

DIFFERENCES IN THE USES AND NEEDS OF  
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS:  
A CASE STUDY ABOUT FEMALE PARK USERS IN  
BALÇOVA (İZMİR, TURKEY)

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## ABSTRACT

### DIFFERENCES IN THE USES AND NEEDS OF NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS: A CASE STUDY ABOUT FEMALE PARK USERS IN BALÇOVA (IZMIR, TURKEY)

Neighborhood parks as important public open green spaces are supposed to provide certain opportunities of improving physical and mental health, socializing with others and developing public expression and identity in neighborhoods. However, on the contrary to ideal definitions of public open green spaces as open and accessible to all groups of the society, in real life this “access” is not guaranteed for all, mainly due to unequal distribution of resources. Especially certain groups of the society experience urban inequalities due to unequal distribution of resources. Women is one those groups who experience urban inequalities. The aim of this thesis is to produce a comprehensive research method that adopts a need-based approach to understand underlying causes of different user groups’ park needs and uses by looking at the different experiences of women in neighborhood parks based on their park perceptions as an example. Therefore, I conducted a case study in the neighborhood parks in Balçova, İzmir, Turkey with "mixed method" as a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. I realized detailed observations, questionnaires, structured and un-structured interviews with Balçova residents in neighborhood parks and community houses. As a result, this study contributes to the scientific literature with the produced comprehensive research method, park improvement suggestions that consider the differences in the needs and uses of neighborhood parks and a raised awareness regarding the park needs of women, especially the ones who are bound to neighborhood space with limited social and leisure activity opportunities.

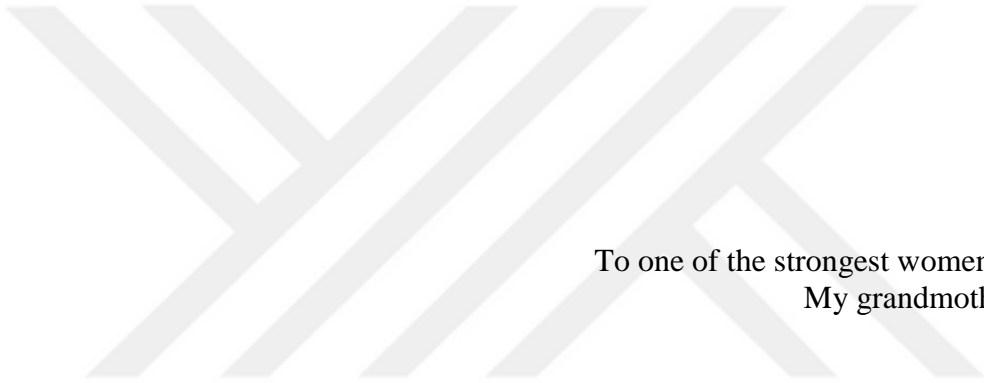
*Keywords: Public space, neighborhood parks, gender, park provision, urban inequalities*

## ÖZET

### MAHALLE PARKLARININ KULLANIMLARI VE İHTİYAÇLARINDA FARKLILIKLAR: BALÇOVA'DAKİ (İZMİR, TÜRKİYE) KADIN PARK KULLANICILARINA DAİR BİR ÖRNEKLEM ÇALIŞMASI

Mahalle parkları kullanıcılarına çeşitli imkanlar sunan, önemli birer açık ve yeşil kamusal alanlardır. Bu imkanların başında fiziksel ve psikolojik sağlığın iyileştirilmesi, insanlar ile sosyalleşme şansı, kamusal alanda kendini ve fikirlerini diğer insanlara ifade edebilme şansı gelir. Ancak açık ve yeşil kamusal alanlar için ideal durumlar baz alınarak yapılan ve bu mekanları herkesin erişimine açık olarak tanımlayan ifadelerin aksine, gerçek hayatta bu mekanlara erişim herkes için mümkün değildir. Bu da temel olarak kamusal kaynakların hakça dağıtılmamasından doğar. Bu durumdan toplum içerisinde özellikle belirli gruplar daha çok zarar görür ve kentsel eşitsizliklere maruz kalırlar. Bu grupların başında da kadınlar gelir. Bu tez farklı kullanıcı gruplarının mahalle parklarını kullanırkenki ihtiyaçlarını ve farklı kullanım deneyimlerini kadın kullanıcılar özelinde incelemeyi, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı olarak deneyimlenen kentsel eşitsizliklerin altında yatan nedenlerin anlaşılmasını, kadınların park kullanımlarının artırılması için düzenlemelerin yapılması için gereken bilginin üretilmesini ve amaçlar. Bu amaç için Balçova, İzmir, Türkiye’de karma yöntemli, niteliksel ve niceliksel verileri ve analiz yöntemlerini bir araya getiren bir alan çalışması uyguladım. Bu alan çalışması kapsamında Balçova’da yaşayan kişiler ile mahalle parklarında ve semt evlerinde detaylı gözlem, anket ve röportaj çalışmaları gerçekleştirdim. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma bilimsel literatüre üç şekilde katkı sağlar: İhtiyaca dayalı kaynak dağıtımını baz alarak kapsamlı bir araştırma metodu önerisi, farklı kullanıcı gruplarının ihtiyaçlarını göz önünde bulunduran park geliştirme modeli ve de özellikle mahalle alanına bağlı yaşayan, kısıtlı sosyal ve dinlenme aktivitesi imkanına sahip olan ve kamusal alanın bir parçası olmakta zorlanan kadınların ihtiyaçları hakkında bir farkındalık yaratılmasıdır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamusal alan, mahalle parkları, toplumsal cinsiyet, park temini, kentsel eşitsizlik*



To one of the strongest women in my life.  
My grandmother, Suna...

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1. Research Questions and Aim of the Study

This study explores the interrelated ties among socio-economic characteristics of individuals, social and physical characteristics of parks and their surrounding neighborhood when shaping different user groups' neighborhood park uses and needs in the example of women. Thesis tries to understand the effects of gender perceptions on women's park use. Neighborhood parks are important public open green spaces and valuable public services that are designed, planned and distributed through public resources. Getting access to and benefit from neighborhood parks carry great value especially for certain groups of people such as women, who are expected to have most of their daily life close to home. This study argues that, accessing to and benefiting from – using – neighborhood parks is not possible all the time for all residents. In the case women due to certain conditions such as their individual limitations and their gendered perceptions, provided parks and amenities, the surrounding neighborhood conditions, and other users of the park the use of parks is even harder. Additionally certain park provision policies and limited consideration of potential users' needs from such parks contribute to limited use of parks by female users.

Drawing from my observations, surveys, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with female users of neighborhood parks in Balçova, İzmir (Turkey), this study aims to understand the underlying causes of different experiences of different users in the example of women in neighborhood parks based on their park perceptions and to produce useful knowledge that will improve women's park use experiences and participation to the parochial realm of the neighborhoods through physical and social change of the neighborhood parks. In order to achieve this purpose, the study aims to answer following research questions:

Q1: How do people use neighborhood parks? How do user's socio-economic characteristics relate to their neighborhood park use?

Q2: How do physical and social characteristics of parks affect individual's use of neighborhood parks?

Q3: How do the gendered perceptions affect women's neighborhood park use?

## **1. 2. Scope of the Study**

Neighborhood parks as public spaces are expected to provide opportunities for improving physical and mental health, socializing with others and developing public expression and identity. However, on the contrary to the ideal definitions of public spaces as open and accessible to all groups of the society, in real life this "access" is not guaranteed for all, mainly due to unequal distribution of and limited access to public resources such as public spaces. That is why it is important to study "equity" in the allocation of public resources with an approach that not only considers the amount or size of provided areas, but also analyzes the needs of all potential users of those spaces, their socio-economic characteristics as well as the characteristics of the surrounding environment of these parks.

This thesis benefits from three bodies of literatures namely public space, urban inequalities and equity discussions, and park use by different user groups with a focus on gender. As the first body of literature, I focused on public spaces and contradictions between the idealized definitions and publicness of public space and the real conditions. Although speaking, acting or just being in public spaces is defined as the ideals for public spaces, the real conditions suggest the opposite. Public spaces are not open to all. The literature tries to explain the differences between the idealized definitions and the existing conditions of public spaces from different perspectives. A view defends the idea of the loss of public spaces due to socio-economic and political conditions of the modernist era and changing public space provision policies. Another view argues that public spaces are not lost but going through transformations due to its nature which needs to host different political actors and the risks of disorder and differences.

As the second body of literature, deriving from the question of if public spaces are housing different public groups how these spaces should be distributed in the city so that these different publics can have an access to public spaces, I reviewed the discussions regarding the experienced urban inequalities as a result of the distribution of public resources. As public spaces are important public services that are produced by



public resources and then they become crucial urban public resources that redistribute public wealth among people, distribution of these resources in an equitable way is crucial. However, the literature state that as a result of the distribution policies, there are important urban inequalities in the use of and access to public spaces that are experienced by certain groups of the society. Literature provides certain methods to develop models to decide the required amount of green space and its overall characteristics in order to reduce urban inequalities by considering certain individual, social, cultural and political aspects and they state that such an approach can provide equity in the access to and use of public resources.

As the third body of literature, I concentrated on parks as urban public spaces and use of parks by different user groups with different socio-economic characteristics as these different characteristics may be one of the reasons that cause experiencing urban inequalities. Like all socio-economic characteristics, gender may cause social and physical exclusion from public spaces and cause different experiences for men and women in public spaces. Women may seem in much lower positions in ranks of power, policy and decision making and access to public resources. Women can be mostly being marginalized and their voice is being oppressed in many fields of daily life from decision-making to spending leisure time in public parks more, when compared to men. Deriving from this literature, I focused specifically on the different experiences of women in neighborhood parks as one of the groups of the society that experience most of the urban inequalities in the use of public spaces.

Benefiting from these three bodies of literatures, this thesis states that there are existing urban inequalities in the use of urban public spaces especially for certain user groups and my study adopts a need-based approach (Talen, 1998) that gathers publicness and equity discussions together with the concerns on women's experiences in public spaces.

### **1. 3. Study Methodology and Site**

In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, I use "mixed method" as a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (Saldana, 2011). Qualitative method provides data in the form of words or visual material (Strauss

& Corbin, 1990) and quantitative method generates numerical data from the collected data.

I realized this study in three main phases which are observation, survey and interview. As the site for the case study I selected Balçova District (İzmir, Turkey). Balçova is a district which is located between İzmir Bay and Teleferik Mountain and carries significant geographical, physical, architectural and social characteristics due to its location between İzmir Bay and Teleferik Mountain.

I realized the case study in seven steps, each of which helped to detail the previous step of the study that is explained in Chapter 5 in detail.

Firstly I started with an initial walk through the site and then realized preliminary site observations. Through observation of provided amenities in parks, physical characteristics of the parks and surrounding site conditions. I selected four parks among thirty two parks in Balçova for user surveys. I realized survey with 159 participants and tried to learn their park use habits, perceptions regarding parks and their socio-economic characteristics. Considering the results of the user surveys and park characteristics, for the fourth step of the study, I selected two parks among the four parks according to survey results and developed there in-depth interviews with 30 park users. User interviews helped to understand user's experiences and perceptions regarding neighborhood parks. In addition to park user interviews, I realized 5 focus group interviews at community houses in Balçova and 8 interviews with people who are working in these parks. During and after the interviews, I concluded detailed observation step of the study, where I documented park use behaviors of people.

The data gathered from these steps formed the primary data in this study. The quantitative part of this study provided numerical data that helped to have a general understanding of the site conditions and ideas and park use habits of both men and women respondents in the neighborhood parks in Balçova. The qualitative part based on interviews helped to gather more detailed and specific information regarding the daily experiences of all female respondents.

Interviewing with mostly female users does not mean that I am not looking at men's experiences and ideas too. To fully grasp the details of women's lives it is also important to understand what men are thinking and experiencing. That is why in the survey phase of the study I included both genders in equal numbers and also during the interviews that I realized with people who are working in the park.

A research that aims to understand women's lives needs to pay attention to the relationship between the researcher and the researched and finally the power and authority that the researcher has (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). That is why as a researcher, I participated to the courses that I realized focus group interviews, sat together with the participants of the study and ate together while chatting. In this study, I was also a participant as an observer and a researcher who is also a woman and experiencing similar urban inequalities everyday in the urban and social life. This helped me to be an insider in order to understand the individuals and put myself in their role and see the situation from their perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

#### **1. 4. Structure of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to understand the relationship between user's socio-economic characteristics, physical and social characteristics of neighborhoods and parks with park use habits. While exploring this relation the study also investigates the effects of gender perceptions on women's park use.

Accordingly, the thesis is composed of nine chapters. Chapter 1 is introduction chapter which dwells on the aim of the study, research questions, problem definition, methodology and contributions of the thesis. It begins with the definition of the problem and explains why women's use of neighborhood parks is an important issue and how I approach to this issue through different literatures on public space, urban inequalities and equity discussions, and park use by different user groups with a focus on gender. Then it continues with how I adopt a need-based approach (Talen, 1998) that gathers publicness and equity discussions together with the concerns on different experiences of women in public spaces.

Chapter 2 explores the literature about the urban public spaces and gendered urban inequalities. Deriving from the discussions regarding the characteristics of public spaces, necessary properties that it should provide to users and publicness levels this chapter explores how urban public spaces evolved throughout the time, how changing conditions of the era affect public spaces, how public spaces house to urban inequalities today and how gendered urban inequalities in urban public spaces are being experienced.

Chapter 3 firstly analyzes the importance of neighborhood parks as a public open green space and how these public spaces are being provided as a public service area and how these areas are used by different user groups. Followingly, Chapter 3 focuses on the equity discussions in the distribution of neighborhood parks and explores how these distribution policies create urban inequalities for people according to their different individual characteristics and then overviews the park provision policies in Turkey and analyzes the empirical studies that focus on the park use in Turkey. Finally deriving from the previous discussions, this chapter explains my study approach for the study. My study approach evolves out of the contradictions between the ideal definitions of public spaces and the existing conditions and resulting urban inequalities that cause exclusion from the use of urban public spaces.

Chapter 4 describes the details of the study site and the methodology of the thesis. Firstly, chapter explains physical and social characteristics of the site conditions of İzmir and Balçova, and explains the reasons for selecting Balçova as a case site. Following these, the chapter concludes with the explanation of the steps of the study and the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 are the chapters where I answer research questions of the study with findings of the case study. Chapter 5 focuses on users' individual characteristics and effects of these characteristics on the use of neighborhood parks. The chapter explains main park use purposes, use frequencies and preferences on how they use the parks in relation with the socio-economic characteristics of users such as gender, age, education status or having a child.

Chapter 6 approach the issue from the perspective of external factors that affect the use of neighborhood parks and tries to explain how these external factors which are mainly the physical and social characteristics of the park, its surrounding environment and the socio-economic characteristics of the other park users, affect the use of neighborhood parks.

Chapter 7 benefiting from the previous results discusses how different perceptions of men and women about the use of public spaces shape their decisions on using neighborhood parks. This chapter also investigates the effects of women's traditional daily responsibilities and men and women's perception of safety and comfort while using neighborhood parks. At the end of Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I give a general

discussion that summarizes the findings and discusses the issues in relation with the literature.

Finally Chapter 8 concludes all the discussions that derive from the literature and find reflections on the site. This chapter starts with answering the main research questions of the study according to the findings of the case study. Then chapter 9 gives proposals on how to improve neighborhood parks in order to increase different user groups' park use and answer their park needs.

## **1. 5. Contributions of the Thesis**

Different user groups have different limitations, needs and considerations and public spaces should be planned accordingly. Literature review indicates that there are no studies that follow a comprehensive approach that considers users' needs together with their perception of the parks' and their surrounding environments' physical and social characteristics and socio-economic characteristics of other park users . I think that my study contributes to the literature in three ways.

First of all, this thesis provides a comprehensive research method that adopts a need based approach that not only considers the physical characteristics of the parks and their distribution in the city, but also considers physical and social characteristics of the park, surrounding environment in relation with the user needs to understand differences in women's park use. Considering that most of the empirical studies on this topic in Turkey are very limited to efficiency based technical approaches that cannot go any further than doing an inventory of the existing parks and the ones that focus on user characteristics and their needs are very limited my study's contribution gains more importance.

Second contribution of this study is the park improvement model that is proposed according to the findings of this study. With the help of this model and proposed solutions on the district, neighborhood and park spatial scales, women's use of neighborhood parks can be improved. These neighborhood parks and surrounding environments that are redesigned with such considerations will welcome more number of women users and make them feel more comfortable and safe while using neighborhood parks.

Third contribution of this study will be in terms of valuing the needs of different user groups, especially the ones who are bounded to neighborhood space with limited social and leisure activity opportunities, to be a part of the public space. The results of this research will highlight the importance of the consideration of the needs of different user groups in the example of women and inclusion of women to the public life of the cities. In my opinion even, giving the opportunity to discuss how parks can be improved or to state their needs regarding parks can develop the awareness of women and make the ones who did not realize yet to understand that they are also an important part of the public lives of the cities.

Overview of the empirical research on women's use of public spaces and especially neighborhood parks indicate that most of the studies evolve around the discussions on women's underrepresentation in the use of public spaces (e.g. Hutchison, 2009; Henderson et. al., 2002) due to socially constructed gender definitions, roles and responsibilities, women's lack of time or hardships of getting permission (e.g. Wearing & Wearing, 1988; Firestone & Shelton, 1988; Deem, 1986; Bialeschki, & Michener, 1994; Silver, 2000; Kaczynski et.al, 2008; Hutchinson, 2009). Additionally, the lack of detailed research on the needs of women, analyzing and planning public spaces only by considering the needs of general common public (middle class, white man) and not including women into decision making processes are main causes of the women's lower levels of park use (Bernard, 1981; Woodward, D., Green, & Hebron, 1988; Henderson et.al., 1989; Hutchison, 1994).

## **1. 6. Limitations of the Study**

Based on the research process, the following four issues can be considered as the limitations of the study. First of all, as I start working on this topic, I aimed to reach to people who never use neighborhood parks: Non-users of neighborhood parks in order to understand the reasons for not using the parks and their park perceptions via face to face detailed interviews. However, due to time limitations of this study, I could not achieve this aim. As the second limitation of this study, I can mention the hardship of realizing an open-air case study. Since this study is conducted majorly in open air in parks, weather conditions were quite limiting in terms of realizing this study during all four seasons. That is why structured interviews and surveys could be realized during spring and summer seasons when it wasn't raining and warm as it is not possible to find anyone at parks at those times. I could only realize focus group interviews during the cold or rainy days.

Third limitation of the study was regarding the length of the surveys and detail of the answers in structured interviews. As these interviews were realized in parks while women were using the parks and busy with something such as chatting with a friend or watching after their children, the detail and length of answers were not very satisfying. As explained previously, this limitation led me to keep the number of structured interviews to 15 for each park and to realize focus group interviews. There I could find a chance for more comfortable environment where women could explain their ideas in longer periods. As the fourth limitation, the objectivity and accuracy of the survey and interview answers of the respondents can be considered. As the subject includes quite intimate issues and problems, in certain cases the respondents tend to say the "right" thing instead of their real thoughts. In order to resolve this problem, I asked several cross-check questions to test the accuracy of the answers.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **URBAN PUBLIC SPACES AND GENDERED URBAN INEQUALITIES**

This chapter highlights that as a part of urban inequalities, there are inequalities in the use of urban public spaces to the contrary of the ideal definitions of urban public spaces and certain groups of the society experience these inequalities more than others. Socio-economic reasons such as age, race, ethnicity, education status, income levels along with gender are major causes for people to experience different types of urban inequalities in the urban public spaces. As an important part of the society, especially, women's exclusion from accessing to and benefiting fully from urban public spaces is an important issue to be discussed.

The first section of this chapter starts with the definitions of ideal meanings and importance of urban public spaces as a crucial part of the public sphere. Following these definitions, I focus on the changing understanding of public spaces in different eras and how today's politic, economic and social conditions reproduce the definition of public spaces today. These discussions mostly revolve around the idea of loss or transformation of public spaces and the needs for defining a transition zone between the private and public realms, which is parochial realm. The second section of this chapter examines the differences in the use of urban public spaces in relation with the experienced urban inequalities due to users' socio-economic characteristics and elaborating on the social construction of the definition of gender discusses gender differences as one of the defining criteria of the experienced inequalities in urban public spaces.

### **2. 1.Urban Public Spaces and Urban Inequalities**

In order to understand the importance of urban public spaces as an opportunity for people to interact with others of different characteristics in the urban context, public space, public sphere and urban public space should be defined.



“Public sphere is an immaterial, universal and abstract realm where democracy occurs” (Low & Smith 2006; p. 5). Media, internet, institutions, and community associations can be examples of the public sphere where all contribute to the creation of the public, publics or public opinions. The domain of public sphere is seen to exist between the privacy of the individual, domestic life and the state. Public sphere is an arena of discursive relations conceptually independent of both state and the economy. Habermass’ (1989) public sphere definitions emphasize unity and equality as ideal conditions. It is defined as a space of democracy where all citizens have the right to inhabit and all public communication takes place. All the social and economic inequalities are being ignored to determine a common good (Crawford, 1995). Low & Smith (2006) also emphasize the political aspects of the public sphere and separate it from the public space with physicality aspect of the public space (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). According to Schmidt (2010) public space gains its meaning by being the site for the development of the public sphere while at the same time, public sphere demands “the occupation or active creation of public space” in order to have one’s claims heard (Blomley, 2001, p. 3 cited in Schmidt, 2010). The concept of public space is inseparable from the idea of a “public sphere” (Habermas, 1991).

Public space is a concrete entity and takes up an actual site, a place and a ground where all types of different activities such as political or cultural occur (Habermas, 1991). Examples of public space can vary from the public library to a beach or from the sidewalk of a street to a public square. According to Lynch (1972), public spaces are the places that are open to the freely chosen, democratic and spontaneous actions of people (Lynch, 1972). Rapoport (1977) states that the only way to perceive a place as a public place is the possibility to be free in all actions that are realized there. When people feel the freedom to be in a space and behave as they want without any barriers, rules and the need of asking any authority’s permission than that place can be called as public space (Rapoport, 1977). Only with these characteristics, we can talk about accessible and free public spaces where certain problems can be expressed and protested, and make all people aware of these issues which they may never be aware of otherwise. Public space is a stage where people can realize their wills to be there and benefit from the opportunities that are provided. In such places there are chances for social interaction and dialogue so all the political, cultural, economical and social differences start to disappear and a heterogeneous public occurs (Lefebvre, 1968 cited in Mitchell, 2003).

This heterogeneity does not imply to make differences disappear but emphasizes to be in public space by accepting to interact with those who do not have similar socio-economic characteristics, same social class or thoughts and appreciating these differences.

Such a public creates urban public spaces that are accessible, free, lively, vibrant and playful where different people have the chance to witness and appreciate various cultural qualities and ideas (Fainstein & Campbell, 2003). Examples of urban public spaces can be numerous such as neighborhood parks, waterfront recreation areas or the shopping streets.

People may see urban public spaces as the extension of their houses because of the limited size of the houses, the size of the family and the type of the house. Due to not having exterior spaces in their homes, certain people may use urban public spaces near their houses. Also certain social, economical and cultural limitations may enforce people to use urban public spaces as the only possible place for socialization. Some people like unemployed, homeless, women who do not have any other place to go; young people or migrants who may not have any other places to get together may have to use urban public spaces for interaction.

So it is possible to differentiate public realm with its political, democratic and social characteristics such as a square that is mostly used by protests and political party gatherings; from urban public space with its practical opportunities where two neighbors can go right in front their houses and use the street, the nearby park or the shopping streets to get together and share daily conversations.

Publicness level is one of the most important indicators of an urban public space's quality (Benn & Gaus, 1983; Young, 1990; Madanipour, 1999; Kohn, 2004; Carmona, 2010; Schmidt & Németh, 2012). Publicness level can be defined by looking at the quality of a space and analyze whether it is restricting social interaction, limiting personal rights and excluding a certain group of the population. Publicness is dependent on political and democratic characteristics, provided physical and psychological opportunities. Political and democratic features cause urban public spaces to work as a political stage for political representation and action without a fear of state (Schmidt & Németh, 2012). Social quality of a space is also crucial for the level of publicness. Social quality of urban public space means that there is a common ground for social interaction, communication, seeing and being seen by each other. It works as a stage for

information exchange, personal wellbeing, social learning and tolerance for differences. Symbolic qualities are another important component of publicness. Urban public spaces are symbols of representation of differences, expression of demands and political rights. Finally leisure opportunities are also important. Urban public spaces provide opportunities for leisure and recreational activities (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). Only with the existence of these qualities we can call a place “urban public space”.

Accessibility among all other qualities is the most important indicators of publicness. Urban public spaces should be open to all, inclusive and pluralist, accepting and valuing difference (Young, 2000). Accessibility of an urban public space means that people cannot only reach to a space physically but they can also benefit from all of the activities within these spaces without the need of permission of anyone. Accessible urban public spaces are inclusive and encourage interaction among diverse users, as well as providing variety, flexibility and freedom to users. These spaces enable unplanned, unorganized, heterogeneous user groups exist in the same space and allow possible connections between diverse populations to meet and interact. Accessible public spaces indicate the variety in the urban fabric, connect contrasting neighborhoods and encourage interaction (Madanipour, 2004).

On the contrary to the ideal definitions of urban public spaces and the criteria for publicness, the practices of the everyday world are different and cause certain urban inequalities in the use of urban public spaces. So the following part explores changing understanding of urban public spaces and the role of socio-economic and politic concepts of the eras in the determination of publicness level of spaces. Especially to understand today’s conditions of urban public spaces, chapter focuses on the discussions on whether public spaces are losing its main characteristics or just going through a transformation. The final part of this chapter discusses the reflections of these loss or transformation discussions in the real life conditions of public spaces where people experience urban inequalities due to certain socio-economic and demographic reasons, on the contrary to the ideal definitions of urban public spaces.

## **2. 1. 1.Changing Understandings of Urban Public Spaces**

According to Lofland (1989), starting from preindustrial cities public space holds a very important position. A large part of the social life occurred in public space.

Social and public life overlapped as different from any other previous city forms. Inhabitants of this city form had to live in the public space because of the available technological and social resources for them. In the absence of the mass media, circulation of the news had to be verbal in the public space and everybody had to be there to be informed about news and announcements. These spaces were the core of the political life where speeches were delivered, elections were realized, and battle tactics were decided. A large number of activities like shopping, political action, entertainment and religious acts required to be present in public space. That is why the preindustrial city was dominated by the public realm in the largest extent when compared with the other city forms (Lofland, 1989).

Lofland (1989) states that with the industrial revolution and new possibilities for enlargement, public realms started to lose their strength. Two major characteristics of this period affected the city form a lot. These are innovations in transportation, which helped cities to spread in larger areas, and innovations in construction, which made it possible to inhabit many more facilities compared to the previous city forms. These innovations caused the separation of work places and dwellings. Work places became highly specialized and large environments and residential areas became more homogenous and larger. Larger residential areas made it possible to have different activities occurring in residential areas and neighborhoods. Possession of cars helped people to connect these large dispersed residential and working areas without being had to get in touch with public. When compared to preindustrial city residents, with these developments inhabitants of late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> century cities spent most of their time entirely outside of the public realms of the city (Lofland, 1989).

As we come to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ethington (1994) states that what changed were the political features and the geographical framework of the growing city. When compared to the previous city forms, changing political and geographical characteristics also changed the roles of public sphere as an institution that makes access to state possible for the citizens, and an institution that defines and redefines boundaries between public and private lives (Ethington, 1994 cited in Goheen, 1998). In this era, as the political concept of the public good changed significantly, public sphere changed as well. Under the absence of state's sufficient budget conditions that is separated for the public space provision, open space requirements stayed unfulfilled and unrealized. Budget cuts in the public service provisions in the late 1970s and emerging neoliberal

politics had devastating effects on green systems of the cities. As a result of financial struggles, increasing land values and construction costs, tax problems, declining revenues of municipalities caused inability of the public sector to maintain existing public spaces and construct new ones to fulfill the needs of increasing population and cities had to get support from private resources for the design of open spaces like corporate plazas and they ensured certain policies such as increased floor area ratios of valuable commercial space in exchange for the provision of public amenities (Sideris, 1993). Especially in older city cores, the open space supply could not keep up with the growth of urban population. The amenities that are crucial for the livability of the cities became insufficient in these cities. For instance, while privately owned shopping centers continued to dominate the public lives of many cities, the shopping streets started to lose their quality as an attraction point for the public (Banerjee, 2001).

It is clear that deriving from the changing characteristics of the contemporary era, there are some fundamental changes happening in the public space which cause major changes in the definition of public spaces. Sennet (1977) calls this situation “the fall of public life” and his successors repeat this perspective (Mitchell, 1995; Habermas, 1991; Sorkin, 1992; Goheen, 1998). Public space is being seen as an entity that lost its value as a powerful social and political ideal in the modern city. There are two different perspectives that discuss these changing characteristics of public spaces. First perspective defends that the decrease in the chance to take role in active participation to public discussions caused loss of interest of people on public space and experience urban inequalities. On the other hand, the second perspective calls this situation as “the transformation of the public space”. This perspective supports that the observed changes in public space is not a loss of quality but just a transformation of public life (Ethington, 1994; Zukin, 1995; Crawford, 1995; Pitkin, 1981).

The first perspective states that public spaces are losing their value as a powerful social and political ideal in the modern city. Habermas (1991)’s description of today’s public sphere as “dominated by consumerism, the media and the interference of state into private life”, Sennett (1994)’s phrase “the fall of public man”, Sorkin (1992) and Davis (1995)’s discussions on “the end of public space” and “the destruction of the democratic urban spaces”, all try to define the reflections of changing policies and economies of public space production to the use of these spaces. Lynch (1972) also

states that if public spaces are not capable of providing certain characteristics which measures the publicness level of a space, than it is liable to mention the loss.

Sennett (1994) believes that the main reason of the “loss” is the structuring of the modern city. The way that modern city has been designed overestimated its capability to sustain a crucial public culture and house to populations with diverse characteristics. The city could have been a place where different ages, races, classes, ways of life, abilities can all exist together on streets. “The city is the natural home of difference”. But in the contemporary city, the relevance and power of the public is lost. He states that modern city has ignored the idea that the public shares a common interest. This is the negative result of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s selection for private comfort and the approach to ignore the needs of crowds while privileging the individuals. This situation caused the win of modern individualism and the loss of belief in public and community experiences. Public space became an “empty space, a space of abstract freedom but no enduring human connection”. Sennett believes that starting from 19<sup>th</sup> century private market, certain individuals have been privileged and this caused the devaluation of the public experiences and the belief in a common destiny has demolished. The increasing diversity of people in public spaces has been seen as a negative quality and uncontrolled encounters and those has been perceived as undesirable and something to be stayed away. Public spaces such as plazas, shopping areas and streets started to be owned and controlled by private groups and house only a certain group of people that are appropriate to be in those spaces. This situation caused benefits for modern individualism and the loss of belief in public and community experiences (Sennet, 1977).

On the contrary to the philosophers who perceived the substantial change in the definitions and characteristics of public spaces as a “loss”, “decline” or a “fall”, others have defended that it was never possible to create a single homogenous public and ignore individual differences and needs anyway so it was never possible to have a public space that is welcoming for a homogenous public. This view, different than the modernist approach, valued the differences and lived experienced of different groups of publics. This perspective defends that democratic qualities of public spaces still exist and see those spaces as unconstrained political spaces that are shaped by different political actors and they accept the risks of disorder and differences. They defend that public space is not lost but going through a continuous transformation and support the

continuing importance of the public space as the preferred area where different groups of people can be visible, seek for recognition, and make demands. Ethington (1994), Zukin (1995), Crawford (1995) and Pitkin (1981) are some of defenders of the view that support the idea that public space is a place that houses the differences that creates a vibrant public life where changing dynamics of public activities and politics are seen.

As a response to the discussions of loss of public space, Pitkin (1981) thinks that people, who are obsessed with the idea of loss, miss the emerging forms of public life. There are new forms of public life occurring in places that are privately owned. These new places, on the contrary to the park, square or dense streets which are dominated by unwanted groups of people such as immigrant groups, the poor, and the homeless; include shopping malls, atriums, invented streets, skywalks creating a different type of public world (Pitkin, 1981). Crawford (1995) defends that public space is not lost but instead transforming into other forms. There is a constant remaking of public space by urban residents that redefine the public sphere through the lived experiences (Crawford, 1995).

These public spaces create and expose a different logic of public life without need to defend the representation of whole heterogeneous public life. According to Fraser (1990), it is impossible to define a completely inclusive space of democracy as today's public spaces are formed of exclusions. That is why instead of a single "public" occupying a symbolic public space, there are multiple "counter-publics" who creates multiple sites for public expression. Such places are partial and selective, answering the needs of limited groups of the population and to a certain numbered public roles that individuals carry in the urban society. Instead of being fixed in time and space, these public spaces are constantly changing while users redefine and reshape physical space (Fraser, 1990).

According to Crawford (1995) there are increasing demands of certain groups in the society for the access to public space. For instance, economically disadvantaged groups demand "rights to the city" and women and ethnic or racial minorities demand "rights to difference" and these demands derive from the results of lived experience which are different than the normative and institutional definitions of the state and its legal codes. These rights derive from the social experiences in the new collective and personal spaces of the city and these mainly concerns people who are excluded from the resources of the state. She believes that, the strict divisions between public and private

started to diminish and defends that instead of the failure of the public space, this causes the changes, transformations and multiplicity. So she sees public space full of opportunities on the contrary to the idea of loss (Crawford, 1995). Zukin (1995) also suggests that instead of writing negative scenarios about public space, we should comprehend the new forms of public spaces and think about ways of managing it as an arena that houses diverse interests (Zukin, 1995).

The “loss” versus “transformation” discussions clearly indicates that there are differences between idealized definitions of public space and the practices of the everyday world. Due to the socio-economic and politic reasons behind the structuring of the urban spaces, it is not possible to provide urban public spaces that are inclusive for all and invite a heterogeneous society. So besides the discussions regarding the loss and transformation of public spaces, there is a third discussion that focuses on the intersection of the public spaces with the private spaces which is called parochial space. The coming section focuses on the characteristics of public realm and examples of public realm in the built environment.

## **2. 1. 2. Parochial Realm as the Intersection of Private and Public Realms**

As Hunter (1985) states there are three social orders – public, parochial, private – in the city that are based on three characteristics namely: form of their social bonds, their institutional locus, and the qualities of the spatial area that they occupy. Common knowledge and intimacy among participants of each type of social order decrease from private, to parochial and to public (Hunter, 1985). Lofland (1998) also raises the attention to this trinity in the city life and defines those as three distinct but interrelated realms. According to Lofland “*Private realm* is the world of the household and intimate networks; *parochial realm* is the world of the neighborhood, workplace, or acquaintance network; and the *public realm* is the world of the street.” (Lofland, 1998, p. 10).

Public and private realms can be considered as the two ends of the continuum. As an example to private realm from the built environment, we can think of home and relationships among the husband and wife or a child and his/her mother, the activities realized there such as cooking, eating, playing or inviting acquaintances and family



members for dinner and so on. On the other hand, public realm is composed of people who do not know each other personally or only have certain assumptions regarding their outer looks, behaviors and so on. An example for a public realm from the built environment can be a square where people from all over the city come and sit, play or just pass by almost without any personal interaction.

At the intersection of these two realms we can think of parochial realm. Parochial realm is shaped as a result of a sense of shared benefits among acquaintances or neighbors who are a part of close interpersonal networks that are located within communities of neighborhood, workplace. Lofland (1988) stresses that parochial realm is a type of a transitional area, a gray zone and it is defined by a sense of sharing the commons among acquaintances and neighbors who are part of an intimate network that are located within communities (Lofland, 1998). Parochial realms are areas where people start to negotiate and accept the physical, cultural and social differences among themselves and share the commonalities. A good example of parochial realm from the built environment can be residential streets (Gehl, 1986) where formal and informal social activities are realized by people who are living on that street. Children from different households can get together and play, women can wash laundry in front of their home and hang them between two houses, elderly men can sit in front of their homes and chat with their neighbors.

As DeVault (2000) also state there is no inherent relationship between the physical space and the type of the realms. This is based on the mutant and easily changing characteristics of the social configuration of these realms.

“... Thus, a legally “public” place can be sociologically “parochial,” a family home can become a public realm when opened for a charity tour, or a public zoo can be the site of a private realm where family and caregiving relationships are enacted (DeVault, 2000 cited in McKenzie, 2006).”

By carrying these activities and habits of private realm, public spaces can easily be converted into parochial realms. One of the most important characteristics of parochial realms is being an extension and an area where private life of homes and activities within are carried to the public life of the outside of the home space. Parochial realms, with the possible activity and interaction opportunities becomes valuable sites

for socialization for certain people who are bounded to these sites – neighborhood parks, residential street – such as elderly, non-working women, children.

McKenzie et. al. (2006) also state that there are changing degrees of intimacy and level of knowledge among participants of private, parochial and public realms. As the number of close ties in a space and the level of intimacy among the inhabitants and their knowledge of the space increases, the spaces start to function as private realms for its inhabitants. Also inhabitants start to treat those areas as they are treating to their homes and they start to use those areas for their own private purposes with more informal and casual behaviors which are different then the original intentions for those spaces and people start to behave as if they also own the proprietary rights of those settings (McKenzie et. al., 2006).

Neighborhood life, which will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3, is a good example for the parochial realm and it is made of ties that consist of a community psychology and with this sense it differs from the public realm which is social life with strangers (Pitkin, 1981). Local interpersonal networks and local institutions in the residential community are crucial components of parochial social order. Parochial realm in residential areas houses to dense connections of personal knowledge and thrust among the interlocking local institutions. Such dense connections create spatial and social boundaries that are beneficial to define insiders who are familiar to each other and outsiders who have limited rights withing the community (Hunter, 1985).

### **2. 1. 3. Experienced Urban Inequalities in Urban Public Space**

Urban inequality means severe differences in terms of economic situations (levels of poverty and wealth), as well as people's well-being and access to things like jobs, housing, education, and urban public spaces such as parks, waterfronts, squares and so on. These differences cause urban inequalities and diminish the ideal definitions of a dense, diverse, classless, and democratic public life that was dreamt to happen on the streets, squares and parks. Among all different forms of urban inequalities, I specifically, focus on the ones in the access to and use of urban public spaces. As a result of urban inequalities, certain urban facilities becomes reserved to a limited part of the society and the rest of the society stays less educated, less satisfied with economic situations or feels as not capable of accessing and using certain urban facilities. Results

of these urban inequalities create new inequalities in the access to public services and these newly formed urban inequalities perpetuate the initially experienced inequalities and create a vicious circle.

These urban inequalities through use of public spaces are seen generally in two main ways. Firstly, urban inequalities are seen in the use of these spaces by different user groups. One of the main challenges in the use of public space is caused by those who have more power to access to public spaces more and want to exclude others who are perceived as “threatening” and “unwanted” from the use of public spaces. Urban inequalities may occur in the form of differing use of urban public spaces by different groups and allocation of varying levels of urban resources to those different groups (Madge, 1996, Madanipour, 2004), limited physical access to urban public spaces (Talen, 2010), and structural inequalities in society which is reflected to the behaviors of people in public spaces depending on the time of the day and place (Madge, 1996). Secondly, urban inequalities are seen in development of public spaces, that generally is an expression of power struggle between institutions for the control and profit of the space. Institutional competition for urban public space is related with the land, as it is highly in demand. Inevitably, such a demand causes pressure for development and profit. This pressure also affects the public authorities who separate small budgets for the maintenance and development of public spaces and cause reduction of the size of the urban public space. All these demands and pressures not only affect today but also affect the future characteristics of public spaces and public life of the neighborhood as well (Madanipour, 2004).

Power struggles among different groups of society directly affect individuals' experiences in the public spaces. Overall, there are two major approaches that try to understand the relationship between power struggles and resulting urban inequalities. First approach with an emphasis on Marxist urban political theory mainly focuses on especially for class based differences of individuals to explain the reasons of experienced urban inequalities. This approach provides a perspective that helps to understand the interconnected economic, political, social and ecological processes that together build highly uneven and unjust built environments (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003). On the other hand, second approach highlights the importance of other socio-economic characteristic differences and to understand those they look at the theories and discussions especially with focus on non-economic differences in the society. This

approach states the importance of characteristics other than economic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and gender. With this perspective, sexuality and the intersection of race, class, and social statuses gains a great importance in the explanation of urban inequalities in the built environment.

The following sections firstly, define reasons of urban inequalities and resulting experiences based on the class-based differences in the society. This approach reviews capitalist structures which are based on the power struggles between different classes of the society that is based on the socio-economic differences and resulting urban inequalities in built environment from a Marxist perspective. Secondly, the following section defends the idea that trying to explain reasons of urban inequalities only with a class-based approach is not enough. According to this second perspective social differences among people should also be considered to understand the underlying reasons of experienced urban inequalities. This second perspective takes its roots from the environmental justice movement with accepting the existence of socio-economic differences that cause serious different experiences and urban inequalities.

### **2. 1. 3. 1. Class-based Explanations**

This first approach defends that the major cause for urban inequalities are class based.. Throughout the history, economic policies of each era had crucial effects on the production methods of public spaces in cities and these methods influence the access to those spaces. Complex economic, political and cultural processes are mainly responsible of producing built environments and the organization of the built environment has an important role on the creation of class struggles and urban inequalities. For Lefebvre (1974), as well as for Harvey (1996) and Merrifield (2002), the built environment carries the roots of capitalist social relations through which urban inequalities are produced, in both a material and a cultural sense (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003).

Capitalist processes have major impacts on the creation and recreation of urban inequalities and contribute to the creation of uneven built environment and unjust access to resources (Heynen, 2003). It is important to analyze the outcomes of the capitalist interventions on the basis of their impacts on welfare of deprived groups (Fainstein, 1997). According to Ward (2008), capitalism is a mode of production, a system with

particular economic and social characteristics. He states that it is important to see how labor is coordinated and how the ruling class (capitalist) extracts the surplus produced by the working class. In capitalist system, capitalists have important effects on the production processes of the built environment (Ward, 2008). They look for the ways to define the quality of life of working class from the point of commodities that they can profitably produce and use in certain locations (Harvey, 1973). Capitalists have the power to command working class and make it possible to accumulate money through the ownership of wealth. However, working class has to sell their labor power which makes them dependant on capitalist for wage and for its continuing existence. Such a dependence creates inconsistencies between the total time that workers worked, the value of such a work and earned wage; the surplus value that capitalist gained as a result of worker's work, capitalist's profit and wage of worker's, and use value and exchange value of worker's wage in purchasing power of consumption goods. Working class defines their life quality only by relying on the use-value terms and fundamental standards of being a human. Such a relationship is an exploitative one (Ward, 2008). It is most likely capitalist's who will have access to or control over and worker class who will be excluded from access to or control over resources or other components of the built environment. Such power relations affect the social and political configurations and create urban inequalities in the built environment (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003).

Individuals from working class, who do not have access to resources and the ability to have control over capitalist production, consumption and exchange, are prone to suffer urban inequalities in the built environment (Low & Gleeson, 1998 cited in Heynen, 2003).

Neoliberal policies among others have significant reflections in the production and use of public spaces today as they privilege capital accumulation and prioritize economic benefits of certain groups in the society. Public spaces were started to be seen as arenas for capitalist growth and became strategic points for a wide range of neoliberal policy trials, innovations and projects. They started to work as incubators for the main political and ideological strategies, economic growth and consumption. Business and political leaders started to behave as entrepreneurs to work for economic growth and expansion. With these new policies, functions of public spaces like parks, plazas and sidewalks have changed and started to be seen as possible areas for capital

investment. New strategies in the urban public spaces included social control, policing, surveillance and ownership rights.

According to Nemeth (2012), there are major differences between today's urban public spaces and traditional urban public spaces. The traditional public spaces are owned, maintained and accessed by the public. On the contrary, privately owned urban public spaces are open to public at certain hours, and the owners of the space have the right to accept or deny the access of certain people. Those spaces are trying to attract more "appropriate" group of people and exclude the less desirable ones. Access to these areas is limited and use of the space is only a privilege, not a right which causes the population to be more homogenous. Such new public spaces with the set rules on legal, physical and cultural behaviors threatens civil liberties such as to protest, rebel, make decisions, be seen, be heard and not to consume (Nemeth, 2012). These spaces that prioritize security over interaction caused "dead public spaces" as Sennett (1992) stated. Most of the public spaces ended up as empty large open spaces and public started to be seen as passive, receptive and refined that support a homogenized public by eliminating the social heterogeneity of the urban crowd (Sennet, 1977).

### **2. 1. 3. 2. Explanations Based on Social Differences**

Focusing on socio-economic differences only in respect to social classes and explaining urban inequalities as a result of capitalist interventions is not sufficient to understand the reasons of experiencing urban inequalities in the public spaces.

Especially with more contemporary discussions on urban inequalities, emphasized the inadequacies of socio-economic differences in explaining urban inequalities and started valuing socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, race and so on to explain the underlying reasons of urban inequalities. Although most of the literature is sensitive to the importance of social, political and economic power relations in shaping processes of urban inequalities, the failure to grasp how these relationships are integral to the functioning of a capitalist political-economic system has been criticized and environmental justice movement started to be appreciated more.

Sandercock (1998) pointed out the limitations of the explanation of urban inequalities with a single focus on socio-economic differences.

“Marxists have either ignored, or tried to subsume into their class analysis, other forms of oppression, domination, and exploitation, such as those based on gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference” (Sandercock, 1998, p. 92 cited in Fincher & Iveson, 2008).

Starting with 1980s, researchers began to give greater attention to non-class bases of inequality, with a focus on differences based on socio-economic characteristics such as race, ethnicity and gender. In the 1990s, the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and social statuses became important topics (Lobao, 2002). Concepts that are stressing the importance of hearing multiple voices such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, handicapped and age have become popular (Iveson & Fincher, 2011).

Understanding and considering the differences between the needs of people from different class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, and recognizing different ways of oppression indicates that consideration of multiple voices is not a simple matter of accepting a particular identity or difference, but rather a matter of transforming the ways in which identities and differences are produced (Fincher & Iveson, 2008).

With an understanding of the importance of hearing multiple voices, it is possible to understand that the state of justice and injustice are directly related to the processes which understand different needs of different groups while making decisions in city planning (Iveson & Fincher, 2011). Sandercock states that the main aim of such an approach, which not only considers economic bases of difference but also the other differences such as gender, race and so on, is not creating plans that are based on some political decisions but to produce policies and programs that answers the needs of all different groups (Sandercock, 1998). With such an approach planning decisions are not only based on the questions of ‘who gets what, where?’ but also tries to answer questions about ‘who can do what, where?’ So that these questions can consider all social and cultural differences and rights of diverse residents of urban areas together with the economic results of such planning approach (Iveson & Fincher, 2011).

