourhood and house]:

16. Daha  nce nere(ler)de – hangi mahalle(ler)de yaşıdınız? [Where and in which neighbourhoods have you lived before?]
17.  ocukluğunuzdan ve  ocukluk mahallenizden bahseder misiniz? Zamanınızın  oğ  nerede ge erdi? Mahalle arkadaşlarınız var mıydı? Ne oyunlar oynardınız? (Kız erkek beraber mi oynardınız?) [Could you mention your childhood and childhood neighbourhood? Did you have friends from the neighbourhood? Which games did you play? Did you play together as girls and boys?]
18. Mahallede yaşayan insanların ortak  zellikleri var mıydı?  rneğın gelir durumu ya da yaşam tarzları arasında  ok fark var mıydı? [Were there any similar features among the people living in the neighbourhood? For example, were features like income level or lifestyle different or similar?]
19. Komşuluk/akrabalık ilişkileri nasıldı? (Bu ilişkiler mek na nasıl yansıyordu?  r. Kimlerle hangi mekanlarda sosyalleşme ger ekleşiyor? Hangi aktiviteler yapılıyor?) [How was your relationship with neighbours and relatives? How did these relationships reflect the space? For example, which spaces were used to socialise with whom? Which activities were held in which space?]
20. Bug ne kadar oturduğunuz evler size mi aitti? Kira mıydı?
Bu evleri tarif edebilir misiniz? ( r. Nasıl bir sokaktaydı? Odaları nasıl kullanırdınız?) Ka , odası vardı? Evde ka , kiři yaşırdı? Krokisini  izebilir misiniz?
Yatılı misafir gelir miydi? Gelirse nerede konaklardı?
[Did the houses you lived in belong to you, or were they rental houses? Could you describe the houses? For example, what kind of street was it? How did you use the rooms, etc.? How many rooms did they have? How many people were living in the house? Could you draw sketches of the house? Were there any guests who stayed? If so, where did they stay?]

21. Mobilyaları ve diğer eşyaları hatırlıyor musunuz? [Do you remember the furniture and other belongings in those houses?]
22. Eski evi(leri)nizde neyi özlerdiniz, neyi severdiniz ya da neyi sevmezsiniz? Şikâyet ettiğiniz bir şey var mıydı? [What do you miss about your old houses? What did you like and dislike? Was there anything you complained about?]
23. Eski evi(leri)nizi düşündüğünüzde aklınıza gelen bir koku ya da renk var mı? [Is there any color or smell you remember when you think of your old houses?]
24. Eski evi(leri)nizden anı olarak getirdiğiniz mobilya / eşya var mı? Bu eşyayı kullanıyor musunuz? Aile büyüklerinizden kalan, çocuklara bırakmayı düşündüğünüz eşyalar var mı? [Is there any furniture or belongings you still hold today from your old houses as mementos? Are there any things you want to pass down to your children as family mementos?]

Güncel mahalle – Güncel konut [Existing neighbourhood – house]:

25. Kaç yıldır bu mahallede yaşıyorsunuz? Burada yaşadığınız süre içinde mahalle değişti mi? [How long have you been living in this neighbourhood? Has the neighbourhood changed during the time you've lived here?]
26. Bu mahallede ev almaya veya kiralamaya nasıl karar verdiniz? Kimler etkili oldu? Mahallenin hangi özellikleri sizi cezbedi? [How did you decide to buy or rent a house in this neighbourhood? Was there anyone who influenced your decision? Which features of the neighbourhood captivated you?]
27. Kaç yıldır bu evde oturuyorsunuz? Eviniz size mi ait yoksa kira mı? İkincil bir konutunuz var mı? (Ör. Bağ evi) [How long have you been living in this house? Do you own the house, or is it a rental? Do you have a second house, like a vineyard house?]
28. Eski evinizden neden bu eve geçtiniz? Ev değiştirmenizde neler rol oynadı? [Why did you move to this house from the old one? What played a role in your decision?]
29. Bu konutu neden tercih ettiniz? Tercihle fiyat mı, yoksa özellikler mi etkili oldu? Mahalle ve komşuların ya da akrabaların tercihinizdeki etkisi nedir? [Why did you prefer this house? Was the price or the features a factor in your decision? What influence did the neighbourhood, neighbours, or relatives have on this decision?]