Urban inequalities that can be caused by the interwoven social and spatial processes that are continuously happening in and through the built environments have been explained in this section from different perspectives that focus on differences that are based on socio-economic characteristics and classes, and differences that are based socio-economic characteristics and multiple voices. The coming section will concentrate on the urban inequalities that are being experienced in the society by

different user groups, with a special focus on the women whose socio-economic characteristics are not well considered.

## **2. 2. Gender, Urban Inequalities and Public Space**

Being a woman or man is not something that is acquired while coming to the world but it is something that is associated later with the social constructions. There are no predetermined biological, psychological or economic characteristics that set the personality that women or men should obey in society. What determines the differences between male and 'others', women, is the cultural and social characteristics of the society (Beauvoir, 1949: p. 295 cited in McDowell, 1999).

“Gender is the social organization of sexual differences but this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and a natural physical difference between women and men, rather gender is the knowledge that establishes meaning for bodily difference. These meanings vary across cultures, social groups and time” (Scott, 1988: p. 2).

As Blake (1994) states:

“Gender differences are not only biologically determined, culturally constructed, or politically imposed, but also ways of living in a body and thus of being in the world” (Blake, 1994: p. 678).

It is also clear that there are certain variations in social construction of gender, gender divisions and the symbolic meanings associated with femininity and masculinity. Rubin (1975) explains the difference between sex and gender as follows.

“Set of arrangements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied. Through this transformation and social regulation 'sex' becomes 'gender'” (Rubin, 1975: p. 28).

As the definitions of gender indicate, gender is not something inherent to women but it is something that is constructed by the society day by day starting even before a woman is born. These social constructions have negative effects throughout the life of a woman as gender can sometimes become a reason for social and physical exclusion from the use of and benefit from public resources. Based on gendered exclusions, women and men experience different types of urban inequalities. As one of the major urban inequalities, there are variations between and among women and male domination in the society, and women both do not have power or a place in policy and



decision making (Lovenduski & Randall, 1993; Marchbank, 2000) and access to public resources such as public spaces as much as men. Women are mostly being marginalized and their voice is being oppressed in many fields of daily life from decision-making in planning to spend leisure time in public parks, when compared to men. That is why; I specifically focus on the gendered urban inequalities that are being experienced by women in urban public spaces.

The first part of this section discusses urban inequalities that are experienced by different genders with a focus on women's experiences in the use of urban public spaces. In order to be able to analyze these urban inequalities, this part tries to answer the question of how social constructions of gender lead to experience of urban inequalities and how gender definitions are interwoven with the factors that cause women's exclusion from public spaces. Then the second part examines the reflections of urban inequalities to urban space and the reasons of experienced urban inequalities in the urban public space.

### **2. 2. 1. Women's Experiences of Urban Inequalities**

In the society, there are visible differences in the resource and public service allocation mechanisms between men and women. One of the main reasons of such an asymmetry in resource allocation is patriarchy which can be limiting for women whereas encouraging for men (Garber & Turner, 1994). Patriarchy refers to the law of the father, the social control that men as fathers hold over their wives and daughters. Patriarchy refers to the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women and so assumed to have authority over them. Patriarchy is useful both in connecting gender to class and in theorizing the reasons for women's oppression in a range of societies (McDowell, 1999). It is possible to argue that patriarchal assumptions in male thinking have led to a systematic misrepresentation of women's experience of the world and also led male theorists to ignore women's views and interests (Letherby, 2003).

Due to definition and social construction of gender, and their reflections on the society, there are significant everyday examples of women's exclusions from their certain resources. Examples of these situations can be seen in many different fields of the everyday life. For instance, although women work as much as, if not more than men,

they are paid less and have less opportunities for promotion (Jackson, 1993; Witz, 1993). Women are more likely to have dual responsibilities both at home and at work which not only affect their success and chance in the workplace but also requires extra effort and time to travel from one to another (Hochschild, 1983; Graham, 1984; Marchbank, 2000) and experience the problems that are caused by city planning decisions that do not consider these dual responsibilities. Additionally, patriarchal family roles such as childcare and reproduction for women and working and production for men are accepted as the norms of the society and are supported by all social institutions. In addition to all these, sexual morality is another serious issue for women to be worried about as it means that the sexual reputation of a woman is much more precious than that of a man (Smith, 1989).

Although ideal definitions of public sphere defend that each and every individual as a member of the society has an equal right to be in public arena, this right is often denied in practice. A historical overview indicates that women have been, and continue to be, excluded from equal access to the public spaces. For instance, Baudelaire (1963)'s "flaneur" was also assumed to be a man since it was only men at that time that had the freedom to be in public space (Baudelaire, 1963). Women were not a part of the accepted crowd of the public spaces and they were seen as less respectable (McDowell, 1999). Wolff (1985) also states that all the modern time heroes are all men (Wolff, 1985). The common belief is that certain aspects of women such as femininity, energy and sexuality may result with violence in public space (Zola, 1982 cited in McDowell, 1999). Deriving from Zola's ideas, Wilson (1991) state that such threats of women result in the fear of the urban crowd thus affect town planning and cause women's exclusion from urban public space (Wilson, 1991).

All these above mentioned gendered inequalities in the society cause women to have limited access to public spaces such as squares, streets or parks, especially when alone (Massey, 1994), and simply cannot stroll around in the city at all (Fenster, 1999) without any threat or concern. Following the discussions of the construction of gender definitions, resulting urban inequalities, how these are reflected to the behaviors and daily routines of women in the city, the next section concentrates on women's exclusions from public spaces.

## **2. 2. 2. Women's Exclusion from Public Spaces**

According to McDowell (1999) people's belief in the definition of appropriate behavior or actions by men and women reflect the understanding of how a man or a woman should be and how they expect men and women to behave despite of the differentiations in terms of class, race or sexuality among men and women and the altering expectations and beliefs over time and between places (McDowell, 1999). That is why women have fewer rights in urban public spaces and they are excluded from the access to public spaces.

There are series of factors that cause women's exclusion from urban public spaces and these include patriarchal relationships in the society (McDowell, 1999; Letherby, 2003), attribution of separate spheres to different genders (Wajcman, 1991; Wright, 1980; Saegert, 1980; Mackenzie, 1989), gendered role divisions (Kaplan, 1997; Greed, 2007) and the hardship of fulfilling roles due to the separation of urban functions in the city (RTPI, 2007; Milroy & Wismer, 1994; Milroy & Wismer, 1994), planning decisions that do not consider the needs of different groups of the society and lack of inclusion of women to decision making process (Bondi & Rose 2010; Burgess, 2008), and finally experienced feelings of fear and exclusion while in public spaces (Valentine, 1998; Pain, 1991; Madge, 1997). This section explains these interrelated factors that result in women's inability to be in and use urban public spaces as much as men.

Patriarchy and patriarchal relationships in the society are one of the main reasons of the gendered inequalities. We can perceive the most striking effects of the patriarchal constructions to the urban public space on the participation to decision making processes, constitution of gendered divisions of labor, household production, relations of power and male violence against women. The inability of the participation to public space starts from the exclusion of the women from the decision making rights in home. Of course, this does not guarantee inability to use urban public spaces by the women who experience strong patriarchal control at home. However, it is important to emphasize the importance of the connection between the 'private' and 'public'. The dominance of patriarchal power relations in the private domain obviously affects the different ways in which women fulfill their right to the public sphere — to the city.

Patriarchal relationships have important negative impacts on women's lives, as those assign certain roles such as assignment of child and elderly care as well as all

other reproductive and household related duties on top of the paid job responsibilities to women. That makes even more important for women to be able to access urban resources such as public transportation, childcare facilities, markets and so on and to travel easily within the city from one assigned job to another. Due to patriarchal job assignments, the distribution of and access to urban service areas and providing them in the close vicinity of home and neighborhood carries a great importance for women, who are especially bound to public transportation or travel on foot (Tokman, 2010).

The separation of spheres in society and valuing women less than men throughout the history causes women to experience urban inequalities. Wajcman (1991) states that women are seen as synonymous with non-reason and the dichotomies always seen women as the lower one: “Culture vs. nature, mind vs. body, reason vs. emotion, objectivity vs. subjectivity, the public realm vs. the private realm – in each dichotomy the former must dominate the latter and the latter in each case seems to be systematically associated with the feminine” (Wajcman, 1991: p.5) Starting from Victorian era and then progressing “the city of separate spheres,” emerged in which a woman’s proper place was perceived to be in the home (Wright, 1980). In the twentieth-century, with the expansion and development patterns of the urban spatial forms, “masculine cities and feminine suburbs” idea (Saegert, 1980) has reinforced the notion of separate spheres. There are precise definitions of those separate spheres. For instance, home, private spaces, neighborhood and domestic environments are attributed to women, whereas public, urban, communal spaces are associated with men. However, such a division clearly creates a distinction between the roles of men and women, and their place and value in the society. As private lives of home and close communal area, neighborhood, is accepted as the right place for women, the available opportunities in this space were considered to make reproduction and leisure of wage workers, men, easier (Mackenzie, 1989).

Another factor that excludes women from urban public spaces is the gendered role divisions. Women are overloaded with many different duties such as being the mother, caregiver, belonging to home, responsible from taking care of her home and family, every day practices in the public spaces also reflect these patriarchal associations of gendered role definitions. Due to these roles, women end up giving up certain spatial rights of citizenship such as using public spaces for leisure or socialization purposes free of concern and permission (Kaplan, 1997) in order to make

sure that they can realize their daily responsibilities such as going to work, doing shopping, taking children to educational and health services, and so forth. Here, the spatial rights refer to be able to

During the planning of the cities, separation of urban functions without considering the needs of different groups of the society excludes women from urban public spaces. Public infrastructure and transportation facilities reinforce the impacts of these roles in daily lives of women. Feminist critiques argue against the planning of the cities and comment on problems that women face in their daily lives because of these gendered roles (RTPI, 2007; Milroy & Wismer, 1994). Urban land-use patterns and the design of transportation systems create barriers for women to travel easily in the city. Such planning approaches reinforce gendered inequalities in access to many facilities of the urban life and maintain traditional gender roles (Bondi & Rose, 2010). For instance, the location of homes in relation to jobs, schools, shopping facilities must be considered, so that women, who take the responsibility on most of the caring roles, have an equal chance to access job opportunities and men can take on more caring responsibilities (RTPI, 2007). Poor public transport and lack of caring facilities close to home spaces and poorly considered land-use zoning policies divide residential areas and employment locations. Such planning decisions have a major impact on women's mobility in the city and access to urban resources (Burgess, 2008).

Separation of urban facilities without considering the needs of women is caused by the dominance of man in design and planning disciplines and in the decision making positions. It is common that women lack the chance to participate in decision making processes in design and planning of the cities and planning officials mostly ignore the fact that men and women use space differently. For instance, according to Greed (2007) there are twice women as men who are responsible of taking children to school, seventy-five per cent of all public transportation users are women and only thirty per cent of women have a private car during the daytime (Greed, 2007). However, when these differences are not considered it cause built environments to disadvantage women and do not meet their needs. It is argued that the integration of gender into spatial policy-making would result in a more sustainable, equal and accessible built environment for all members of society (Greed, 2005 cited in Burgess, 2008). Otherwise, results of the limited access to urban resources and division of certain urban functions cause women's isolation and boredom. Such a separation also causes

women's realization of daily duties – shopping, occupying children, taking them to activities, going to doctors, and so on – more difficult and time consuming. Working women also suffer from the spatial separation of urban facilities, that restricts their workplace opportunities and force them to consent for low-paying jobs that are nearby their residential locations, or forces them to travel to remote parts of the city every day, from home to child care to work to grocery store to child care to home (Hayden, 1982 cited in Young, 1990).

That is why women must be included in the participatory planning processes which aim to plan the city with a consideration of the needs of different groups with different characteristics that cause them to experience the city in different ways. The main reason for the need to include women in decision making processes is the lack of neutrality of professional decision-making as individuals inevitably bring their own personal life experiences and 'world view' of what is 'normal' to the policy and decision making processes (Greed, 2000). Since planners and people with decision-making responsibilities rely on to their own professional experiences, they are likely to plan the cities according to the needs of 'people like themselves'. Those who do not 'fit' or who see things 'differently' from the rest of the profession are likely to experience social exclusion and 'closure'. Such a situation requires the inclusion of new and different insights of people with different needs to the city planning processes (Greed 2000).

All these are powerful in creating urban inequalities which are experienced by women and result in feeling of fear while using urban public spaces. That is why I think that feeling of fear has very concrete reflections and it directly affects daily routines of women and cause their exclusion from urban public spaces. Starting with the socially constructed gender identities, women are defined as weak and vulnerable. This situation empowers the idea of urban public space as a dangerous place for women (Gardner, 1995; Valentine, 1990; Bowman, 1993; Day, 1994). Fear is a feeling that limits women's use of urban public open spaces freely and limits the possible opportunities of interactions (Day, 1997; Gordon & Riger, 1991). Women can be encouraged by the fear of danger to obey to the patriarchal social norms and behave accordingly in the urban public spaces. Such a behavior is very limiting for women's access to and freedom in urban public spaces (Day, 2001).

Women's fear for the use of public spaces, especially the street, public transportation and urban parks, limits them from fulfilling their needs to use the city (Valentine, 1998; Pain, 1991; Madge, 1997) and restrict their access to their cities, including to employment, health, education, political and recreation facilities. The use of public space can be both a luxury and a source of threat and fear of violence for women. Women experience a much higher threat of sexual violence than men, and as a result, tend to avoid certain areas that they feel dangerous. As a result of this situation, Koskela (1996) notes that "by restricting their mobility because of fear, women unwittingly reproduce masculine domination over space" and it may be argued that fear is a consequence of women's unequal status, but it also contributes to perpetuating gendered inequalities (Koskela, 1996; 113).

To sum up, chapter two indicates that on the contrary to the ideal definitions of urban public spaces as arenas where residents are in a continuous and exciting process of realizing their claims to use and benefit, in the real world urban public spaces are not fully projecting publicness criteria. Such a situation causes certain urban inequalities that affect the access to and use of urban public spaces. These urban inequalities are mostly experienced by certain groups of the society with lower levels of power and control over the design and use of urban public spaces. Among these groups, women are the one of the groups that experiences urban inequalities the most as a result of the socially constructed definitions, roles, and appropriate behaviors and spheres. The social constructions cause women to be dominated by the norms of the patriarchy and experience urban inequalities due to lower levels of inclusion to decision making processes, hardship of realizing everyday roles because of the unthoughtfully designed public spaces and separation of urban functions, and finally the fear of violence that are perpetuated by the social constructions of gendered spheres. Parochial realm of neighborhoods with the ties of intimacy and resulting ties may create opportunities for such groups and especially for people who are bounded to neighborhood space.

Deriving from the discussions, the coming chapter elaborates on the parochial realm – neighborhood and explore use of neighborhood parks as one of the most important urban places for the daily lives of women who are mostly bounded to the private realms due to social constitutions of gender and experience neighborhood parks as one of the few parochial realms where they can express their needs and wills.

## CHAPTER 3

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND PARK USE

Neighborhood parks are one of the most important public open green spaces in residential areas which are provided through public resources. The importance of neighborhood parks comes from benefits they provide to its users. These benefits vary from opportunities of improving physical and mental health to socializing with others and to the chance of developing public expression and identity in neighborhoods. There are especially certain user groups such as housewives with young children, elderly, and low income residents whose access to and use of neighborhood parks is more crucial as large portion of their daily life and recreational activities are bounded to the immediate surroundings of their homes.

Following a brief definition, categorization and exploration of benefits of parks, this chapter aims at discussing how socio-economic characteristics of park users, physical and social characteristics of parks and their surrounding environments and finally park provision policies affect the use and needs of neighborhood parks by different user groups namely, elderly people, non-working women with childcare, children and so on.

#### **3. 1. Parks as Public Open Green Spaces and Public Service Areas**

Public open green spaces (or, here parks) are important public spaces and public service areas that all citizens need to get access to and benefit from. Parks are

“... treasured family refuges and oases for urban residents and, parks vary in size, age, design, ornamental embellishments, planting, facilities, maintenance, and patterns of use. Their constitutive elements – trees, grass, pathways, benches, ponds, fountains, statues, gardens, playgrounds, sporting facilities, etc – reflect diverse ideologies of nature-making” (Byrne and Wolch, 2009; 743).



Parks are important areas for urban leisure activities, and they are defined as ‘gateways’ to the natural world, play areas for children and for sports recreation (Burgess et al.1988). They are places enabling a connection between inhabitants of the city and the nature and settings with recreational areas with the protection of the nature and sustainable urban ecology, and also places that contribute to the aesthetics and economy of cities as well as to the health and education of citizens (Demir, 2006). A high quality living environment and urban life is only possible with a balance between built structures, transportation network and public open green spaces; especially parks. Parks are supposed to provide many benefits to their users with the activities that they include, their design qualities, their functions and their impact zones (Emur & Onsekiz, 2007). Under ideal conditions benefits of parks can be summarized as below:

Public aspect of parks plays an important role in the expression of democratic rights as they create opportunities for free speech and expressing individual ideas as well as meeting and socializing with other dwellers and developing citizen identity. With this way parks enhance the social coherence and democratic quality of the society. Most importantly, parks provide chances for self expression, areas for leisure times, open green spaces, sports fields, fun and resting spaces and cultural activities to all residents independent of their age, sex, social class and economic status (Ceylan, 2007). Parks are places that define the physical and social quality of the urban space, create opportunities for educational, cultural and recreational uses and are open spaces for all citizens (Yuen, 1996). Parks are common spaces that can be enjoyed by elderly people, children, women, men and handicapped without any financial or time limitations.

Health related benefits are one of the most important aspects of parks. According to Byrne and Wolch (2009), parks urge people for a more active life style and decrease health problems related with obesity, coronary heart disease and several types of cancer (Orsega-Smith et al., 2004; cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). Studies indicate that people who live near parks can find more opportunity for exercise than people who live beyond walking distance (Giles-Corti et al. 2005 cited in Ceylan, 2007).

Parks are beneficial for mental health of the users as well since they provide psychological relief from the stresses of city life (Ulrich, 1979; 1984; Kaplan et al., 2004 cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). Wolch et al (2005) also state that outdoor play is very important for younger children’s social and cognitive development, as well as

older children and young people also benefit from parks to spend quality active time instead of computer games and television (Burgess et al., 1988).

Parks provide ecosystem services benefits by controlling and regulating the microclimate. Parks help to reduce the urban heat island effect, clean the air, increase oxygen, calm down the dust and dirt in the air and reduce air pollution, enable air circulation, control humidity and temperature, cool down the air, slow down and direct the wind to desired directions. Additionally, they create natural ecosystems and habitat for flora and fauna and protect biodiversity, balance carbon balance, and storm water infiltration (Burgess et al., 1988; Heynen, 2006 cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). As parks cover the ground with a permeable surface they also help water saving and fertility of the soil (Ceylan, 2007; Emür and Onsekiz, 2007).

Parks also have important and visible roles in terms of economical benefits as they increase property values while improving socialization, promoting child development, and creating opportunities for a more civilized life (Emür and Onsekiz, 2007).

Plants and structures that are used in parks support the city physically and aesthetically with their forms, dimensions, textures, and colors. They create a balance between dwellers and environment, structures, solids and voids in the city. Parks create a boundary and barrier, direct and ease the vehicular and pedestrian traffic while creating privacy and isolation (Ceylan, 2007).

To ensure that all citizens can benefit from parks, laws in general provide standards for the required amount of parks, their distribution and location in the city, service areas, target users and functions. Turkish Development Law (İmar Yasası) no. 3194 define park as “Sum of all public spaces that are reserved for children’s play areas, resting, walking, picnic, enjoyment, leisure and waterfront areas. Also large scaled fair areas, botanic gardens, zoos and district parks are included in the park definition.” Until 1999, according to the regulations following this law, the minimum amount of green area per person in the city plans had to be 7 square meter. After the revision in the regulations in 1999, this standard is increased to 10 square meters. However, it can be argued that such a determination regarding a certain green area per person is quite controversial without consideration the accessibility of the parks for city inhabitants in relation with their location, amount of green area per person and quality of the space (Üstündağ & Şengün, 2006) and park’s success in responding to needs of various users.

Planning disciplines related with the built environment underline certain categorizations and norms for parks. Emür and Onsekiz (2007) categorize parks according to their size (Table 1) and function (Table 2). I benefit from their categorization since they define park categories in relation with the surrounding environments and potential users' certain socio-economic characteristics.

Table 1. Park categorization according to size  
(Source: Tümer, 1976; Yıldızcı, 1982; Bakan ve Konuk, 1987; Türel, 1988 cited in Emür and Onsekiz, 2007)

Parks	Service Area Size	Age of Users	Amount of Park Per Capita (Area_da/1000People)	Target Users	Standard Size (da)
Playgrounds	200-600 m	0-3, 4-7, 8-15	4		8-16
Sports Fields	2 km	7 and up	4	Whole City	40-60
Neighborhood Parks	500-1.500 m	All Ages	8-12	3500-5000	20-40
District Parks	1000-2500 m	All Ages	10-20	15.000-30.000	160-400
Urban Parks	1-10 km	All Ages	80	Whole County	40-800
Region Parks	25-100 km	All Ages	750-3.000		2.000 - 4.000
National Parks	Whole County	All Ages	Varies	Whole County	Varies

Table 2. Park categorization according to function  
(Source: Tümer, 1976; Yıldızcı, 1982; Bakan ve Konuk, 1987; Türel, 1988 cited in Emür and Onsekiz, 2007)

Parks	Location	Functions
Playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In residential areas.</li> <li>Away from major transportation routes and heavy traffic.</li> <li>Visible from residential buildings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help children to develop mentally and physically and to participate to active play.</li> <li>Includes play equipments, sand boxes, natural planted areas.</li> </ul>
Sport Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programmed athletic fields and</li> <li>Multi-use indoor complexes,</li> <li>Regional use and access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track, field, natatorium, softball, soccer, tennis, basketball, volleyball, racquetball, football, boxing</li> </ul>
Neighborhood Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal recreation spaces.</li> <li>Basic unit of park system.</li> <li>Neighborhood central location.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighborhood Driven Use:</li> <li>Playgrounds, courts and structures; internal trails, picnic/seating area, dog parks</li> </ul>
Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Larger parks with structured recreational opportunities serving multiple nearby neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Driven Use:</li> <li>Recreation centers; playgrounds, play fields, courts; internal trails, picnic/seating area, dog parks, arts opportunities</li> </ul>
Urban Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topographically various areas and easily accessible should be selected. Main transportation routes can go through the parks as well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to community parks, these areas include zoos, fair areas, sports and concert areas, trails etc. Defines the main green area footprint of the city.</li> </ul>
Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large, easily accessible multi-use parks drawing from beyond adjacent neighborhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High activity uses: Recreation centers (may be specialized), trails; play fields, courts and structures; multiple activity areas</li> </ul>
Natural Resource Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks prioritizing conservation of open space, heritage assets, nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental sustainability emphasis, low-impact uses (hiking, canoeing, bird watching), educational programming</li> </ul>

### **3. 1. 1. Neighborhood Parks as a Part of Parochial Realm**

Given the definition, categorization and benefits of parks; it is also important to look at these discussions in the neighborhood scale since neighborhood parks are the key public open green spaces and supposed to be “people’s parks” as they are close to all the households and present for multiple formal and informal leisure activities (Cunningham & Jones, 2000).

According to Mills (2007) neighborhood is the residential space where close ties and relationships of daily life occur in the urban context. Neighborhoods are important in the sense that they create connections between the extensions of the private interior spaces of houses and family lives to the public life of the streets (Mills, 2007). Immediate surrounding environments of the residential spaces or the neighborhood create transition from private commodities of people such as their homes, private gardens to the public service areas such as public open green spaces, children playgrounds, transportation systems, parking areas, common activity and sports areas (Ekinci & Ozan, 2006). By providing connections between private and public realms and creating opportunities for socialization with the people from the similar residential areas, neighborhoods are important areas for their residents’ personal and social development (Gökçe, 2007). Deriving from Lofland (1989)’s definition of parochial realm as an area for sharing the commons among acquaintances and neighbors, it is possible that neighborhoods are great examples of parochial realm. The core of neighborhoods is the ties that consist of a community psychology and this is the unique characteristics of neighborhoods that make them different from private realm which is social life with strangers (Pitkin, 1981).

Neighborhoods are core living environments as they create an important part of the public life as they help to fulfill residents’ social needs and satisfaction through social relations of neighborliness. Neighborhoods with certain qualities such as supportive physical activities, safe environmental conditions and well maintained amenities, controlled traffic flow and public transportation that answers the needs of all residents and eases their mobility enables the residents to be more satisfied with their home environments. Such conditions make people physically active and socially engaged (Chaudhury et. al., 2016). Neighborhoods inhabit physical, psychological and socio-cultural relations through the residential environment and with this quality they

affect residents' satisfaction and happiness levels. Also as being a core to the physical and social life of the cities, individual and family relations also feed from the neighborhoods' physical, psychological and socio-cultural relations (Kellekci. & Berköz, 2006 cited in Sensoy & Karadag, 2012).

Socio-cultural relations that occur in neighborhood spaces (neighborliness / komşuluk) are crucial as it makes private lives open to the neighbors (Mills, 2007). "Neighborliness" has different definitions from different perspectives. From physical perspective, neighborliness can be defined as including different service categories and facilities that are in walking distance to the residents of a neighborhood. These include healthcare facilities, public open green spaces, club houses, commercial, cultural and religious facilities where people can get together and share certain feelings and memories. From the socio-cultural perspective, neighborliness is a zone that lets the ties of the social relations that is formed by the people who are living in close distance (Kellekci & Berköz, 2006). Also social relations like neighborliness can be perceived as social ties in the micro level of the neighborhood and they answer the basic needs of the society such as social support and security (Kısar & Türkoğlu, 2010). Neighborhoods are places where communication and sense of sharing common feelings can be achieved between people who live in the same neighborhood through the ties of neighborliness. Neighborliness also proves that human being cannot live alone and she/he is a part of the society and she/he can only reach to her/his own personality in a society (Şensoy & Karadağ, 2012).

The use of public services and positive experiences increase only in neighborhoods where there is powerful neighborliness relations and commitment to the physical and social life. In such neighborhoods people perceive the physical space positively and they value the possibilities of casual social interactions such as "exchanges at the local market, the hustle and bustle of a shopping street, the brief conversations on residential streets or while jogging in a park" (Dines et. al. 2006: p. 18).

Neighborhood parks are one of the most examples of parochial realms that not only create opportunities for serendipitous encounters among neighbors but also provide certain benefits with their physical and social characteristics for the residents of the neighborhoods. Coşaner et. al. (2014) define neighborhood parks as accessible in a service area with a 500-1000m diameter, have entrance and exits that can easily be seen,

rich in terms of aesthetics and visual qualities, gather several functions together, appeal to different user groups, reflect the local characteristics of the neighborhoods that they are located in, in harmony with the nature and provide activities that can enable socio-cultural interaction between users (Kandemir, 2010 cited in Coşaner et. al., 2014) and enliven the social life of the neighborhoods by creating opportunities for casual encounters and building social ties between residents (Oğuz, 1998; Nasuh, 1993). Neighborhood parks can be defined as one of the most important urban public spaces of neighborhoods as they provide mostly recreational benefits (Forsyth et. al. 2009) and indicate important qualities of public spaces by providing a democratic arena for residents and being the most accessible part of nature in an urban area (Brown, 2008; Machabee et. al., 2005; Phillips, 1996 cited in Forsyth et. al. 2009). Neighborhood parks provide opportunities for people to relax in terms of physical, emotional and social aspects and realize leisure time activities close to their homes. They also improve life in the urban areas of the neighborhood ecologically and aesthetically. They give mental relief to people with the help of easily accessible social opportunities and the chance of realizing their wishes in an open green space.

Additionally, neighborhood parks build ties between urban context and the nature. They reduce the sharpness of geometric structures, soften the overwhelming effects of the built environment and connect these structures to each other with an organic manner. Neighborhood parks serve to the environment in an aesthetic way. Especially the planting in these parks are great tools of breaking the monotony of the cities and enlivening the environment by the help of the changing qualities of plants due to different seasons and weather conditions.

Neighborhood parks also create opportunities for people to gather and enjoy social and cultural activities such as concerts, meetings, and shows (Oğuz, 1998; Nasuh, 1993 cited in Coşaner, 2014). People may see neighborhood parks as the extension of their houses due to the limited size of the houses, the size of the family and the type of the house. People with no exterior spaces in their homes may use neighborhood parks near to their houses in their neighborhoods. The physical and social characteristics of neighborhood parks have a crucial impact on the health behaviors, chronic illnesses, mental health and mortality rates of especially elderly people who have reduced mobility rates due to aging related illnesses and social exclusion from the public life (Chaudhury et. al, 2016).

Neighborhood parks with the physical and social benefits that they provide can play an important role especially for certain groups of people with physical, social, economic and cultural limitations to use city space. For these groups neighborhood parks might be the only possible place for socialization, relaxation and enjoyment of the green in the urban space. Some people like unemployed, homeless, women with limited social and leisure opportunities; young people or migrants who may not have any other places to get together and share stories may use neighborhood parks for social interaction. For instance, neighborhood parks create important opportunities for children to gain the habit of exercising as they are close to home place and easily accessible (Coşaner et. al., 2014) and arguably safer. According to Mills (2007) “The cultural practice of neighborhood life is gendered, relying in part on traditional gender roles for women as wives and mothers which place them at home during the day” (Mills, 2007). So neighborhood parks may be the only opportunities for this group of women for socialization.

In order to be able to use and fully benefit from the neighborhood parks, accessibility of these areas is crucial. Here accessibility not only means being in walking distance to dwellings but also being available to all societal groups’ use. As mentioned before there are certain groups who are mostly disadvantaged by the general planning decisions in the overall city and/or bounded to neighborhood space due to their societal roles, responsibilities and status related to their income, gender, age and other socio-economic characteristics. So the access to neighborhood parks is significantly important for these groups. However, due to certain factors, such as limited municipality budgets (Forsyth, 2009) or residents’ individual preferences to use larger urban parks rather than smaller neighborhood parks (Gold, 1977) not all neighborhood parks are fully used or fulfill the needs of these groups.

The next section focuses on the factors that affect the use of neighborhood parks from the perspectives of socio-economic characteristics of park users, physical and social characteristics of parks and their surroundings environments, and the park provision policies.

### **3. 2. Factors Affecting the Use of Parks**

“Parks are not ideologically neutral spaces, nor are they physically homogeneous; rather, they exist for specific ecological, social, political, and economic reasons – reasons that shape how people perceive and use parks” (Byrne & Wolch, 2009: p. 745).

There are certain studies that develop certain research methods that aim at understanding differing factors that affect park use. For such purpose, these studies develop comprehensive models that focus on different user characteristics, physical and social characteristics of parks and their environments. Among these studies, Byrne and Wolch (2009) (Figure 1) who developed a model to understand the unequal access to public resources by people from different races and ethnicities, and Gedikli and Özbilen (2004) (Figure2) who developed a model to determine the required unit park area for each people according to individual and environmental conditions, are quite comprehensive in terms of analyzing physical, social, cultural, economic and political factors affecting park use. According to these models, differences between people in terms of park use are caused firstly by the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of park users and their individual limitations. Secondly by the environmental limitations, namely, physical characteristics and provided amenities of park spaces and the opportunities for spending time in those spaces. Thirdly by the perception of park spaces by park users and their individual experiences; finally by the historical and cultural context of park provision policies and unit park area per capita. Not considering all these factors simultaneously is one of the main causes of unequal distribution of park resources and lack of use of these places by all user groups.



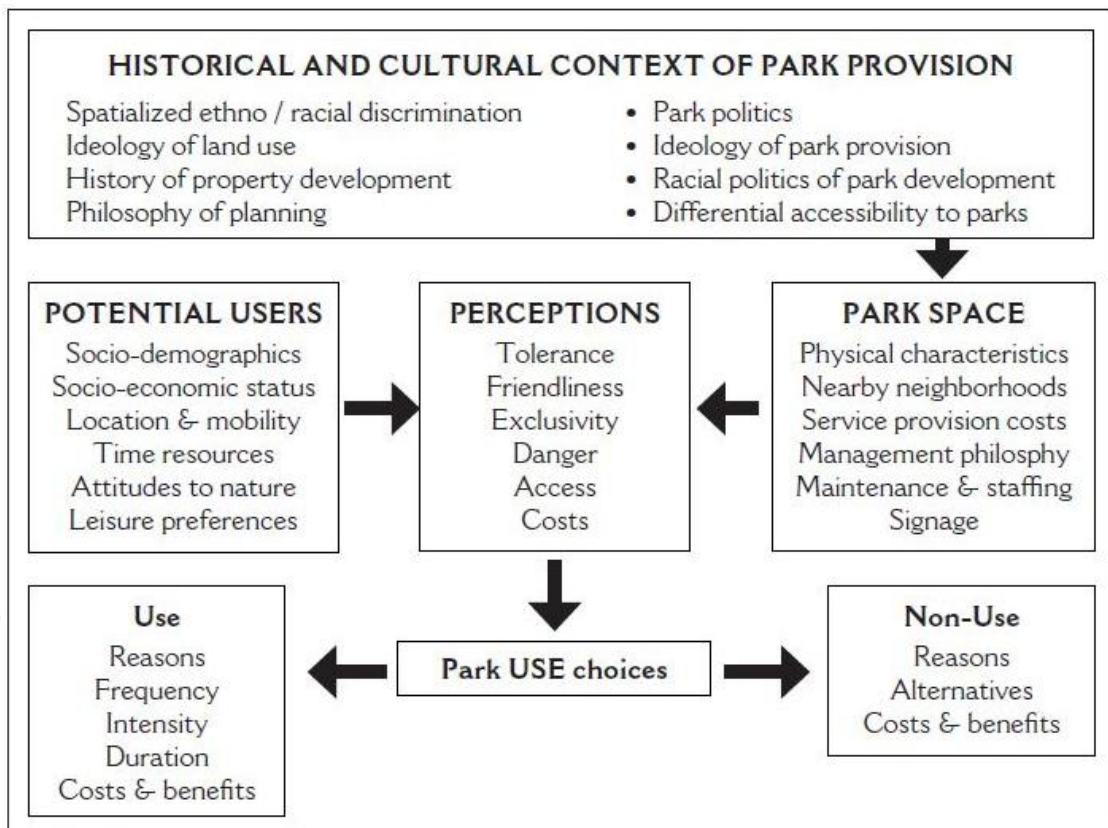


Figure 1. The relationship between space, race and park use  
(Source: Byrne and Wolch, 2009)

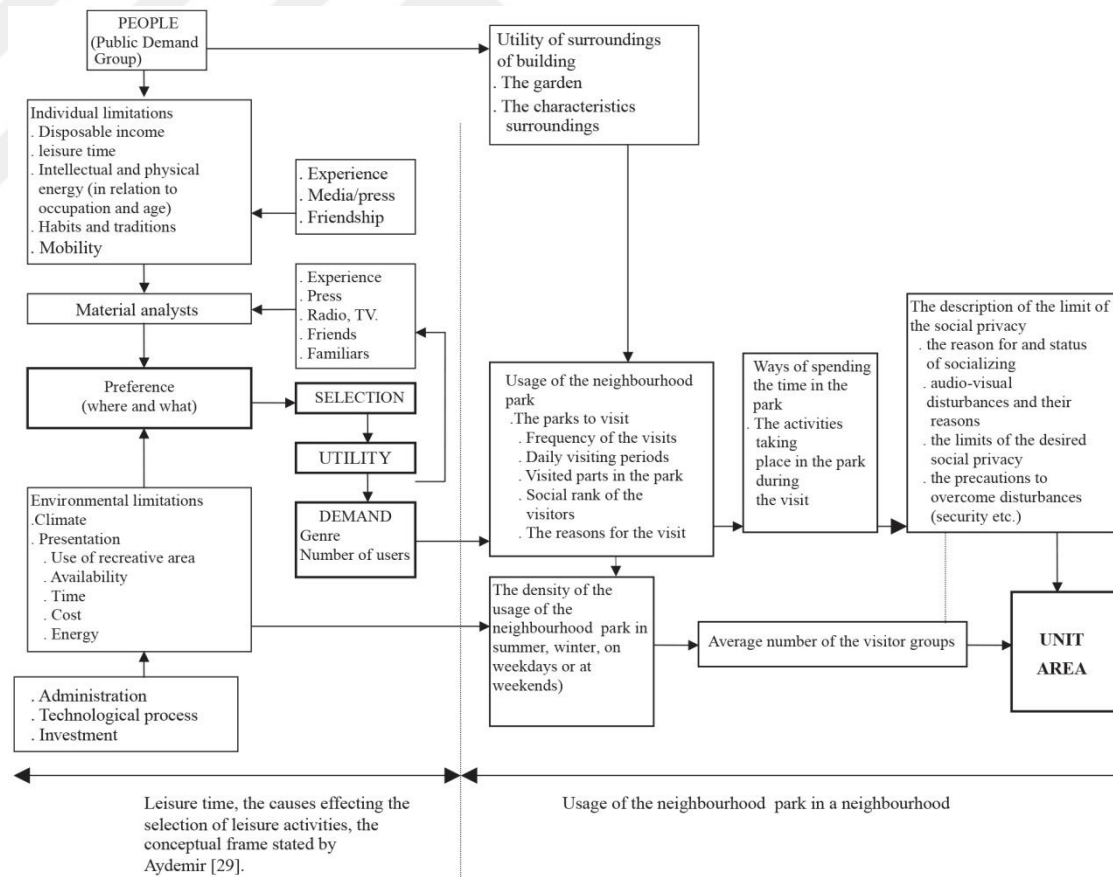


Figure 2. Identifying the unit neighborhood park area per person  
(Source: Gedikli and Özbilen, 2004)

In order to understand differing levels of park use and satisfaction from the experiences in neighborhood parks, deriving from the proposed models, this chapter focuses on how different factors shape people's use of parks and their perceptions regarding neighborhood parks. Before exploring socio-economic characteristics of users, physical conditions of the parks, and physical and social characteristics of parks, firstly I will focus on historical and cultural context of park provision policies.

### **3. 2. 1. Historical and Cultural Context of Park Provision**

Park provision policies and the accessibility of parks shape park spaces in a way that define people's decisions on use of parks (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). Thus, in this section, firstly, I focus on the historical and cultural context of park provision and secondly, I analyze different park provision methods as a factor that may affect the distribution of resources in an equitable way and the accessibility of these resources, and cause serious urban inequalities in the urban context.

Historical context of park provision policies starting from the second half of 19th century, especially in American cities, follows a trend to turn large chunks of land into public spaces and specifically into park systems or urban parks started. The park system represented an initiative to humanize the utilitarian form of cities. Health and hygiene concerns and the aim to create recreational opportunities for the public, especially for working class in congested inner cities were the main motives. As one of the first initiator of this trend, Frederick Law Olmsted's designs for parks aimed to create an order and structure for the expanding industrial cities of the late 19th and 20th C. He aimed to realize the comprehension of democratic ideals, good citizenship, civic responsibilities, and ultimately, the essential social compact that constitutes the core of civil society. Rosenfield (1989) emphasized that "the public park served for the 19th C. urban democracy. The function of celebration of institutions and ideological principles thought to be genius of those cultures". Public parks served to inspire concepts like civic pride, social contract, especially between people from different backgrounds, a sense of freedom and common sense in aesthetic standards and public taste.

Following the foundation of the Republic of Turkey became changing governmental policies and ideals have used the space as a tool to shape and dominate the "Turkish Citizens" and society (Demir, 2006; Yüksekli, 2013). The "modernization"

projects and nation building ideals were raised and dominated the whole society and space. Architecture and planning disciplines have played a major role in “building a nation” and urban public spaces including the city parks. Especially in major cities, park spaces were perceived as a tool for realizing the aims for building “modern”/ “westernized” cities and citizens. The plans and design of urban public spaces were aimed to enable the interaction and connection of members of different classes of the society while sharing the same spaces (Demir, 2006). Since there is no related detailed information on neighborhood parks in the literature, I will focus on the parks in general in Turkey’s history.

In order to succeed in modernization project, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk -the leader of the new Republic- proposed the design of two major types of urban parks: Cultural parks (in İzmir), for leading the society during the socialization processes and enrich cultural enlightenment, and Youth parks (in Ankara), for the creation of a new, modern and westernized generation. These suggestions can be interpreted as the “green revolution” for the country (Memluk, 2004). The first examples to achieve these goals were Gençlik Parkı in Ankara and Kültür Park in Izmir. Such examples of parks were perceived as the prestigious spaces that signifies the new modern ideologies and life styles of the Republican ideology. Another vibrant example is the Balıkesir Atatürk Parkı where a former cemetery was turned into one of the most important recreation areas and gathering spaces in Balıkesir. It was planned as a space where balls, social gatherings, formal ceremonies and parades can be organized to represent the “modernized” face of the city (Yüksekli, 2013).

After 1950’s, along with the increasing levels of industrialization, socio-economic and cultural developments have caused a rapid urbanization and a major increase in the population of Turkish cities. Uncontrolled increase in the urban population and accompanying social, economic, political and cultural changes in the structure of the society in the cities; increase in the high rise buildings in the city centers, expansion of the cities with additional settlements and the increased areas of industrial areas all caused a crucial decrease in the amount of public open green spaces in the cities. Such cities that have a tendency to grow in an unplanned way with limited amount of public open green spaces have important impacts on citizens’ physical and psychological health, and quality of life (Gül & Küçük, 2001).

When planning laws and regulations that set the minimum areas for public open green spaces in Turkey have been analyzed, it is seen that the first law that considers the public open green spaces in Turkey is “Buildings and Roads” (Yapılar Yollar Kanunu) Law numbered 2290. This law proposes 4m<sup>2</sup> of green space (groves, meadow, lake and play grounds) in the city plans between the years of 1933 and 1956. In 1956, with the Development Law (İmar Planı) this has been changed and according to Development Law numbered 6785 / 1605, the open green space per person have been determined as minimum 7m<sup>2</sup>. This includes 1,5m<sup>2</sup> of playgrounds for ages of 3-6 and 7-11 in primary school unit scale; 2m<sup>2</sup> of play and sports areas for ages of 11-18, 1m<sup>2</sup> of neighborhood park in neighborhood scale; 1m<sup>2</sup> district stadium and 1,5m<sup>2</sup> urban park in the urban scale (Aksoy, 2001).

The Development Law (İmar Yasası) numbered 3194 dated 1985 also protected this minimum amount of green area per capita in the city plans that have been set to be 7m<sup>2</sup> and in 1999 this minimum was revised to 10m<sup>2</sup>. This included 1,5m<sup>2</sup> of playgrounds in primary school unit scale for 5000 population, 2m<sup>2</sup> of neighborhood park and 2m<sup>2</sup> of sports area in neighborhood scale for 15000 population; 1m<sup>2</sup> district stadiums and 3,5m<sup>2</sup> urban park in the urban scale for 45000 population (Aksoy, 2001). These standards are still valid in today’s Turkey planning laws.

When these standards are analyzed and compared with other countries, it is seen that cities in Turkey have much lower amounts of public open green spaces (Table 4). What is more, when today’s Turkish cities are analyzed, the amount of urban green spaces per capita is much less than this amount (Doygun & İlter, 2007).

Table 3. Public green space standards comparison across cities and countries (m<sup>2</sup>)  
(Source: Aksoy, 2001)

Function	USA	Amsterdam	Stockholm	Rome	Warsaw	England	France	Turkey
Children Playgrounds	*	*	5,6	3,2	-	*	3,5	1,5
Neighborhood Parks	3,9	-		5,5	15	20	4,2	2
Urban Park	13-20	9	23,8	11,6	5,3	40	10	-
Green Belts	60	30	48,1	18	17,5	8	10	-
Sports Areas	*	6,5	10	7,5	7,5	10	8	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	77-84	45,5	87,5	45,8	45,3	78	35,7	10

In Turkish cities all public spaces including parks are owned, managed and maintained by metropolitan and local municipalities. That is why, parks not only reflect social and physical characteristics of the area that they are located in, but also they reflect the ideologies and being shaped by the political perspective of the municipalities that they are owned by. In the last twenty years, with the changing dynamics in the economy of Turkey, new consumption spaces that are owned and managed by private companies started to take the dominance over the public spaces that are owned by the municipalities. It is started to be observed that people prefer these privately owned places that provide everything but a connection with nature over the open green spaces that provide such a connection with the nature (Özdemir, 2009).

Considering these developments, there are dramatic changes in ideologies of park making and allocation of resources in today's park provision policies both in the world and in Turkey. For instance, we see that the goals for urban park provision in Turkey have shifted from "societal goals" to those emphasizing "efficiency" with technical arrangements and calculations. It is possible to say that modernization ideologies of new Turkey Republic have been replaced by others, but mostly by technical language of urban planning. Here similar to the practices of modern urban planning, the approach to equity for providing public open green spaces has been based on the "equality." In general, the approach with equal allocation of public resources focuses on the whole city to determine the distribution of parks. Measuring total park areas in the city, their spatial distribution and total amount of green areas per capita are the main tools of measuring equitable park provision. As a result of scattering small green areas all over the city in an unplanned and random way without considering the needs of the potential users, such cities cannot establish a healthy and successful connection between citizens and nature (Kaştaş Uzun & Şenol, 2014).

Another factor that affected the park planning methodologies is due to the occasional student or worker union protests in parks such as Güvenpark or Abdi İpekçi Parkı in Ankara. As a result these areas started to be seen as problematic. So parks started to be planned in a way that do not let these kinds of large gatherings and provide easy control by the police forces (Özdemir, 2009). Gezi Parkı protest in 2013 became an important mile stone in Turkey's park provision history and policy. These protests are quite crucial and most importantly they changed people's awareness about their city rights for green spaces. In 2013, after government's decision for building a shopping

mall in Gezi Parkı, a large urban park (Taksim, Istanbul) heavily used by citizens, park users started to guard the trees from being cut. People's increasing reactions to "save" Gezi Parkı spread all around Turkey in a very short time and transformed into a kind of collective (re)action to demand city rights including having and using parks at all spatial scales. Since then, there have been various demands of city dwellers and residents for keeping and "protecting" neighborhood parks from redevelopment pressures across multiple cities in Turkey, as reflected in the recent media news that are reviewed.

This section focused on the historical and cultural park provision policies with a focus on Turkey as these policies have important effects on the parks starting from planning and construction decisions to the budgets that are reserved for the parks, their locations, total areas, amenities that they provide and the maintenance policies. The coming sections will elaborate on the analysis of different factors such as socio-economic characteristics of users, physical and social characteristics of parks and park's surrounding environments as those have important effects on the access and use of neighborhood parks.

### **3. 2. 2. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Park Users**

The benefits of parks and people's use patterns and experiences are directly related with their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. There are increasing numbers of research focusing on the prejudice and discrimination of the dominant society, social roles and expectations for appropriate behaviors, and other constraints that may limit the activities of specific subgroups and cause them to experience a limited access to public open green spaces (Hutchison, 2009). Most of the studies on the use of parks overlook the individual socio-economic and demographic characteristics such as class, race, age and gender of different users and they mainly focus on young, white, middle and upper middle class individuals (Croskeys et. al., 2002) and they propose certain park norms in terms of design, size, distance and quality that every park should have. However, different groups of people may use parks in different ways and they may have various needs (Byrne & Wolch, 2009). For instance, studies indicate that there is relationship with income and park use - higher park use rate in neighborhoods with higher income when compared to middle and low income neighborhoods- (Machabee et. al., 2004); age, race and gender and park use -elderly people, minority

groups and females are prone to be “non-frequent” or “non-users” of parks (Bedimo et. al., 2005); for women and elderly, traditional family roles affect park use (Hutchinson, 1994 cited in Mutiara & Isami, 2012).

This section focuses on different user groups and how their differences affect neighborhood park use. For this purpose, the section examines various empirical studies and analyzes their study methods and approaches to grasp the relationship between individual characteristics of users with their park use. When I review empirical studies with a focus on socio-economic characteristics of users, I concentrate on the studies that mostly examine park use of users from different age groups, namely, children, youth and elderly people, and gender for the scope of my thesis. While analyzing these studies, I specifically examined the study methods, their aims and main findings of these researches.

### **Age & Park Use**

The research indicates that one of the defining factors of park use behaviors is age (Crespo et al., 2000; Riddick & Stewart, 1994). Studies that focus on different age groups mainly base their discussions on how age affects park use and state that users from different age groups have various expectations from the parks and they have different physical, social and economic abilities to use parks. Another significant focus of age related studies is the health benefits of parks for different age groups. They state that benefits of parks play an important role in their life quality. For children and youth, using parks and benefiting from the activities within help them to socialize with their peers, get rid of their extra energy, acquire physical and social skills and help them to grow in a healthier environment (Larson & Verma, 1999). For elderly people who have limited mobility and less interaction with the social life, activities in parks support social interaction, prevent isolation and affect their health and wellness (Kelly & Ross, 1989; Tinsley et. al., 2002).

#### **– Children and Park Use**

Children are one of the most important user groups of neighborhood parks. Not only the high number of children in parks, but also their relation to their mothers, and the occasions that they cause high numbers of women to use parks due to their care-giver duties, make children important users groups that needs to be analyzed.

My literature review on children’s use of parks indicates that neighborhood characteristics, park characteristics, children’s socio-economic characteristics, and



parental anxiety over children's safety all affect the frequency and type of children's use of neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks provide many benefits to children as they are important public service areas with their potential to increase physical activity for children and offer a variety of active recreation options close to where children live (Floyd, et. al., 2008). Neighborhood parks let children to explore and develop their social skills. Free play opportunities, chance to explore nature are available for especially younger children in parks (Proshanski & Fabian, 1987). Parks and public open green spaces that allow children to burn off their excessive energy, improve their motor skills, and interact with other children in environments that are usually less restrictive than those of home and school. Such benefits of parks help children's social and cognitive development (Saegert & Hart, 1978; Hart, 1979). Many researchers believe that parks, which are present and already equipped with active recreation facilities in many neighborhoods, can help to fight with health related problems and most importantly obesity.

With a different approach to understand behavior patterns of children, Roemmich et al. (2006) study with 4-7 years old boys and girls and ask them wear accelerometers for four days and conclude that neighborhoods with a greater proportion of park area are associated with increased physical activity among children (Roemmich et. al., 2006). Similarly, Cohen et al.'s (2006) investigation with adolescent girls finds out that the number of parks within one mile of participants' homes are significantly related to total moderate-to-vigorous physical activity as measured by six days of wearing accelerometers (Cohen et. al., 2006).

Sideris and Sideris (2010) aim to gather more specific knowledge about children's park use and how certain neighborhood characteristics, park amenities and user's characteristic affect park use. So they realize their research with middle-school children 10–13 years of age as this age group is still dependent on their parents, but has some freedom to play or get involved in sport activities in different areas of the park without direct adult supervision. Working with this age group requires certain permissions from parents and school administrations and specific questions to test the validity of their answers. The results of the study indicate that majority of the children that are studied make little use of parks. This is mainly due to children's lack of time, lack of curiosity for the park activities and parent's safety concerns. Children also state that the most important factors that bring them to parks are the active recreation

facilities and organized sport programs, natural features, and good levels of maintenance and cleanliness (Sideris & Sideris, 2009).

– **Youth and Park Use**

Like younger children groups, parks are also important social areas to get together with peers and getting involved in sports and physical activities for older children and teenagers. There is an increasing tendency for indoor computer games, electronic toys and television; leisure is becoming a commercial indoor activity rather than being accessible to all in public open green spaces, thus, parks are great opportunities for youth to enjoy the benefits of public open green spaces (Burgess, et. al., 1988).

Different from the early childhood years, adolescents shift their focus from their parents to their peers (Cole et. al., 2005). They become more mobile and avoid authority. They prefer to socialize in larger peer groups of both single and mixed gender. Hanging out becomes an important social activity for these groups. This peer socialization is important for the formation of their personal and social identity and values. Although hanging out in public spaces is viewed as a positive recreational activity by youth, adults often perceive this behavior as a problem and a threat to the community (Glendinning et al. 2003 cited in Passon et. al. 2008). (Glendinning et. al., 2003)

Research indicates that small, safe, suburban settings are generally preferred by adults for raising children (Vliet, 1981 cited in Passon et. al., 2008). However, youth do not prefer these environments. Among the preference reasons of youth there are criteria such as social integration, variety of interesting settings, safety and freedom of movement, peer meeting places, cohesive community identity, and green areas (Lynch, 1977; Chawla, 2002 cited in Passon et. al., 2008). Youth's space preferences indicate that they mostly like gardens, parks, natural areas, and undeveloped agricultural fields among their favorite places (Owens, 1988; O'Brien, 2003; Hester et al., 1988; Lynch, 1977 cited in Passon et. al., 2008). Youth generally complain about unfriendly people, noise, dirt, crime, and traffic (O'Brien, 2003; Vliet, 1981), and want a safe environment where they can be active.

As much as parks and neighborhood space is crucial in children and youth's lives, it is very important for elderly people as well. The common side for children and elderly people's neighborhood park use is their attachments to neighborhood spaces.

Children, mostly due to their parent's safety concerns are bounded to neighborhood places, whereas elderly people are bounded to neighborhood due to their limited physical and social capabilities. Coming section analyzes roles of neighborhood parks in the lives of elderly people and reviews the empirical studies on this subject.

– **Elderly and Park Use**

Aging is often associated with changing patterns of spatial use. Changes in cognitive and functional capacities associated with aging may reduce personal competence, increase barriers to the use of services and amenities, or increase personal vulnerability to environmental stressors (Glass & Balfour, 2003). For older adults, localized resources and services found within their proximate residential areas may become more important to their everyday lives (Glass & Balfour, 2003). Social and environmental characteristics of neighborhoods have severe influences on park related activities of older age groups. Older adults are generally not present in parks in large numbers or they are mostly non-users of parks (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Payne et al., 2002). The aging-related changes in cognitive, mental, or functional capacities and increasing dependence on localized resources may diminish some older adults' ability to engage in active park uses, while it may lessen others' abilities to visit the park as members of family units because their children have moved to other parts of the country. For these reasons, the need to pay attention to older people's environments may be understood as an environmental equity issue. It should be made sure that the neighborhood environment does not impact negatively its older residents (Day, 2008).

Recent research shows that older age groups may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of unpleasant neighborhood environments on health and health-related behaviors. That is why; people tend to spend a greater proportion of their lives closer to home as they age (Rowles, 1978; Golant, 1984; Kellaheer et al., 2004; Phillips et al., 2005 cited in Day, 2008). Thus, recent geographical work on ageing and health and construction of place also tends to focus on home and care-giving environments (Kearns & Andrews, 2005). Increasing vulnerability with aging cause more reliance on localized resources and services (Glass & Balfour, 2003). Lawton (1980) also emphasizes the importance of this issue as individuals who were less capable in terms of personal disability or deprived status were more open to the influence of immediate environmental situations (Lawton, 1980).

Clarke et. al. (2009) indicate that living in pedestrian friendly neighborhoods cause older adults to report less complaints of disability in mobility (Clarke et. al., 2009). This study's results highlight the potential interactive effects of individual age related capacities and neighborhood contexts on neighborhood use and health behavior. Some studies finds out that adults who live in areas with a large availability of spaces for recreation and park density are more likely to engage in physical activity (Baker et al., 2008; Bedimo- Rung et al., 2005; Diez Roux et al., 2007 cited in Parra et. al., 2010). A study conducted by Takano et al. (2002) finds out that urban areas with walkable green spaces have an influence on longevity, after controlling for individual risk factors. Study highlights that it is not only the accessibility of spaces that matters for the promotion of physical activity, but also the quality and maintenance of these spaces are important for the use of parks (Takano et al., 2002).

Neighborhood age composition has important affects on the health and well-being of older adults with its socio-economic contextual factors (Glass & Balfour, 2003). When specific age groups are distributed or concentrated within certain areas of cities this may create local demands for services and contribute to the overall infrastructure of a community (Cagney & Wen, 2008). Age composition may be seen as a contextual quality of a neighborhood since the services and infrastructure that is required to fulfill the needs of locally specific age group are not reducible to individual characteristics (Cagney, 2006).

Research about the elderly people's use of neighborhood parks generally highlight certain physical characteristics of old people and its relation to park use. Most of these studies take surrounding neighborhood characteristics as an important defining factor for park use and coming section explores these factors in detail.

Another common point of these researches is their focus on the accessibility of parks. Both Parra et.al. (2010) and Moore et. al. (2010) aim to find the relationship between elderly people's park use and the physical characteristics of neighborhood spaces (Parra et. al., 2010 and Moore et. al., 2010). In their study Parra et. al. (2010) select and survey older adults in 50 different neighborhoods and analyze their socio-economic characteristics by using GIS and aerial-photography restitution. Researchers also collect the data for connectivity, land-use mix and slope and park density. Results indicate that higher park density and high land-use mix are more likely to increase the park use of elderly people. Different then Parra et. al. (2010), Moore et. al. (2010)

include the economic characteristics of the people to their research and they determine high, medium, and low household income areas. In those areas they select interviewees according to the certain criteria such as being non-institutionalized, older than 25 and living at the same house for more than a year. A computer assisted telephone interviewing system guided survey is applied and aim to understand interviewee's perceptions of park's distance and walkability to their home. They also gather information regarding the age composition of each neighborhood and finally find out that dominance of young people in the public spaces of a neighborhood discourages elderly people's park use.

Different than the previous studies, Day (2007) focuses on more social aspects of neighborhoods, namely: cleanliness; peacefulness; exercise facilitation; social interaction facilitation; and emotional boost in addition to the equity concerns in the park use arguing that such aspects of the local environment may disproportionately affect older people. Day states that greater equity and the improved well-being of older people may be achieved through planning and design consideration across sectors. For such purpose, Day selects three neighborhoods with different characteristics to provide examples of different types of local urban environments, covering an inner urban area, a suburban neighborhood, and a small coastal town with a rural hinterland. These areas also reflect a range in terms of socioeconomic status. This research uses interviews and field observation. After visiting each area, local community groups whose members included senior citizens, for example lunch clubs, senior citizens' social clubs, and voluntary organizations, were contacted. Individuals who are interviewed asked to recommend acquaintances as further participants. Following, group interviews took place with between 3 and 8 individuals at once. Interviews were semi-structured, and designed to include discussion on likes and dislikes about the area, outdoor activities and habits, thoughts about whether the area was a healthy place to live, and improvements they would like to see.

### **Gender and Park Use**

In this section I focus on gender's role in determining neighborhood park use. Gender is one of the most efficacious socio-economic factors and most common variables used by public leisure research to investigate users' preferences on the park use. At the same time women, like elderly, and children, are among the least represented groups among the park users (Hutchison, 2009). Henderson, Hodges, and

Kivel (2002) indicated in their review on research about women and park use that examining gender and other characteristics together is important to understand the differences in the frequency, time frames and active/passive park uses (Henderson et. al., 2002). Thus, in this section, firstly, I discuss the main discussions on gendered experiences of neighborhood park use, and then I focus on the specific feminist research approaches that are used in these studies.

Gender role segregation is one of the factors that affect women's experiences in parks. Wearing and Wearing's (1988) study states that unlike men, many women do not believe that they deserve the time or have the time to participate in leisure activities (Wearing & Wearing, 1988 cited in Hutchison, 1994). As a result of the dominant household work responsibility of women, they have significantly less leisure time than do men (Firestone & Shelton, 1988; Gerstel & Gross, 1987; Shaw, 1985). The common belief is that women's leisure activities are the extensions of family and gender roles (Deem, 1986). Hutchinson (2009) indicates that most of the outdoor leisure and recreation activity of female groups in parks largely centers on child-care functions and traditional family roles. Women's presence in parks is either together with child or they are in groups of people typically composed of nuclear or multiple households. The park create opportunities for children's recreation needs and at the same time creates an opportunity as a meeting place for women in the surrounding neighborhood to get together to talk with friends and relatives (Hutchinson, 2009). Although it is mostly stated that the presence of young children is one of the constraints and set-backs for women's leisure and physical activity (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994; Silver, 2000 cited in Kaczynski et.al, 2008), Kaczynski et.al (2008)'s research data suggest that neighborhood parks may reduce this effect by creating more nearby opportunities. The age-related results on the use of neighborhood parks and physical activity patterns also suggested that presence of young children in a household may increase the likelihood of park based physical activity of women.

Most of the current research on leisure, recreation and park use is based on the false assumption that women's leisure activity can be measured by using the same methodologies applied to men (Woodward et. al., 1988 cited in Hutchison, 1994). As Henderson et.al. (1989) note the typical activity checklist used in much of the leisure and recreation research does not include activities that women are most likely to consider as leisure (Henderson et. al., 1989 cited in Hutchison, 2009). These differences

may be caused as a result of household responsibilities, childhood socialization patterns or societal norms regarding "appropriate" behavior for men and women (Bernard, 1981).

Sense of fear is one of the other limiting factors for women. Neighborhood parks are especially important for elderly women as they are believed to be vulnerable and have limited mobility. Many elderly women may experience negative incidents in parks. Although women and the elderly are not among the groups who experience crime events most, these groups are likely to report greater fear of crime (Markson, E., & Hess, B., 1980) and are more likely to change their behavior because of this fear (Gordon et. al., 1980). As a consequence, opportunities for leisure and recreation may be especially limited for women and the elderly.

Kaczynski and Henderson (2008) approach the issue from another perspective and state that as a possible reflection of the importance of access, some women who are likely to work as homemakers and the ones who have to spend more time in their neighborhoods, potentially making greater use of nearby parks (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2008). Since most recreation activity occurs close to home, and because the activity spheres of women and (especially), neighborhood parks carry an important role in the lives of women.

Following the literature review on the gender and park use, I looked at the methods that most of the researchers used while working on the role of gender in the park use. Research on this topic mostly starts with one of the mostly discussed topics of gender literature.

For instance Krenichyn (2003)'s main focus is on the "separate spheres" framework and she argues that this framework is not comprehensive enough to understand, measure and explain women's experiences in public spaces. So as an alternative she uses "ethic of care" framework as a research methodology and realizes an empirical research in New York to understand both concerns and expectations of women in public space. She interviews with women who are exercising in the park and tries to understand social factors that affect their experiences while using parks. Results indicate that women feel more secure and powerful when they have social relationships with family members, friends, acquaintances, and strangers in the park. The presence of others and possibilities of random meetings in the park also gave extra social support and positive feelings for the future activities and uses in the park. This research

indicates that the studies on the influence of the environment on physical activity and an ethic of care approach provide a more comprehensive framework for theories of public space (Krenichyn, 2003).

Madge (1997) focuses on a different perspective of gender research which is effects of fear on the park use as a limiting factor especially for certain groups like women and elderly. To understand the differences in the access and use of parks that is based on the geography of fear, she realizes a survey by using quota sampling method to select interviewees to analyze the geography in Britain. The study aims to reflect the results of experiencing fear on the use of space as it supports social injustice issues and gender based inequalities. Results of the study indicate that fear works as a restriction on the accessibility of parks and it is a reflection of the structural inequalities in the society that also affects the use behaviors of public spaces which lead to a tendency not to use certain areas at certain times of the day. She concludes her research with a suggestion to local governments to be aware of the results of the geography of fear and to encourage people for participation in public parks (Madge, 1997).

Day (2001) also studies the effects of feeling of fear in the use of public spaces and she concentrates on the use of a campus. (1996). She strongly states that feeling of fear is a factor that limits women's freedom and enjoyment in public space, thus decreases the possibilities for women's comfort. In order to understand the effects of feeling of she realizes a semi-structured interviews with 82 undergraduate men students at the university campus to understand men's fear and their perceptions of women's fear in public space. The study highlighted that construction of masculinity is socially constructed similar to femininity and the construction of masculine gender identities may increase dominance over feminine gender identities and may help to increase women's fear in public space (Day, 2001).

Although above mentioned factors, namely, age and gender are important socio-economic characteristics and have severe effects on the access to and use of parks; they fall short for explaining all the reasons for not using parks or feeling uncomfortable while using these public open green spaces. That is why in order to understand the reasons of different levels of park use simultaneous consideration of the park's physical and social characteristics together with people's socio-economic characteristics is necessary.



### 3. 2. 3. Physical Characteristics of Parks

This section focuses on the physical characteristics of parks in relation with its design, provided amenities and maintenance to understand how these factors affect park use.

Van Herzele and Wiedemann (2002) state that design and quality of green spaces have serious effects on the determination of behavior patterns, chosen activities, the ways and frequencies of park visits, ideas and feelings regarding their immediate environment and the chances of escaping from the stress of the daily life (Van Herzele & Wiedemann, 2002 cited in Kemperman & Timmermans, 2008). There are strong connections between the accessibility of a place and its design. Varna & Tiesdell (2010) approach to the issue of design by defining a distinction between a place's macro design and micro design. According to them macro design refers to the relationship of place to its surrounding environment and micro design refers the internal design of the place. Macro design of a public place is directly related with the centrality of a space and its connection to the surrounding. Public places that are cleverly designed and located within the circulation pattern of the city are more accessible for people from different social groups to get together in the same place. Micro design on the other hand, is mainly about the relationship between the design of the place and how much this design fulfills the needs of the people. This directly affects the active use by different groups of people with different needs such as 'comfort', 'relaxation', 'passive engagement', 'active engagement' and 'discovery' (Carr et. al., 1992) and being a display setting to represent both visibility and self-presentation in public space (Carmona, 2010) (Carr et al., 1992 & Carmona 2010 cited in Varna & Tiesdell, 2010).

Parks have the potential to provide many different amenities through their micro design and programming. These can promote opportunities for exercise, relaxation, education, encountering with nature, spirituality, self-expression, socializing, being with companion animals, escaping the city, and for solitude, personal development, and to earn a living (Hayward, 1989; McIntyre et al., 1991; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Manning & More, 2002 cited in Byrne & Wolch, 2009). However, when parks are not well designed in a way that do not fulfill the needs of potential users, than those same parks can be used for unwanted purposes including homelessness, voyeurism, exhibitionism, sexual gratification, drug use, thievery and so on (McDonald & Newcomer, 1973;

Kornblum, 1983 cited in Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Parks may provide amenities for more active recreation purposes such as walking with or without animals, riding bicycles, running, and playing sports or for passive recreation purposes such as reading, picnicking, painting, fishing, photography, playing with children or animals, playing musical instruments, studying nature, and people-watching (Hayward, 1989 cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). For instance, researchers who analyzed Bryant Park investigated the condition of the park both before and after renovation and found out that provision of amenities such as food kiosks, programmed activities, moveable chairs, paved and lawn areas are valued by the users (PPS - Project for Public Spaces, 2005 cited in Golicnik & Thompson, 2009). Such studies indicate the importance of the design, programming and provision of amenities in the increase of the level of use.

As an important amenity in a park playgrounds also need special consideration in terms of design. According to Tupper (1966), while designing playgrounds, the first consideration should be children's wants and needs instead of typical, low-cost, low-maintenance designs. Playgrounds should provide creative play opportunities and challenge that will help their physical and psychological support rather than the common emphasis on safety and sterility. She states that "a playground should be constructed so children will want to go there and will be reluctant to leave, because it offers them more fun than they can find elsewhere" (Tupper, 1966 cited in Gold, 1972).

In addition the provided amenities in the neighborhood parks, it is also crucial to pay attention to issues like site characteristics. Only designs that pay importance on the landforms, landscaping, lighting, water, protection from weather conditions like winds, rain or sun, provision of quiet areas, privacy, identity, and diversity can be successful in attracting people for use.

Pattern of park management is another issue that may work for excluding certain groups of people and cause the reduction in social and cultural diversity. This issue may be caused by several reasons such as certain programs that aim to reduce the number of undesirables, like homeless people. Privatization, commercialization, historic preservation and specific design strategies are among the other reasons. Not providing periodic maintenance is an issue of injustice that can be caused by bureaucratic inequities. Although neglect in maintenance may not diminish parks completely, it can cause these spaces to be perceived as dangerous, unpleasant, and unwelcoming, and cause a severe decrease in the use (Low et. al, 2005 cited in Boone et. al. 2009; Sister et.

al. 2010). For instance, in the 1970s, in United States, reduced park budgets and the increase in the number of people moving to suburbs caused decrease in the maintenance of parks and ultimately a decrease in the park use (Low et. al., 2005 cited in Boone, 2009).

Decrease in the formal mechanisms of social control that may include official mechanisms like policing or camera surveillance and unofficial mechanisms like being able to sit on a bench and watch the park or having a flower stand that is open until late hours of the evening may also cause certain parks to turn into places that people are afraid of using. These kinds of places especially cause women to feel fear and all residents to feel disorder (Brownlow 2006 cited in Boone, 2009).

Only the presence of a park does not mean that it will be seen as an amenity and used by people for different activities. It is crucial to provide parks with appropriate size, design features, amenities that will answer the needs of the potential users and these parks should be well maintained in order to keep it welcoming for people. Otherwise parks are prone to be left unused and deteriorated which will lead to use of parks for unwanted activities such as drug use, harassment and so on.

### **3. 2. 4. Social and Physical Characteristics of Neighborhoods**

In order to understand the factors that affect users' experiences about park spaces, analysis of the social and physical characteristics of parks' surrounding environment is crucial as these strongly affect people's perceptions on the accessibility, safety and sense of welcome. Park's social characteristics are directly related to the location of the park in relation to the place of residence of the users; neighborhood's physical and social characteristics; the immediate surrounding environment of the park and the surrounding thresholds. Adjacent land-uses, street layout and traffic, slope of the terrain or barriers around the edge of the park are important thresholds for people to pass by and reach to a park space. Park's social characteristics, on the other hand, is related to social opportunities that parks provide ranging from cultural and social activities in parks, to the relationship between different groups of people who are using the park and the surrounding environment together.

Quantitative and qualitative studies that look at physical characteristics of the park surroundings have found out that higher levels of park use is directly related with

the availability and proximity of leisure facilities (Patterson & Chapman, 2004; Föbker & Grotz, 2006) and with the availability of attractive, pedestrian friendly walking routes (Booth et al., 2000; Michael et al., 2006). The total park acreage in the neighborhood, which directly affects proximity of park land to the place of residence, has been found to be an important determinant of park visitation (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005; Cohen et al., 2007; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002). Neighborhood socio-economic characteristics and racial composition have also been found to affect park use (Zakarian et. al., 1994).

Min and Lee also state that a place's proximity to home or school environment, to have access to, having affordances and functional opportunities for play are important factors especially for children to use a park. Children's place attachment is strongly developed through parks those are near to their living spaces. When asked to children 'neighborhood places' refer to community open spaces and communal facilities in a neighborhood that are considered as being especially important for them in terms of psychological, behavioral, and symbolic meanings (Chawla, 1992; Downs & Liben, 1993). Such places are important with the environmental attributes such as easy access, functional capabilities, etc. that children find useful for their meaningful experiences.

Increased availability and accessibility of parks increases the likelihood that a person can visit a park and potentially engage in physical activities. According to Parra et. al. (2010) specific characteristics of residential built environments such as slope of the terrain, park density, connectivity and land-use mix can be associated with the active park use among older adults. They state that in areas with high slope of the terrain (>5%) older adults had a reduced likelihood of using parks. Areas with high connectivity are more likely to be physically active, including having increased levels of walking for leisure and transportation (Perra et. al., 2010).

The relationship between connectivity and physical activity indicates the importance of surrounding environment and the necessity of interventions in the realm of traffic and pedestrian safety to improve physical activity of older adults (Parra et. al., 2010). Problems crossing roads and walking on pavements, or a poor general overall appearance can be strongly felt negatives (Fokkema et al., 1996; Scharf et al., 2002) and they can work as barriers to reach a park (Hatry & Dunn, 1971). Similarly Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) strongly stated the possible negative effects of traffic on the perceived accessibility of parks (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989 cited in Walker & Crompton, 2013).

Studies also indicate that older adults residing in areas with low-connectivity index, which can be interpreted as high number of street intersections, were less likely to report active park use (Wendel-Vos et al., 2007, 2008). Surface materials, seat availability and design, steps and access routes, lighting, street layout, and signage have all been noted as potentially posing problems for older people (Valdemarsson et al., 2005; Burton & Mitchell, 2006)

In addition to the physical characteristics of the parks' surrounding environments, social characteristics of both park users and surrounding environment are also important for the park use. Neighborhood parks have a crucial role in neighborhood's social life since they provide chances for building and maintaining a certain level of social relationships (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005) as they are places for both planned and unplanned activities (Floyd et. al., 2008). In terms of the social characteristics of parks, it is important to think about the social activities in the parks and the social interactions with other park users. Activities that are provided in parks have an important impact on the life quality of the residents as they enable social interaction, prohibit isolation from the social life and positively affect mental health (Kelly & Ross, 1989; Mannell, 1999; Tinsley, Tinsley, & Croskeys, 2002). Park use also helps people who are working for diminishing the work related daily stress factors (Trenberth & Dewe, 2002). Especially for children, being able to gather together with other acquaintances and be a part of group activities enables them to grasp the societal expectations and understand their social skills (Larson & Verma, 1999 cited in Kemperman & Timmermans, 2008).

In certain cases, these social encounters may not be pleasing for all groups of people due to cultural and/or economic differences or the unwanted behaviors of certain user groups. Gold (1977) claims that behavioral differences as one of the causes of non-use of neighborhood parks. Severe physical, mental or cultural differences between the users of the park and the potential users may cause them not to use parks. Certain "deviant behavior" in neighborhood parks such as vandalism, drinking, narcotics, nudity, and civil disorders also cause decreases in the use of neighborhood parks (Gold, 1977; Madge, 1996).

In this section, I focused on the neighborhood parks as they are valuable public open green spaces and parts of parochial realm in residential areas that are provided through the use of public resources. In addition to the mentioned benefits of parks as

urban public spaces, neighborhood parks are beneficial for people as they provide these benefits and opportunities in residential space and enable people to carry the private life habits and activities to the parochial realm of the neighborhood and use those areas more comfortably and safely. Being able to access to and benefit from neighborhood parks is an important criterion for certain groups of people who have their daily life and/or recreational activities close to their home and have limited access to other recreation opportunities that are outside the parochial realm of the neighborhood.

### **3. 3. Study Approach of the Thesis Deriving from Equity Discussions**

This section discusses the equity discussions in the distribution of, access to and use of public resources to understand the varying levels of access to and benefit of public spaces by different user groups with different needs. Then the second part makes a brief review of existing literature about Turkey with different equity perspectives, research questions and aims. Finally, the third part explains how I developed my study approach to answer my research questions in the case study site, Balçova by benefiting from the definitions of different equity approaches and the missing parts of the existing Turkish literature.

#### **3. 3. 1. Inequalities in the Access and Use of Neighborhood Parks**

Urban inequalities in parks may occur in the form of differing levels of park use, and allocation of varying levels of resources to different groups (Madge, 1996, Madanipour, 2004), limited access to urban parks (Talen, 2010), uneven distribution of services in relation to the needs, mobility and service standards of each resident (Chang & Liao, 2011) and proximity, diversity (Talen, 2010) of the population. Deriving from this definition, this section explores urban inequalities in the access and discusses use of neighborhood parks.

Madge (1996) highlights two important issues regarding the causes of urban inequalities. Firstly, in the society there are various different needs and perceptions related to the use of urban parks and secondly, urban parks are not equally accessible to all due their physical characteristics (Madge, 1996) and these two conditions are the

major causes of urban inequalities. Research indicate that differing uses, experienced inequalities and unequal access to parks vary according to socio-economic characteristics of subgroups in the society, depending on age (Kennedy & Silverman, 1985), disability (Hahn, 1986), sexuality (Adler & Brenner, 1992), race (Jackson 1987; Byrne and Wolch, 2009) and gender (Maitland 1992; Pain 1991). Such a research shows that women, 'black' people, the elderly, the disabled, the gay community and some ethnic groups may be marginalized and face inequalities.

Unequal accessibility to public open spaces is one of the major urban inequalities. There are studies on the unequal access of disadvantaged groups such as children, elderly, poor and so on to urban parks (Scranton & Watson, 2012; Yılmaz Bayram, 2011; Talen, 2010; Wolch et. al., 2010; Segovia, 2009; Day, 2001; Madge, 1996; Tuason, 1997; Erkan, 2006; Burgess et. al. 1988). Wolch et. al. (2010) state that, mostly the low-income communities of color have limited opportunities in terms of the numbers and diversity of recreational activities that is accessible for them. As cited in Byrne and Wolch (2009) in order to maintain equal access, especially for the marginalized groups parks must be seen safe, welcoming, well maintained, physically appealing, catering for a range of activities, and fostering social interaction (French, 1973; Gray, 1973; McDonald and Newcomer, 1973 cited in Byrne & Wolch, 2009).

Equitable distribution of park resources is an important issue in the accessibility research. Equitable distribution is not only related with the distance of parks to users but also related with the quality and size of the parks which are available for all to benefit from (Bernartzky, 1972), the level of fulfillment of the users' needs and maintenance of parks. A park use research example indicates that although case study area is inhabited by users with high need of park areas and they have the best access to parks, they have access to less acreage of parks compared to low-need areas (Boone et. al 2009). Another example of a park analysis shows that after a park in a low-income neighborhood faced reduction of staff, space and services, it faced with underutilization of park and less use (Loukatiou-Sideris, 2012). Such examples show the importance of the measurement of accessibility by not only looking at the distance of parks to users but also the size and quality of the park in order to claim a just distribution and equality in the use.

Location of provided resources is also an important criterion for equity in the distribution of parks. There are certain districts and neighborhoods in cities where low-income groups or marginalized groups (minority ethnic groups, low income, blacks,

single moms etc.) live and usually there are not equally distributed resources or facilities for the residents in these places (Madge, 1996). Sister et. al. (2010) states that these areas that are dominated by marginal groups usually experience fiscal pressure, and have limited local resources for park acquisition and enhancement (Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005 cited in Sister et. al., 2010). Such a situation causes residents to suffer from crowded, inadequate parks with facilities that are poorly maintained. It is seen that these areas also suffer from undesirable land uses and pollution, poor access to parks and increased public health risks and intense environmental justice challenges (Madge, 2010).

There is a frequent lack of fit between desirable park uses, park design, programming, location, and park users' socio-economic and demographic characteristics. While parks are being designed and their programs are being defined, the main approach is to follow "average user" norm. However, such an approach ignores different socio-economic and demographic characteristics of people and fails to fulfill the differing use patterns and needs of different users such as men, women, children, young adults, the elderly, or different ethnic groups. Studies indicate that users of different ages, genders, races, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds have differing park preferences and an ideal of a park (Loukatiou-Sideris and Sideris, 2009 cited in Loukatiou-Sideris, 2012). The underrepresentation of certain groups while designing parks creates an inconsistency between user's needs, preferences and what park presents to their users (Loukatiou-Sideris, 2012) and result in urban inequalities.

The coming section explores different perspectives that approach equity in the park distribution, use and focuses on the discussions and methods proposed for the equity in the park provision and use in detail.

### **3. 3. 2. "Equity" Discussions: Distribution, Use and Needs of Parks**

As parks are valuable public open green spaces and public service areas that are provided through the use of public resources, equitable distribution of these resources and the questions of "who gets what" and "who pays for it" (Talen, 1998) gain a great importance. Talen (2007) directs the attention to certain complexities for the equitable allocation of public resources such as methodology (how can equity be measured), and deciding who should benefit, the nature of social justice and the definition of political



consensus. Talen and Anselin (1998) states that these issues are related with various research dimensions and concepts related with the normative aspects of “equity” and “fairness” and with the empirical research methodologies of discovering “equity” (Talen & Anselin, 1998).

Measures of accessibility also have a defining role in determining what “equity” is. “Equitable accessibility” means that the distribution of resources or facilities in a way that as many different groups as possible benefit. Talen and Anselin (1998) criticize that access is loosely defined as a simple count of facilities or services by some geographic unit, without considering the spatial externalities such as the structure of the transportation network, the negative effects of distance of urban facilities, properties of these facilities, and measurement issues related to the geographical scale of analysis (Talen & Anselin, 1998).

According to Nichols (2001) and Talen (2007) empirical studies and discussions in the literature (e.g. Lucy, 1981; Crompton and Wicks, 1988; Marsh and Schilling, 1994) mainly assume that equity in allocation and distribution of scarce resources are realized with four major concerns. These are equality based, need based, market based and demand based equity. Equality based resource allocation approach defends that the best way of achieving equity is to distribute all resources whether it has positive impacts for the users such as parks or negative impacts such as waste yards, equally to all individuals and areas without the consideration of the needs of the users or physical, cultural, and social characteristics of the regions (Boone et al, 2009). In the case of parks, equality is aimed to be achieved by distribution of equal numbers of acres per person or recreation funds per capita without considering neighborhood status. Since such an approach does not consider the personal characteristics and needs, it does not answer the needs of the users.

Need-based allocation of resources approach defends “unequal treatment of the unequals” (Talen, 1998), which means that disadvantaged groups or individuals or areas should get extra opportunities so that they can receive resources which they may never had. With a need-based approach, Talen (2010) claims that a distributional pattern and a spatial logic that is based on the proximity, diversity and social need would eventually change the relationship and access of people to urban parks. That is why spatial distribution of parks should be about making parks accessible at the locations where needed the most. The areas or the groups of people with limited resources, higher

population and built area densities and higher needs should get the resources. Also in the analysis of the existing neighborhood parks the needs of the area should be considered. It is seen that in certain neighborhoods parks with many facilities are left unused which may be a result of the inconsistencies of the needs of the neighborhood and the existing park areas (Talen, 2010).

Market-based approach prioritizes the allocation of resources according to the amount of paid taxes and fees and also does not consider the needs of the users' social conditions and opportunities of people. Demand-based approach is another method that is used for the allocation of resources and may achieve satisfaction among the users as active participation in the decision making processes and a visible indication of need is a must in this approach. So the positive side is the people who are in need and have the chance to state it can get those. However, the ones who are not lucky enough to ask for their needs may end up not having anything (Crompton & Wicks, 1988).

### **3. 3. 3. "Equity" in Empirical Works about the Parks in Turkey**

When I review the empirical works in Turkey to understand their methods in the definition of equity in the distribution and use of parks as public resources, I found out that there are mainly two groups of works among which there are studies that work on different scales. First group of these studies follow an equal allocation of resources approach and second group with a limited number of study follows a need-based approach. Most of the empirical works in the first group of works that focus on equality end up with considering only the amount of green space per capita and distribution of these green spaces in the cities. So they miss the chances of evaluating the interplaying characteristics of the "needs" of those living close to home-place due to their age or gender roles and responsibilities or those who have less recreational options for their income level (Table 4).

Table 4. Approaches aiming equity in resource allocation in different spatial scales

	<b>At City/District Scale</b>	<b>At Neighborhood Scale</b>	<b>At Park Scale</b>
<b>Equal Allocation of Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Includes the whole city or a large district.</li> <li>* Looks at the geographical distribution of parks, amount of green per capita.</li> <li>* Makes a comparison of planned and built green area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Concentrates on the park together with its surrounding neighborhood.</li> <li>* Defines a service area around the park.</li> <li>* Looks at:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How many people use these parks from that neighborhood?</li> <li>- For what purposes do they use parks?</li> <li>- What is the distance traveled to park?</li> <li>- How often do they use parks?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Limited with the park and its design.</li> <li>* Descriptive studies.</li> <li>* Looks at:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who uses where?</li> <li>- How many people use?</li> <li>- How often do they use?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Need-based Allocation of Resources (Has an initial inequality perception and continues the studies with this in mind)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Includes the whole city or a large district.</li> <li>* First maps the location of disadvantaged groups and compares the use patterns. Then gives design proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Concentrates on the park together with its surrounding.</li> <li>* Looks at:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The distribution of different land uses around the parks and the effect of those landuses on the use of parks.</li> <li>- Looks at the characteristics (social, economical, national etc.) of the residents of that neighborhood and tries to build a connection with the design and the use of the park.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Makes detailed analysis and surveys.</li> <li>* Looks at:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the needs and characteristics of users?</li> <li>- Why do or do not they use parks?</li> <li>- What is the relationship between the background of the user (home, family, job responsibilities etc.) and their park use?</li> <li>- What are the resources of the users?</li> <li>- What is the relationship between the existing resources of the users and their park use?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The first group of empirical works mostly follows an approach that aims to measure equity by equal allocation of resources. Majority of these studies work in the whole city scale (e.g. Ayaşlıgil, 1998; Özcan, 2006; Yavuz, 2010 & Eminağaoğlu, 2007; Özcan, 2008; Özdemir & Uzun, 2008; Eminağaoğlu & Yavuz, 2010; Öztürk & Özdemir, 2013). These studies generally start with considering the total park areas, their distribution, and the total amount of green per person (per capita) in the city. Usually these studies calculate the existing total green area, compare them with the planed green spaces in master plans of the cities and calculate the amount of the green per capita. A smaller group of empirical works focus on the district/neighborhood scale (e.g.; Aksoy, 2004; Emür & Onsekiz, 2007; Kara et. al., 2011; Atakan Öznam, 2013; Akpınar, 2014; Coşaner et. al, 2014). These works take parks with their surrounding neighborhoods and try to build relationships between parks and their users from the surrounding neighborhoods There are also empirical works that study on the individual park scale (e.g. Altınçekiç & Erdönmez, 2001). These consider parks as a point that should be reached. The size and the shape of the park or the location of its entrances are not being

considered. Such empirical works do not pay too much attention to the surrounding of the parks but only deals with the connections of the park with main pathways and roads to the surrounding neighborhood.

The second group of empirical works adopts a need-based approach and prioritizes the needs of people while working on the achievement of equity in the use of and access to resources. These works follow a more user oriented perspective and try to identify the multiple leveled relationships between the socio-economic characteristics, needs and desires of the users with the park location and services planning. They try to define a relationship between the characteristics of the cities or neighborhoods, the people who live in there and the design of the parks. Studies with this inclination also work on the whole city, district/neighborhood or park spatial scales, as followed. Studies that analyses the overall condition of parks in the whole city firstly start with mapping the location of disadvantaged groups or determine the needs, than they analyze the existing green areas and state the possible design suggestions that can fulfill the needs of the user groups (Beler & Erkip, 1997; Gedikli & Özbilen, 2004; Erdönmez & Akı, 2005; İnan, 2008; Çakçı & Çelem, 2009; Özdemir, 2009; Kısar Korkmaz & Türkoğlu, 2014). The empirical works that concentrates on a region or neighborhood of a city mainly try to define a relationship between the physical and social characteristics of the neighborhood, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of people who live in there, the design of the parks and provided amenities there (e.g. Topalfakıoğlu, 2002; Aksoy & Ergün, 2009; Aksoy & Akpınar, 2012). A smaller group of empirical works which adopts a perspective that concentrates on the user needs work on the individual parks scale and focuses on more to user characteristics and needs, overall satisfaction levels, individual features of parks, and factors that affect the demand for the park space or try to define a norm for the park designs (e.g. Çayır, 2004; Müderrisoğlu & Demirkumbuz, 2004; Yılmaz et. al., 2007; Yılmaz & Bulut, 2007; Çelen Öztürk, 2011; Yılmaz Bayram, 2010; Akış, 2011; Yılmaz & Gökçe, 2012). These studies mostly focus on certain user groups like children, women, handicapped.

### **3. 3. 4. Study Approach of the Thesis**

Based on these discussions on the different approaches to achieve equity in the distribution, access and use of public resources, I believe a need-based approach to

achieve equity is the most comprehensive and successful method to understand the needs of different user groups and fulfill their needs regarding the access to and use of neighborhood parks. Most of the studies in Turkey follow an equal allocation of resources approach to analyze park use and there are very limited studies that benefit from equal allocation of resources approach. Considering these issues I developed my study approach and it suggests a detailed comprehensive analysis of the users' needs and park uses and understanding of the underlying conditions of urban inequalities.

For the scope of my thesis and to develop my study approach, I analyzed the models that are proposed by Byrne and Wolch (2009) (see page 58), and Gedikli and Özbilen (2004) (see page 59). Different than other studies, Byrne and Wolch concentrate on the historical and cultural contexts of park provision policies as a major issue to understand park use. They put an emphasis on the importance of park politics, ideologies and resulting different accessibilities of parks along with the impacts of nearby neighborhoods on the park use choices. On the other hand Gedikli and Özbilen's model misses to consider such political aspects and impacts of physical characteristics of parks and their surrounding environments to determine unit area size for required park space. They concentrate on more to social aspects, individual limitations and the factors that define these limitations such as personal perceptions and experiences regarding park use. I considered powerful and missing aspects of each model to prepare a comprehensive model that can be suitable for the context of the case study in Balçova, İzmir (Figure 3).

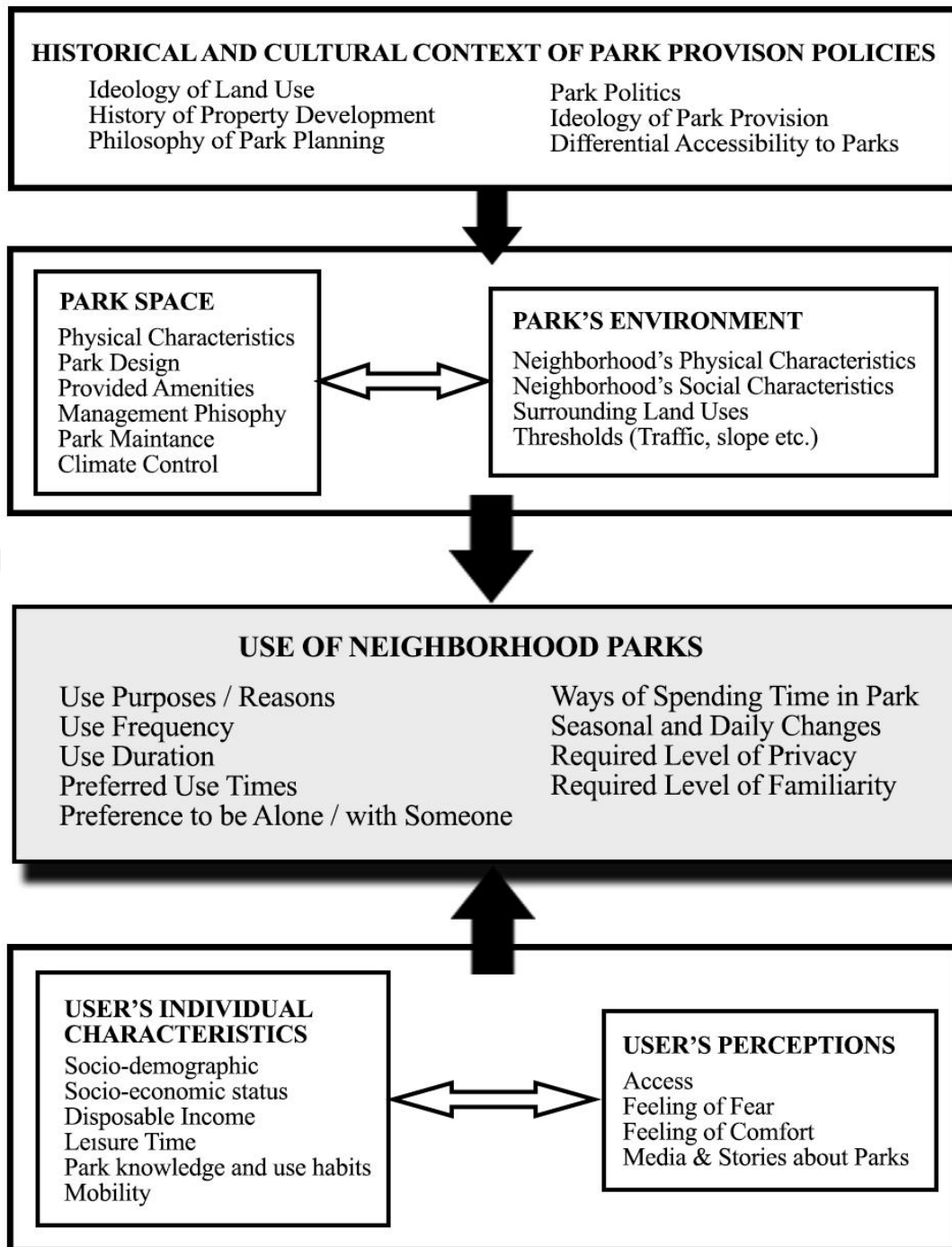


Figure 3. Factors that affect park uses

In my thesis I aim to understand the different user groups' park needs and uses. Park use means park use purposes, frequency, duration, preferred or not preferred park use times, preferences to be alone or with someone while in parks, required level of privacy and familiarity, ways of spending time in parks and how all these habits change across different seasons and times. Literature review indicates that there are three main

factors that affect park use which are historical and cultural context of park provision policies, social and physical characteristics of park's and its surrounding environment, and socio-economic and demographic characteristics of users and their perceptions regarding park use

First of all, historical and cultural context of park provision policies is important to consider as no matter what people want and need, these policies shape most of the park space characteristics. So decision-makers' ideologies of land use and park provision; philosophies of park planning and park politics; directly affect the budgets reserved for park making, when and where the parks will be built, the resources that will be reserved for those spaces and the types of amenities that will be provided in these parks.