30. Evinizde sürekli yaşayan kişi sayısı nedir? Çekirdek aile olarak mı büyük aile olarak mı yaşıyorsunuz? [How many people are living in the house? Do you live as a core family or an extended family?]
31. Şu an oturduğunuz konutun özellikleri nelerdir? Evin büyüklüğü nedir? Kaç odası vardır? [What are the features of your house? What is its size? How many rooms does it have?]
32. Şu an oturduğunuz konutu nasıl kullanıyorsunuz? Odaları kimler kullanıyor? *Salon* ve oturma odası ayrı mı? Misafir geldiğinde nerede ağırlarsınız? [How do you use the house? Which rooms are used by whom? Is there a separation between the *salon* and the living room? Where do you host your guests?]
33. Evinizdeki mobilyaları ne zaman ve nereden aldınız? Mobilya seçerken nelere dikkat ettiniz? [Where and when did you buy your furniture? What did you focus on when choosing them?]
34. Ev dekorasyonu sizin için önemli midir? Ev dekorasyonunda nelere dikkat edersiniz? Dekorasyonda kullandığınız kişisel bir eşyanız var mı? [Is home decoration important to you? What features do you prioritise in home decoration? Is there any personally made item you use for decoration?]
35. Ev değiştirmek ister misiniz? Evet ise neden? Hayır ise evinizde neyi değiştirmek istersiniz? [Would you prefer to change your house? If yes, why? If no, what would you prefer to change in the house?]
36. Sizce bir evde olmazsa olmaz diyeceğiniz eşyalar nelerdir? [Is there anything you see as essential in the house?]