These ideologies directly shape not only the park space but also its surrounding environment. Physical characteristics, park design and provided amenities, park management philosophies and maintenance policies of the park space together with the physical and social characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood, landuses and thresholds are important issues that affect people's park use habits and preferences.

As the third factor, users' individual characteristics and perceptions are important in shaping differing park uses and needs. Users' socio-economic characteristics, their time and money resources and mobility levels as well as their knowledge and habits regarding park use are important factors that shape their park use. However, these characteristics are not enough to understand park use and needs since previous park use experiences, their perceptions regarding parks and resulting feeling of fear and comfort affect their access to parks.

Deriving from this model, in order to understand the affects of three main issues and to see how characteristics of parochial realms impact park uses I take neighborhood parks in Balçova as case study sites since neighborhoods are important components of the cities not only physically but also socially and culturally. Neighborhoods provide many opportunities, especially to people who are bounded to the residential space due to reasons that are based on socio-economic characteristics, daily responsibilities, abilities and/or power relations that are affecting their will to move freely. On the other hand, under certain conditions neighborliness ties may provide positive or negative contributions to public experiences. It can be positive, as it provides close social ties that ends up with close friendships and support opportunities or can be negative as it

may be possible to feel the gaze of the familiar eyes while in public space. Deriving from these characteristics of neighborhoods, neighborhood parks gain a great importance to discuss the previously mentioned three issues.





## CHAPTER 4

### STUDY SITE AND METHODOLOGY

The case study of this thesis is realized in Balçova, İzmir, Turkey. Chapter 5 mainly focuses on the study context and site conditions and explains the reasons for selecting this site for the case study. For this purpose, firstly explains physical, cultural and social characteristics of İzmir and then concentrates on Balçova. Following the explanation of these characteristics, the second part of this chapter gives details of the steps of the case study and explains how each step of the study fulfills the missing parts of the previous steps of the study.

Before going into the details of physical and social characteristics of İzmir and Balçova, I want to explain the reasons for choosing Balçova as the case study site. As the coming section explains in detail, Balçova has certain physical characteristics among other counties in İzmir. As one of the research questions of this study concentrates on the effects of physical characteristics of the surrounding environment on the park use, Balçova provides certain unique characteristics to be analyzed. Its location between İzmir Bay and Teleferik Mountain is one of these unique characteristics. Such location has several outcomes that affect the physical and social life of Balçova. First of all this location create several public open green space alternatives in addition to the neighborhood parks. Waterfront recreation areas and mountain picnic areas may be considered as very strong alternatives to neighborhood parks for the fulfillment of recreation needs. So analyzing this condition, whether existence of large scale public open green spaces can limit the use of neighborhood parks is one of the reasons of selecting Balçova. Another important physical characteristic that results from the level differences between sea and the mountain is steep slopes. These slopes create important barriers and thresholds for Balçova residents to cross in order to access public open green spaces. Such a physical characteristics of the site increase the importance of the neighborhood parks and their locations in walking distance to residential areas of Balçova.

Population characteristics also provide interesting issues to be analyzed. First of all, according to population counts, Balçova has one of lowest populations (third after

Güzelbahçe and Narlıdere). The population density may not seem that high due to the existing areas that are not open for settlement such as orange gardens and limited main residential settlement areas where most of the population is densely settled. Analysis of the characteristics of these residential areas indicates that there are very limited openings for open green spaces. As a result the neighborhood parks in between residential areas have very small areas. This creates two important conditions. First of all, most of the neighborhood parks have very limited areas and second of all, most of the buildings are very tightly located with no private gardens or any other openings. These two conditions creates another reason for selecting Balçova which is exploring the effects of being obliged to these limited park spaces due to limited alternatives in the close proximity of residential areas. All of these issues have important effects on the people's perceptions and uses of neighborhood parks. Deriving from these unique characteristics and their possible effects on the neighborhood park use and perceptions I selected Balçova as the study site for this thesis.

#### **4. 1. Study Context & Site: Balçova, İzmir**

Balçova district (İzmir, Turkey) is the study site for this thesis. İzmir Province is covering an area of 12,012km<sup>2</sup> between 37°45' and 39°15' northern latitudes and 26°15' and 28°20' eastern longitudes and located in the west coast of Turkey. Neighboring cities are Balıkesir to the north, Manisa to the east and Aydın to the south (İzmir Governorship, 2016) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Location of İzmir in the World and in Turkey

İzmir is the third largest city of Turkey. It is at the intersection of important industry, transportation, agriculture, commerce and tourism nodes. Due to this reason, İzmir has a constantly increasing population. As of 2016 the total population of İzmir is 4.168.415 who lives in total of 30 municipalities (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2016). 11 of these municipalities are considered as the central municipal districts, whereas Balçova is one of them.

İzmir is in the Mediterranean climate zone, has hot and dry summers and wet and warm winters. Due to the locations of mountains, effects of the sea with wind and humidity can be perceived in the inner parts of the city and Aegean Region.

Median temperature in İzmir is around 17<sup>0</sup>C and has the maximum 45.1<sup>0</sup>C and minimum -13<sup>0</sup>C around the year. The humidity level varies between 50% - 70% and reach it's highest in the coldest winter times and lowest in the hottest summer times. Annual median rainfall in İzmir is 700mm. This amount varies from year to year and may go up to 1000mm or fall down to 300mm a year. Rainfall amount starts to rise after October and continues until May. The highest amount of rainfall is usually seen in December, January and February. Snow is very rare in İzmir. These weather conditions indicate that open spaces in İzmir can be easily and comfortably used in most of the times of the year.

Balçova is located in the south of İzmir Bay with a total of 6km long shore and an area of 29km<sup>2</sup> (Figure 5). Balçova neighbors to Narlıdere to the west, Konak to the east and Karabağlar to the southeast and east (Balçova District Governorship, 2016).

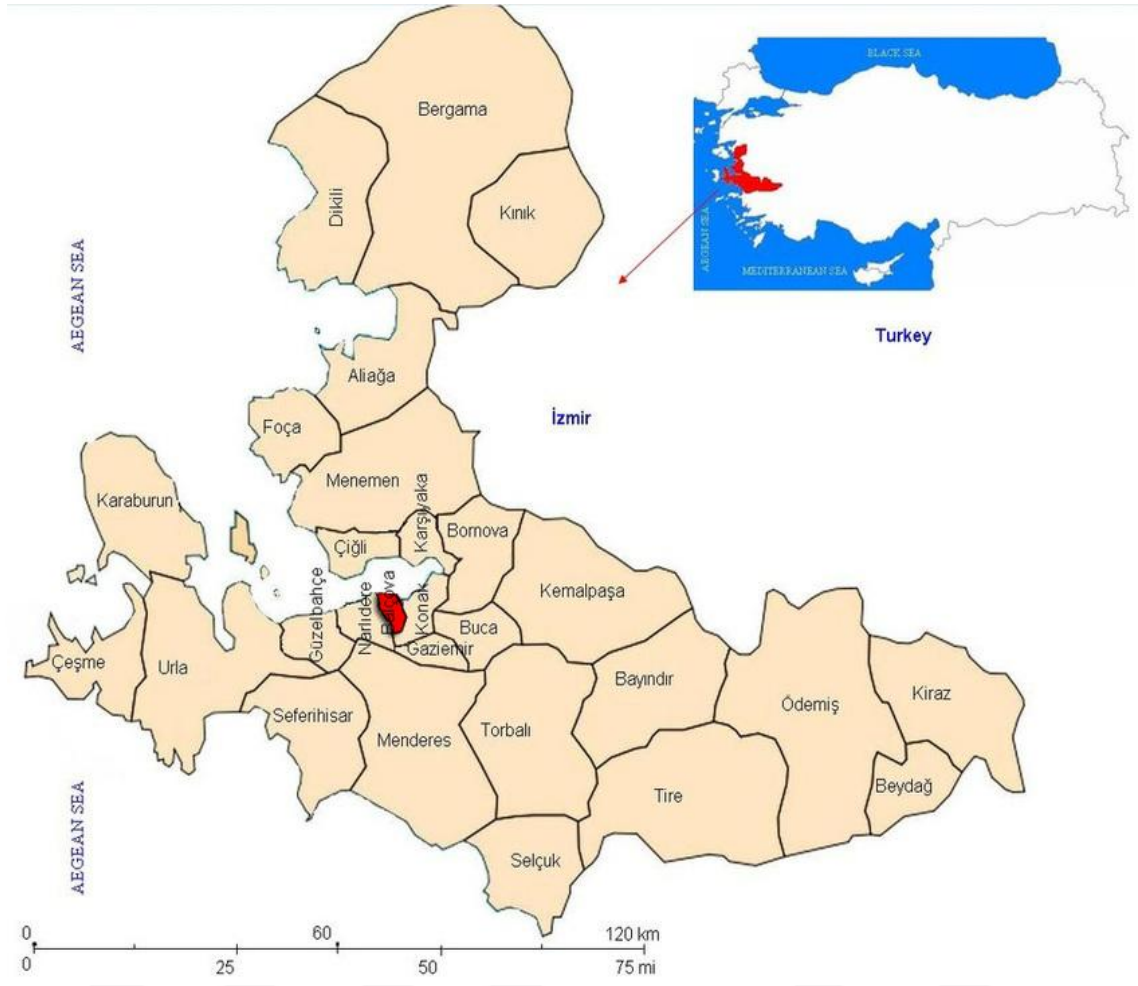


Figure 5. Location of Balçova in İzmir  
(Source: İzmir Metropolitan Municipality)

According to the population count in 2015 Balçova has a population of 78.121 in 8 neighborhoods (Table 5). Statistics indicate that Balçova has a very stable population which does not indicate major increases. This stability is mainly due to the residential areas that are surrounded by natural thresholds such as İzmir Bay, agriculture sites, natural preservation sites such as İnciraltı and physical thresholds such as main highways that limit population growth in Balçova.

Table 5. Population of Balçova neighborhoods  
(Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, 2016)

	Bahçelerarası	Eğitim	Fevzi Çakmak	Korutürk	Onur	Teleferik	Çetin Emeç	İnciraltı	Balçova Pop. Density P/Ha
2007	674	12697	11986	11731	18487	8610	9150	1502	3526
2008	811	12789	11831	12530	18218	8604	9990	1446	3591
2009	831	13149	11671	12458	17928	8932	10249	2697	3671
2010	775	13262	11444	12302	17897	8849	10540	2698	3664
2011	735	13291	11728	12129	17700	8774	10748	2836	3672
2012	704	13447	11580	12192	17518	8680	10815	2907	3668
2013	713	13522	11490	12279	17292	8595	10904	2829	3658
2014	698	13537	11417	12324	16998	8581	10955	2801	3643
<b>2015</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>13854</b>	<b>11387</b>	<b>12495</b>	<b>16899</b>	<b>8625</b>	<b>10993</b>	<b>3177</b>	<b>3681</b>

Balçova has the oldest population when compared to other counties of İzmir. Median age is 32 in Balçova (29 for İzmir). Compared to the county with the youngest median age of 25, Balçova can be considered as a county with an older population. Balçova is also the mostly preferred county by the retired people in İzmir (Balçova Municipality, 2016). The gender distribution of the population in Balçova is almost equal, respectively 39,825 (female) and 38,296 (male). However, from the age perspective, male population between the ages 15-24 is more than women population of the same age, whereas women population between ages of 35 and above is more than the male population of the same age.

Balçova is located between the shores of İzmir Bay and the hills of Teleferik Mountain (Figure 6). This provides many recreational opportunities such as waterfront recreation areas where people can get the sea air, exercise by the sea or mountainous areas where people can get mountain air benefit the view of the sea and the Dam Lake while picnicking on the Teleferik Mountain.

Due to the level differences along the north-south direction, buildings, public open spaces, vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes are located perpendicular to the sea with steep slopes. Steep slopes create difficulties for pedestrian circulation and they start to be perceived as thresholds to be crossed. It becomes hard, especially for

pedestrians, handicapped, and elderly or for people who do not have private vehicle alternatives to reach these recreation areas by İzmir Bay.

In addition to the steep slope, there are other thresholds in Balçova that affects pedestrian circulation and access to public open green spaces. The main vehicular traffic routes are one of those thresholds. Mithatpaşa Boulevard and Ata Street that cuts Mithatpaşa Boulevard perpendicularly are among the main vehicular roads together with Çeşme Highway which goes through Balçova and creates the connection between İzmir and Çeşme. These main highways also create certain barriers between the residential areas and public open green spaces that are located along the İzmir Bay. Other important thresholds are the orange gardens that are located between Çeşme Highway and the seashore, and the shopping malls strip that are located along the Mithatpaşa Boulevard on the west-east direction. Gardens together with shopping malls strip starts to be perceived as a wall and when all these thresholds are considered together, it creates hardships for connections between the inner parts of Balçova which houses to all residential facilities and waterfront parts which houses mostly public open green spaces along İzmir Bay.

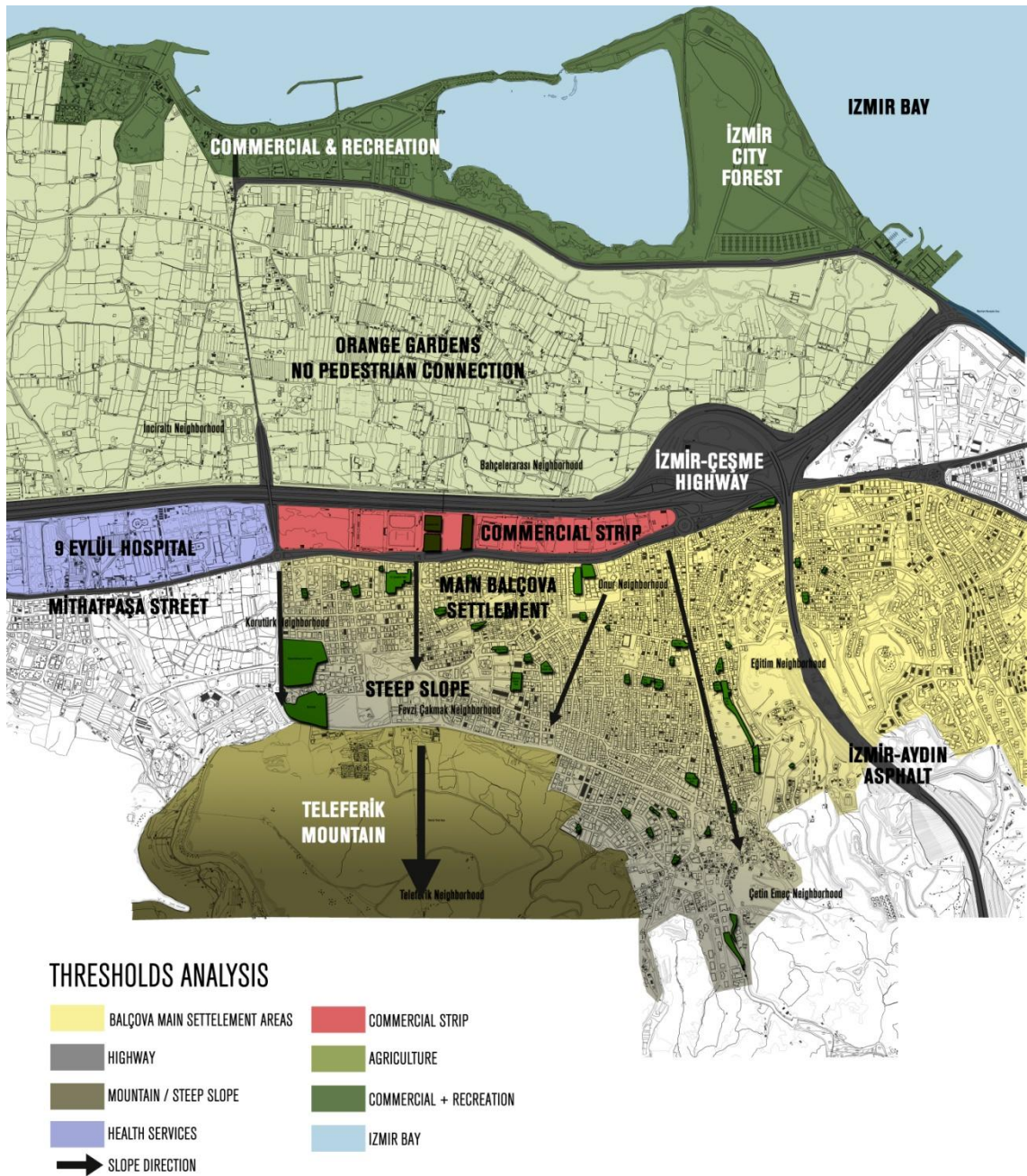


Figure 6. Thresholds in Balçova

There are mostly apartment blocks, especially in the older construction areas of Balçova such as Onur, Fevzi Çakmak and Eğitim Neighborhoods. These apartment blocks are located in very close distances to each other without any front or back yards and the main gates of apartment buildings mostly open directly to the streets right in front of them. Only in the newer parts of Balçova such as the west parts of Korutürk Neighborhood, there are new gated communities that have private open green spaces and facilities. Along Balçova, there is also small number of two or three storey villas with private gardens (Figure 7).

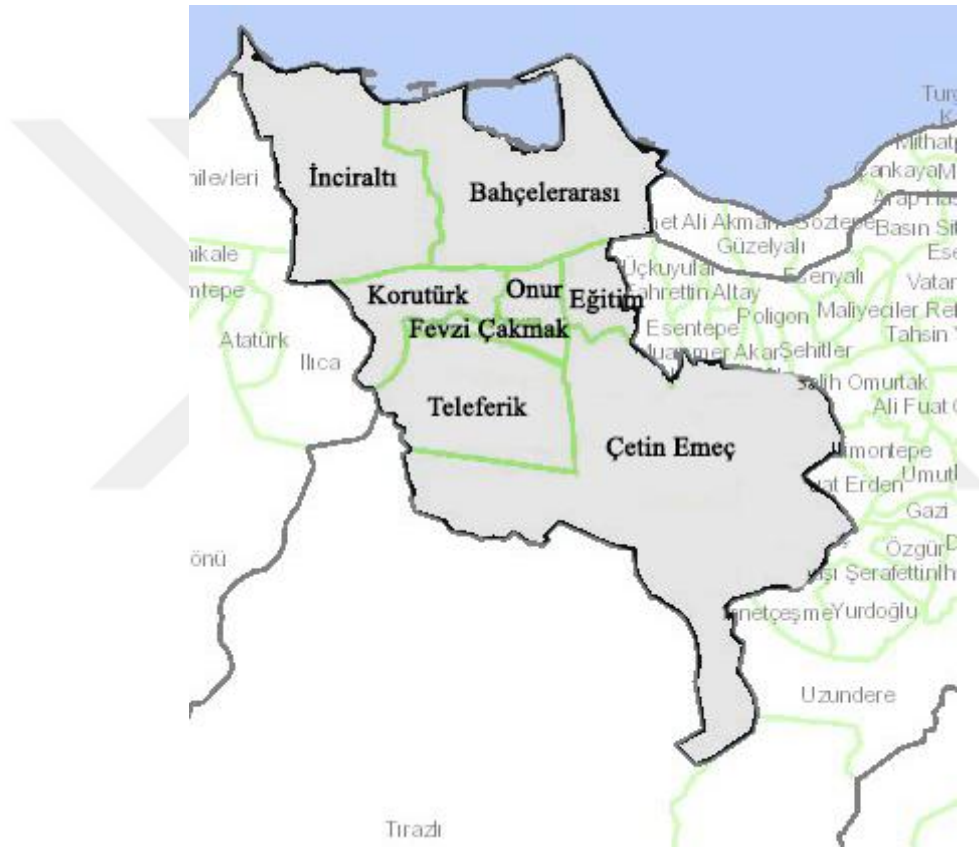


Figure 7. Neighborhoods of Balçova

Considering all these it is possible to say that Balçova has a very dense building stock with limited amount of space for public open spaces. There are important large scale public open green spaces, which are İnciraltı City Forest, Park for Handicapped, İzmir Bay Waterfront on the north of Balçova and Teleferik Mountain Picnic Areas on the south of Balçova. In addition to these urban parks and waterfront recreation areas there



are thirty two neighborhood parks located in between residential areas of Balçova (Figure 8 for locations of park and table 6 for the total areas of parks).

Table 6. Neighborhood parks in Balçova  
(Source: Balçova Municipality, 2015)

NAME OF THE PARK	TOTAL AREA	SOFT LANDSCAPE	HARD LANDSCAPE	POOL
<b>KORUTÜRK NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
İtfaiye Parkı	900 m <sup>2</sup>	308 m <sup>2</sup>	592 m <sup>2</sup>	
Çevre Parkı	757m <sup>2</sup>	521 m <sup>2</sup>	236 m <sup>2</sup>	
Lider Park	801 m <sup>2</sup>	611 m <sup>2</sup>	190 m <sup>2</sup>	
Bora Parkı	725 m <sup>2</sup>	303,5 m <sup>2</sup>	421,5 m <sup>2</sup>	
Korutürk Mah. Muh. Parkı	460 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup>	160 m <sup>2</sup>	
Süleyman E. Parkı	2271 m <sup>2</sup>	1040 m <sup>2</sup>	1151 m <sup>2</sup>	80 m <sup>2</sup>
Servet Park	315 m <sup>2</sup>	185 m <sup>2</sup>	130 m <sup>2</sup>	
Cevdet B. Parkı	2700 m <sup>2</sup>	1728 m <sup>2</sup>	952 m <sup>2</sup>	
Y. Şerafettin Parkı	4500 m <sup>2</sup>	1300 m <sup>2</sup>	3351 m <sup>2</sup>	149 m <sup>2</sup>
Özağaç Sok. Mini Park	145 m <sup>2</sup>	33 m <sup>2</sup>	112 m <sup>2</sup>	
Poyraz Parkı	340 m <sup>2</sup>	277 m <sup>2</sup>	63 m <sup>2</sup>	
Belediye Spor Alan Tesisleri	1742 m <sup>2</sup>	1742 m <sup>2</sup>		
Servet Nur Parkı	585 m <sup>2</sup>	226 m <sup>2</sup>	359 m <sup>2</sup>	
Korutürk Mah. Park ve Spor Alanı	1178 m <sup>2</sup>	587 m <sup>2</sup>	375 m <sup>2</sup>	16 m <sup>2</sup>
Tuncer Parkı	585 m <sup>2</sup>	226 m <sup>2</sup>	359 m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>FEVZİ ÇAKMAK NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
Muslu Çelebi Parkı	1630m <sup>2</sup>			
<b>ONUR NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
Muhtarlık Parkı	840 m <sup>2</sup>	500 m <sup>2</sup>	340 m <sup>2</sup>	
Oğuz Park	522 m <sup>2</sup>	222 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup>	
Sadullah S. Parkı	435 m <sup>2</sup>	145 m <sup>2</sup>	290 m <sup>2</sup>	
Duru Park	1103 m <sup>2</sup>	278 m <sup>2</sup>	825 m <sup>2</sup>	
Mini Park	129 m <sup>2</sup>	88 m <sup>2</sup>	41 m <sup>2</sup>	
Özay Gönüm Parkı	1450 m <sup>2</sup>	683 m <sup>2</sup>	767 m <sup>2</sup>	
İbrahim Ö. Parkı	1000 m <sup>2</sup>	650 m <sup>2</sup>	350 m <sup>2</sup>	
İbrahim T. Parkı	724 m <sup>2</sup>	256 m <sup>2</sup>	468 m <sup>2</sup>	
Onur Park	1153 m <sup>2</sup>	710 m <sup>2</sup>	443 m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>EĞİTİM NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
Yunus Emre Parkı	2366 m <sup>2</sup>	1200 m <sup>2</sup>	1166 m <sup>2</sup>	
Seyfettin G. Parkı	5730 m <sup>2</sup>	4010 m <sup>2</sup>	1720 m <sup>2</sup>	
Pınar Park	900 m <sup>2</sup>	340 m <sup>2</sup>	560 m <sup>2</sup>	
Seher E. Parkı	651 m <sup>2</sup>	390 m <sup>2</sup>	261 m <sup>2</sup>	
Celile H. Parkı	517 m <sup>2</sup>	411 m <sup>2</sup>	106 m <sup>2</sup>	
Karagöz Parkı	182 m <sup>2</sup>	132 m <sup>2</sup>	50 m <sup>2</sup>	
Fuat K. Parkı	294 m <sup>2</sup>	294 m <sup>2</sup>		

(cont. on next page)

Table 7. (cont.)

<b>TELEFERİK NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
Muhtarlık Parkı	502 m <sup>2</sup>	134 m <sup>2</sup>	368 m <sup>2</sup>	
Kazım O. Parkı	511 m <sup>2</sup>	130 m <sup>2</sup>	381 m <sup>2</sup>	
Kel Mehmet Parkı	320 m <sup>2</sup>	320 m <sup>2</sup>		
Fahrettin S. Meydanı Parkı	1480 m <sup>2</sup>	705 m <sup>2</sup>	745 m <sup>2</sup>	30 m <sup>2</sup>
Çarşı Pazar Önü	110 m <sup>2</sup>	100 m <sup>2</sup>	10 m <sup>2</sup>	
Nuh K. Parkı	865 m <sup>2</sup>	385 m <sup>2</sup>	480 m <sup>2</sup>	
Piknik ve Mesire Alanı	17.140 m <sup>2</sup>	14.455 m <sup>2</sup>	2385 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>ÇETİN EMEÇ NEIGHBORHOOD</b>				
Hacı Ahmet Parkı	590 m <sup>2</sup>	300 m <sup>2</sup>	290 m <sup>2</sup>	
Güvenevler Parkı	1458 m <sup>2</sup>	909 m <sup>2</sup>	549 m <sup>2</sup>	
Şehit Öğretmenler Parkı	2622 m <sup>2</sup>	842 m <sup>2</sup>	1780 m <sup>2</sup>	
Bebek Parkı	1100 m <sup>2</sup>	576 m <sup>2</sup>	524 m <sup>2</sup>	
Beşerli Parkı	2000 m <sup>2</sup>	2000 m <sup>2</sup>		
Meşale Evleri Parkı	2158 m <sup>2</sup>	1876 m <sup>2</sup>	282 m <sup>2</sup>	
Siteler Parkı	175 m <sup>2</sup>	88 m <sup>2</sup>	87 m <sup>2</sup>	
Barış Parkı	225 m <sup>2</sup>	89 m <sup>2</sup>	136 m <sup>2</sup>	
Kızılkant Parkı	8225 m <sup>2</sup>	5845 m <sup>2</sup>	2380 m <sup>2</sup>	

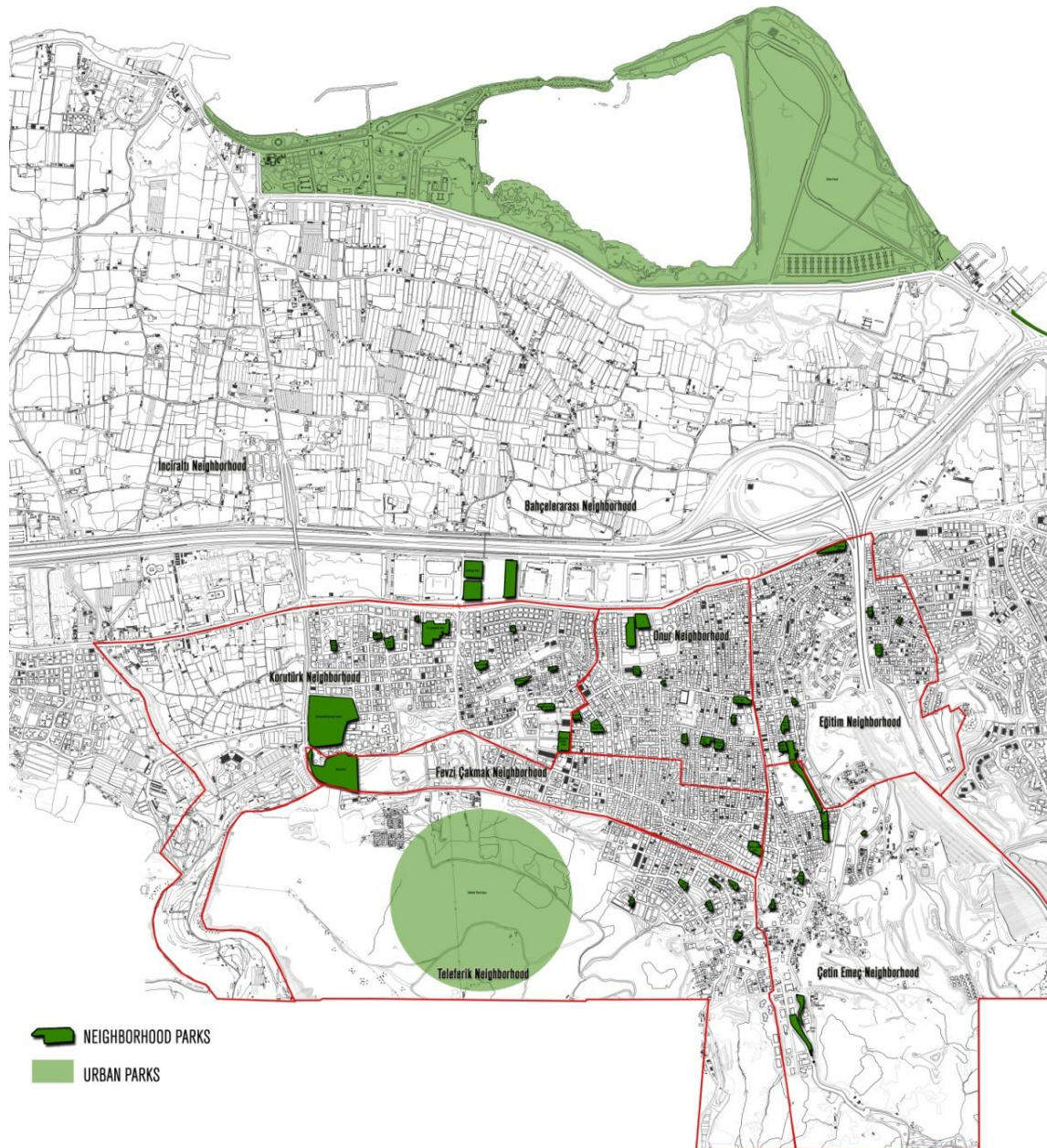


Figure 8. Neighborhood and urban parks in Balçova, 2015

Considering all the above mentioned thresholds, densely located building stock, limited opportunities for public open green spaces around the residential spaces on the contrary to opportunities along the waterfront and Teleferik Mountain, access to neighborhood parks seems crucial for the residents of Balçova which is mostly formed of elderly and women. Based on these reasons I decided to realize my case study in Balçova. My aim is not reaching to general conclusions that can be applied to all neighborhood parks in İzmir or in Turkey however, it is to capture the details of daily

experiences of women and to understand whether they experience urban inequalities in the access to and use of neighborhood parks in Balçova, I also aim to find out women's reasons for using neighborhood parks and the factors that affect their daily experiences while they are trying to enjoy the benefits of parks in their daily lives.

## **4. 2. Research Design and Methodology**

In order to answer research questions of this thesis I use a mixed method approach. This method suggests the combination of both quantitative and/or qualitative procedures that aims to gather different forms of data together and analyze them in a single study" (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) states that "this approach associate with field methods such as observations and interviews (qualitative data) were combined with traditional surveys (quantitative data)" (Creswell, 2013; p. 15). Deriving from mixed method approach, I designed my case study research in three main steps: observation of the whole neighborhood parks in Balçova, surveys in four selected parks and interviews in two selected parks amongst the four parks that the survey is realized. The following parts explain the details of each step and their contributions to the study (Table 7 and Figure 9).

Table 7. Summary of the steps of study methodology for this thesis

<b>Step</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Aim / Findings</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>With Whom</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Initial walk through</b>	To have an general understanding of * Physical characteristics of neighborhood parks, * Traffic * Threshold	<b>11 park zones</b>	X
<b>2</b>	<b>Preliminary site observations by walking</b>	Analysis of physical and social characteristics of surrounding environment & park * Landuse analysis * Population density around parks via building storey count * Park Characteristics & Provided Amenities * Estimated user counts	<b>8 park zones</b>	X
<b>3</b>	<b>User Surveys</b>	Collecting statistical data to evaluate park use habits: * Use purpose, * Use frequency, * Use duration, * Preferred time frames * Preferring to use w/ someone or alone	<b>4 parks</b> * Duru Park * Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri * Süleyman Ersever Parkı * Muhtarlık Parkı)	159 participants (Women & men)
<b>4</b>	<b>Face to Face User Interviews</b>	Detailed user experiences and perceptions to understand the effects of: * Socio-economic characteristics of users	<b>2 parks</b> * Duru Park * Süleyman Ersever Parkı	30 interviews (15 in each park) (Women)
<b>5</b>	<b>Focus Group Interviews</b>	* Physical setting of the parks * Physical & social characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood * Other park users	<b>3 community houses</b>	6 focus group interviews (Women)
<b>6</b>	<b>Interview with * People who use parks as a workplace * People who spend all day at the park</b>	Understanding of * 24 hours of the park * General use patterns * Social characteristics of the parks	<b>2 parks</b> * Duru Park * Süleyman Ersever Parkı	8 participants (Women & men)
<b>7</b>	<b>Detailed Site Observations</b>	* Park use patterns * Socio-economic characteristics of users	<b>2 parks</b> * Duru Park * Süleyman Ersever Parkı	* In each season one weekday and weekend day * On special days (Ramadan, Hıdırellez)

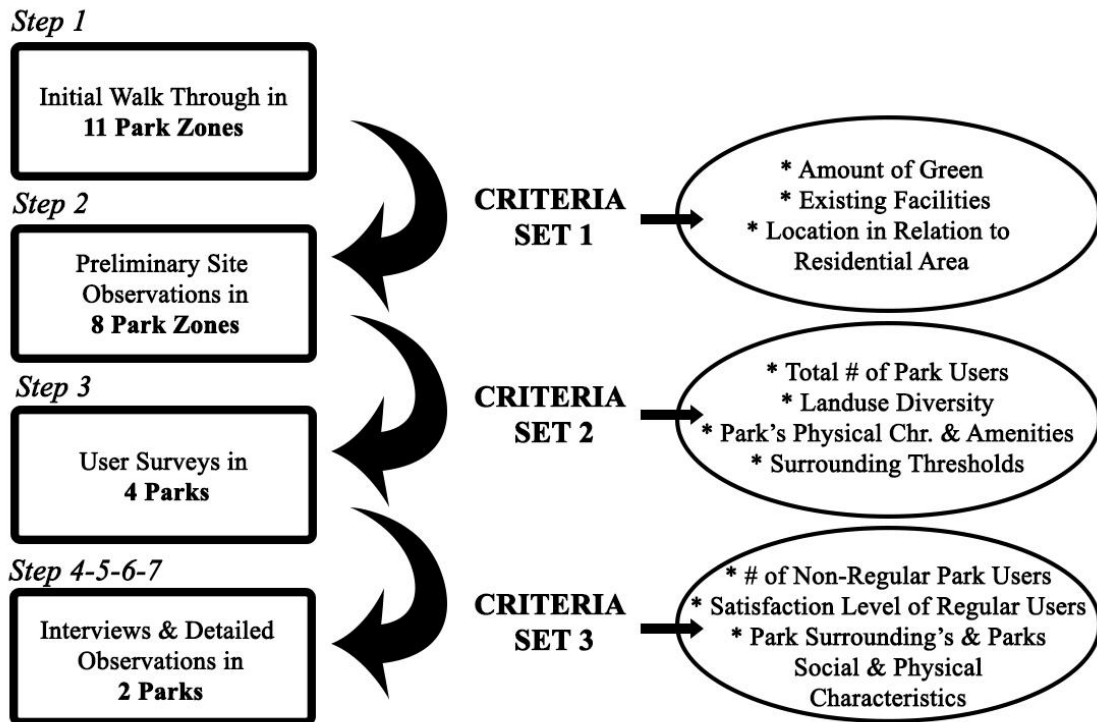


Figure 9 Park Selection Criteria

#### 4. 2. 1. Initial Site Observations (Step 1 & 2)

For my research in neighborhood parks of Balçova, as the first step of the study I had initial walk through all around the Balçova's public open green spaces. I photographed surrounding built environment around the parks, the amenities in the parks, and took some notes regarding the physical and social characteristics of those areas. I also analyzed traffic conditions (Figure 10) and exiting thresholds and slope rates around parks very briefly. This stage helped me to understand certain basic characteristics of a typical neighborhood park in Balçova, their location selections and general use patterns, and have a general understanding of Balçova's geographical characteristics and design language.

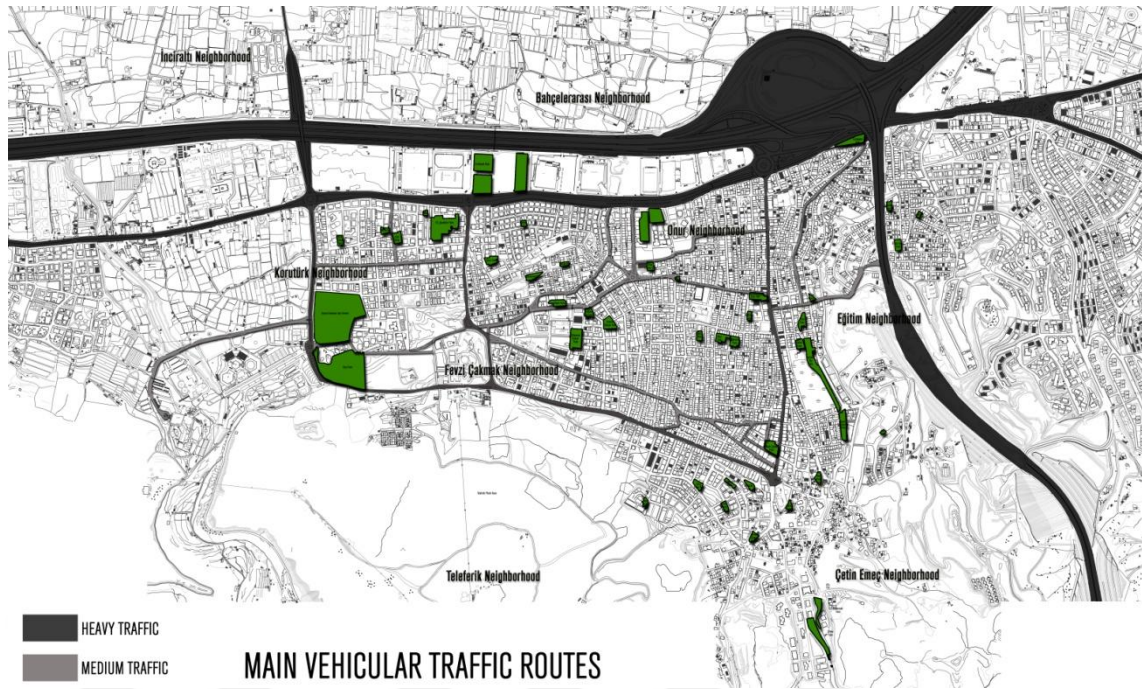


Figure 10. Main traffic routes in Balçova

According to the findings of the first step of the study, I prepared a map that is showing “park zones” that indicates the areas that are in walking distance (400m) to parks. In order to decide the diameters of these park zones I benefited both from literature and my initial site observations. According to Demir et. al (2007) public open green spaces such as playgrounds, parks and sports areas have an impact area for 400m so in neighborhoods those areas should be planned in a circle with 400m diameter (Demir et. al., 2007). Deriving both from the literature and Balçova’s physical characteristics such as total square meter of the neighborhoods, the level difference between the sea and mountain, the steepness of the slope of the main streets, I determined “park zones” with 400m radius that covers parks that are in walking distance to each other and to people who live, work and study in these areas without considering neighborhood borders. As a result, I determined total of 11 park zones (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Park zones in Balçova



Among these 11 park zones, I eliminated 3 of them as a result of the first step. Park zone 9 is eliminated as most of parks in this zone do not carry park qualities but they are only flat concrete open areas that are used as parking facilities. In the park zones 10 and 11 again parks have lost their neighborhood park qualities as they are blocked by highways and very far away from the Balçova's main settlement and residential areas. It is possible to say that these areas are not neighborhood parks as they are not green areas and not well maintained public facilities.

In the remaining park zones I performed preliminary site observations. I observed all neighborhood parks in 8 park zones. I also realized land-use, building storey and estimated average population analysis (Figure 12 for Landuse Analysis example and figure 13 for Building Storey Number Analysis example) to understand the physical and social characteristics of park surroundings. I also counted park users, provided amenities and analyzed thresholds around the parks.

Landuse analysis indicates that although this district of Balçova is mostly used for residential purposes, there are also commercial, educational and health facilities. Almost all the parks, except the ones in park zone 1, are surrounded by buildings. Park zone 1 is surrounded by residential buildings only on the east side and surrounded by main roads on the other sides and it is disconnected from the urban fabric. Almost all neighborhood parks in park zones 2, 3, 6 and 7 are surrounded only by residential buildings. Neighborhood parks in park zones 4 are mostly surrounded by residential and education facilities and the ones in park zone 5 and 8 are surrounded by different mostly commercial buildings.

One of the main purposes of the building storey numbers analysis is to estimate the average population and potential users who are living in walking distance to neighborhood parks in these park zones. Another aim is to understand the physical characteristics of the surrounding environment, such as height of the buildings that are surrounding the parks as it is important to understand the physical definitions of the parks with the surrounding buildings. Considering that the park zones 7 and 8 are the newly built parts of Balçova and park zone 3, 4 and 5 have a comparatively older building stock, this analysis indicate that especially park zone 3 has a very low population with mostly one or two storey high buildings, while park zones 7 and 8 have a denser population with ten or eleven storey high buildings. On the other hand we see that park zones 1 and 6 also have lower population due to low level of construction area.

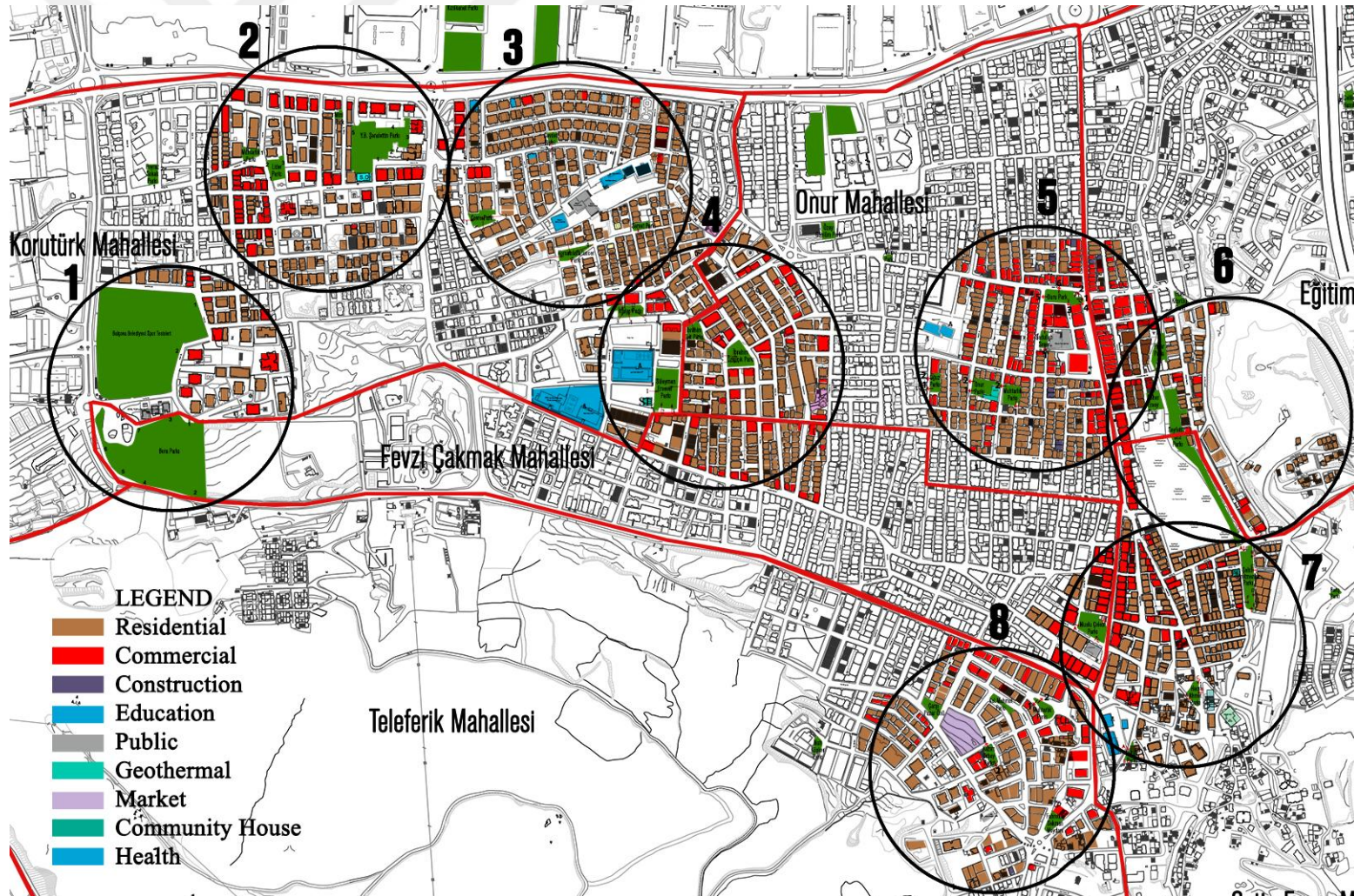


Figure 12. Landuse analysis of the park zones in Balçova

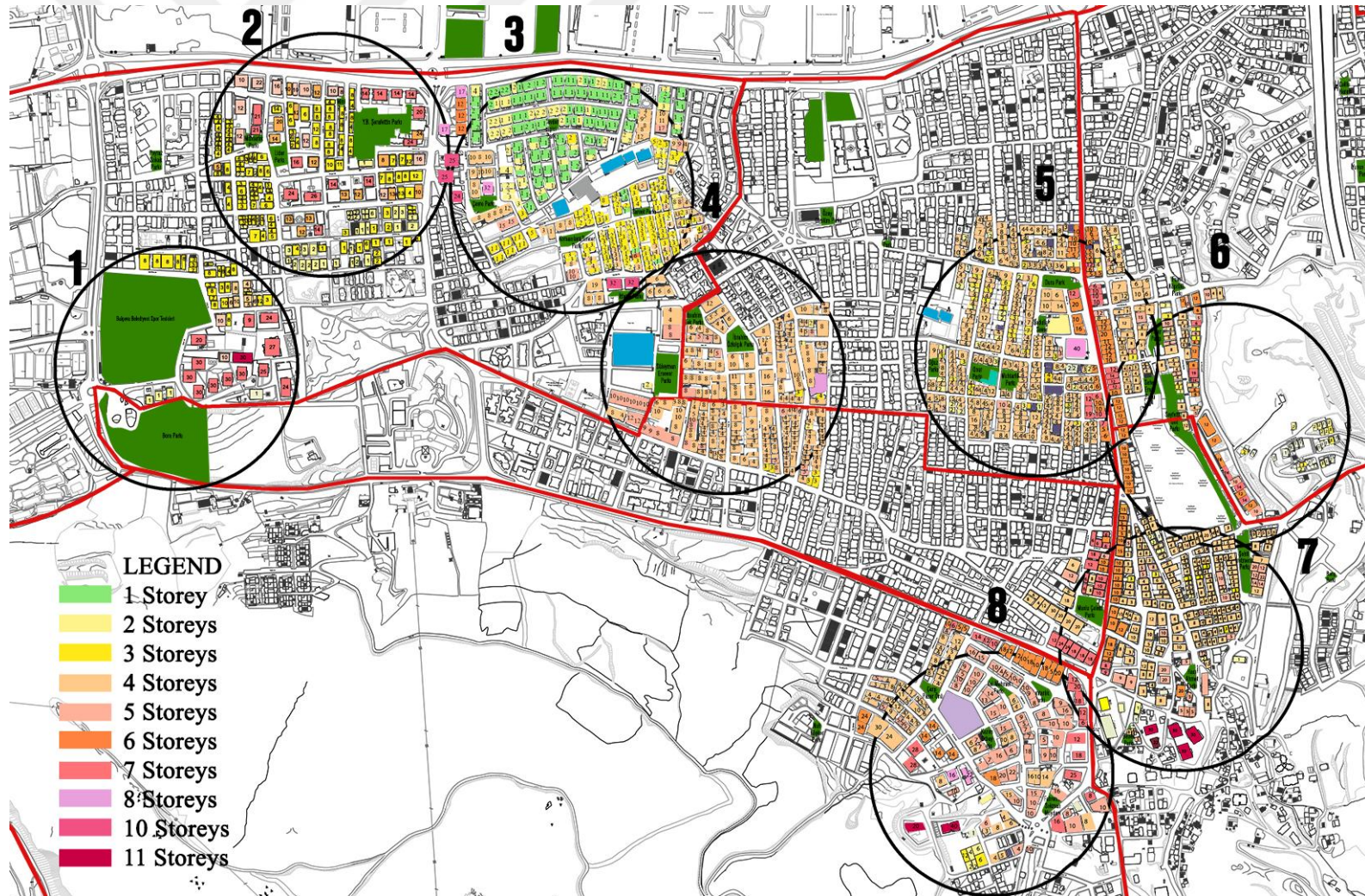


Figure 13. Building storey numbers of the park zones in Balçova

As cited in Loukaitou Sideris (2010), many critiques derive attention to certain physical characteristics and amenities of parks. Literature states that park size (Holman et. al, 1996), the availability of active recreation facilities and programs at the park (Gordon- Larsen, McMurray, & Popkin, 2000; Sister, Wolch, & Wilson, 2008), aesthetic features like water and trees (Corti et al., 1996), and a park's level of maintenance, (Tinsley, Tinsley, & Croskeys, 2002) are important criteria to determine park use. That is why I analyzed and photographed physical characteristics and amenities of each park in 8 park zones (Table 8) (see appendix B for "Park's Physical Characteristics Analysis" and 25 item activity list).

Table 8 Parks' physical amenities (Out of 25 activities)

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>NUMBER OF AMENITIES</b>
Süleyman Ersever Parkı	19
Y.B. Şerafettin Parkı	14
Duru Park	14
Ercüment Özgür Spor Tesisleri	12
Korsacılar Parkı	11
Seyfettin Göz Parkı	11
Seher Ersoy Parkı	10
5. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı	9
İtfaiye Parkı	9
Bora Park	9
Lider Parkı	8
Şehit Öğretmenler Parkı	8
2. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı	7
Poyraz Sok Parkı	7
Onur Park	7
Bebek Parkı	7
Hacı Ahmet Parkı	7
Muslu Çelebi Parkı	7
8. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı	7
Kazım Orbay Parkı	7
Çevre Parkı	6
Servet Parkı	6
Sadullah Ersever Parkı	6
Pınar Park	6

(cont. on next page)

Table 8 (cont.)

<b>Kel Mehmet Parkı</b>	6
<b>İbrahim Özkılçık Parkı</b>	5
<b>“İbrahim Tek Parkı</b>	5
<b>Oğuz Park</b>	5
<b>Mini Park</b>	4
<b>Çarşı Pazar Önü</b>	3
<b>Fahrettin Sekman</b>	2
<b>Cevdet Biçici Park</b>	1

Additionally, since thresholds may have important affect on the users’ access to parks (Day, 2008; Kaczynski & Henderson, 2008; Parra et. al., 2010; Walker & Crompton, 2012) I realized surrounding traffic, street connectivity and thresholds analysis around all parks (Table 9).

Table 9 Surrounding thresholds

<b>PARK NAME</b>	<b>THRESHOLDS</b>
<b>2. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, Railing
<b>İtfaiye Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, Railing
<b>8. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, Railing
<b>Fahrettin Sekman Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, Railing
<b>Kazım Orbay Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, Railing, Slope
<b>Çarşı Pazar Önü Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, No railings, Slope
<b>Duru Park</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, No railings,
<b>Sadullah Ersever Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, No railings,
<b>Muslu Çelebi Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, No railings,
<b>Lider Parkı</b>	Traffic, Busy environment, No railings,
<b>Spor Tesisleri Parkı</b>	Traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Bora Park Parkı</b>	Traffic, Calm environment, No railings, Slope
<b>Süleyman Ersever Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing, Slope
<b>5. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>İbrahim Tek Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Poyraz Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>İbrahim Özkılçık Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Oğuz Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Onur Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,

(cont. on next page)

Table 9 (cont.)

<b>Pınar Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Seher Ersoy Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Seyfettin Göz Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Hacı Ahmet Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Kel Mehmet Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing,
<b>Çevre Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing, Slope
<b>Korsacılar Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, Railing, Slope
<b>Servet Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings, Slop
<b>Y.B. Şerafettin Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings,
<b>Cevdet Biçici Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings,
<b>Bebek Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings,
<b>Şehit Öğretmenler Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings,
<b>Mini Parkı</b>	No traffic, Calm environment, No railings,

I also determined estimated user numbers in each park with the categories according to age and gender (see appendix C for “Users’ Behavior Analysis”). These observations were realized for four days, two weekdays and two weekends at the same time of the day between 12.00 and 14.00. Each observer’s count continued for half an hour during each session. During this time, depending on the park’s physical characteristics, the counts were done either by walking through the park to observe all areas or by sitting in a spot that lets to see all parts of the park (Table 10). Following all these analysis, all the information gathered digitalized.

Table 10 Estimated park user counts

<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Total Number Of Users</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men Age</b>	<b>Women Age</b>
<b>Duru Park</b>	191	96	95	30 Children 9 Young 10 Middle Age 47 Elderly	19 Children 19 Young 32 Middle Age 25 Elderly
<b>Bora Park</b>	120	30	90	3 Children 10 Young 10 Middle Age 7 Elderly	17 Children 15 Young 35 Middle Age 23 Elderly

(cont. on next page)

Table 10 (cont.)

<b>5. Bölge Muhtarlık Parkı</b>	101	45	56	31 Children 9 Young 2 Middle Age 3 Elderly	16 Children 6 Young 17 Middle Age 17 Elderly
<b>Y.B. Şerafettin Parkı</b>	100	65	35	0 Children 24 Young 16 Middle Age 25 Elderly	0 Children 15 Young 13 Middle Age 7 Elderly
<b>Ercüment Özgür Spor Tesisleri</b>	84	48	36	18 Children 11 Young 16 Middle Age 2 Elderly	10 Children 8 Young 12 Middle Age 6 Elderly
<b>Muslu Çelebi Parkı</b>	80	40	40	18 Children 6 Young 10 Middle Age 6 Elderly	13 Children 12 Young 8 Middle Age 7 Elderly
<b>Lider Parkı</b>	69	23	46	9 Children 3 Young 3 Middle Age 8 Elderly	4 Children 8 Young 22 Middle Age 12 Elderly
<b>Süleyman Ersever Parkı</b>	94	32	62	14 Children 8 Young 8 Middle Age 2 Elderly	10 Children 20 Young 24 Middle Age 8 Elderly
<b>İtfaiye Parkı</b>	54	21	33	2 Children 5 Young 9 Middle Age 5 Elderly	7 Children 9 Young 10 Middle Age 7 Elderly
<b>Sadullah Ersever Parkı</b>	40	27	13	2 Children 8 Young 6 Middle Age 11 Elderly	1 Children 2 Young 5 Middle Age 5 Elderly
<b>Kazım Orbay Parkı</b>	38	15	23	9 Children 0 Young 3 Middle Age 3 Elderly	11 Children 2 Young 5 Middle Age 5 Elderly
<b>Seyfettin Göz Parkı</b>	33	6	27	4 Children 1 Young 1 Middle Age 0 Elderly	6 Children 5 Young 10 Middle Age 6 Elderly

According to all of analyzed criteria for each park that is observed, I overlapped all result and compared the results regarding parks and finally I selected four parks: Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri, Süleyman Ersever Parkı, Duru Park and Muhtarlık Parkı. These parks represent different neighborhood, park and user characteristics.

Park selection criteria are as followed:

- *Total Number of Park Users*

(Highest number of users with a balanced distribution of age and gender)

- *Surrounding Landuse Diversity*

(The least and the most diverse landuse around each park)

- *Park's physical characteristic and amenities*

(The highest number of amenities)

- *Thresholds - Surrounding traffic conditions, environment, physical boundaries around the park*

(One from different categories)

#### **4. 2. 2. Park User Surveys (Step 3)**

As the third step of my research, I realized user surveys at the four selected parks to understand people's personal park use habits, their thoughts regarding both parks' physical and social settings, and surrounding environment, their gendered experiences and their socio-economic characteristics. This survey aims to gather an initial data regarding the park use habits of people such as use frequency, use duration, purpose and with whom they are using the parks and its relationship with users' socio-economic and demographic characteristics, physical and social characteristics of parks, its surrounding environment and other park users. In each park, except for Muhtarlık Parkı, a total of 40 interviews were realized with equal numbers of women and men (20 women and 20 men). Only in Muhtarlık Parkı, I could only realize 39 surveys with an unbalanced gender distribution (26 women and 13 men) as a result of the hardship to find male users. All interviewees were realized with respondents who are older than 15, since children's use of neighborhood park is another topic that needs different research design. All 159 interviews were completed and results have been transferred to digital platform.

The survey is formed in five sections (see appendix E for survey questions). The first section aims to understand respondent's park use habits such as use frequency, use duration, purpose of use, whether people prefer to use the park alone or with someone, and if there are certain time frames that people prefer or not prefer to use the park. I also questioned people's alternative transportation methods to come to park to understand



people's homes' proximity to the park. The second section of the survey focuses on the physical characteristics of the parks and respondents' satisfaction levels from the characteristics, provided amenities and programs. The third section of the survey aimed to understand respondents' preferences and complaints about the physical and social characteristics of the surrounding environment of the neighborhood parks and their opinions about other users of the park or its immediate surroundings. In the fourth part of the survey I tried to focus on the gendered experiences of the respondents and tried to have a basic understanding with the survey. I asked whether they had any negative incident in neighborhood parks, their ideas about gendered differences in terms of park use and their ideas about advantages or disadvantages of being close to home place and be in their own neighborhood. The last part of the survey aimed to learn the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their length of stay in İzmir, and certain characteristics of their houses such as having a garden as an alternative to parks.

#### **User Survey Analysis**

To analyze the results of the survey, I had descriptive analysis and additionally I developed a regression model using the Ordinary Least Squares technique. The number of observations or respondents (N) is 159. The data collected under section 1 and section 4 were the dependent variables (Y), whereas sections 2, 3 and 5 constituted the independent variables (X).

In order to understand the determinant of Y, we refer to the following regression model:  $Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + e_i$

i: 1, 2, ..., 159 (the index notation for the individuals participated in the survey) and e: error terms which are assumed to follow a normally, identically and independently distributed residuals.

During both the application of survey and analyzing its results, I also found out that there are some contradicting and unclear answers to certain questions, especially in the gendered experiences section. This may be due to the survey design, clarity problems of the questions or the technical problems with the survey method itself. So in the interview stage, I tried to clarify all these issues.

### 4. 2. 3. Face to Face User Interviews (Step 4, 5 & 6)

To understand experienced differences and urban inequalities by women while using neighborhood parks, to find the details of varying levels of park use and the reasons for it, I realized face to face user interviews only with women park users in two selected parks as the fourth step of my study. The selected parks are Duru Park and Süleyman Ersever Park<sup>1</sup>. To select these parks I benefited from the survey results and defined four criteria. These criteria are based on the use frequency, use duration, users' satisfaction levels from the parks and park's surrounding characteristics.

Similar to Tinsley et. al (2002)'s methodology to understand the park use patterns of different groups, I take 'use frequency' and 'use duration' and group user survey respondents as "regular users" and "non-regular users" based on their park use frequency and park use duration. I define regular park users as the users who use park at least 3 to 5 times a month and stay in the park at least for 30 minutes. On the other hand, I define non-regular users as the users who uses the park maximum 3 to 5 times a year (regardless of the length of their stay) and/or stay in parks for less than 30 minutes (regardless of the frequency of their visit).

In addition to park use frequencies and durations, I considered whether users are satisfied with the parks or not and the physical characteristics of park surrounding such as landuse, traffic density and so on. Considering all these issues, I selected two of the four parks for the face to face user interviews (Table 11).

Table 11. Characteristics to select parks to realize interviews

<b>Duru Park</b>	<b>Süleyman Ersever Parkı</b>
Highest # of Non-Regular Users (amongst 4 parks)	Lowest # of Non-Regular Users (amongst 4 parks)
Lowest Level of Satisfaction among Regular Users	Highest Level of Satisfaction among Regular Users
Commercial activities & dense traffic	Residential & education buildings & low traffic
Smaller park area	Larger park area
<b>Amenities:</b> * Playground, * Café (Döner & Kokoreç Kiosks) * Toilets * Seating units * Water elements	<b>Amenities:</b> * Playground, * Café (Tea, coffee etc.) * Toilets * Seating units & tables * Water elements

I had three different interview groups (Steps 4, 5 & 6): Park user interviews (Step 4, see appendix F for questions), focus group interviews (Step 5, see appendix G for questions), workplace interviews (Step 6, see appendix H for questions). All three different types of interviews fulfilled each other's gaps and created a comprehensive picture to answer research questions of this thesis.

As the fourth step of my study, I realized park user interviews (structured) with female park users at the selected two parks (15 interviews in each park) to understand their personal reasons of park use based on their individual limitations, park perceptions and their thoughts regarding the social and physical environment of park and its users. All interviews in both parks were realized on one week day and two weekend days, between 10.00 and 17.00, and on one weekday and one weekend day between 16.00 and 20.00. I specifically chose days with similar weather conditions for both parks. However, at certain times I had difficulties to get detailed answers to my questions as interviewees are in rush to their daily routines or distracted as they have to keep an eye on their children.

As the fifth step of my study, I realized five focus group interviews (semi-structured) with women groups in community houses<sup>1</sup> (semt evi) that are in close proximity to the parks that I realize interviews. I selected community houses as they provide a single gender profile and ease to talk with a large number of women at the same time. Different than structured interviews, respondents of focus groups were much more concentrated on the discussion and they were much more comfortable and talkative. I realized focus group interviews during the lunch break in jewelry making classes which take all day. In this interview I asked questions about their daily responsibilities, safety concerns about public spaces, their ideas about their neighborhood and neighborhood parks. Although I did not ask any specific questions regarding Duru Park or Süleyman Ersever Park<sup>1</sup>, most of the examples that they gave related to their park use were from these two parks. In this environment where women feel very relaxed and spend time just for their own benefit, I both had a chance to spend longer time with groups of women and get detailed answers to my questions and also being in a group opened up new discussions where they brought up details related to park use that I did not include to my interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> These community houses are administered by Balçova Municipality and provide certain social services

As the sixth step of my study, I realized (unstructured) interviews with eight people who use the park as workplace such as toilet keeper, taxi drivers, kokoreç salesman and kiosk employees and/or with people who comes to park every day, sits there all day and know almost all the people who are from that neighborhood. As these people spend almost all their days and sometimes evenings (taxi drivers or kokoreç seller) in these parks, they witness all the social events, gatherings or disagreements and fights in these parks during the day and night. Additionally, these people are familiar with the changes happened in these parks throughout the time. In these interviews I asked those people their ideas and perceptions about park users, how people use parks during different times of the day and different times of the week, old days of the park and their perceptions on the gendered differences in the use of these parks.

#### **4. 2. 4. Detailed Observations (Step 7)**

As the seventh and last step of my study, I realized detailed observations in the two parks that are selected for face to face user interviews. For detailed observation I selected one weekday and one weekend day in each season (fall, winter, spring and summer) to see the seasonal changes in the park use and important dates when parks may be crowded such as Hıdırellez<sup>2</sup> or Ramadan<sup>3</sup> Days (See appendix D for the dates and times of observation).

On these selected dates, I performed 30 minutes observations in the noon and in the evening on each day in both of the parks consequently. I observed all users according to age, gender and use patterns and took notes regarding their activities. I also photographed the parks and then digitalized the information on maps. These observations gave me the chance to compare the use of two parks at the same times of the day and the year and also at the same weather conditions. I not only compared the

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<sup>2</sup> Hıdırellez is a Turkish seasonal holiday that celebrates the end of cold winter days and start of hot summer days. On the 5th of May, people go outside in the evening and gather on streets, parks, waterfronts and perform several routines such as jumping over the fire, collecting soil from ant nests or writing wishes on a paper and tying those papers to the branches of a rose plant.

<sup>3</sup> Ramadan, is the month when Muslim people realize certain religious routines and fast during the day hours. Since people fast during the day, they mostly perform leisure activities in the evening. As a custom, certain institutions, municipalities or people organize public dinners or entertainment activities after sun set where people come together and enjoy those activities. These activities are mostly organized in public open spaces such as parks and squares.

number of people using both parks but I also compared the gender, age and use patterns of these people as well. I also had a chance to make comparison between the differing uses of same parks in different days based on the environmental and physical characteristics of the parks.

I gathered all the obtained information from seven steps of my study and analyzed the results. To answer research questions of the thesis, all of the gathered data is used correspondingly and explained in chapter 6, 7 and 8. Each chapter, firstly, focuses on the user survey results that descriptively and statistically explain differences of park use in four selected parks. Following the differences between four parks, with the help of the interview results, chapters concentrate on the details of park use behaviors of users in two selected parks and try to capture daily experiences of women in more detail.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PARK USERS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN BALÇOVA**

Different groups of people with different socio-economic characteristics may use neighborhood parks in different ways for different purposes and needs. Most of the studies that research park use habits miss to consider individual characteristics of different users and they mainly focus on a certain user profile (Croskeys et. al., 2002). Socio-economic characteristics of users such as age, gender, education status or economic status may alter people's decisions on the park use habits such as park use purposes, frequencies and durations, the time periods that people prefer or not prefer to use parks, and the preferences on using the parks alone or together with someone. Users' length of stay in the neighborhood and familiarity to the surrounding environment may also have impacts on park perceptions of people and their park use habits in relation with the park users' socio-economic characteristics. Thus, this chapter analyses park use habits of users in relation with their socio-economic characteristics.

First section of this chapter starts with an explanation of the basic characteristics of the four parks where user surveys are realized and then focuses on the profiles of survey respondents, distribution of these respondents to four parks according to these parks characteristics and how social and physical park characteristics affect park use habits. The second section of this chapter explores park use purposes of respondents based on the findings of both user surveys and user interviews according to four main focuses which are responsibilities of women and use of parks as a socialization opportunity, changing park use needs with aging, effects of satisfaction levels and familiarity to the environment on the park use, and finally reflection of the physical characteristics of respondents' homes to their park use habits. Finally, the last section of this chapter summarizes and presents a general discussion of the findings on the relationship between users' socio-economic characteristics with park use habits under the light of previous literature.

## 5. 1. Characteristics of Selected Parks

There is a typical design for most of the neighborhood parks in Balçova. The details of the design or total square meter may change depending on the site conditions, however, the materials, furniture, main amenities and general layouts are very similar in most of the parks. Selected four parks for the user surveys are also good examples of typical park designs (Table 12). Before going into the details of the characteristics of the four selected parks, I explain the properties of a typical municipality park.

In Balçova, these typical municipality neighborhood parks include walking paths, seating units, water features, children playground, sports areas and small cafes/kiosks. Parks are dominated by hard surface materials and mostly with cobblestone. The play equipments include slides, swings and seesaws made of colored plastic or metal. In some of the more contemporary parks, wood or recycled plastic based materials are being used as well. These equipments used to be placed in sand however, due to hygienic problems; most of playgrounds are paved with colored rubber mats. Usually this material is being used in sports areas as well. In most of the typical municipality neighborhood parks there are basic equipments for individual exercise.

Usually planting design includes small trees and lawn with plant hedges on the borders of the park. In most of the municipality parks, it is forbidden to step, sit or play on lawn surfaces and those areas are mostly surrounded with a metal railing. In most of the municipality parks, due to maintenance problems, the soft surfaces such as lawn or flower beds are wearing out very quickly and not replaced instantly.

Usually there is no appropriate planting and shade elements. In some of the parks, certain seating units are covered with shading elements but since the used materials are not selected carefully they do not block the sun and the rain.

Maintenance and littering by users are other common problems for typical neighborhood parks. Due to heavy use and staff related problems these areas are not usually maintained well. Street animals are also causing hygiene problems as well (Figure 14):



Lider Parkı



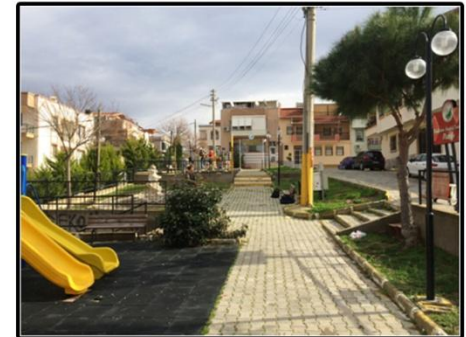
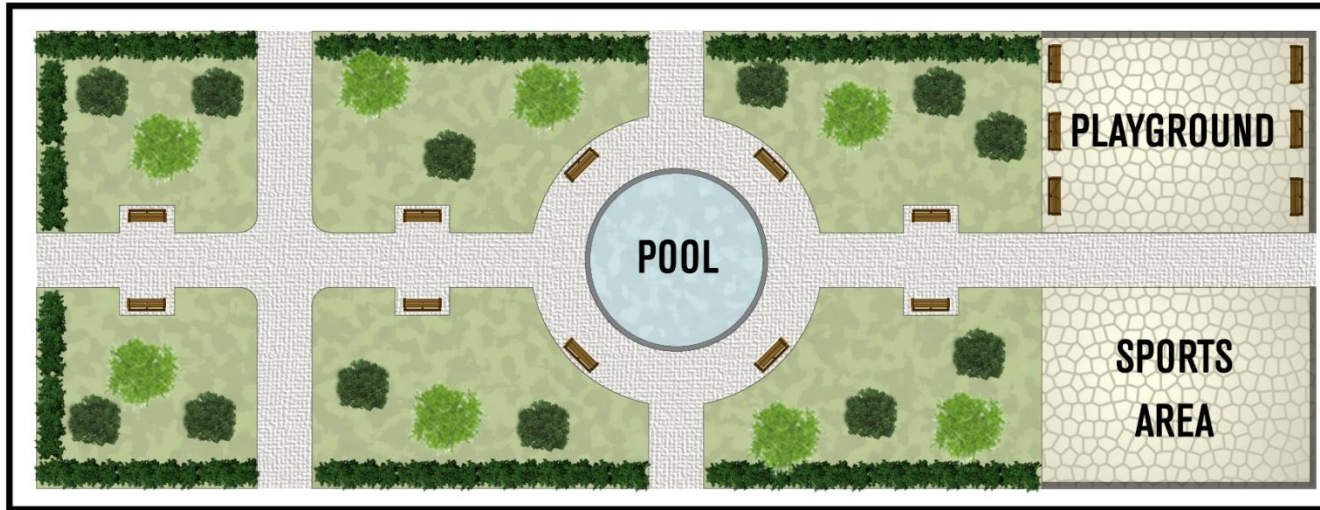
İtfaiye Parkı



İbrahim Tek Parkı



Korsacılar Parkı



Korsacılar Parkı

Figure 14. Typical neighborhood park design in Balçova



Considering the characteristics of the typical municipality parks in Balçova, the coming section explains certain characteristics of the selected four parks in order to give a brief understanding of the context that the user surveys are realized(See Figure 15 for park locations). Understanding the context is crucial to be able to relate the park use habits of different user groups in different parks with different characteristics.



Figure 15. Parks where user surveys realized

#### **Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri (Park Zone 1):**



Figure 16. View 1 from Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri



Figure 17. View 2 from Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri

This park is surrounded by mostly residential blocks, non-governmental organization buildings and roads. The population density is very high on the north and east sides of the park with the existence of 7 or 8 storey high residential buildings whereas on the south and west the density is very low due to the surrounding roads and hotel buildings that are located in large fields. There is very low traffic around the park and the slope of the surrounding streets are not steep. Park is surrounded by railing and provides a single controlled entrance to the park. Pedestrian connection is very easy and not interrupted by any thresholds other than the railing around the park.

**Süleyman Ersever Park (Park Zone 4)<sup>4</sup>:**



Figure 18. View 1 from Süleyman Ersever Parkı



Figure 19. View 2 from Süleyman Ersever Parkı

<sup>4</sup> Used for face to face user interviews as well.

Süleyman Ersever Parkı is mostly surrounded by residential buildings, education facilities (one elementary and one high school) and neighborhood community house. There is also a soccer field next to the park. There are usually 4 or 5 storey high residential buildings on the three sides of the park. Park surrounding is not dominated by active traffic except than the school dismiss hours and it is very easy to reach by walking as it is not in a steep location. However, since the park is surrounded by a wall which provides two entrances on the west and east sides of the park, entrances to the park is limited to these gates.

**Duru Park (Park Zone 5)<sup>5</sup>:**



Figure 20. View 1 from Duru Park

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<sup>5</sup> Used for face to face user interviews as well.



Figure 21. View 2 from Duru Park

Duru Park is located by Ata Street which is one of the busiest streets and a shopping district in Balçova. As it is one of the spines of the traffic web of Balçova and there are major bus and dolmuş lines passing through, the traffic is very dense. Park is surrounded by commercial activities dominantly, and residential facilities. Population density is high in this area and buildings are densely located without any openings or private gardens. Park is easy to reach, both by walking and public transportation. Park is not surrounded by any kind of railings, and access to park is possible from all sides, however heavy traffic around the park creates a boundary which causes some difficulties in the access to the park

**Muhtarlık Parkı (Zone 5):**



Figure 22. View 1 from Muhtarlık Parkı



Figure 23. View 2 from Muhtarlık Parkı

Muhtarlık Parkı is surrounded by residential buildings at the immediate surrounding and commercial activities at a very close distance. Park is at an intersection spot of streets that connects different commercial and residential activities. The surrounding environment is very calm and free from traffic. There is muhtarlık building located in the park.

Table 12. Analysis of selected parks according to provided amenities

<b>TYPICAL PARK AMENITIES</b>	<b>Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri (1742 m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Süleyman Ersever Parkı (2271 m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Duru Park (1103 m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Muhtarlık Parkı (840 m<sup>2</sup>)</b>
Walking paths / With cobblestone surface	√	√	√	√
Seating units (Not flexible)	√	√(+ Movable café chairs)	√	√
Shading elements	-	-	√	√
Water features	-	√	√	-
Children playground	√	√	√	√
Rubber playground surface	√	√	√	√
Sports areas	√	-	-	-
Small cafes / kiosks	√	√	√	-
Weak Planting		√	√	√
Periodical Maintenances	√	√	√	√
<b>IDEAL PARK AMENITIES <sup>6</sup></b>				
Connection to Green Space Network	-	-	-	-
Dense Planting	√	-	-	-
Soft surface with plants	-	-	-	-
Well Considered Lighting for Night Time Use	√	-	√	-
Flexible Site Furnitures	-	-	-	-
Informal Park Maintenance	-	√	-	-
Field Games	√	-	-	-
Walking Trails	√	-	-	-
Semi open spaces for education and art activities	-	-	-	-

<sup>6</sup> Ideal park amenities deriving from the findings of “Yerel Yönetimler için Kadın Dostu Kent Planlaması ve Tasarım İlkeleri Rehberi” (Altay Baykan, 2015)

## 5. 2. Characteristics of the Participants of Study

For my study firstly I surveyed 159 people and based on the results of the survey I determined a target group according to their park use frequencies, durations and satisfaction levels from the parks I selected a certain target group and interviewed those people. Before going into the details of the selection of the interview participants, firstly this section explains the characteristics of survey participants.

For the survey, 159 respondents participated to survey in equal numbers in four selected parks of Balçova. I aimed to realize surveys with equal numbers of men and women, but since I could not find equal numbers of female and male users in Muhtarlık Parkı general overview of the respondents indicates that more than half of the respondents (88 out of 159) are women and the rest is men (Figure 24).

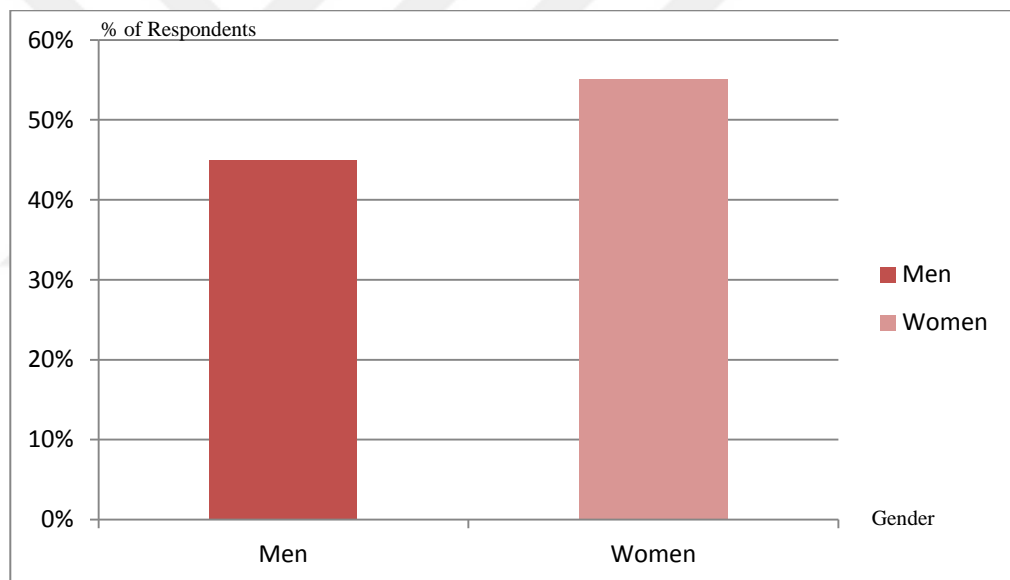


Figure 24. Gender distributions across four selected parks

Age distribution of respondents across four parks indicates that majority of the respondents are younger than age of 45 and while female respondents who are younger than 45 years old is more than male respondents, number of male respondents who are older than 45 is more than female respondents. Almost one fourth of the respondents are between ages 15 – 25 years old, half of the respondents are between ages 26 – 45 and the rest of the respondents are almost equally distributed among the older age groups (Figure 25).



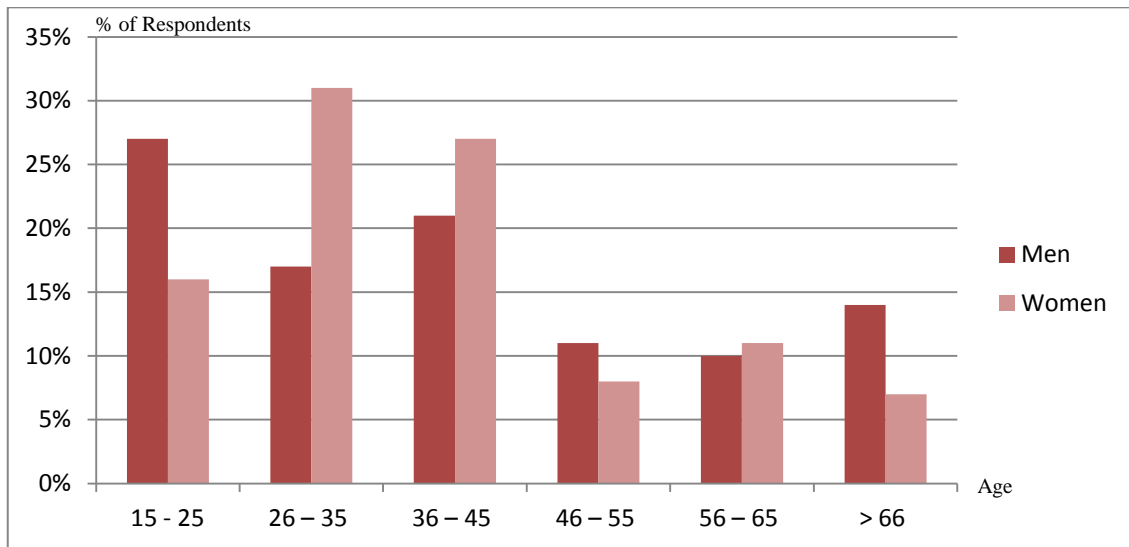


Figure 25. Age distribution of respondents based on gender across four parks

Median age of the respondents in Duru Park is more than the other parks while respondents who are younger than 45 years old are almost equally distributed in the three parks according to the age distribution across four selected parks (Figure 26).

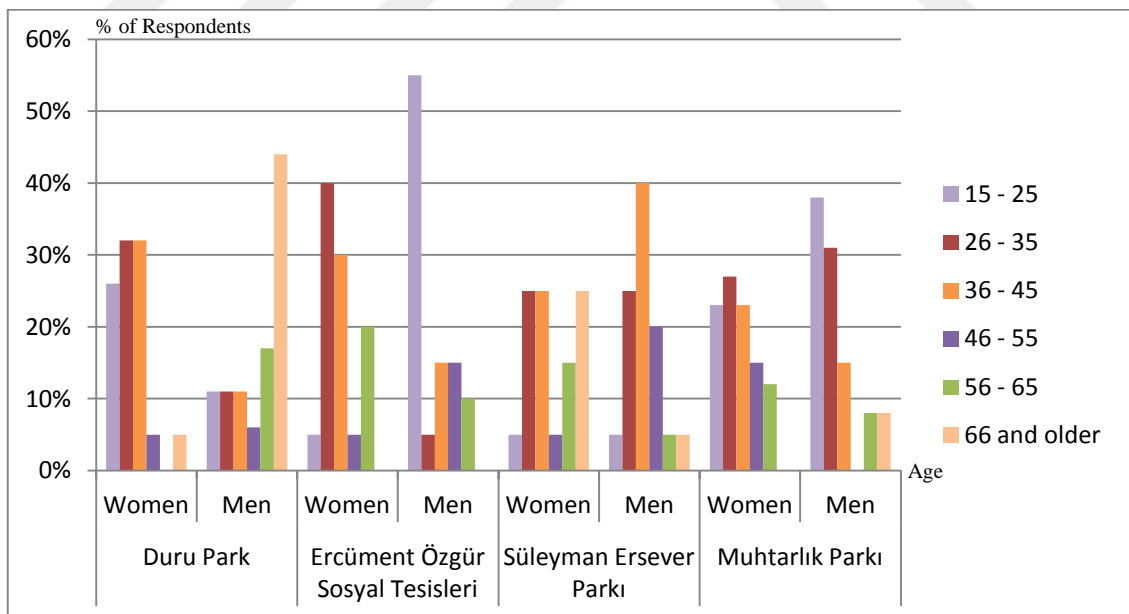


Figure 26. Age distribution of respondents according to their gender in each park

Education levels of user survey respondents indicate that majority of respondents hold either high school or university degree. The education level is slightly

higher for female respondents than that of male respondents. One third of the respondents (48 out of 159) (slightly more than the average in İzmir with 26%) hold university degrees or above and slightly more than one third of respondents (35%) are high school graduates. (Figure 27 & 28).

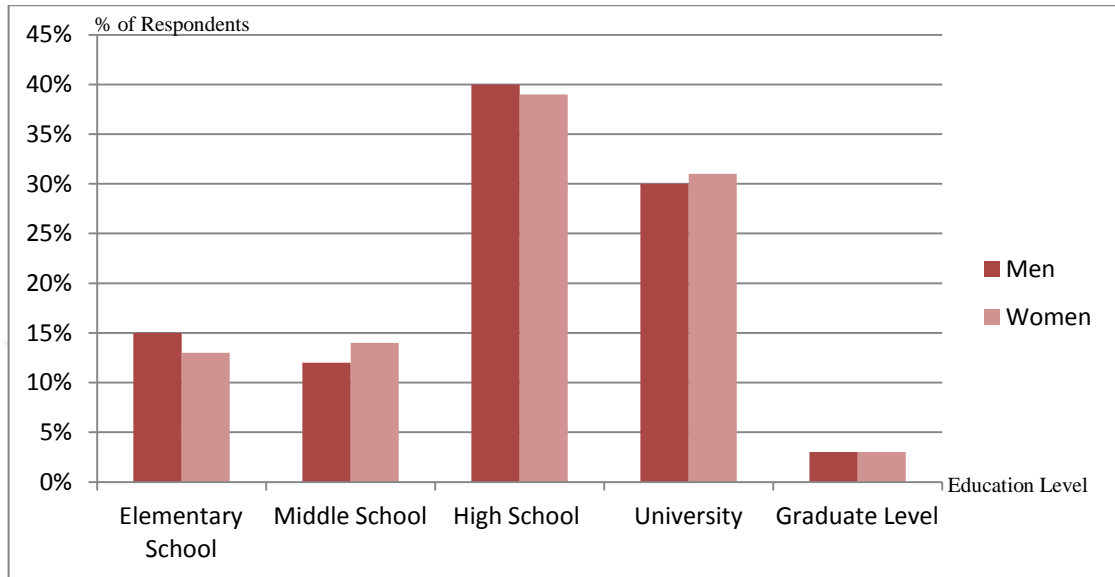


Figure 27. Education level of respondents based on gender across four parks

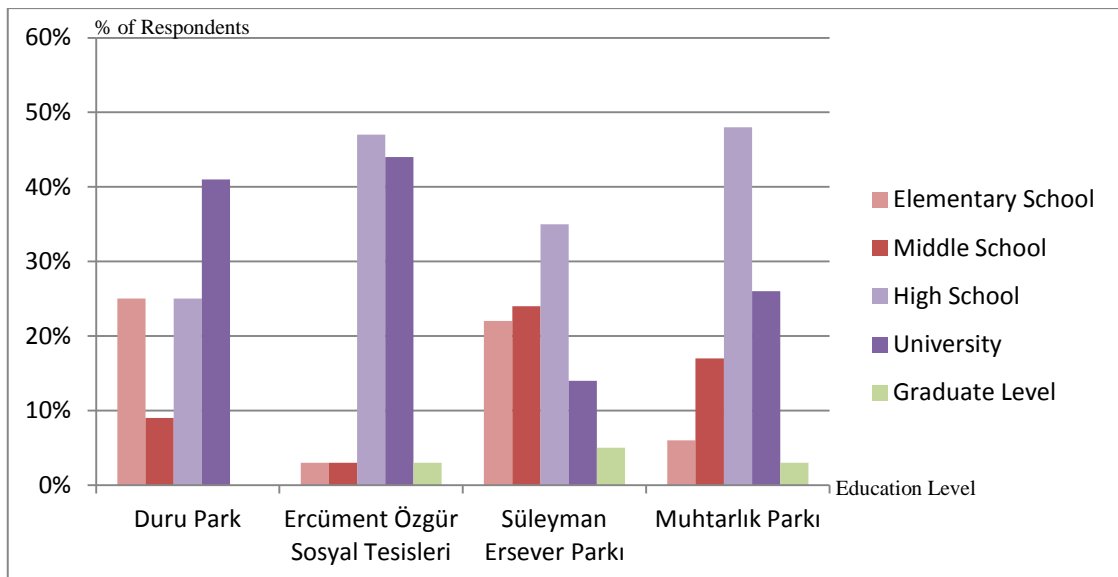


Figure 28. Education level of respondents according to their gender in each park

Almost one fourth (37 out of 159) of respondents are holding a paid-job. Assuming 2000 – 3000 Turkish Lira as the “medium household income level”, more

than half of respondents (96 out of 159) have an income that is lower than medium household income level (Figure 29). Although results indicate similarities across four parks, median income of the respondents in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri is closer to the general average and number of users from different income groups are close to each other.

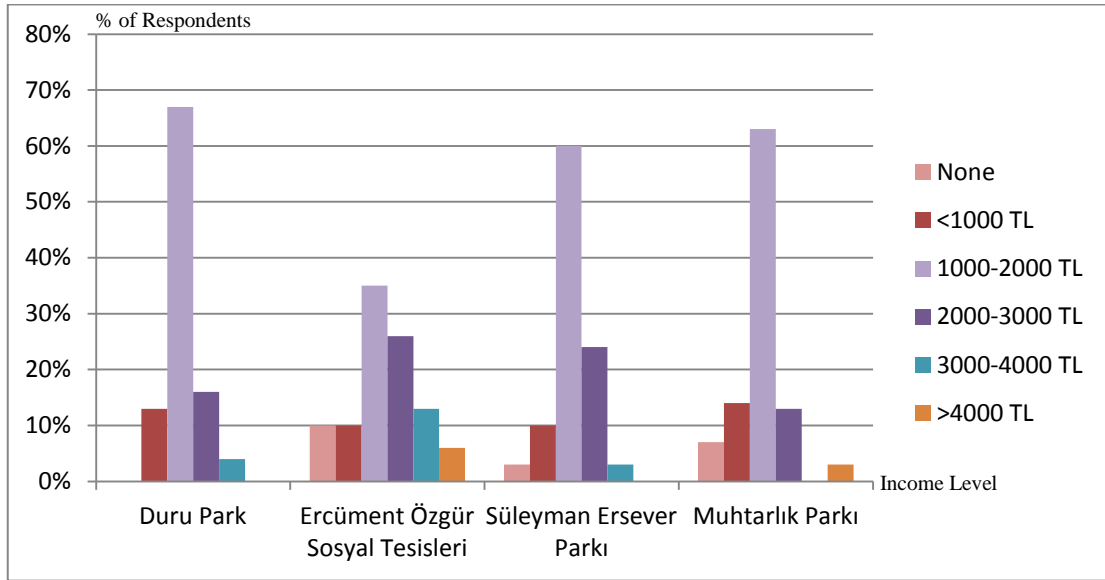


Figure 29. Income level of respondents in each park

Less than one fourth (20 out of 88) of women are working at a paid-job and have an income while half of male respondents are working at a paid job and have an income. Almost half of the university and graduate school graduates are not working with almost the same levels for males and females.

More than half of respondents (98 out of 159) are married and live in a household of three or four people. The rate of marriage is slightly higher for female respondents (58 out of 88) than of male respondents (40 out of 71).

According to the years of their stay in İzmir, more than half of respondents (100 out of 159) have been living in İzmir for more than 21 years while around one fourth of respondents (28 out of 159) have been living in İzmir less than 10 years. Results indicate that all parks are dominantly used by respondents who have been living in İzmir for more than 21 years and the highest percentage of those users is using Süleyman Ersever Parkı (Figure 30).

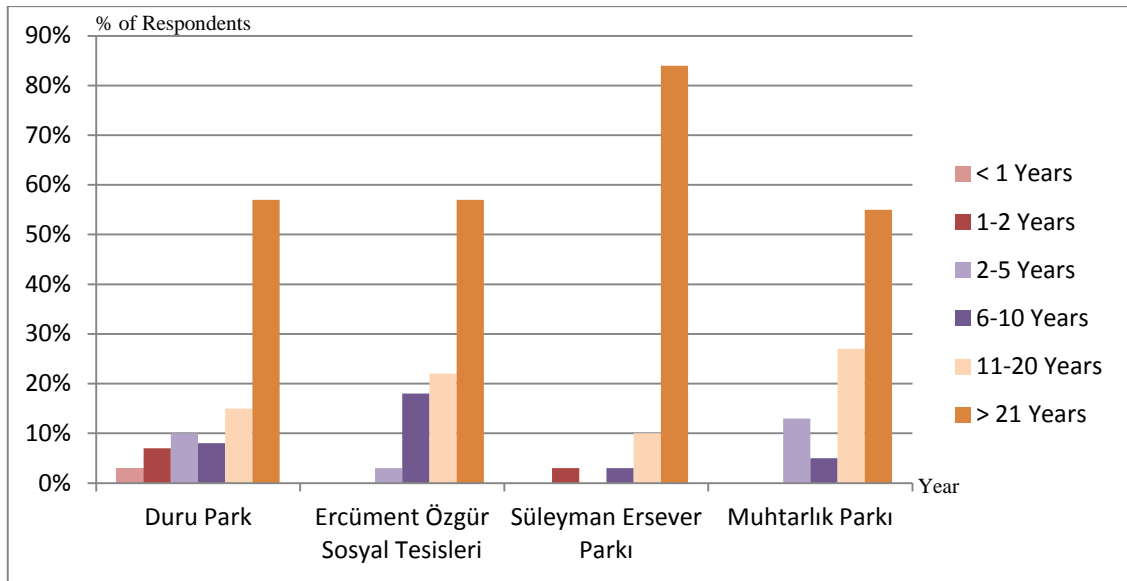


Figure 30. Respondents' length of stay in İzmir in each park

Almost majority (134 out of 159) of the respondents are living in apartment blocks. 13 of those are living in a residential complex and 11 of them are living in a single house. Slightly more than half (90 out of 159) of the total respondents has an access to private gardens either in their permanent or summer houses. Majority of these respondents is actively using their private gardens for leisure activities such as resting and reading or for gardening purposes. Slightly less than majority of the total respondents (112 out of 159) state that if they have one, they would prefer private home gardens over public parks.