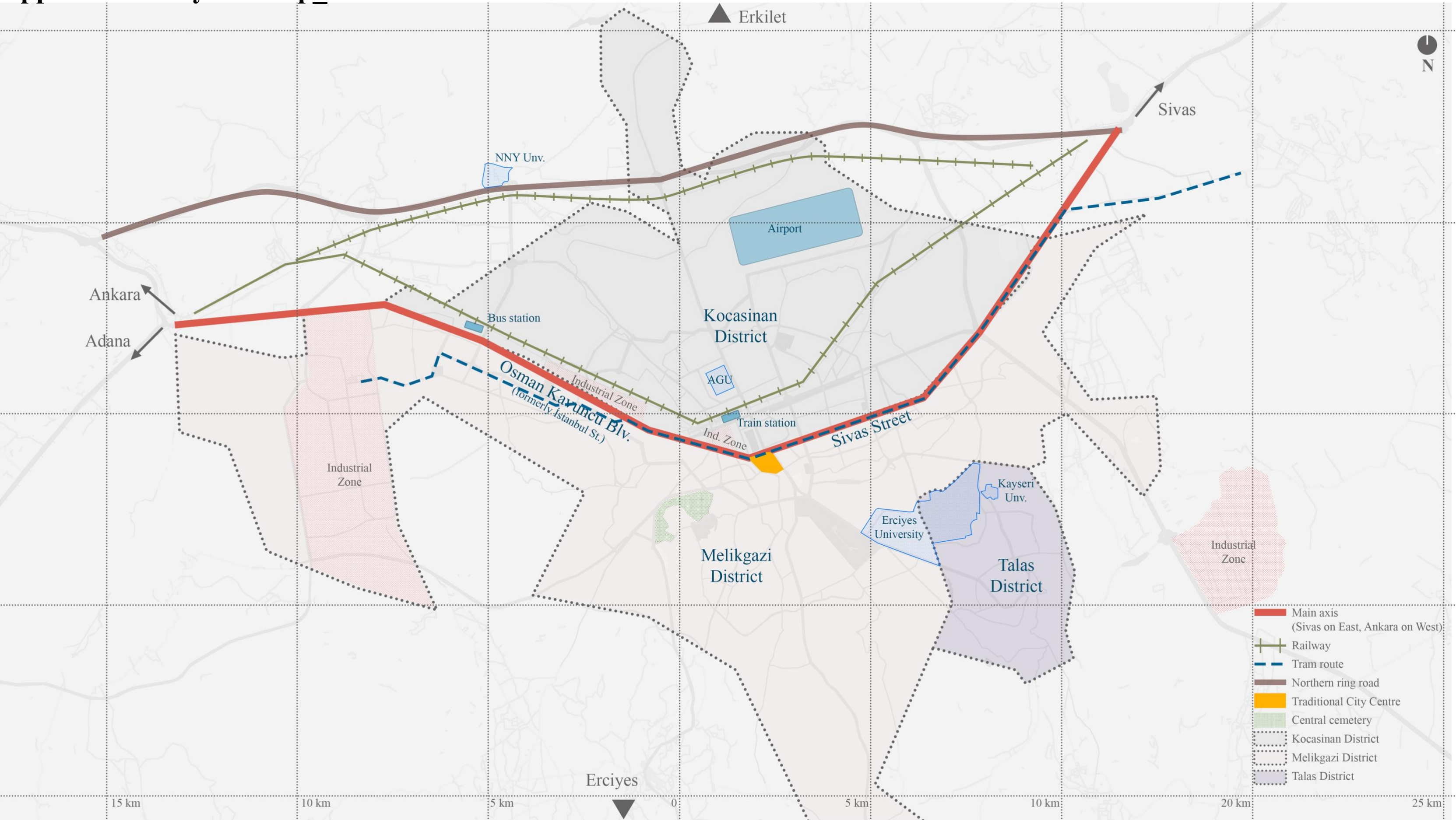
Gündelik hayat – kültür [Daily life and culture]:

37. Kayseri yemekleri yapar mısınız? Yemek için hangi odayı kullanırsınız? [Do you cook Kayseri dishes? Which space do you use to eat your meals?]
38. Evinizdeki mahremiyet nerede başlıyor? (Ör. Yatak odanızı kimler görebilir?) [Where does privacy begin in your house? For example, who is allowed to see your bedroom?]
39. Komşularınızla, akrabalarınızla, arkadaşlarınızla düzenlediğiniz etkinlikler (oturma, düğün, salça, pekmez, kışık hazırlıklar vb.) olur mu? Varsa bu etkinlikleri nerelerde yaparsınız? Bu etkinlikler için evde hangi mekanları kullanırsınız? [Are there any activities you organise with your neighbours,