In order to select interview participants, I grouped survey participants according to their use frequency of the visits as “frequent”, “average” and “non-frequent” users. Frequent users are the ones who use the parks everyday or at least 3-5 times a week (56%, 89 out of 159). Average users are the ones who use the parks 3-5 times a month (28%, 44 out of 159). Finally, non-frequent users are the ones who are using the parks 3-5 times a year or never (16%, 26 out of 159). When I analyze user survey respondents according to their use durations respondents can be grouped as “long”, “medium” or “short stay”. Long stay means respondents who stay in parks more than 60 minutes (45%, 71 out of 159). Medium stay means respondents who stay in parks more than 30 minutes and less than 60 minutes (31%, 50 out of 159) and finally short stay means respondents who stay in parks less than 30minutes (24%, 38 out of 159).

Deriving from the user groups based on their park use frequency and duration, I define two main user profiles which are “*regular*” and “*non regular*” park users. Regular park users are the frequent and average park users who stay in the park for long and medium durations and non-regular park users are the non-frequent park users (regardless of the length of their stay) who stay in parks for short durations (regardless of the frequency of their visit). Based on these user profile definitions, 68% of the survey respondents (108 out of 159) are regular park users and the rest is non-regular users of parks. When I looked at the socio-economic characteristics of the non-regular users in four parks, I found out that most of the non-users are women who are between ages of 25 and 55, married with child/s and non-working. So I interviewed people with such characteristics. Coming sections explain findings of both user surveys and interviews in more detail.

### **5. 3 User Profiles and their Park Use Purposes**

There are certain park use purposes that changes according to the socio-economic characteristics of the users and related daily responsibilities such as childcare, socializing, fulfilling ecological needs, using parks as shortcuts or spaces to rest for short periods of time. At certain times these purpose may come together and create a need to use the park or certain daily responsibilities may be used as an opportunity to use a park. Survey with users of four parks indicates that childcare is the mostly mentioned park use purpose (46%, 70 out of 164 responses). Following childcare, leisure (24%, 40 out of 164 responses) and socialization (18%, 30 out of 164 responses) are also important purposes for park use (Figure 29).

The need to benefit from nature is another cause to use parks in Balçova. As mentioned, Balçova is a very densely built settlement with very small amount of open green spaces to breath. So when people find access to such open green spaces they want to benefit from this opportunity to fulfill their ecological needs. As stated parks have very important ecological and climatic benefits as they reduce the heat island effect, increase oxygen, reduce air pollution, control humidity and temperature, and cool down the air and these benefits are great reasons to use the parks (Burgess et al., 1988; McIntyre et al., 1991; Bolund and Hunhammar, 1999; Swanwick et al., 2003; Heynen, 2006 cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). User survey and interview results indicate that

one of the most important use purposes of parks is to escape the hot summer days of İzmir.

*“What can people do in this hot weather of İzmir, they come to Duru Park out of necessity.”* (Woman, 56, married)

*“I come here a lot especially in summer afternoons to have a cup of tea and cool off”* (Focus group interview)

*“We come to Duru Park a lot. We came here throughout Ramadan as it was much cooler.”* (Woman, 43, married with one child)

*“I wish there were more trees and flowers. I like the pool. The sound of the water is very calming”* (Woman, 51, widow, no child)

Use purposes change significantly across four parks that the user surveys are realized due to the physical and social characteristics of the parks, their surrounding environment and user’s park perceptions and socio-economic characteristics. For instance childcare is the mostly mentioned use purpose of Süleyman Ersever Parkı (62%, average is 44%) in user surveys and user interviews indicate that this is a result of being next to a school. According to user surveys spending leisure time (38%, average is 25%) is almost as equally mentioned as childcare in Duru Park and interviews clarified that this is due to being close to commercial activities and including a playground. Socialization and sports is the mostly mentioned use purposes of Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri in the user surveys and it is seen that this results from the provided amenities in the park. Sports as a park use purpose is only mentioned in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri as it is the only park that provides several sports activity options. Childcare is again the mostly preferred use purpose for Muhtarlık Parkı as it is the only activity option that Muhtarlık Parkı provides and interviews indicate that users are not satisfied with the physical condition of the park (Figure 31).

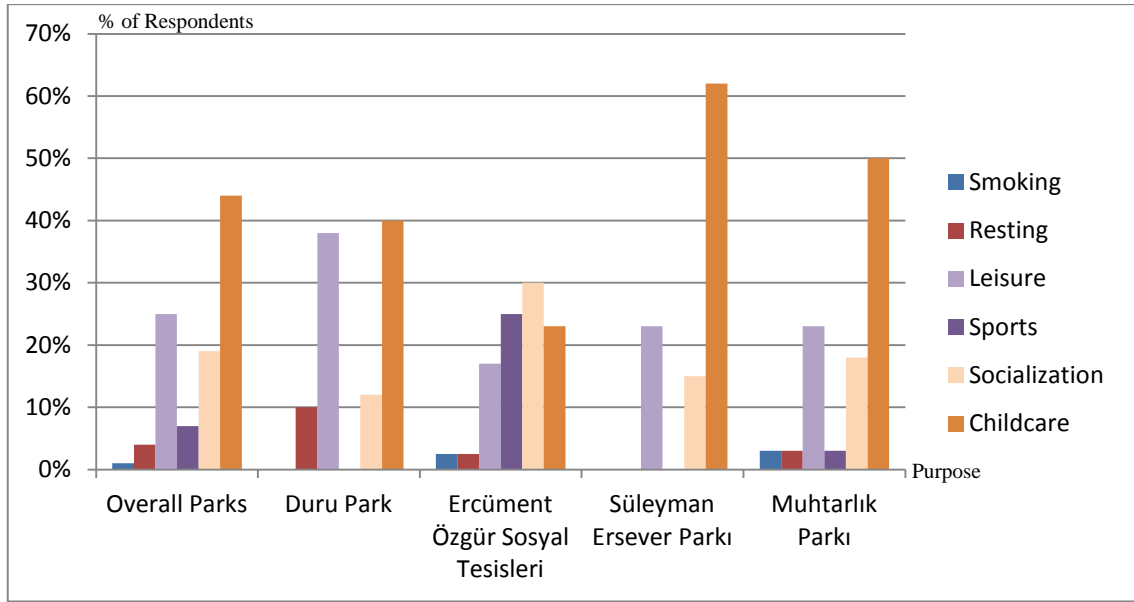


Figure 31. Respondents' use purposes in each park

*“Since our children are at the school we are here in this park everyday”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

*“Usually I call my friend before coming to this park. While our children play at the playground, we sit here, chat and spend time together”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child, high school).

*“I wish there were sports equipments in here, (Süleyman Ersever Parkı) I go to Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri to exercise”* (woman, 40, married with two children, middle school).

*“For instance there is Muhtarlık Parkı. When my daughter was younger, we were going there a lot to play since our home is closer to that park”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child, high school).

When respondents are asked about the time frames that they prefer to use parks in the survey, slightly less than majority, 63% of the respondents (100 out of 159) stated that they prefer to use parks between 16.00-20.00 and same number of the total respondents (100 out of 159) stated that they do not prefer to be in the parks before 16.00. Also more than one fourth of the respondents do not prefer to use the parks after 20.00 in the evening. Preferred times to use or not to use parks are related with the use purposes as well. On the contrary to the overall park results, there are certain parks that signify differences. For instance while Muhtarlık Parkı is almost used (82%) only

between 16.00 and 20.00, Duru Park can be used (99%) between 12.00 and 20.00. On the other hand results indicate that the use period for Süleyman Ersever Parkı and Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri is much wider. These differences can be mainly due to the physical and social characteristics of the specific park that the survey has been realized, their surrounding environment and individual factors of the respondents such as gender age and personal responsibilities For instance since Süleyman Ersever Parkı is mostly used for childcare purposes, the school hours directly affect park use times and being located in a residential district where people feel comfortable and safe also affect the use time. Also in Duru Park, since surrounding shopping related activities are in close relation with park use purposes, again the working hours of the surrounding commercial facilities affect park use times (Figure 32).

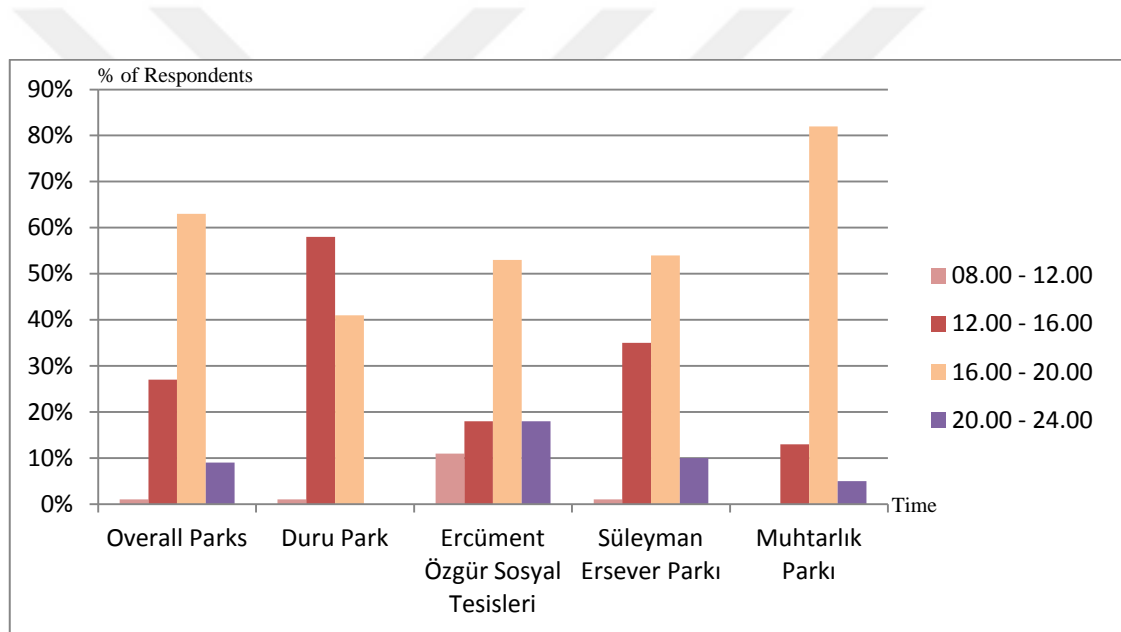


Figure 32. Respondents' park use times in each park

### 5. 3. 1. Parks as a Socialization Opportunity for Women with Traditional Daily Responsibilities

Survey results in four parks indicate that gender is one of the most important determinants of park use purposes. Men's use purposes are almost equally distributed among three major purposes: socialization (21%), leisure (31%) and childcare (33%).



Although women also mentioned similar purposes, childcare (45%) is more dominant than other use purposes such as socialization (17%) and leisure (22%) (Figure 33).

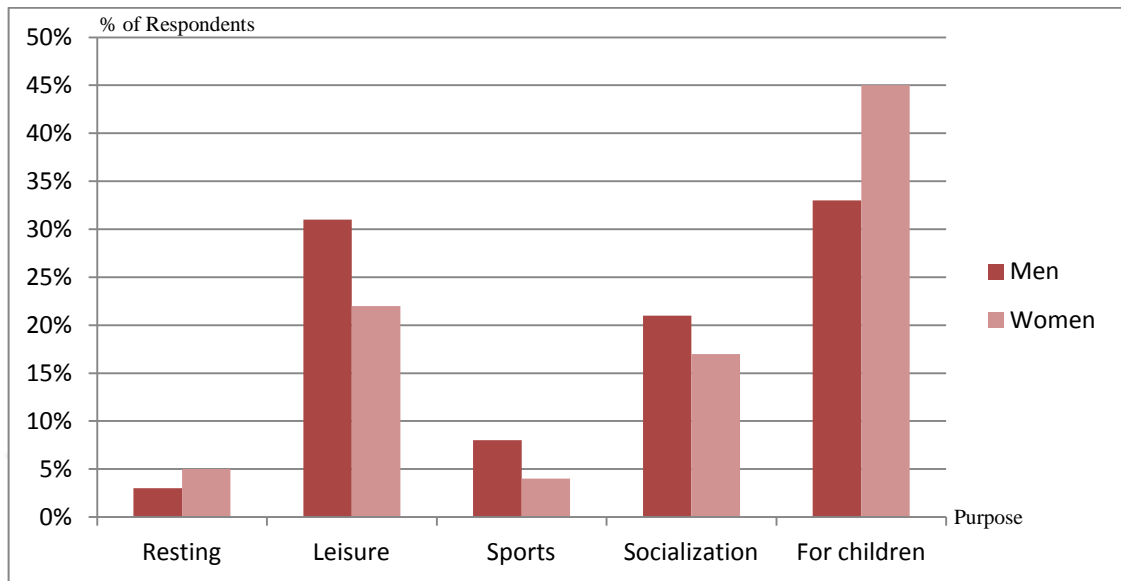


Figure 33. Respondents' use purposes according to gender across four parks

Individual park use purposes according to gender indicate that women and men uses the same parks for different purposes, so this indicates that not only the park related characteristics but also individual characteristics affect the park use purposes. For instance, while Duru Park is being used for childcare purposes by women mostly (57%), it is used for leisure purposes by men (61%). Interestingly only in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri the rate of men who use the park for childcare is higher than the rate of women. (Respectively: 25%, 16%). On the other hand the rate of use Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri for leisure purposes is higher for women (26%) then men (15%) whereas it is the opposite for all other parks (Figure 34 & 35).

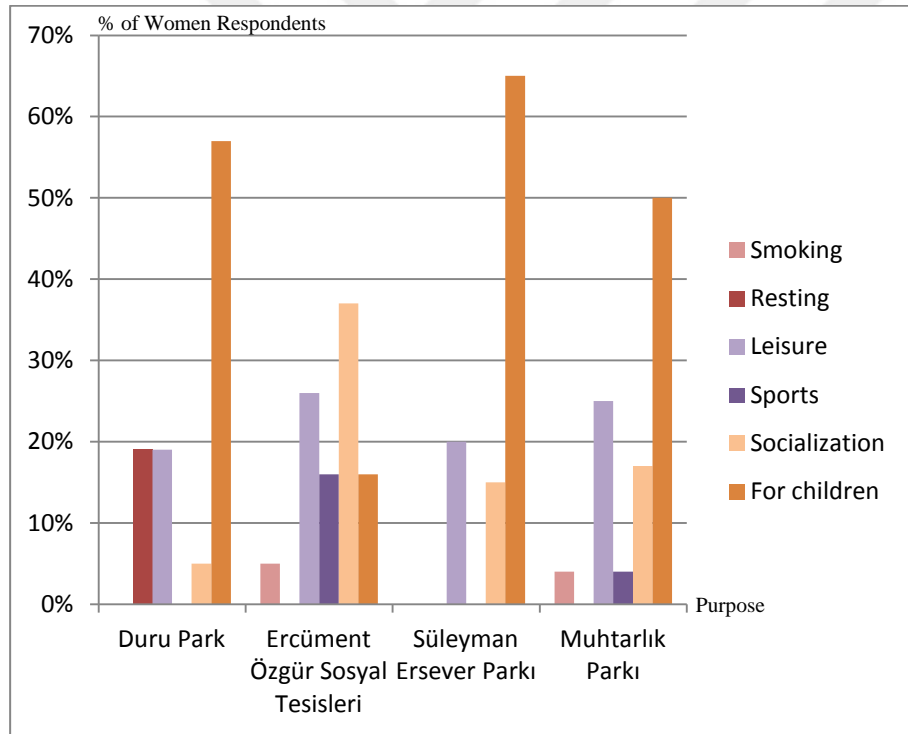


Figure 34. Respondents' use purposes of women in each park

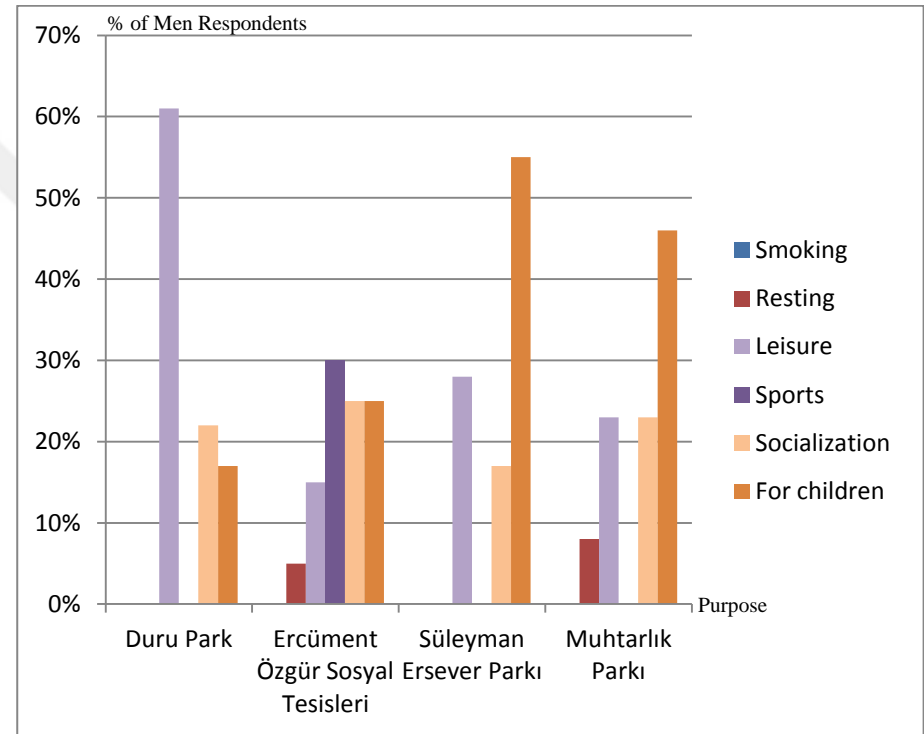


Figure 35. Respondents' use purposes of men in each park

Interview results also prove the differences between the use purposes of parks due to their layouts and provided amenities. This situation directly affects the use purposes of women and men. For instance the most visible example of this situation is Duru Park. There is a vertical division in Duru Park based on the design of the park and the location of amenities (Figure 36). This division clearly affects the use of the park.

The part where the play equipments are located is being dominantly used by women around their 30s with their children. These women mostly use the park for half an hour or an hour for their children's play activities. Most of them sit right next to the playground or run after their playing children. Some women prefer to come together with their friends to watch their children play and chat in the meanwhile which also helps to fulfill their needs for socialization. On the other hand young male users also use those benches for very short periods to sit and wait for internet café or women personnel of the surrounding stores use the park to smoke.

When I ask the respondents who are using the playground part of Duru Park, whether they have ever used this park without their children, the reply is always the same. "No!" They cannot think of any other reason to come to Duru Park (or any other park) other than their children's play activity.

*"I am coming to the park for my daughter so that she can play and have friends. I am coming only for her. I never came for myself. I would never"* (Duru Park, women, 42, married with two children, high school).

The other side of the park (pool side) which is almost two times larger than the playground part, is mostly used by elderly people from both genders however, majority of this group is men. On the contrary to what Bedimo-Rung et. al. (2005) suggests, my study indicates that there is a high number of older adults present in the park and they are regular users of Duru Park. Users of this part are sitting together with their friends of the same sex or alone and they spend very long time in the park. All of the respondents that are using the pool side are using the park for spending leisure time or resting. Most of the elderly people who use the park for such purposes state that they intentionally choose this part of the park as they are disturbed by the children's noise and indicate that they prefer to sit far from the playground.



Figure 36. Duru Park's plan layout

*“Areas for resting should be separate from children playgrounds. When these two are together, children make too much noise and disturb elderly people. Elderly people want to have some quiet time and they do not feel comfortable in an area where there are too many children.”* (Woman, 51, widow, no child)

Since the larger portion of Duru Park is mostly used by elderly men, this leaves a limited space for women who want to use the park. This fact is also stated by women as well.

*“I am very comfortable here but for instance when I go to Duru Park I do not feel this way. There are too many men in and around the park in the tea houses especially. It is the most improper place to be a park. There is not enough space for mothers who come to park with their children. The park looks like as if it is reserved to old men. All the sitting units are used by them and those sitting units are far from the playground anyway. So if I want to take my kid to a park, Duru Park is not my selection. I'd go to Süleyman Ersever”* (Woman, 38, married with two children, high school graduate).

There is no such spatial separation in Süleyman Ersever Parkı but the majority of users are women and they are mostly using the café part mostly or playground parts for waiting their children in the park.

The main reason of the differences between use purpose of the park and gender is due to women's park use as a part of their daily responsibilities. On the contrary to what Kaplan (1997) states, case study indicates that women do not give up their right to use a neighborhood park because of their roles. Just like Kaplan himself states they develop certain strategies and use their daily responsibilities as an opportunity to use neighborhood parks. Daily responsibilities of women vary from going to work to shopping or from childcare to elderly care. These daily responsibilities reflect on women's use of public open green spaces. The mostly mentioned daily responsibility for most of the women that affect their use purpose is childcare. The park not only creates opportunities for children's recreation needs but also at the same time creates an opportunity as a meeting place for women from the surrounding neighborhood to get together to talk with friends and relatives (Hutchinson, 2009). One of the important

findings of this study is the use of parks as an opportunity for women. Results indicate that women justify their park use through their children. Since children wants to be in the park they state that (not only to me but to their husbands, family members or curious neighbor sitting on the window) they have to come to park. These strategies open them the doors of socialization opportunity with their friends and turn public realm of neighborhood parks into a form of parochial realm.

*“Usually when I decide to go to park with my daughter I call my friend who has a son as the same age as my daughter. While our children play at the park, we sit, chat and share our daily problems”* (Duru Park, woman, 27, married with two children).

*“Before I come to park I call my friend and invite her to the park to spend sometime together. She also has two children and I tell her that I can take care of one of them and she can take care of the other. However, she does not prefer to come to park as she thinks that it is easier to take care of them at home since she needs to run after them all the time”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 26, married with one child).

*“We come here everyday. What can you do at home with three children? It is really hard to take care of them at home. Also while they play I can sit together with my friends and chat for a while. I would go crazy at home alone with these 3 children”* (Duru Park, Unstructured Interview – Woman, 28, married with three children)

Another major park use purpose of women is using them as a cut through while finishing up traditional daily responsibilities or resting in the middle of these daily chores. Interview results also indicate that especially for women users their daily routines and routes that are connecting their homes to workplaces, childcare facilities to shopping activities are important for the park selection and use frequencies. Here this result also indicate the importance and roles of neighborhood parks as parochial realms that creates intersection areas, gray zones in between the private lives of homes and public lives of cities. Qualities such as being located in very close proximity to both residential areas and commercial activities, the design with opportunities to spend time in between these activities and provided amenities in the park such as seating units that are located closer towards the main street that enable both watching the passer bys and sit for a short period in between shopping, directly affect the use purpose of Duru Park.

*“I come here for shopping almost every week and everytime I sit here for some time, drink tea and read my newspaper” (Duru Park, woman, 50, married with four children, elementary school).*

*“We are coming together with my daughter to spend time together. Generally, she is getting out of school and I am getting out of office and then we come here. I bring her here so that she can get rid of her extra energy and get tired before we go home so that she does not create too much problem at home” (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child).*

Proximity of parks to work place or the places that they need to go everyday as a part of their daily routine works has an effect on the use frequency of parks. For instance, since Süleyman Ersever Parkı is located right next to a school and provides a large area where people can sit and wait their children or drink tea and spend time, it affects the use purposes of the park.

*“I come here so that my child can play after school. My friends also bring their children and this creates an opportunity for us mothers to be together and chat for a while” (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 38, married with two children, high school).*

*Since my son is at the school, I have to come and sit here everyday twice, one for dropping him to the school and one for taking him back. Since he wants to play with his friends after the school we sit here at least for an hour or two (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 38, married with a child, high school).*

*Since I am a teacher in this school, I come here very often. Sometimes I come before the classes start, read a book and drink tea before going to the hustle of the school (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 26, single, university).*

User survey results indicate that while women use certain parks (Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri & Muhtarlık Parkı) only during a limited time of the day, men use all of the parks during a larger time frame during the day. Women prefer to use Duru Park and Süleyman Ersever Parkı between 12.00 and 20.00 and other parks only between 16.00 and 20.00. Interview results also indicate that the reason for women’s time preference to use or not use parks are mostly based on the daily routines and responsibilities of women and the security concerns. Surrounding activities such as the

existence of tea houses next to Duru Park and resulting male dominance in the park, being located in a more isolated park of the neighborhood and attracting unwanted uses to Muhtarlık Parkı such as drinking in the park, weather conditions and Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri's provided climate control decisions, and daily responsibilities of women and provided activities and location of Süleyman Ersever Parkı affect women's decisions on park use times (Figure 37 & 38).





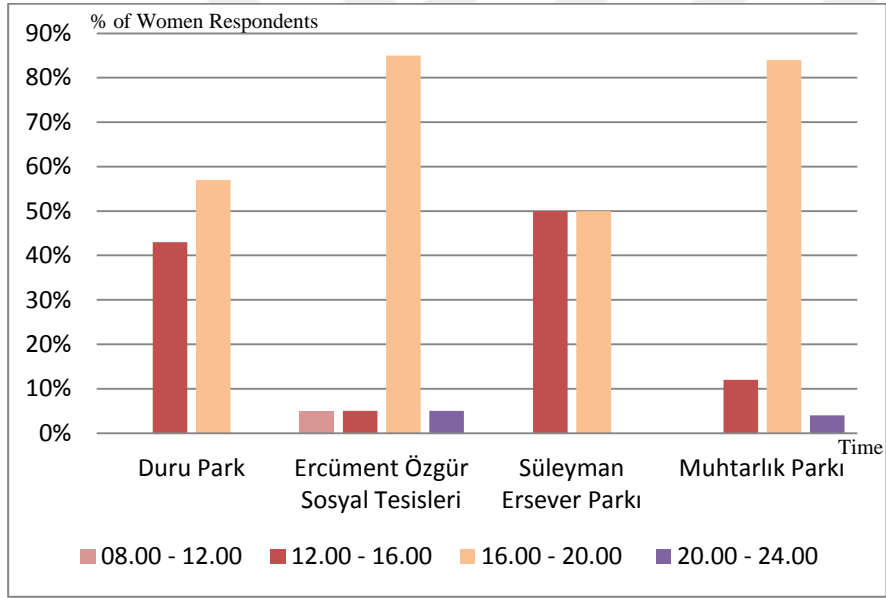


Figure 37. Women's park use time preferences in each park

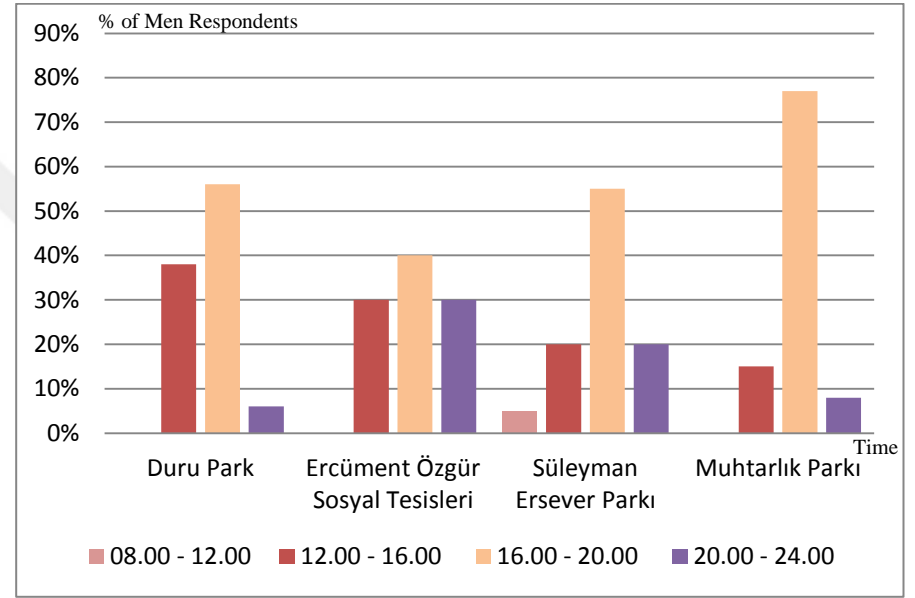


Figure 38. Men's park use time preferences in each park

*“Since there are tea houses right next to the park where mostly male users are present, I do not want to use the park after 20.00 as it is not safe”.* (Duru Park, female, age between 26 and 35).

*“I do not prefer to use this park after 20.00 as there are lots of men who are drinking”.* (Muhtarlık Parkı, female, age between 36 and 45).

*“Since it is very hot between 12.00 and 16.00, I do not use this park around that time”* (Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri, female, age between 26 and 35).

*“I have responsibilities and duties at home, so I cannot use the park until noon time”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, female, older than 66).

Childcare responsibility among all other responsibilities is significantly important for decision for the preferred park use time (Independent variable: Q25vii, negative, 5%). Respondents who have childcare responsibility are more likely to prefer to use parks in late afternoon or evening hours. On the other hand respondents who do not have childcare responsibility are more likely to use parks in early morning or noon hours. According to interview results, this situation is mostly based on the school schedule of children. Women are either responsible of taking their children to school and back home or helping them to study at home.

*“My son has to finish his homework after school so we directly go to home and I help him finish his homework. He finishes around 7pm or 8pm and after that time it becomes too late to go to park”* (Woman, 32, married with one child, high school).

*“I do not come very often to this park. I only come here to bring my daughter to school in the morning and to pick her up in the afternoon. Sometimes I also come during their lunch break if she needs anything”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

As the second major use purpose, neighborhood parks specifically play an important role for developing and maintaining social relationships as Bediomo – Rung et. al. (2005) also mentions. Chance of routine or serendipitous encounters with people that they know from the neighborhood or the chance of meeting strangers and building social ties is a very important quality of neighborhood parks. Regular encounters in parks help to build closer ties between residents (Dines et. al, 2006). Interview results also indicate that especially for women who are homebound due to their daily

responsibilities and not working outside of home, neighborhood parks becomes an important opportunity to get out of home, socialize and build social ties. Especially since Duru Park is located at a very central location, women who live nearby use the park to get together with their friends. Or since Süleyman Ersever Parkı is creating a common gathering area for the mothers of the students becomes a very good opportunity to socialize.

*“We met here in Duru Park. I do not have mother, she does not have a sister, and we became each other’s mothers and sisters. We became like a family here. We come to Duru Park everyday to chat and share our problems. There are no good neighbor relations in apartment blocks nowadays. That is why we organize Gold Days here in the Park. We order tea from the tea house, bring pastry from our home and collect money to fulfill our friends’ needs. We will collect money soon for charity work”* (Woman, 28, married with three children).

*“We came to Duru Park very often during Ramadan. After iftar we are coming to the park. It gets very crowded. So there are no enough sitting. Everybody lays down their kilims on the ground or brings their chairs and snacks from home. It is a great way to sit together with friends and spend summer evenings in the park.”* (Woman, 48, married with one child)

Study indicates that both daily responsibilities and need for socialization affect park users’ preferences on the use of parks alone or together with a company. Survey results in four parks indicate that slightly less than the majority of the respondents (82%) prefer coming to parks with a company and most probably with their children, spouse or friends of same sex. Individual park results indicate similar averages with each other, however, it is interesting that, among all other parks, Duru Park is mostly preferred park to be used alone with a higher level than the average of all four parks (Duru Park: 30%, average is 18%;). This may be due to the existing crowd and security feeling that this crowd provides or the provided seating units which do not let people to sit and spend time in groups. On the other hand, Süleyman Ersever Parkı is mostly preferred to be used together with children more than the average of all four parks (Süleyman Ersever Parkı: 43%, .Average: 33%) and with female friends (Süleyman Ersever Parkı: 26%, .Average: 21%) which is caused by the existence of school, a

considerably better designed playground and common purpose of mothers to use park for waiting their children to get out of school (Figure 39).

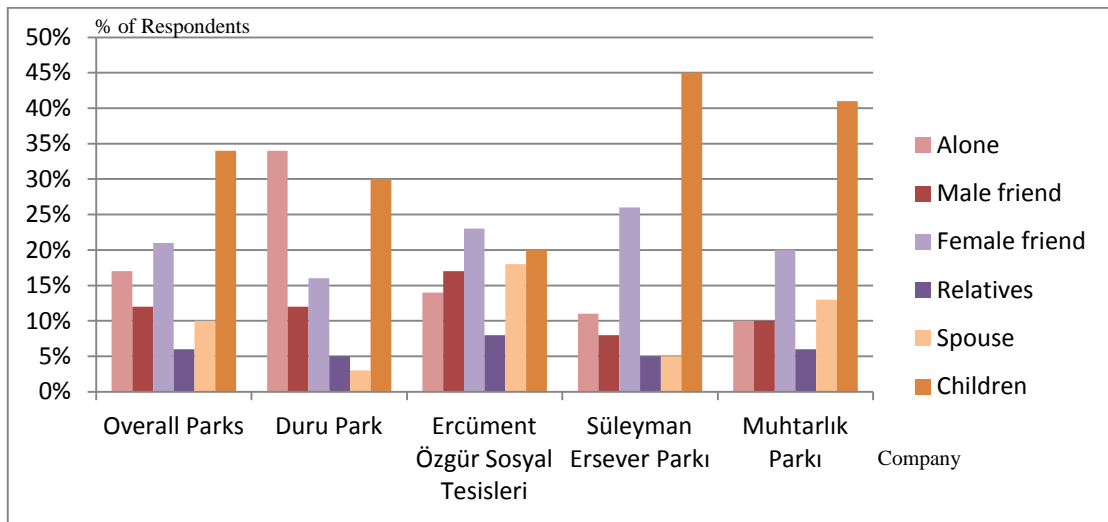


Figure 39. Using parks with a company in each park

87% of the women respondents state that they prefer not to use parks alone and results indicate that they mostly prefer coming to parks with their children (38%) or women friends (32%). On the other hand, 24% of men respondents prefer coming to parks alone. Men respondents state that when come to parks with someone they prefer to be together with male friends (25%) or with their children (27%) (Figure 40) Results indicate similarities for four parks regardless of their physical and social characteristics.

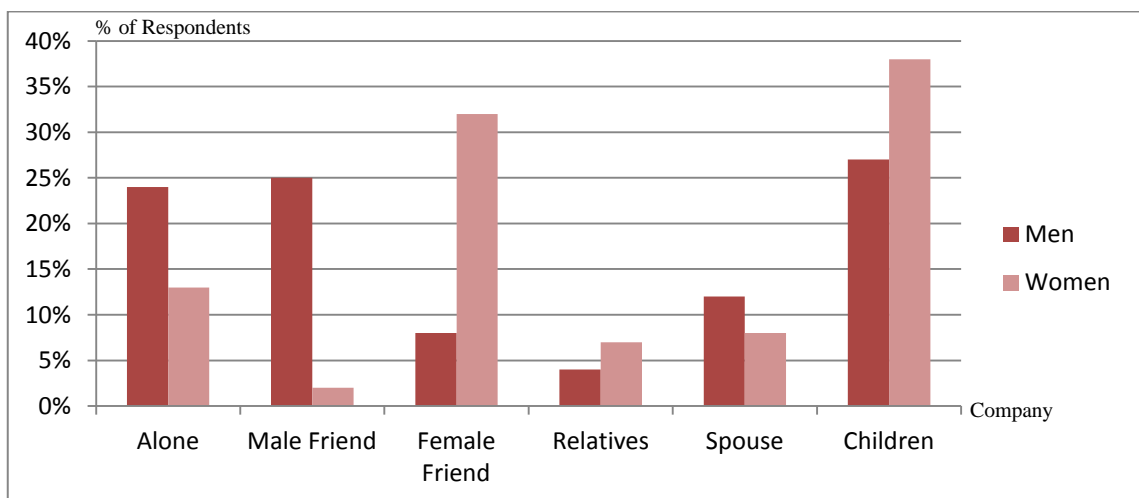


Figure 40. Using parks with a company according to gender across four parks

### 5. 3. 2. Changing Needs by Age

Survey results in four parks indicate that age is another important determinant of park use purposes. As Scraton and Watson (1998) state especially for younger mothers the use of public spaces for leisure purposes is directly associated with childcare responsibilities (Scraton, S. & Watson, B., 1998). Findings of this study also indicate that childcare is the major park use purpose of the people who are between 26 – 45 years old as this age group is mostly have childcare responsibility as their primary role and parks serve many opportunities to fulfill this role. The older the respondents are, the more they prefer to use cafe, sitting units or green areas more for spending leisure time or socialization purposes (Independent variable: Q25i, negative, 5%) in the parks. On the other hand leisure is also a major park use purpose mostly for people who are between 15 and 25 (Figure 41).

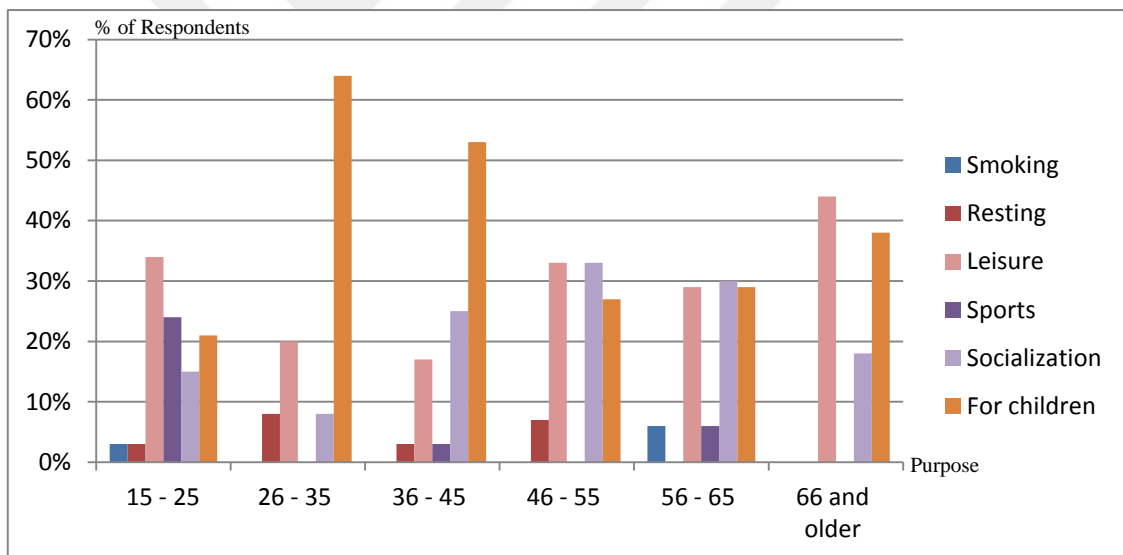


Figure 41. Respondents’ use purposes according to age across four parks

Individual park results also indicate similarities. 17% of Duru Park users, which is the highest ratio among four parks, are elderly users who are older than 66 and using Duru Park for leisure. 20% of the respondents who are 26 – 35 years old prefer using Süleyman Ersever Parkı for childcare purposes and 15% of the respondents who are 15 -25 years old prefers to use Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri (the only park that for sports activities).

In relation with the use purpose, preference of coming to park alone or with a company also changes. 44% of the respondents who are between ages 15 and 25 prefer coming to park with a male friend. The rate of coming to park with a child (15%) or spouse (13%) in this age group is lower when compared to other age groups. Respondents who are between ages 36-45 mostly prefer coming to park either with their children (35%) or with their relatives (34). The rate of coming to park with a relative is the highest for this age group among other ages. Coming to park with children is very low for people who are older than 45 since most of the children of these users are already grown up and they do not have childcare responsibilities. (Figure 42).

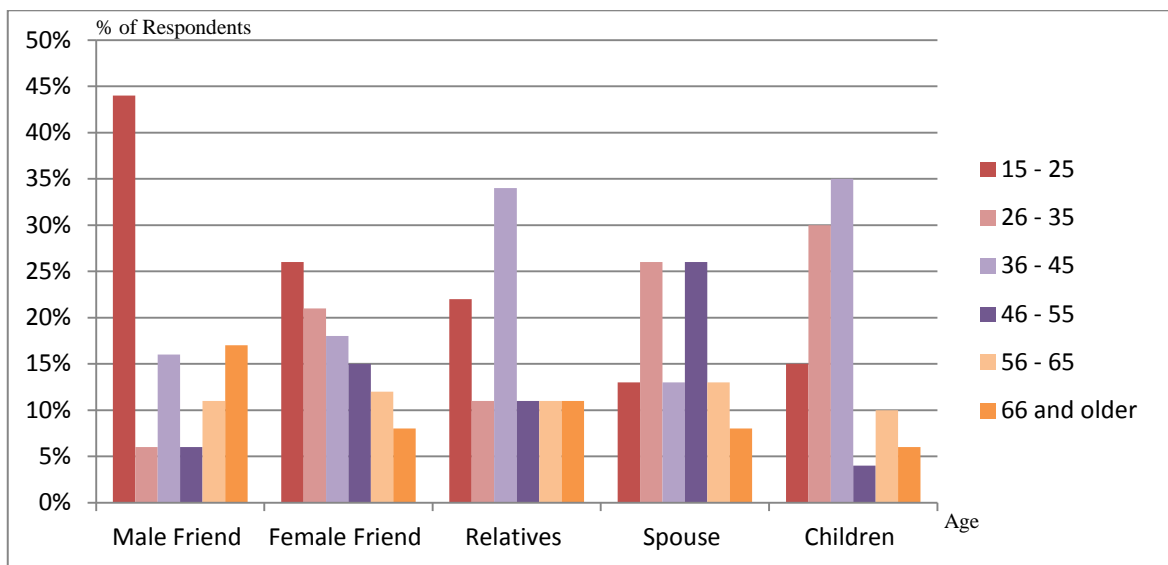


Figure 42. Using parks with a company according to age across four parks

Since most of the people who are older than 66 is not working and assumed as starting to recede from an active life this situation may start to cause alienation from the society and increase their need to be a part of the everyday life. Especially due to the increasing vulnerability with aging, elderly people are more dependent on localized resources and services (Glass & Balfour, 2003) so neighborhood parks become one of the few opportunities for socialization especially for the people with low income level. As Glass and Balfour (2003) suggests, services that are close to residential areas increase elderly people’s participation to social life in their everyday life routines. Interview results prove this situation as well.

*“I come here very often. I live right around the corner. I am used to this park, I like here. It is harder to go to other parks. My friends also come. I am here all the time and sit together with my friends. We drink tea and chat all together” (Woman, 53, married with one child, elementary school).*

On the other hand not holding a paid-job, being a student or being retired can lead to have more spare time. Survey results in four parks indicate that having spare time affects park use frequency and people who do not have a paid-job are using parks more frequently as well. For instance while majority of the respondents (14 out of 16) who are older than age of 65 are frequent users, half of the other age groups are frequent park users (Figure 43). Interviews with people who are working in Duru Park also reveal this situation.

*“There are usually noone but the elderly people here in Duru Park. When you look around you can also see that almost all users are elderly. They come in the morning and all benches fill up with those old men. Until evening there are mostly elderly users. Usually there are not that many people left in the park in the evening. In the summer it gets very crowded but again with dominant elderly users. Families also come but usually after school around 17.30. Mothers bring their children for play for an hour or so, of course if the weather is warm. What can I say. This is an elderly park” (Man, 32, waiter in the döner kiosk)*

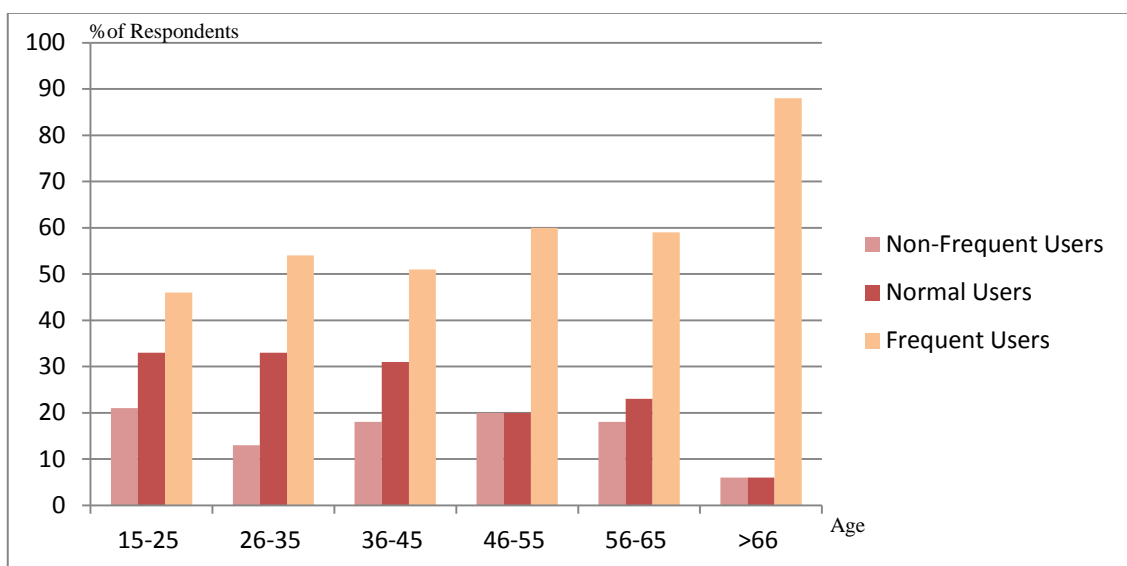


Figure 43. Respondents’ use frequencies according to age across four parks

However when use frequency differences are analyzed according to gender of respondents, results indicate that number of frequent uses are almost the same for men and women (Men: 59%, Women 53%) (Figure 44).

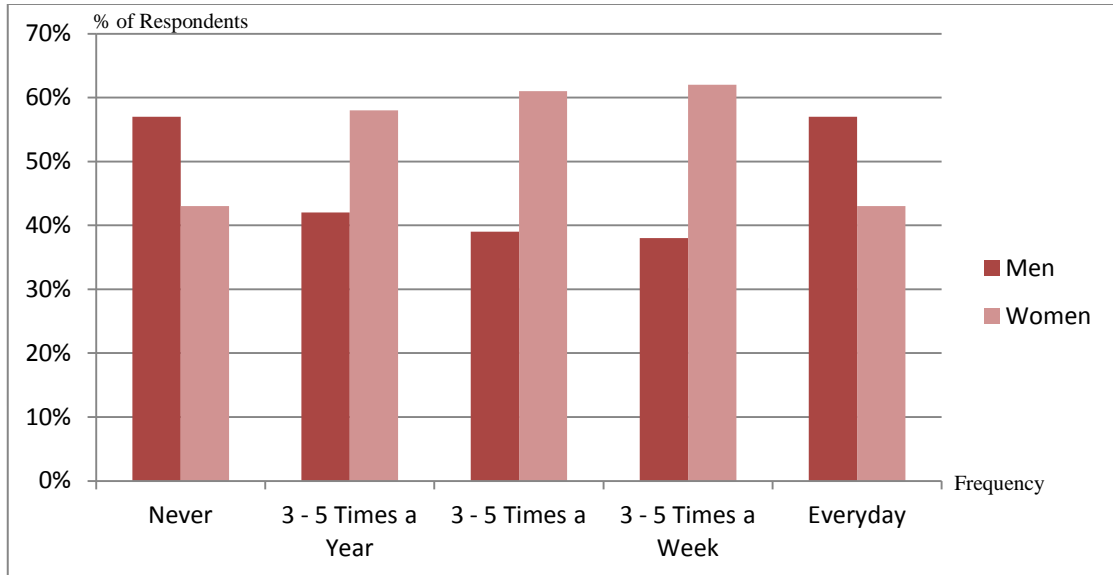


Figure 44. Respondents' use frequencies according to gender across four parks

### 5. 3. 3. Affects of Satisfaction and Familiarity with the Park Space

As Chaudhury et. al. (2016) also states neighborhoods with certain positive aspects that answer the needs of the users enable them to be more socially engaged to all other activities in the neighborhood space. Thus satisfaction level of users becomes an issue that persuades them to participate in all other public services and they start to carry their positive perceptions to all other public services that are in the neighborhood.

Survey results in four parks state that respondents' satisfaction with the quality of parks is likely to affect park use frequencies slightly (Independent variable: Q17, positive, 10%) (Figure 45). The number of non-frequent and normal users who are not satisfied with the overall conditions of parks is slightly higher than the ones who are satisfied with the overall quality of parks in Balçova.



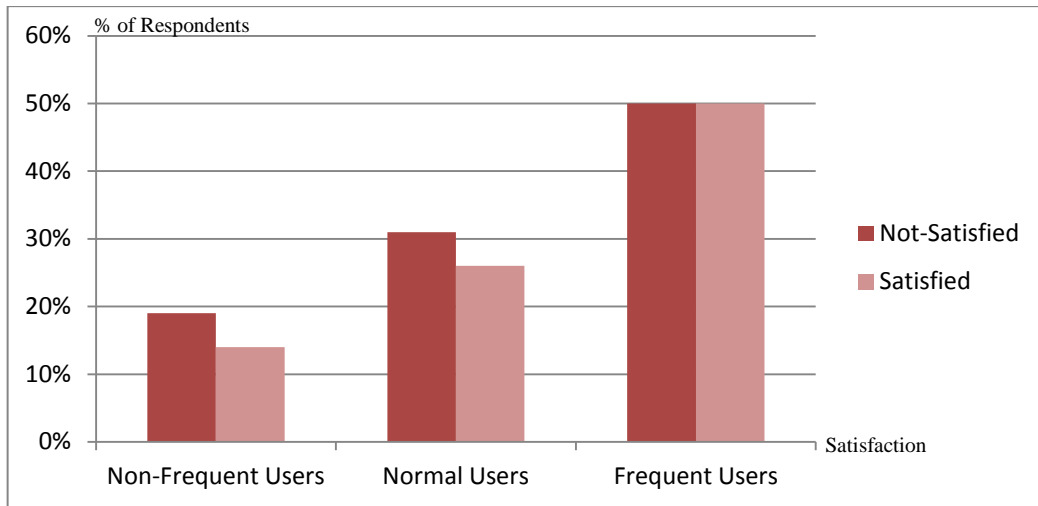


Figure 45. Use frequency based on satisfaction level across four parks

*“My daughter was going to this school but she is graduated now. However, I still come to this park everyday. I am so happy with this park that is why I keep coming here. Otherwise I would not come. I can go other parks but I got used to here and like this park so I come here”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 53, married with one child, elementary school graduate).

As Gedikli and Özbilen (2004) mentions personal limitations affect park use habits of parks. User survey results in four parks also indicate that respondents’ personal experiences and limitations affect the decision of coming to parks alone or with a company (Independent variable: Q21, negative, 5%). This means that respondents who did not have a negative experience while using neighborhood parks are more likely to come to parks with a company. Also respondents’ preferences for not using certain areas in their neighborhoods alone have certain reflections on the decision of using parks alone or with a company (Independent variable: Q22, negative, 10%). Respondents who do not prefer to use empty open fields alone are most likely to use parks with a company.

### 5. 3. 4. Home Space Characteristics and Neighborhood Park Use

Results of the study indicate that there is a direct relationship between the overall characteristics of the homes and neighborhoods where respondents live and their park use patterns. First of all, the total park space in neighborhood has reflections on

park space preferences. The total park acreage in the neighborhood directly affects proximity of park land to the place of residence which is an important determinant of park visitation (Bedino-Rung et al., 2005; D. A. Cohen et al., 2007; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Grow et al., 2008). During the interviews respondents mentioned that they are using certain parks as they are living right at the corner of the park, very close to the park, two streets down from the park. One mentioned that although she is working full time, she can bring her child to play in the weekdays or in the evenings to the park as her home is very close. Some other respondents stated that they are not using certain parks as they are living far from there or closer to another park so they use the parks around their homes. Some other respondents also mentioned that if park was closer to their home they would use the park more frequently.

*“For instance there is a park close to last bus stops but it is very far from home. How can I go there all the time with the kids? My home is closer to here so we come here everyday”* (Woman, 55, married with three children, elementary school).

However, a certain group of respondents also think that even if the park is not close to where they live, if another park which is further away provides good quality amenities they could go to those parks.

*“I do not use Duru Park, although it is right in front of my home due to its existing conditions. However, if there is a beautiful park, even if it is far, I would walk there and go anyways. Maybe it is about the quality of the park, although it is in my neighborhood I do not want to use it”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

Characteristics of the respondents' dwellings such as having a private garden or directly opening to a street, having open space alternatives in close distance also affect the frequency of their visits. One of the respondents mention that since they are living in an apartment building with a large garden, her child can play and ride her bicycle there safely so she does not have to come to park in her busy daily routine. Another respondent mentions that they are living across a school and her child can use the garden of the school for playing with her friends or for skating so she prefers that large, open and secure space instead of neighborhood parks. On the contrary, couple of other

respondents complained about building layouts and the street designs of Balçova. As apartments directly open to a heavy traffic street, although children want to play outside with friends, parents hesitate to let them play on the street so they have to come to Duru Park to fulfill children's needs.

Users' dwelling type, living in an apartment block, private home or gated community (Independent variable: Q28, negative, 5%) also affect park use habits and frequency. People who live in apartment blocks are more likely to use parks frequently as they do not have an immediate access to an open space or even if they have one it is still seen as a part of the home environment and not a part of social life. Interview results also suggest the same issue. All of the interview respondents are living in apartment blocks and most of them do not have gardens in their apartments. The ones who are living in apartments with backyards also prefer parks as areas to meet with friends and socialize far from the daily responsibilities and worries of homes.

*“We have a backyard but I do not let my son to play there. If he plays there, I have to there as well but we have neighbors whose doors are opening to that backyard and I do not want to disturb them. Children make lots of noise and harm the plants in the garden. So I get very nervous there. That is why; I prefer to go to park instead. It is much freer to be there in the park, at least children do not harm anything and I do not get to deal with angry neighbors”* (Woman, 40, married with two children, secondary school graduate).

Even if respondents prefer to use their private gardens, they still need to use parks for the provided amenities and programs such as playgrounds or sports fields. Survey results in four parks indicate that people who prefer using their own private gardens over public open green spaces are the ones who use playgrounds or sports fields more often when they go to parks. People who do not prefer using their own private gardens over public open green spaces are most likely the ones who uses cafe when they go to parks (Independent variable: Q30, positive, 10%).

*“Garden is very different than parks. I mostly bring my children here for the playground to help him socialize and have friends. You know the neighborliness relations are not like the old times so parks are our only opportunities to meet with new friends for us”* (Duru Park, woman, 38 , married with two children, high school).

Survey results in four parks also indicate that respondents' residents' proximity to parks has an effect on the preferred park use times as well (Independent variable: Q4, negative, 10%). Respondents who live close to parks are more likely to prefer to use parks in late afternoon hours, while respondents who live far from parks are more likely to prefer to use parks in early morning and noon hours.

#### **5. 4. Summary of the Chapter Findings**

In Balçova park use habits and park use purposes change significantly according to users' age, gender, levels of satisfaction from parks and characteristics of living environment. Women's traditional daily responsibilities especially childcare and need for socialization; changing needs and abilities with age such as elderly having more spare time for leisure; satisfaction from previous park use experiences, and characteristics of the living environments of park users such as having a garden or being located close to a park cause the different uses of same parks by different users.

Being a male or female significantly affect their park use habits, purposes and use frequencies based on the defined traditional daily roles. While women can mostly use parks for the sake of fulfilling their traditional daily responsibilities such as taking child to school or giving a break while shopping, men's park use purposes are determined by the availability of leisure time and they mostly use parks for getting together with friends. Especially, for women, the location of the park in relation to the location of the home is very important for the frequency of their park use. When women live close to parks, they use those more frequently and as a reason for not using waterfront urban parks they state lack of comfortable transportation opportunities and leisure time. So they prefer neighborhood parks in walking distance.

Age of the respondents also affect park use habits and purposes. Older respondents have relatively limited daily responsibilities and have leisure time that can be spent in the parks. Since elderly people have limited mobility they prefer parks that are easily accessible, lively and close to commercial facilities that they use during the day such as Duru Park which they use frequently for long durations. On the other hand, younger age group (25-45) who has childcare responsibilities use the parks that are close to children's school and in calmer residential areas.

There is a direct relationship between the daily responsibilities of users in relation to their park use times. Parks are used mostly between 16.00 and 20.00 by the majority of users. This situation is directly related with the daily routines of women and men. The hours of the paid job for both working men and women, the school hours, household chores and other traditional daily responsibilities of non-working women are important determinants of park use times. So parks that are close to workplace or childcare activities are used more frequently.

The seating layout in neighborhood parks in Balçova does not let people to sit in groups, and there is no movable seating in parks that create flexibility for different activities this cause people to prefer to use parks either alone or in small groups for shorter time frames such as in Duru Park. Majority of users complain for not having sitting alternatives and they state that a woman may not prefer to sit next to someone that she does not know, or an elderly man may not prefer to sit next to a playground. On the other hand, since there are movable tables and chairs, and picnic tables in Süleyman Ersever Parkı, users can easily come in groups and realize various group activities such as picnics, birthday celebrations and so on.

People are mostly happy and satisfied with the public open spaces in Balçova. This satisfaction reflects to their behaviours in the use of neighborhood parks so they comfortably bring their children or friends to the park. However, when people are not satisfied with certain issues they do not want to bring anyone to the park as they do not want to be criticized by the people that they are with.

## CHAPTER 6

# PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARKS AND THEIR SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS IN BALÇOVA

Empirical researches (eg. Croskeys et. al., 2002; Machabee et. al., 2004; Bedimo et. al., 2005; Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Hutchison, 2009) state the effects of socio-economic characteristics of users on the park use experiences and habits. However, these studies do not explore interrelated effects of socio-economic characteristics together with other determinants such as physical characteristics of parks, social characteristics of surrounding environment and so on. Results of my study indicate that it is not possible to explain park use habits only with the socio-economic characteristics. Findings show that people with similar individual characteristics such as gender, age, education level and so on may use different parks for different purposes. This situation proves the importance of the park's, its surrounding environment's and other users' characteristics on the determination of park use purposes.

This chapter is composed of four sections and focuses on the effects of these different characteristics on shaping women's park habits and perceptions. The first section of this chapter analyzes the physical and social characteristics of parks such as their overall design and size, provided amenities and programming, climate control decisions and maintenance of these parks. The second section explores the effects of physical and social characteristics of the surrounding environment such as the surrounding landuses and surrounding thresholds such as traffic conditions. The third section analyzes the effects of other users of the parks, the characteristics of the neighborhoods that the parks are located in and the other residents of the neighborhood on the park use of women. Finally the fourth section gives a brief overview of the findings and related discussion with the light of previous literature.

Findings of the case study indicate that parks with different designs and that are surrounded with different landuses such as commercial or residential are being used differently by the same users. This is mostly based on the parks' design and provided opportunities in the parks. On the other hand since most of the time women relate park

use with their daily responsibilities surrounding landuses define park use times, the frequency and durations of park visits. Additionally, people's perceptions regarding their neighborhoods, neighbors and other users of the park and its surrounding also impact park use behaviors as well.

## **6. 1.Park's Physical Characteristics and Park Use Preferences**

Physical characteristics of parks have important effects on the satisfaction and comfort of park users. Satisfaction level of users significantly affects their park preferences, their park use frequencies, durations and park use purposes of people. Park size (Holman, Donovan, & Corti, 1996), the availability of active recreation facilities and programs at the park (Gordon-Larsen, et. al., 2000; Sister, Wilson, & Wolch, 2008), climate controlling features like water and trees (Corti et al., 1996) and park's level of maintenance, and its perceived safety (Tinsley & Croskeys, 2002) are among those important physical characteristics of parks that seriously affect park use preferences.

As Byrne and Wolch (2009) state park design significantly affect how people perceive and use them (Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Study results also prove the importance of physical characteristics of parks' effects on people's satisfaction levels and their decisions to use a park or not. More than half of the survey respondents are quite satisfied with the general conditions of public open spaces in Balçova in terms of comfort and quality levels and this satisfaction reflect to the use of neighborhood parks. However, this satisfaction does not mean that respondents are thinking that all the physical characteristics of parks, amount and the quality of the parks and provided amenities there are enough and fulfilling for them. Majority of the respondents think that there should be more neighborhood parks in Balçova (100 out of 159); which are in better conditions in terms of use quality (109 out of 159) to fulfill their needs.

When users are asked what they would want to improve in these parks mostly mentioned issues are mostly about the climate control in parks (42%), more active uses (27%) and improvement of physical characteristics of parks (24%) (Figure. 46).

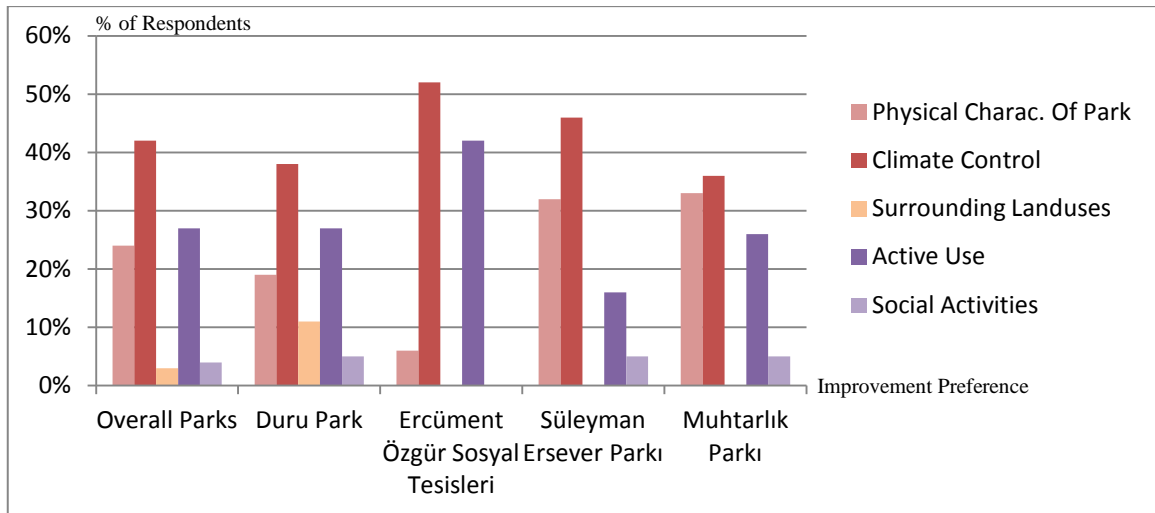


Figure 46. Improvements that respondents want in each park

People’s desires regarding the improvements in parks significantly change according to *genders*. For instance while climate control is the mostly mentioned issue by men (50%) in Duru Park, it is increasing active uses for women (48%). On the other hand, while it is more active uses for men (46%) in Muhtarlık Parkı, women want improvement of physical characteristics of parks (38%) and solutions for climate control issues (42%) (Figure 47). Coming sections discuss these issues and how parks’ physical and social characteristics affect users’ satisfaction from parks based on their gender and age.

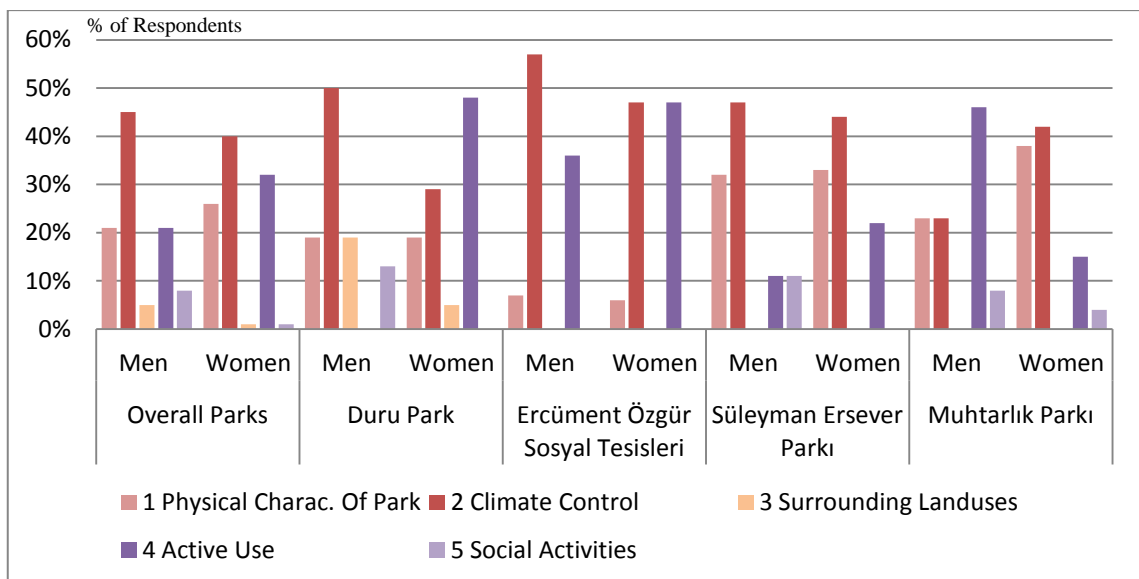


Figure 47. Improvements that respondents want in each park according to gender



### 6. 1. 1. Limited Park Size Provides Limited Amenities

Due to Balçova's plan layout and population density, neighborhood parks in Balçova have very limited space. Limited park size cause parks to provide limited amenities and programs to users. These limitations play a great importance in residents' satisfaction levels from public open green spaces.

Balçova has the second densest population in İzmir after Buca. The population is 78.121 and population density in Balçova is 37 people/ha according to 2015 population count, however, the total amount of open green spaces in Balçova is less than 60.000 m<sup>2</sup> and total amount of open green space is 0,77 m<sup>2</sup> per person. In addition to the limited park space opportunities, residents of Balçova also have limited access to private gardens. Except than certain private houses or gated communities with gardens most of the apartment blocks, especially in the older parts of Balçova are located very close to each other, opening to narrow sloped streets or dead ends with no pull back distance and most of these apartment blocks do not have private gardens (Figure 48).



Figure 48. Buildings opening directly to steep sloped streets

This situation makes neighborhood parks are almost only opportunities for residents of Balçova. The problems related lack of enough park space and satisfying activities in those spaces are mentioned over and over by the respondents. They complain that they do not have any space to breath in their living space and most of the park spaces in Balçova are very small and they do not provide enough amenities. That is why, although they complain about certain conditions of parks, respondents keep repeating such phrases:

*“Nowadays urban renovation projects are very popular, I wish all Balçova would be renewed and all apartments could have a small **open green space in front of our homes.**”*

*“**Streets are very narrow**; there is no place to breath. I wish there were more open green spaces to breathe.”*

*“Balçova is very crowded and tightly settled already. So there is too much need for parks in here”.*

*“This small park is a breathing chance for us that is stuck in this **densely built neighborhood** (For Süleyman Ersever Parkı)”*

*“We do not have much chance to select among open green spaces. What can we do, we come here.”*

*“**I wish this park was larger.** They build parks in Balçova but they are all very **small in size.** There is not much to do there. So why should I go?”*

*“What else can be done here? Enough facilities for such **a small space** (for Duru Park)”*

*“If this **park was larger** I could have come here together with my husband and children and spend longer times (for Duru Park).”*

*“I have no place to take my child out to breath fresh air. So we come here”*

*“There are **not many large parks** to go in Balçova, there is only the waterfront and Kent Ormanı but how can we go there everyday”*

According to user survey results in four parks **gender** is also an important factor that affects satisfaction levels and reasons in parks. 62% of men and 59% of women are satisfied from the overall conditions of neighborhood parks. Individual results for parks indicate significant differences from each other. For instance, while all of the men and 85% of women in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri are satisfied with this park, 69% of

men and 73% of women in Muhtarlık Parkı are not satisfied with those parks. One of the reasons for the satisfaction with the Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri is the large park space (the largest among four parks) that enables different activities for different user groups. On the other hand Muhtarlık Parkı which is the least satisfying park has the smallest park space and the least amount of activities (Figure 49).

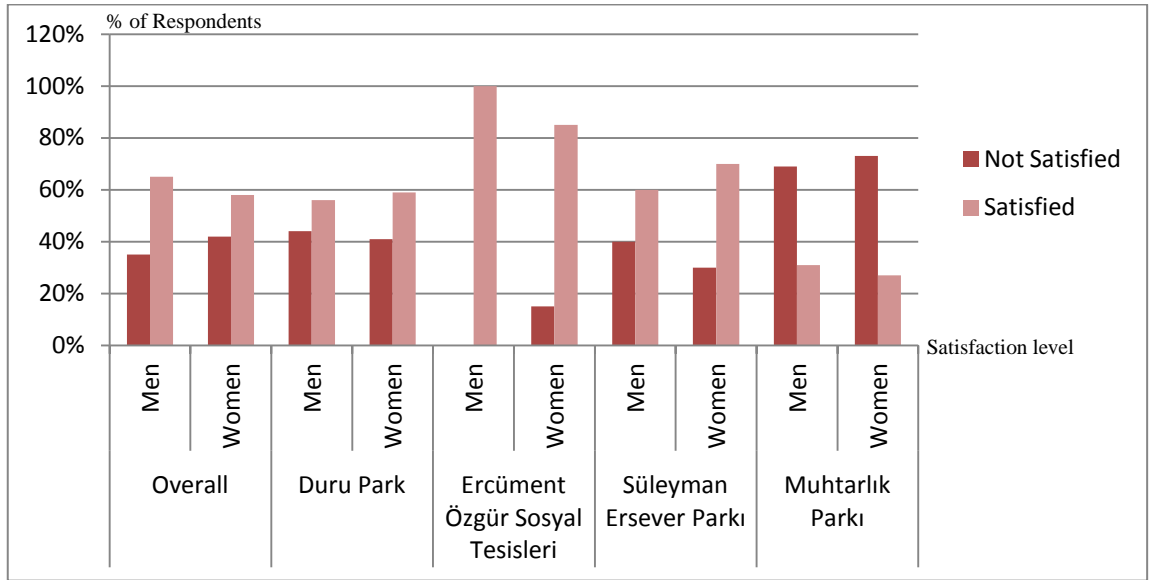


Figure 49. Respondents' satisfaction from parks according to gender in each park

Analysis of *age* distribution in relation with the park satisfaction indicates that 50% of the respondents who are older than 55 in Duru Park are satisfied with Duru Park and 60% of the respondents are satisfied with Süleyman Ersever Parkı. The main reason of the satisfaction of Duru Park can be based on the high numbers of elderly users in the park which create socialization opportunity among acquaintances for those elderly people. On the other hand the satisfaction of elderly in Süleyman Ersever Parkı can be based on the existence of café where elderly people can comfortably sit and get together with friends.

## **6. 1. 2. Amenities and Programs for Different User Groups: A Catalyst for Park Use**

The availability of amenities such as seating units, tables, pergolas, lighting elements, different play and sports equipments, cafes, and programming such as periodical activities like courses, concerts and celebrations at the park play a crucial role on the promotion of use of parks by different user groups and their satisfaction levels. People prefer such parks that provide those amenities and programs that answer the needs of different user groups. User survey and interview results clearly indicate that respondents have significant level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from certain aspects of parks depending on their gender and age.

According to user survey results that focus on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction reasons of respondents, provided activities are among the mostly mentioned issues. 29% of all users stated that they are not satisfied with provided activities. However, individual park results indicate major differences among each other. While in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri, 43% of the respondents are satisfied with the provided activities, 53% of the respondents in Süleyman Ersever Parkı are not satisfied with the activities that are provided. The reason for satisfaction in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri may be due to the provided variety of sports activities, seating alternatives, existence of café and a playground which provide options for different activities for different user groups. However, 58% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the climate control in this park as there are almost no solutions for the climate control problems such as pergolas, tents or planting (Figure 50 & 51).

On the other hand dissatisfaction in Süleyman Ersever Parkı may be caused as a result of lack of any activity on the contrary to the considerably larger space of the park. There is only a café and a playground on one corner of the park and the rest do not provide any activity opportunity and no variety for the furniture.

In Duru Park 30% of the respondents and in Muhtarlık Parkı 29% of the respondents are not satisfied with the provided activities and 25% of the respondents in Duru Park are not satisfied with the overall design. The main reason for dissatisfaction in these parks is mostly based on the limited park spaces.

When respondents are asked what they would want to be improved in parks, 26% of the all respondents stated that they would want more active uses in parks such as sports areas, cafes and periodical events.

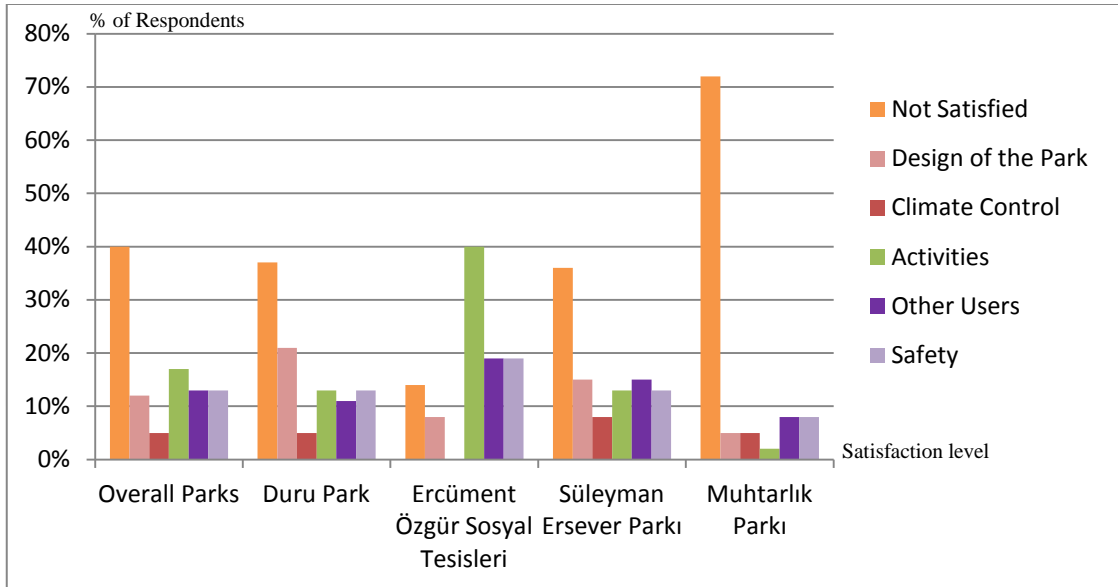


Figure 50. Respondents' satisfaction reasons of users in each park

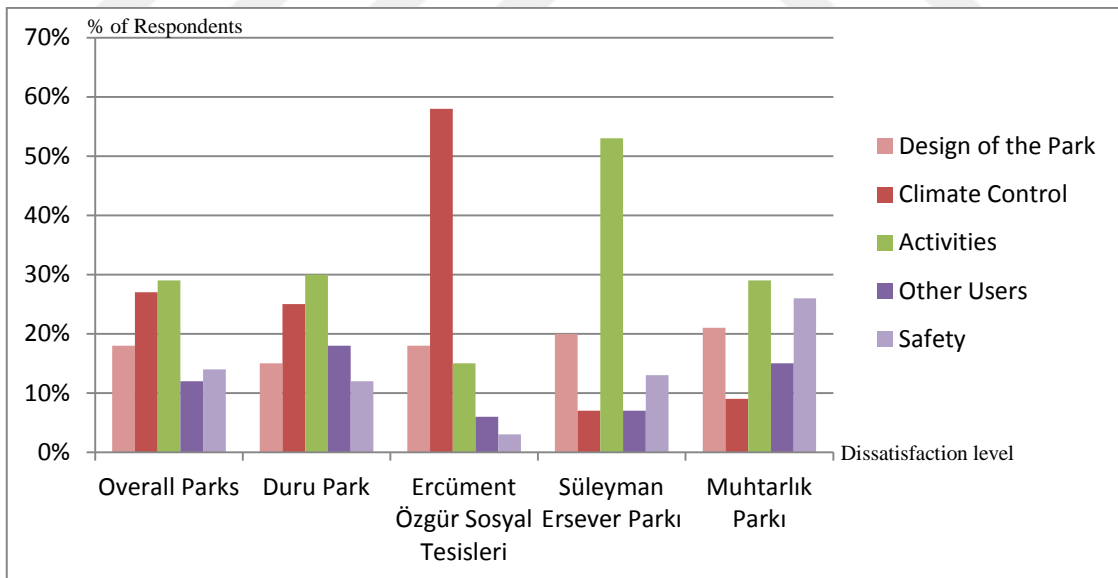


Figure 51. Respondents' dissatisfaction reasons of users in each park

The coming sections will focus on the details of the results that focus on the importance of provided amenities and programming in shaping park use preferences of different user groups such as men, women and different age groups.

### **Flexible Sitable Space: Promoting Interaction in Parks:**

Site furniture, especially flexible siting elements, in parks carry a great importance as they may define the activities that people can realize there. As Whyte (1980) suggests sitable spaces, having various types of different sitting units for different activities, the dimensions that let various sitting combinations, and being movable to change the layout according to the needs of the users are crucial catalysts for the use of a public space (Whyte, 1980). Both user survey and interview results indicate that the main problem in parks is the lack of flexible sitable spaces that can fulfill the needs and desires of different user groups. Seating units are problematic in many aspects like, quantity, placement layout, the design and finally the protection of seating units from the weather conditions for all different user groups. Although user survey results do not give detailed information regarding the user profiles of people who use seating units, interviews and detailed observation results indicate that there are certain conflicting uses among different genders and age groups.

In terms of *gender*, although almost all of the women respondents of the face to face interviews complain about the insufficient number of seating units in Duru Park, observations and interviews with men indicate that men do not have such a complaint as the park is mostly used by elderly men. Especially on the days when the weather is warm and dry the user population of the park increases and people cannot find a place to sit. So they may end up not staying in the park. Interviews with people who work in the park indicate the reason for this situation. The elderly men are the primary user group of this park and since they have a good amount of time for leisure, most of the time they come to park in the early hours of the morning and stay there until it gets dark.

*“You know what, the most important need of this park is that there is no enough place to sit. Space is narrow and there is no place for extra seating elements”* (Duru Park, woman, 43, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“These benches are not enough. If you come around 6 or 7 in summer evenings you cannot find a place to sit. Benches are short in number. Additionally, most of the people, especially elderly users, sit for very long periods and do not leave. So people fight over benches. Space is limited. It is not enough”* (Duru Park, woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school graduate, toilet keeper).

*“Users are all elderly, retired people. When they come to park they forget their way back home. They talk about politics and they overthrow many political parties and build them again starting from morning until evening. There are only a few women here in this park and they are all after their children. There is not that many coming to park to chat like elderlies. Most of the time women stay on the playground side” (Men, 52, Taxi Driver)*

Especially women users who use parks with their children have hard times to accompany their children while they are playing in the playground in parks (Figure 52).

*“The seating area for moms is very limited. The park looks like as if it is reserved for old people. The area where the most of the benches are located is far from the playground. And it is very dirty. So I cannot stay in Duru Park” (Duru Park, woman, 38, married with two children, high school graduate).*



Figure 52. Only two benches for mothers waiting for their children in Duru Park

Number and the quality of the sitting units are also problematic in Süleyman Ersever Parkı. The café in the park provides many tables and chairs not only in their own territory but also around the playground and almost at all parts of the park. Since

there are no other sitting elements in the playground part, most of the mothers sit on the café's chairs. This cause problem when they are forced to buy beverages from the café at everytime that they occupy café's tables and chairs. Other than the chairs that are provided by the café, there are also limited number of stone benches and picnic tables with their benches. However, since the locations are not close to the main activities of the park such as playground and the stone materials are not suitable for different weather conditions they are not satisfying for especially for mothers who use the park for childcare purposes.

*“I am especially not happy with these stone benches. When it is cold in winter, we cannot sit on them and there is no shade in the summer. When we sit on the café's chairs they instantly come and start asking if we want to drink anything. But I come here everyday, I cannot spend that much money everyday. Sitting space is not enough”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 32, married with one child, high school graduate).



Figure 53. Seating unit alternatives in Süleyman Ersever Parkı

*“I do not feel comfortable sitting here (café's chairs in the playground). All the tables and chairs here belong to café. When I sit here they make me buy something. If*



*you sit on their table you have to buy something. But I do not want to. When I say this they tell me that I am occupying their tables. I have to sit here to look after my child. There is no alternative sitting. All other benches are far from the playground and they are not protected from the sun. I am not happy with this issue (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 42, married with two children, high school graduate).*



Figure 54. Café's chairs as seating opportunity, Süleyman Ersever Parkı

One of the mostly discussed issues in the interviews was the fulfilling varying needs of different groups of users. Both for women and men respondents, the layout and the design of the seating units carry a great importance. In terms of gender, the main consideration is the privacy. Respondents mostly mention that seating layout should give them the opportunity to sit in groups of single genders and chat without being heard by others.

In terms of *age*, there are also certain different needs for different seating alternatives in the parks. Group activities are also an important concern for younger users. Most of the young respondents mentioned that they need spaces that they sit together with their friends and chat, study, do music rehearsals or such activities. In relation to their needs they also mentioned the importance of having a table together

with seating so that they can do certain activities instead of just sitting and watching the passer bys.

*“I do not like these seating units. They put them in a military order that is very close to each other. Two rows of benches are looking face to face. Everytime I walk in between these benches, this layout gives me the feeling that all eyes are on me. Since these seating units are fixed, it does not give the chance of moving according to what I like. So if I come here in a group of 3 or 4 we cannot chat properly”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, single, PhD student).

*“First of all, the seating layout here is wrong. There should not be such a layout. Let’s say we came here together with friends to sit and chat. Suddenly a woman comes and sits right to the next bench. She would feel disturbed and we would also feel disturbed and watch out our language next to a woman”* (Duru Park, man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).

Provision of different seating alternatives creates opportunities for different uses of parks. For instance existence of tables in Süleyman Ersever Parkı give chance to people to get together, bring their food and sit there to eat, celebrate birthdays of children. One of the respondents state that until they bring those tables to the park, she was not using the park very often but after the tables she started to prepare food and take it to the park and eat there with her friends. Or one of the respondents state that she never used Duru Park because she cannot think of any activity that she can do there but if there were tables, she and her friends could bring food and eat there all together. Also existence of a café in Süleyman Ersever Parkı that provides opportunity for group sitting fulfills certain needs of women users.

*“The benches are too close to each other. The only thing that you can do there is to watch people sitting across you or walking by. It looks like a bus stop more than a park. First of all the sitting layout should be different. There can be tables so that we could use for studying. If I want to meet with my friends, there is no activity there. Tables can also work for eating together with friends”* (Duru Park, woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

*“I come here everyday to drop my kid to the school and to pick him up. Everytime I sit in the café for a while with my friends. We drink tea and chat while*

*waiting our children. It creates a chance for us to socialize”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 40, married with two children, middle school graduate).

### **Carrying the Activities of the Private Life to the Parochial Realm of Neighborhood Parks**

As much as the physical design of the park, the programming and the social activities in it are very crucial in terms of the use of neighborhood parks. As Kara et. al. (2011) also state parks should aim to improve the satisfaction residents by providing quality recreational facilities and programs for all different user groups (Kara et. al (2011). In terms of programming, different activities that will promote interaction and socialization between park users should be considered. According to Whyte (2001), even just a small food cart can enliven a place. Careful consideration of different activities, their times, potential participants and locations can attract lots of users with different needs such as women, elderly or children to neighborhood parks.

**Gender** based differences may alter park satisfaction and use preferences. User survey results across four parks indicate that while 65% of men users are satisfied with parks, 58% of women are satisfied with parks. From gender perspective, satisfaction from the provided activities do not indicate significant differences among men and women according to user survey results in four parks except Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri. Among women who are satisfied with parks, the mostly mentioned satisfaction reason is the activities in the parks (29%). Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri is the most satisfying park for women (57%) in terms of provided activities, where none of the women respondents in Muhtarlık Parkı are satisfied with the activities. Also for men respondents the activities in parks are the most satisfying park characteristics (29%). Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri is also the most satisfying park for men (39% of the ones who are satisfied with activities) in terms of provided activities. It is possible to say that the variety of activities in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri such as different sports activities, walking trails, café and playground area are major satisfaction reasons for both men and women (Figure 55).

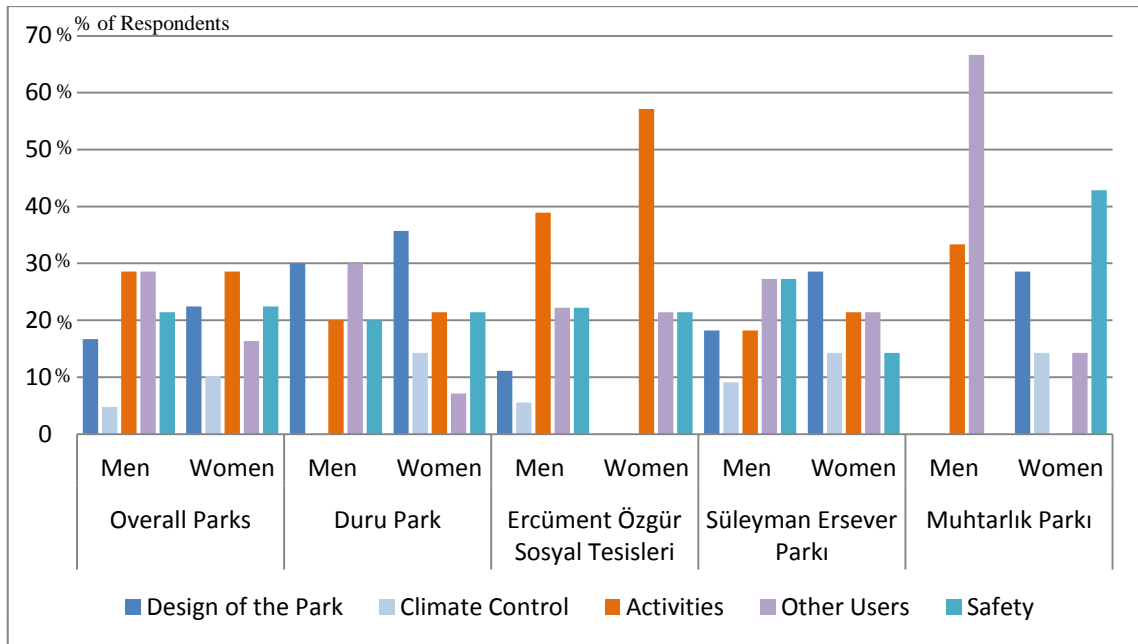


Figure 55. Respondents' satisfaction from activities in each park based on gender

Interview results indicate that there are significant differences among men and women in terms of desired activities in parks. While men mostly want places where they can sit and have coffee in crowded groups in an area with no borders around without the need of other familiar users; women are asking for places to rest in between shopping or places that they can sell their homemade products and contribute to family economy. It is important for women to be in places that are used by people who are familiar, who have similar park use objectives and park use behaviors like them. For instance, one of the mostly mentioned issues in the focus group interviews is the chance of carrying community house activities to open air to parks. Women suggest that they can realize those courses that are given in community houses in the parks when the weather is nice. Additionally they suggested certain additional courses and lectures that are organized in neighborhood parks for women that can improve their general culture.

Although the majority of women complain about certain physical and social aspects of Duru Park during the face to face interviews, they still state that if there were social activities that appeals to their needs, they would use the park to socialize. Also in almost all focus group interviews women mention that activities such as Ramadan events are great opportunities for women to use parks so they ask for such activities all year long. Women state that they like to go to Süleyman Ersever Parkı during Ramadan evenings and especially when there are Ramadan entertainments. Since people fest

during the day and it is very hot to go out while hungry, women stated that after iftar they eat (evening eating time in Ramadan) they go to park both to enjoy the cooler temperatures of the evening, to let their children play while they are sitting together with their husbands and friends and drink tea. Some women stated that the parks get so crowded that they need to bring their own chairs to the park. Another important factor that attracts women to Süleyman Ersever Parkı is the café. The owner of the café said that since the number of users decrease during the Ramadan days, they prefer to stay open until 2 a.m. in the morning and serve people who come after iftar. Detailed observation results, at 10.00 p.m. on a Ramadan evening when there is no Ramadan entertainments also show people using the park (Figure 61). However, on the contrary to what respondents said the park was not that crowded in a way that requires people to bring their own chairs. This may be due to the lack of Ramadan entertainments on the time of the observation. Since this year the Ramadan entertainments have been canceled, I could not observe the use during those evenings.

*“Why not use Duru Park if there are social activities there. There can be small concerts, Ramadan entertainment activities, public dinners, celebrations or there can be places for young people to sit together to study and do music rehearsals. If there were such activities I would not miss them”.* (Woman, 50, married with two children, high school graduate)



Figure 56. Use of Süleyman Ersever Parkı during Ramadan evening



Figure 57. Use of Süleyman Ersever Parkı during a regular evening

According to interview results, the selection of the activities, the location of it, quality and price are also important for the satisfaction of park users. Interview respondents mostly state that for more quality use, having a small café inside the park that is cheap, clean and suitable for group activities is desired. Instead of the existing male dominated tea houses or döner kiosks in Duru Park, respondents suggest a place that is run by municipality that will welcome all different groups of users.

*“If there were affordable places that women can go together with their friends and sit for a while and drink tea, I would call my friends and say let’s go to park but now I cannot as it is so expensive and not that clean. Even if I want to sit there my friends cannot afford to sit there and have tea everyday. So if I go there I would lose my friendship”* (Duru Park, Unstructured Interview – Woman, 56)

*“It is a very expensive café. I come here everyday and sometimes sit all day long. I cannot spend that much money. A tea is 1,25 TL. Once I brought Nescafe from home and asked only for hot water. They charged 2 TL for only water. How can I spend such money? That is why I bring water and juice from home for my son. I wish there was a more affordable place here”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 42, married with two children, elementary school graduate).

*“This is a municipality park, a public space but right now döner kiosk is blocking a large part of it with their tables and umbrellas. It is my transition route but it is blocked. It is a place that is covering my park where I should be able to sit and have drinks at an affordable price (in Duru Park)”* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 61)

While existing *döner* or *kokoreç* kiosks are being complained constantly due to their hygiene, smell and prices in Duru Park mostly by women, men do not state any discomfort regarding those areas and observations indicate that they are frequent users of döner kiosk. On the other hand the café in Süleyman Ersever Parkı is being appreciated and used often especially by the mothers who are waiting their children getting out of the school. Such a different use of two food related activities by women and men indicates the importance of the quality, hygiene, location, served food, service quality and the management of those places in relation with user needs.

*“Since my daughter is in the school, I am here everyday. When the weather is nice, I sit in here in the café together with my friends. While waiting them we chat, drink*



*tea, and eat tost. After the school my daughter wants to play in the playground and we continue to sit in the café. At least we have a clean and pleasant place to get together and spend time while waiting them”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 37, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“I come here very often. I come here everyday and sit together with my friends, drink tea and chat. I started exercising. So I go for a walk in the neighborhood and after than I come here again drink tea and continue sitting with friends. This café is like a resting place for me. I like it so much. We know the owner Murat Ağabey as well. So when we need something he helps us. We can live our bags here and he keeps an eye on it. So it is so nice to have such an opportunity in the park”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 53, married with one child, elementary school graduate).

Among the women the desires for park improvements also change according to their **age**. For example younger women with children define their needs related to their children’s play activities so they ask for safety barriers around the park or prohibition of motorcycles to pass through the park. They want certain play equipments like slides, swings and ask for the replacement of water pool with sand pools since they think that water pool is dangerous as several kids fell into it for many times. On the other hand, elderly women mostly mention their needs for calm and quite space with water features, private spaces to chat with friends or hygienic food and drink services that are affordable.

**Age** is another criterion that affects respondents’ satisfaction of the provided amenities and programs. Different socio-economic groups’ needs, their desires and complaints change. Overall design, provided amenities and the layout of different functions in parks may create conflicting views depending on age.

Satisfaction from activities in terms of age indicates differences amongst four parks. While Duru Park (40%) and Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub> (49%) are the most satisfying parks in terms of provided activities for respondents who are between 26 and 35 years old and all of those respondents are women who use parks for childcare responsibilities. So it is possible to say that those women are satisfied with the activities (playground) that are provided for children. On the other hand majority of the respondents (40%) who are older than 66 years old are satisfied with the provided activities in Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>. According to user survey results 100% of the

respondents who are between 36 and 45 years old are satisfied with the provided activities in Muhtarlık Parkı. However, this result is misleading as there is only one respondent in Muhtarlık Parkı who is satisfied with park activities (Figure 58).