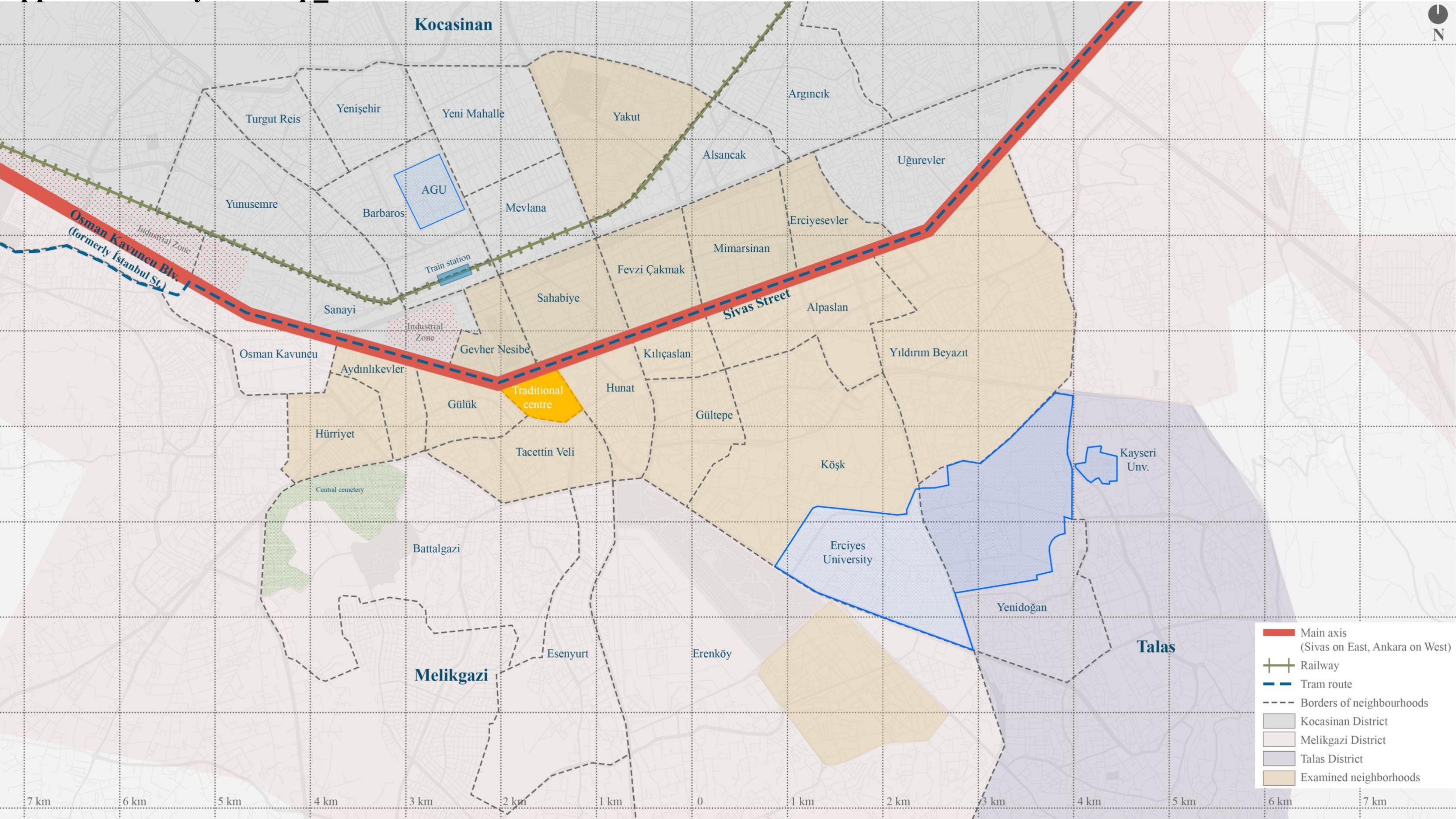
relatives, or friends — such as *oturma*, *d  n  rl  k*, sauce making, molasses production, or winter preparations? If so, where do you carry out these activities? Which spaces in the house do you use for them?]

40. Oturmalarda kadın – erkek ayrı mı yoksa birlikte mi oturuyorsunuz? [Do you socialise together or separately (as women and men) during an *oturma*?]
41. Gemiřten beri olan hangi adetleri uygulamaya devam ediyorsunuz? (  r. Kalın, eyiz, hamam) Bu adetler iin hangi mekanları kullanırsınız? [Which traditions do you continue — such as *kalın*, dowry, hammam, etc.? Which spaces do you use for these traditions?]
42. Sandıėınız var mı? Sandıėınızla ne getirdiniz? Kızınıza ya da oėlunuza sandık hazırlasanız iinde neler olur? [Do you have a dowry chest? What did you put inside it? What would you include if you were preparing one for your daughter or son?]
43. Eskiden b  yle bir yerde yařamayı hayal eder miydiniz? [Would you have considered living in a place like this in the past?]
44. Geride kalan yıllarda yařam standartlarında bir deėiřiklik oldu mu? (Hayat tarzı, t  ketim alışkanlıkları vb.) [Has there been any change in the quality of your life over the years, such as your way of living, consumption preferences, etc.?]
45. Kendi anne babanız sizin bug  nk   yařam tarzınızı nasıl yorumlarlar? (  r: beėenirler mi, mutlu mu olurlar, yoksa eleřtirirler mi? Sizin kendi ocuklarınız iin b  yle bir   ng  r  n  z var mı? [What would your parents think of your way of living today if they were able to see it? Would they like it, be happy about it, or would they criticise it? Do you have any predictions for your children, similar to how your parents had expectations for you?]

Appendix B. Kayseri Map_1



Appendix C. Kayseri Map_2



Curriculum Vitae (CV)

EDUCATION

2017–2019 | M.Sc. in Architecture, Abdullah Gül University, Turkey

Thesis: *A Critical Prospect into Working Spaces for Immaterial Labour*

2003–2009 | B.Sc. in Architecture, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2020–present | Lecturer – Abdullah Gül University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture

2017–2019 | Visiting Lecturer – Erciyes University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Industrial Design

2017–2018 | Visiting Lecturer – Erciyes University, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Industrial Design Engineering

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017–2018 | Architect – Erciyes University Congress Center Project

2009–2016 | Architect / Designer – Boytaş A.Ş. (İstikbal & Mondî), R&D

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Architecture and Urban Planning, Housing and Culture, Spatial Identity, Flexible Design, Parametric Design, Social Stratification, Everyday Practices

PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES:

Muş Özmen, N., & Asiliskender, B. Urban layers and living spaces: The evolution of housing in Kayseri. *Journal of Design for Resilience in Architecture and Planning*. (in printing process)

Kurtuluş, V. B. & Muş Özmen, N. Deprem anında ve Sonrasında dönüşebilen tasarım önerileri: Günlük kullanımdan hayat kurtaran birimlere. *Türk Deprem Araştırma Dergisi*. (in printing process)

Muş Özmen, N., Özüberk, P., & Güneş, A. (2023). Tekerlekli sandalye kullanıcılarına yönelik engelsiz yaşam alanı projesi. *Gazi Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Dergisi Part C: Tasarım Ve Teknoloji*, 11(4), 913-931. <https://doi.org/10.29109/gujsc.1334420>

Muş Özmen, N., & Asiliskender, B. (2021). Evolution of office space in cinema and television. *Megaron*, 16(2), 169-182. <https://doi.org/10.14744/megaron.2021.70431>

Muş Özmen, N., & Asiliskender, B. (2020). Space prospect in the flexible era of late capitalism. *ICONARP International Journal of Architecture and Planning*, 8(2), 591–605. <https://doi.org/10.15320/ICONARP.2020.128>.

Muş Özmen, N., (2020). Grey Spaces: Transitory Spaces in Liquid Modernity. *Kare Dergi*, 9, 75-91.

PROCEEDINGS:

Atılgan, A., & Muş Özmen, N., (2025). *Revealing the layers of Ağırnas and reproducing itself*. XIV. International Sinan Symposium (pp.467-480). Edirne, Turkey. (Full Text)

Özüberk, P., & Muş Özmen, N., (2023). *Interior furniture arrangement for wheelchair users: Barrier-free living space project*. IFC 2023 Uluslararası Mobilya Kongresi (pp.32-33). Kayseri, Turkey. (Summary)

Muş Özmen, N., & Kevseroğlu, Ö., (2023). *Kentsel katmanlaşma bağlamında kent, biçim ve değişim: Askeri-mimari fonksiyonundan Çarşı'ya; Kayseri Dışkale*. IV. Kentsel Morfoloji Sempozyumu (pp.570-583). Konya, Turkey. (Full Text)