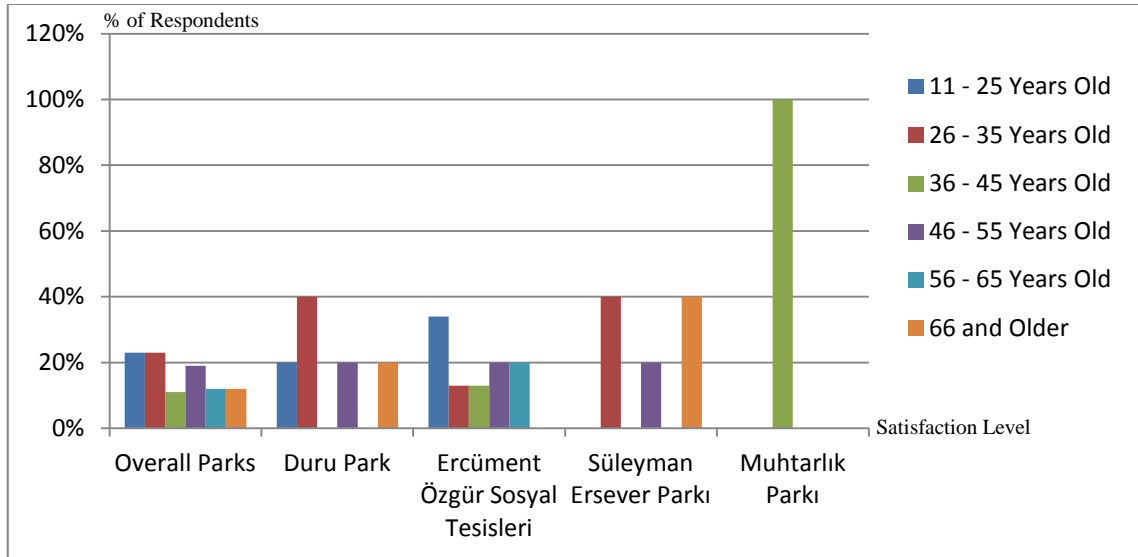


Figure 58. Satisfaction from provided activities in each park according to age

Interview results indicate that while existence of restrooms is one of the most important and appreciated facilities for elderly people and children, locating it right next to the playground is problematic in terms of hygiene and cause complaints by mothers of the children playing in Duru Park. Another conflicting programming issue is again related with playground. A certain group of women with children indicate that the only reason of using certain parks is the existence of playground. However, a group of elderly people especially in Duru Park complain about the noise of children running around the park as playground and seating areas that elderly people prefer are in close distances. This indicates the importance of the location selection of activities that appeal to different user groups. The tastes, likes and dislikes also changes according to age. For instance, one of the younger respondents complains about the classical design of municipality parks with one fountain, two benches and dominant hard surface materials. She states that such designs may be liked by older generation who grew up with it, however younger generations look for something designed with more contemporary approaches.

Also based on socio-economic characteristics such as *income level*, while existence of a café and opportunity to sit there for long hours and drink tea in the park is

very much liked by a group of respondents, the prices and the hygiene of the café is one of the mostly complained issues for another group.

### **6. 1. 3. Lack of Climate Control in a Hot Region**

Microclimatic conditions are important factors that affect the use of open spaces, due to their influence on levels of thermal and mechanical comfort (Nikolopoulou et al., 2001; Givoni et al., 2003 cited in Oliveira, S. & Andrade, H., 2007). In order to benefit from the parks and use them comfortably, climate control is very important. With climate control I mean protection from weather conditions through the use of physical elements such as pergolas, tents; water elements such as pools and running water; and planting that can provide shade. Especially in a city like İzmir, where the summers are very hot and winters are rainy, protection from these weather conditions carry a great importance in public open green spaces through climate control.

According to user survey results in four parks, one of the mostly complained problems in neighborhood parks in Balçova is the climate control (28%). When respondents asked about what they would want to change/add to this park, slightly less than half of the respondents, 43%, state that they want solutions for climate control problems (54% of this group is women). In terms of *gender* differences, results indicate that among those dissatisfied group in all parks except Muhtarlık Parkı and Duru Park, the rate of men and women who want solutions for climate problems are almost the same. However, in Muhtarlık Parkı 79% of women want solutions for the issue. This is mostly based on the women's use of parks for the playground area for considerably longer periods, which is the only activity option there and men do not spend long hours there so they do not realize the problem much. On the other hand the rate of men (57%) is higher than women (43%) as men are using the part where the pergola is located and they have so many complaints about the pergola. So they want those problems to be resolved in Duru Park (Figure 59).

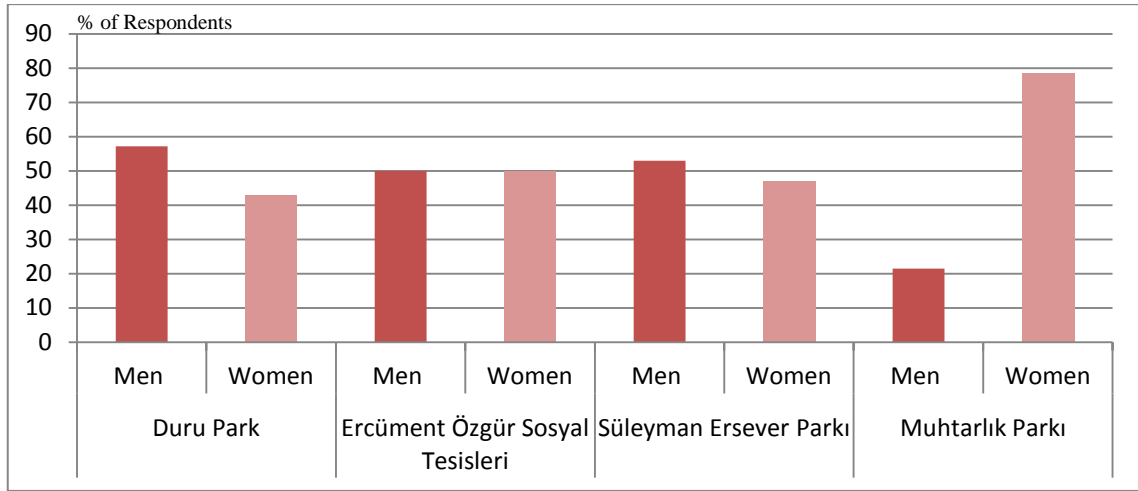


Figure 59. Respondents want solution for climate control problems in each park

According to user survey results one of the important reasons to come to parks is to escape the hot weather of İzmir and it is known that green areas provide major ecological and climatic benefits to its users. However, the results of the user interviews indicate that people mostly complain the lack of planting and elements that can cool down the air in the parks. Especially in Duru Park (increasing complaints after renovation), the ratio of green to hard surface is very low. Planting is very limited and insufficient for climate control. On the contrary, Süleyman Ersever Parkı is much richer in terms of planting; however, it is still not enough to create protection for the seating areas from the weather conditions due to the selection of inappropriate plants and insufficient consideration of the location of planting in relation with the seating units and provided activities and amenities in the park .

*“All we see is concrete here, nothing else”* (Duru Park, woman, 30, married, pregnant, graduate level)

*“There should be more trees and flowers around here. If this park was greener I would use it more often”* (Duru Park, woman, 50, married with two children, elementary school).

*“They can use planting to block unwanted views such as tea houses or traffic”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child, high school).

*“My daughter goes to the school next to Süleyman Ersever Parkı. I pick her up from the school and walk home together. Every time we walk through the park she loves to pick berries from the trees just like my childhood. We used to have lots of fruit trees*

*around our homes. Unfortunately, my children cannot have the same experience. So I wish there were lots of fruit trees in the parks so that children could connect with nature” (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, Focus Group Interviews)*

*“I wish there was more shade in here. Especially, we, mothers, need to sit by the playground but it is impossible to sit here in the summer. There is no shade. This dark colored pavement also reflects the sun and makes it warmer. There should be something to block the sun” (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 38, married with two children, high school).*

*“It is very nice to sit among plants however this plastic roof structure of the café is very inappropriate for such a natural environment. Under of it becomes like hell in the summer and there is no other shaded area in the park so all people get stuck underneath this small area. In the winter it protects from the rain but in summer it is torture to sit there” (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 55, married with one child, university).*

According to detailed observations that I realized in Duru Park at the same times of the days during a spring day when the weather is 28<sup>0</sup>C and during a summer day when the weather is 38<sup>0</sup>C to understand the effects of increased weather temperatures on the park use. Results indicate that the user number significantly decreases during summer time observation. Especially there is a significant change in terms of gender of users. During the summer times there are almost no children and women around the playground. The number of the users on the pool side is also much lower when compared to a spring day. Almost all users are elderly users except from a couple of people who eat in the döner kiosk. Even the number of the tea house users is significantly lower. The main reason for such a decrease is the hot weather and lack of shade elements and enough planting and running water elements that can cool down the air temperature. Especially on the playground side there are neither planting nor pergolas but there is only concrete surface that reflects the heat directly to users and increase the effects of hot weather (Figure 65 & 66). Additionally dense settlement around the park and lack of air circulation also affect the dissatisfaction of users of the hot weather in Duru Park.



Figure 60. Duru Park on a spring day



Figure 61. Duru Park on a summer day

Although there is a shading element in Duru Park on the pool side, it is not efficient as it has a porous structure that cannot block rain and sun. It is one of the mostly complained issues (Figure 62). On the contrary, there is no shading element in Süleyman Ersever Parkı except from the tent of the café which is only covering a small amount of space in the park and belongs to a private amenity where people cannot sit without buying something. So such an element cannot be fully considered as a part of the park's amenities (Figure 63). Lack of appropriate climate control elements directly affects users' experiences, park use frequencies and proffered park use times.

*“I wish there was some trees and grass that we can walk or sit on. Right now it is worse than the street. Additionally the shading element over the benches is not working. As it is made of pieces it transfers the water and the heat right below it”* (Duru Park, woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

*“These things over the benches are not working. Water gathers on top of it after the rain and you do not know that there is water there. So you have your clean, dry clothes on and sitting on the bench and after a minor wind all the water on top pours over your head”* (Duru Park, man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).



Figure 62. Duru Park shading element with inappropriate material





Figure 63. Seatings in the full glare of the sun in Süleyman Ersever Parkı

Due to all these reasons, when the aim is to find a green space to breathe clean air and spend some calm and quality time in a green environment it is not possible to say that Duru Park is a park that satisfies its users and especially women users.

*“When I want to breathe clean air or spend time in outdoors I can never think of Duru Park as a place to go. We are already in chaotic environments during the day, why should I go to such a chaotic place like Duru Park to have fresh air. Parks should not be spaces that are stuck in between roads and buildings. They should be calm, peaceful places that are ripped apart from the traffic and stress of city life.”* (Woman, 26, single, PhD student).

*“I do not have a balcony in my apartment so I need a place to breathe. But I never go to Duru Park. If it was a place full of trees with lots of green and a calm environment I would go there and study in this clean, peaceful environment. But now it is not appealing at all.”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

Still when compared with Duru Park, Süleyman Ersever Parkı is quite satisfying for people who want to spend time in a calm green environment as there are mature trees and a certain amount of planting.

*“Duru Park does not feel like a park to me. I could only understand that it is a park when I saw the sign at the entrance. It is not like here. Crowd of the city, cars, traffic, it is not like a park to me. It is very noisy. There is no calmness and peace there like Süleyman Ersever Parkı”* (Woman, 26, single, university).

*“We come to this park since it is very calm and peaceful. We sit here together and chat until late evening. We do not even realize how the time passes”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 53, married with one child, elementary school).

*“Instead of sitting at home, I prefer coming to this park to do my hand crafts, reading and spending time in a calm environment. I am very happy in this open green environment”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 28, married with two children, high school).

Besides these negative issues in terms of climate control, only positive aspect in Süleyman Ersever Parkı and Duru Park is the use of running water which helps to cool down the temperature of the environment, works as white noise to block certain amount of surrounding noises and to relieve people’s daily stress.

*“When I first came here the fountains of the pool were not working. They just started. It became very peaceful and cooler now (Duru Park)”* (Woman, 51, widow with no child, university).

*“I admire the parks in Bornova. They are very large with lots of trees, flowers, cafes, tables, fountains and pools. You can rest there with the sound of the water. It looks like a park, this does not”* (Focus group interview).

*“For instance even the sound of the water is very pleasing, it calms down people. I like it very much. I also like the sound of waterfall, the one over there is very nice. With the sound of the water, birds and trees, it is a natural environment. I love it here. (Süleyman Ersever Parkı)”* (Woman, 26, single, university graduate).

### **Increasing Night Time Use through Well Considered Lighting Design**

As Madge (1996) also state feeling of fear is directly transferred to the public space use behaviors and creates a hesitancy for using certain spaces at certain times of the day (Madge, 1996). Among all other physical characteristics, lighting design is also a very important issue for the parks to be used in the evening safely. Almost all respondents highlighted the importance of lighting in the night and stated that the

feeling of safety is crucial for the use of a park in the evening. Results of the user survey indicate that the level of night use is very low when compared to other time frames during the day. Considerably mostly used neighborhood park after 20.00 is Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri (18%) and Süleyman Ersever Parkı (10%). This is mostly based on the safety perception of Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri as it is surrounded by railing that provides controlled access to park and existence of café that is open until late hours in the evening in Süleyman Ersever Parkı (Figure 64). Especially women do not prefer to use parks after 20.00 in the evening 86% of the users who use parks in the evening are men and the rest of the women prefer to use Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri.

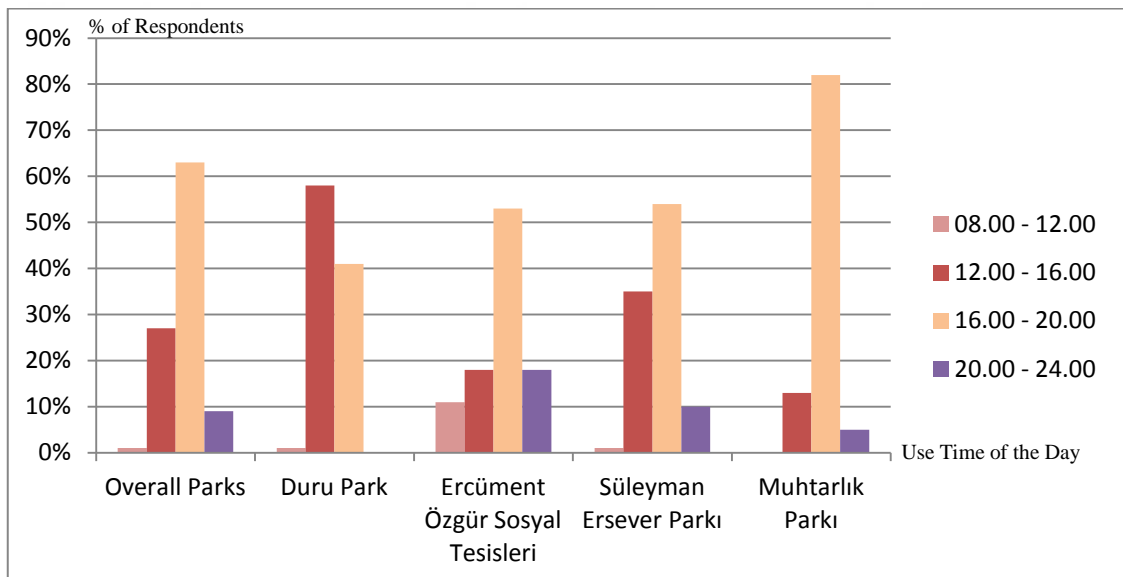


Figure 64. Respondents' park use time preferences in each park

Interestingly, although Duru Park is the only park that has a special lighting design, user survey results indicate that none of the respondents prefer to use Duru Park after 20.00. There can be several causes of this situation. One of them is the location of Duru Park. Since it is surrounded mostly by commercial facilities, after a certain time those stores close off and the surrounding of the park becomes very dark. Second reason can be the lack of activities in the park during the evening. According to interview results Duru Park is only used during Ramadan as there are certain activities and lots of people. Finally it can be related with the lighting design as well. While certain users like the way Duru Park is illuminated during the evening and state that it is very attractive especially for younger children, some others disagree with this opinion. For instance,

one of the respondents who live right by the park complains about the lighting of the park as these bright led lights with different colors reflect into her house all night and disturbs her even while sleeping. (Figure 65 & 66).



Figure 65. Duru Park night view with changing colored LED lights  
(Source: <http://haberciniz.biz/balcovanin-cehresi-degisiyor-2031690h.htm>)



Figure 66. Süleyman Ersever Parkı with insignificant lighting

Interview results in two parks, Duru Park and Süleyman Ersever Park, when users are asked about the reasons for not using parks during the evening indicate that, most of the respondents state the necessity of lighting for fulfilling safety needs.

*“I can use parks anytime I want in Balçova. I can go to park with my women friends. Of course if the lighting wouldn’t have been enough or it was isolated than I could not be able to use the park, then I would be afraid. Lighting is very important for safety. You know the incidents in Turkey. So the lighting of the parks should be improved”* (Woman, 35, married with one child, high school)

#### **6. 1. 4. Increasing Sense of Comfort and Safety through Maintenance: Formal and Informal Control Over Parks**

According to Madge (2010) poor maintenance of parks causes residents to suffer from polluted, crowded, inadequate parks with facilities that are in poor conditions and feel uncomfortable. It is seen that these areas also suffer from undesirable land uses and pollution, poor access to parks and increased public health risks and intense environmental justice challenges (Madge, 2010). Maintenance of parks can be realized either by formal control of the municipalities with cleaning and security personnel, periodical repairs of the amenities, replacement and care of plants and so on. On the other hand, maintenance of parks can be realized through informal control mechanisms such as the park users’ personal care and cleaning attempts, neighbors watching the park from their window and realizing unusual events or owner of the food kiosks being there all the time and taking care of certain problems instantly.

User survey results indicate that when respondents are asked about what they would want to change in parks maintenance and physical conditions of the existing equipments are among the mostly mentioned issues after climate control problems that are previously explained (Figure 67). While results indicate equal rates of need for improvement of maintenance and physical conditions in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri and Süleyman Ersever Parkı, there is an importance difference based on gender in Muhtarlık Parkı. 77% of women want improvement of maintenance and physical conditions as most of the benches and pergolas are broken, the play equipments are worn out and dirty and the hygiene level is very low in this park.

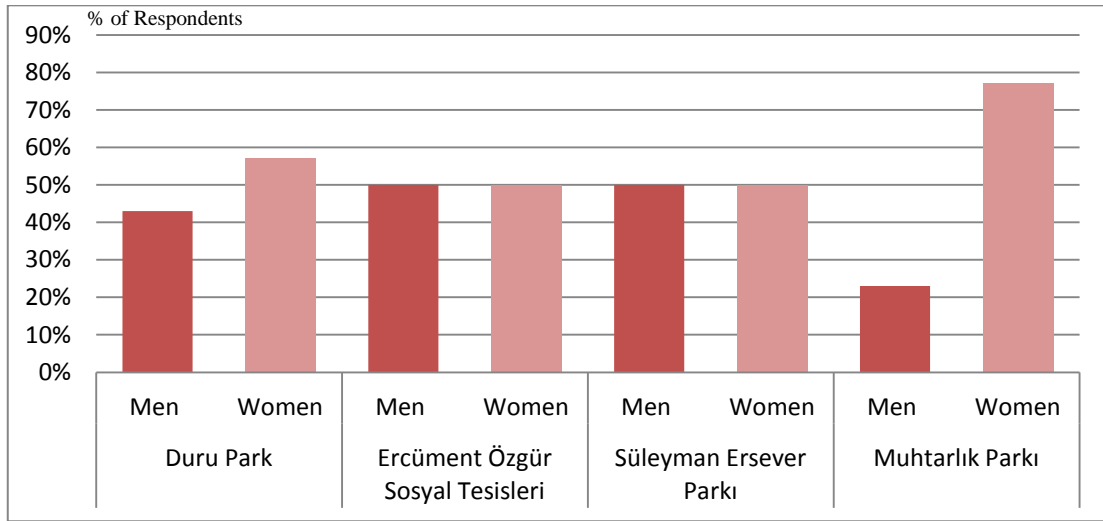


Figure 67. Respondents want solution for maintenance problems in each park

Focus group and face to face user interviews also support that one of the mostly complained issue in all parks is the hygiene problems due to garbage, animal dirt and food that are left for animals.

Especially for women who use the parks mostly for childcare purposes, lack of hygiene and maintenance in the playgrounds is a major complaint reason. Most of the respondents in Duru Park state that they do not want to spend too much time in there and complain about the poor maintenance of the playground and related hygiene problems.

*“The first thing that I would want to change in this park is the hygiene and the cleanliness of the park. It should be in much better conditions. Play equipments and the benches right next to the playground is so dirty and out of repair. Municipality should provide us a better hygienic environment (Duru Park)” (Woman, 37, married with one child, high school graduate).*

*“Is this restroom appropriate for this century? Does the municipality not ashamed of the condition of the restrooms? Look at the playground equipments; they are covered with mud and dirt. Municipality should send people to wash and clean these. Children should not be in such dirty places. Can there be a playground right in front of the toilet? (Duru Park)” (Man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).*

*“Cleanliness is the most important thing for the parks. They should be clean first of all. However, Balçova is not well maintained and parks are also in a very bad condition in terms of cleanliness”* (Woman, 43, married with one child, high school)

Different than Duru Park, existence of a café creates a better maintained environment through informal control as there are always people who are working in the park and keeping an eye around. As also mentioned by the respondents, when there is any maintenance problem in the park, owner of the café informs the municipality and get those problems solved. Such an existence of control over the park increases the feeling of security and comfort for people.

*“There are no cleaning personnel in this park. It can get very dirty sometimes. Park belongs to the municipality however the café looks after the park more than the municipality. If it gets very dirty they call the municipality and get the park cleaned. I witnessed such situations couple of times”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

*“I am very pleased with this park. There is not much problem. Since there is a café here, it is much better maintained and cleaner. For instance there is a toilet here as well. There is not a toilet in all parks. Even there is one, it is not clean. Municipality personnel go and clean those parks on certain days. But here it is cleaned everyday”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 46, married with three children, university).

Apart from the insufficient cleaning and maintenance through formal control of the municipality, it is again the users who mostly create the hygiene problems in the parks. During the focus group interviews, this problem mentioned a lot by most of the participants. They all complain about thrashes that are thrown all over and careless mothers who do not take care of their children's trash. They stated that the location of the park and the surrounding landuses also cause this situation as well.

*“Users should be more conscious about cleaning after themselves. They come here and eat seed and leave all their garbage behind. It becomes like a forest of garbage”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 50, married with four children, high school).

*“Users cause all this dirt. Cleaning men come in the morning and clean all around the park, empty the garbage bins. Right after they leave, it gets messy again. Seed garbage is a major problem here. Also people who buy pastry from the shop around the corner, eat here and leave its thrash on the ground after they leave”* (Duru Park, Unstructured Interview – Woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school graduate, toilet keeper).

As mentioned in the previous part, lack of plants is a major problem in parks and one of the reasons of this situation is based on the maintenance of the parks. Results of the interview indicate that, the problem is not only because there is a limited space for soft landscape or lack of care by the municipality, it is also because of the lack of care by park users. Unstructured interview and focus group interviews respondents stated that municipality plants seasonal plants and flowers in and around the parks for several times a year; however, due to the users’ uncared behaviors and theft problem none of these seasonal plants can stay for a long period.

*“They planted flowers here for 3 times this year. It was not more than a month since they planted the last time. They planted 150 seasonal flowers here. But look there is none right now. Because people step on them, children rip apart their leaves to play with or people steal them to plant in their own gardens. Before there were metal railing around the planting areas but people wanted them to be removed as those may be dangerous for children. Then those areas became foot paths (Duru Park)”* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school graduate, toilet keeper).

*“You know what happens, during the crowded times, tea houses take their tables outside and put them on the planting areas. So all the plants died”* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 28, married with three children)

*“I have seen personally, there was this woman who came to the park with a bag and started ripping off the flowers and put them in her bag. I guess she took them to plant in her own garden. But those flowers belong to all of us. How can someone do this?”* (Focus Group Interview)

Nast (2006) also draws attention to the negative impact of existence of dogs in a park on the park perceptions of especially certain groups such as ethnic minorities



(Nast, 2006 cited in Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Results of my study indicate that dogs also create a serious problem for especially women with children. It is not only the existence of stray dogs, but also the people who are not cleaning after their pets are important problems for most of the respondents. Especially women who use the park for their children complain about the dirt and hairs of animals and the danger that stray dogs may create especially at the late hours of the night. Mothers think that animals not only create safety problems for their children but also they limit their freedom to play with soil. Responds indicate that this is not only a problem for Duru Park or Süleyman Ersever Parkı but also a problem of whole Balçova.

*“My only problem here is animal dirt. We cannot let our children to go and play on the green areas. They need to step on the soil, they need to play with the soil for their well growth but since people do not collect after their pets or street animals sleep around I do not feel comfortable there”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“I am really disturbed by the stray dogs. Playground is full of hair and dirt. It is very dangerous for our children. Those animals fight with each other and scare our children”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 43, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“I keep seeing dogs all over the lawn area. Even this one over there is lying for more than an hour. It looks very scary and dirty. There should also be separate pet walking trails for people with animals. They should not let animals to get into playgrounds. I do not want my child to be covered with dog dirt while playing”* (Duru Park, woman, 27, married with one child, university).

*“People of Balçova think themselves as modern and European. But if they want to copy Europeans they should also clean after their dogs. They never clean after their animals. Then I have to clean that dirt from the hands of my children who plays in the park”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 45, married with two children, middle school).

## **6. 2. Neighborhood’s Physical and Social Characteristics and Park Use Preferences**

In order to understand how and why users prefer to use parks and their satisfaction levels, it is not only enough to evaluate the physical characteristics of the

park. Physical qualities of neighborhoods such as the total park area in the neighborhood that gives the information of proximity of park to the place of residence (Bedino-Rung et al., 2005; D. A. Cohen et al., 2007; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Grow et al., 2008), neighborhood's social characteristics (Byrne and Wolch, 2009; Sideris and Sideris, 2010), and the surrounding land-uses also have serious affects on women's park use preferences. Importance of surrounding environment of the parks and the necessity of interventions in the realm of traffic and pedestrian safety should also be considered (Parra et al., 2010) while analyzing park use preferences as they may create important thresholds that limit the access to parks.

### **6. 2. 1. Surrounding Landuses and Thresholds Shaping Park Use**

#### **Surrounding Landuses Shaping the Use of Neighborhood Parks:**

The existence of different landuses and resources around the parks attributes different uses to parks (Dines et. al, 2006). As Jacobs (1961) states, existence of such environmental variability can have a direct effect on the social importance of a public space (Jacobs, 1961). Overall user survey results indicate that 44% of the respondents feel positive (comfortable and safe) when the parks are surrounded by residential facilities. A larger group, almost %50 of the respondents, state that they feel negative (overwhelmed and insecure) when parks are surrounded by commercial facilities.

Individual park results indicate that the respondents in parks that are surrounded mostly by residential facilities such as Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri mostly feel positive (78%) about having residential facilities around the parks and feel negative (67%) about having commercial facilities around the parks.

*“It would be much better if there were more residential buildings. What is the good of having commercial activities? Think of Basmane. It is full of commercial activities but no one knows the parks there, no one goes there. But it would be different if there were houses around. People would have gone together with their children and families and that would make it safer and cleaner. But would you go to Basmane if you do not have an errand to run? But you would go to the park next to your home”* (Woman, 50, married with two children, elementary school graduate).

On the other hand the respondents in parks that are surrounded mostly by commercial facilities such as Duru Park and Muhtarlık Parkı mostly feel negative (respectively: 50%, 47%) about having residential facilities around the parks and feel positive (respectively: 45%, 49%) about having residential facilities around the parks (Figure 68 & 69)

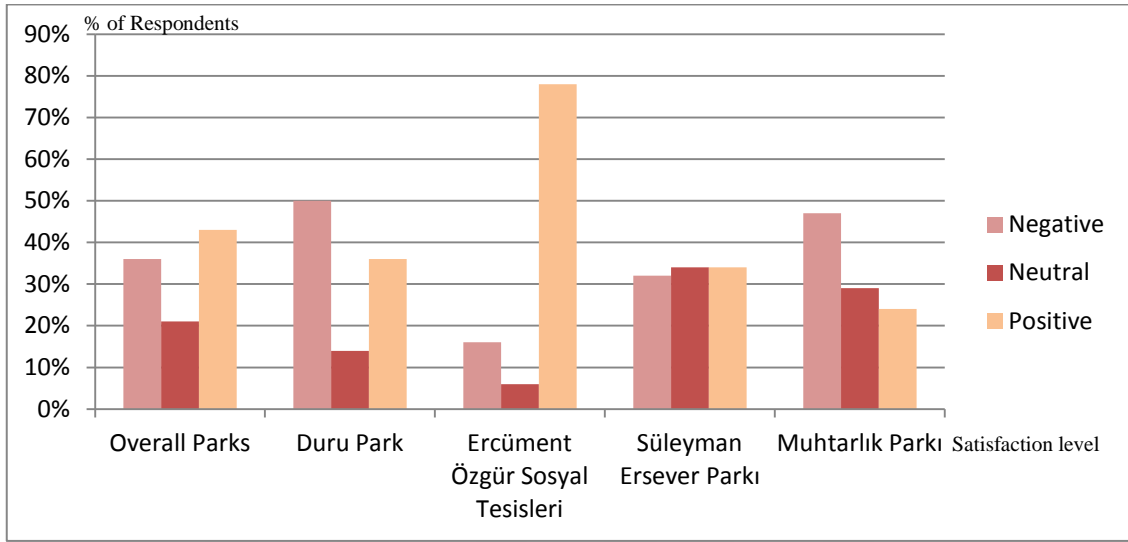


Figure 68. Perceptions of having residential facilities around parks in each park

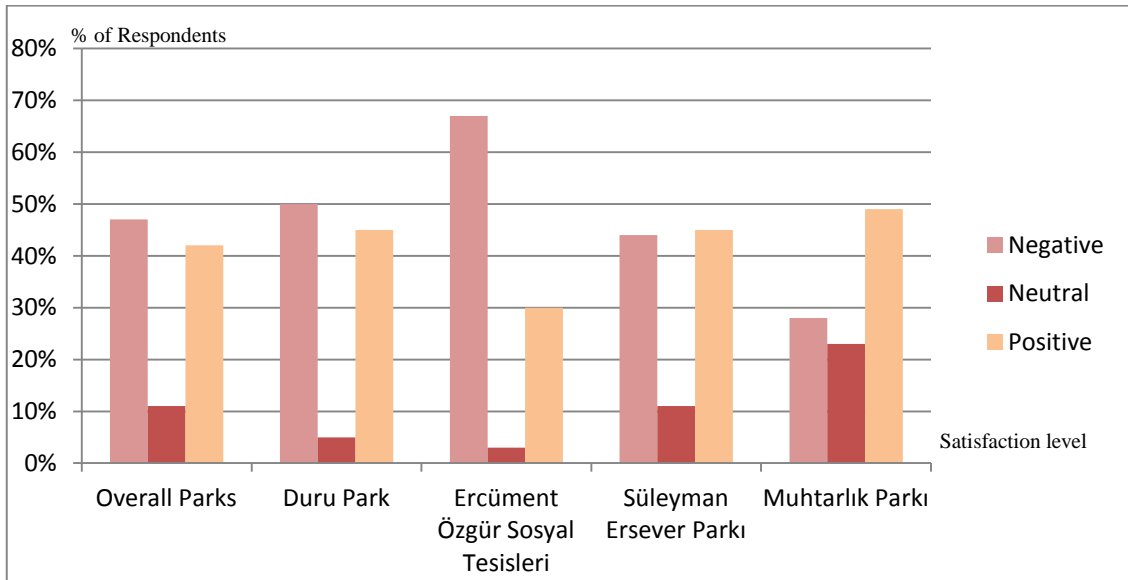


Figure 69. Perceptions of having commercial facilities around parks in each park

In terms of *gender* based differences, overall results indicate that 42% of the respondents are satisfied with having commercial facilities around parks and more than

60% of those people who are satisfied with commercial activities around the parks are women. Interview results indicate that the reason for satisfaction from having commercial facilities is based on the ease of running daily errands for women. Being in the middle of different commercial activities and at the core of the main shopping district of Balçova may have both positive and negative effects on woman's use of Duru Park.

As a positive aspect, parks in a central area give people the opportunity to sit for a while and rest while shopping. In some cases going for a shopping may work as an opportunity to spend some time in park. Being surrounded by a crowd of people and activities gives a sense of safety as well especially for women users.

*“Since Duru Park is at a central location, at the middle of the street and crowded it is safer, there would not be any negative incident” (Woman, 28, married with one child, high school graduate).*

*“We do not go to other parks; we come here as it is on our way to home after shopping. People who come Ata Street for shopping see the park and benches so they want to rest and have tea before going home” (Duru Park, Unstructured Interview – Woman, 56).*

*“Today I wasn't planning to come to park as I had to cook dinner, but I had to do grocery shopping. That is why I came to Ata Street. As soon as we come here my daughter saw the park and started crying to go to the park. So we came for 10 minutes. Other people may have different excuses to use the park; they may not be able to go for a shopping because of economic reasons” (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate).*

Although user survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction from having commercial facilities around parks, certain landuses create conflicting views among different genders. While men do not have any complaints regarding the surrounding stores or tea houses, women mostly comment negatively having tea houses or other activities that have dominant male population around the park. Most of the women respondents state that since almost all of the activities that are surrounding the park are being used by men, this dominance of male population disturbs them and reduce their comfort level while using the park.

*“Who would participate in a sports activity in Duru Park? Noone would use the sports equipments. It would be too exposed to the surrounding men who are working and sitting in the surrounding stores. I would use them in other parks but not here”* (Woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“Duru Park is like the courtyard of the surrounding tea houses, döner kiosk and internet cafes more than a public park. Park is under the control of these stores. Döner kiosk and tea houses put their tables in the park, serve food and drinks there, let people play card there. On the other hand people who are waiting for the internet café, or the ones who came out to smoke all sit at the benches of the park”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

Tea houses<sup>7</sup> that are located on the south border of Duru Park are among the mostly mentioned reasons for discomfort by female users. Primary reason of the complaints of women is mostly based on the dominance of male users in and around the park. Another complaint reason is also about the space that they occupy and the ways that these tea houses expand their tables to the interior of the park and leaving no space for other uses. Most of the women gave a similar answer to the question about their satisfaction rate regarding the surrounding land-uses of parks and its relationship with their use frequency and duration.

*“The tea houses back there are quite problematic for women. They stare at us a lot”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“What should we do in Duru Park; there are lots of men sitting there. The crowd around and especially the men at the tea houses are really disturbing. We cannot sit here comfortably”* (Woman, 34, married with two children, high school graduate).

*“Municipality planted lawn in front of tea houses but unfortunately they are all dead since tea houses put their tables on them. Do they have such a right?”* (Duru Park, woman, 56, married with two children, middle school)

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<sup>7</sup> Tea houses, or sometimes called as coffee houses as well, are informal gathering places for mostly (non-working) men where they get together, drink tea or coffee, chat, play cards or other games for long periods of times. Generally, at least couple of tea houses is located in each neighborhood in Turkey. Although, recently, there are modern versions of tea houses are starting to appear, where women are also welcomed, in most of the times, the existence of women is not welcomed by men in these tea houses.

Such a problem not only mentioned in Duru Park interviews but also mentioned in Süleyman Ersever Parkı interviews. While respondents were explaining their use patterns of parks, they constantly mentioned existence of coffee houses and dominance of male users as a problem for Duru Park.

*“Existence of too many men in Duru Park is very disturbing to me. There is such a problem there. When I go there I cannot spend time there comfortably. Tea houses are too much integrated with the park. So I cannot sit comfortably. For instance in Süleyman Ersever Parkı men and women can sit together it is not disturbing. Because all men are from this neighborhood and they are the parents of the kids from the school. So no one disturbs each other”* (Woman, 40, married with two children, high school).

*“Duru Park is very chaotic. It is not very comfortable. I heard that men are commenting on (laf atmak) women there. People say so. Men are disturbing women in Duru Park”* (Woman, 55, married with three children, elementary school).

*“I go Duru Park as well but I do not like there. I do not feel comfortable when women and men are together there. Men are looking at women with dirty eyes. Especially the elderly men there! I heard an incident the other day. A man went and sat next to a woman in Duru Park and asked her whether she is a widow or not. He told that he is looking for a woman to marry. I heard this I swear. He told that he has a car and a house. I heard. So I am worried about these things. I do not understand why they do not go and sit in the tea house but coming to the park. There is already a place for men. They should leave the park to women”* (Woman, 53, married with one child, elementary school)

The problems that are caused by tea houses were one of the mostly discussed topics in the focus group interviews as well. Almost all of the participants of the focus groups mentioned their problems and feelings about the tea houses around Duru Park. Results indicate that when there is a dominance of a single user group whether it is men, elderly, or children, the other users may start to feel uncomfortable and they do not feel welcomed in those areas. In the case of Duru Park, mostly mentioned problem is the number of male users, how they dominate space through the language that they use, their looks over women, women’s discomfort from walking or sitting in front of them. Women keep saying that those tea houses should be taken out of there or the view in through the park should be blocked with a plant hedge.

I think it is not only the existence of men but also the crowd and noise affect users' perceptions regarding parks. That is why a group of respondents state that they would prefer parks that are surrounded by residential buildings or green instead of busy streets and crowded commercial activities.

*"It is disturbing to be in such a crowd. I would come more often if it was quieter"* (Duru Park, woman, 34, married with two children, high school)

*"I would go to the parks in between houses, they would be much calmer. But there are none"* (Woman, 37, married with one child, high school graduate).

On the other hand, different than Duru Park, Süleyman Ersever Parkı is surrounded by a school and residential facilities. It is a good example of the effects of the surrounding landuses, especially the existence of the school, on the use patterns and people's perceptions regarding parks.

*"Whoever you talk right now is the parent of a child from the school. Most of the mothers come here after they leave their children to the school"* (Woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

The detailed observation results can also highlight the differences in the use of the park that is based on the relationship of the park with the school. As the most dominant user group in Süleyman Ersever Parkı is the mothers of the children who are in school. When the school is closed the park use level significantly drops as mothers who use the park everyday when the school is open, start to go some other recreation areas for a change during the summer times. Below figures indicates the differences in the user numbers in different times of the year when the school is closed or open (Figure 75 & 76).

*"We do not come here very often in the summer. Generally, we either go to vacation or visit our families to other cities in summer. Or if we are here in İzmir, we go to Agora. We come here everyday when the school is open so to have a change we go to other places when the school is closed"* (Women, 32, married with one child, high school).

*“The most important thing for me is the comfort of my child. That is why I wait here in the park all the time in case she may need something. I go to school and check her if she ate her lunch and then I come back to park. Otherwise it would be so hard to go home and come back everytime. So we are very advantaged to have a place that we can sit and wait our children. It is great to have a park next to the school. There is no other place like this. I also have the chance to see my friends since they are also here for their children. In case I run late, I call my friend and ask her to take care of my daughter as well” (Woman, 40, married with two children, middle school).*





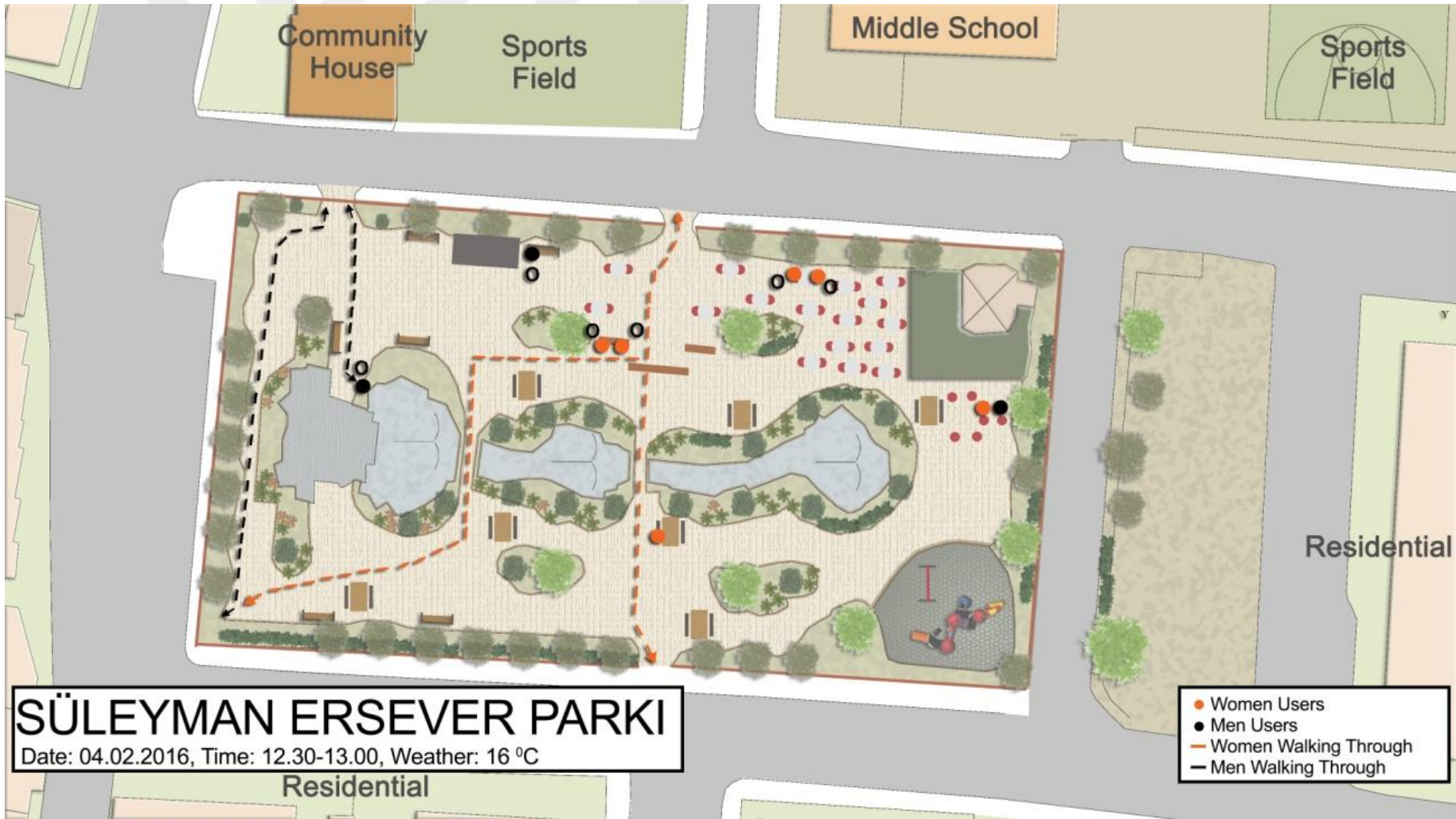


Figure 70. Limited use of Süleyman Ersever Parkı when the school is closed

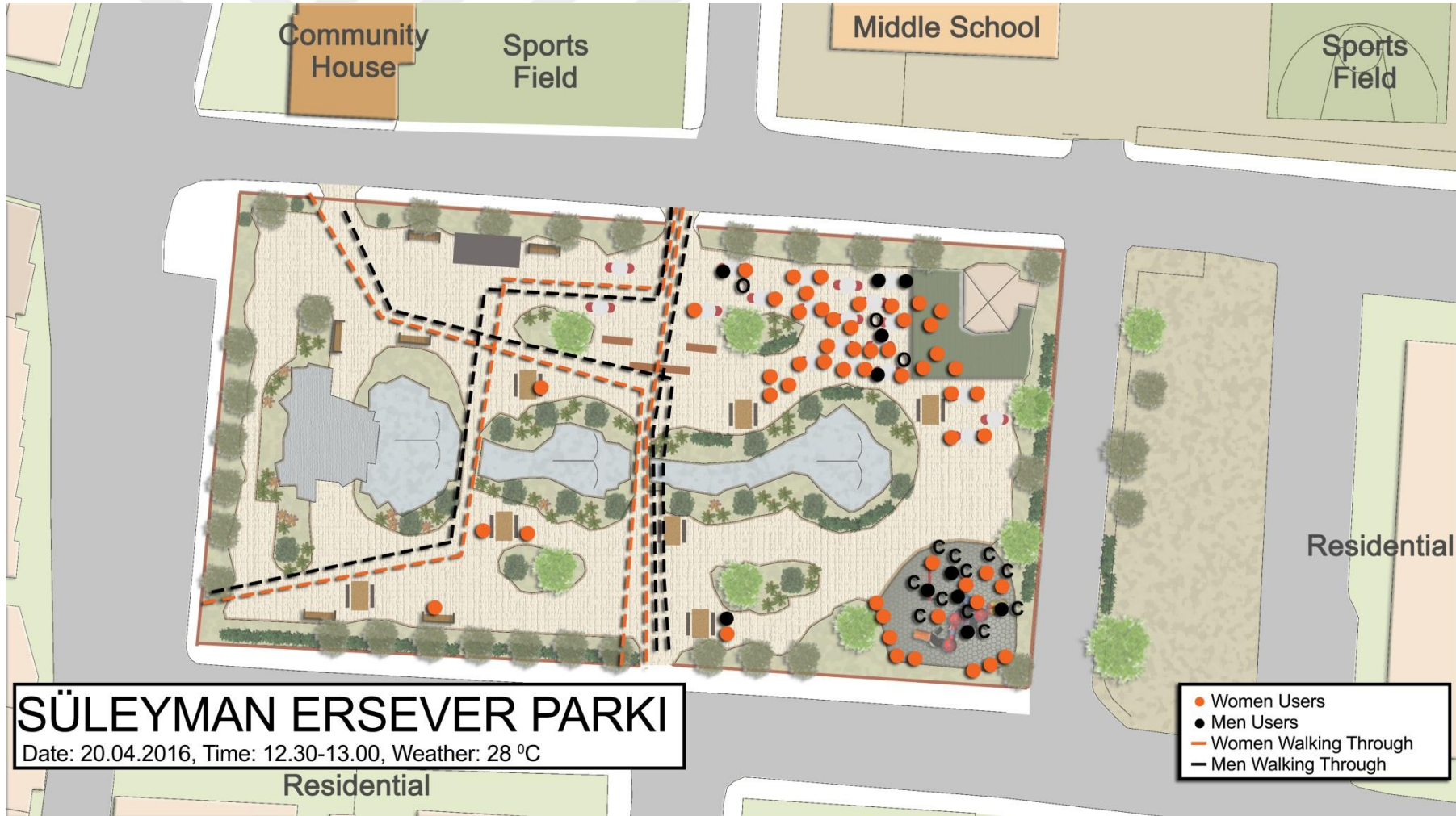


Figure 71. Increased use of Süleyman Ersever Parkı when the school is open

Interview results also indicate that apart from the school, existence of residential buildings are perceived as comforting and secure for women respondents and this affects their park use preferences. User survey results regarding users perceptions about having residential facilities around parks in terms of gender based differences indicate that there is no significant difference between men’s and women’s perceptions (Figure 72) but there are significant differences among different parks. This indicates that regardless of the gender, specific characteristics and user profiles of surrounding landuses affect users’ satisfaction.

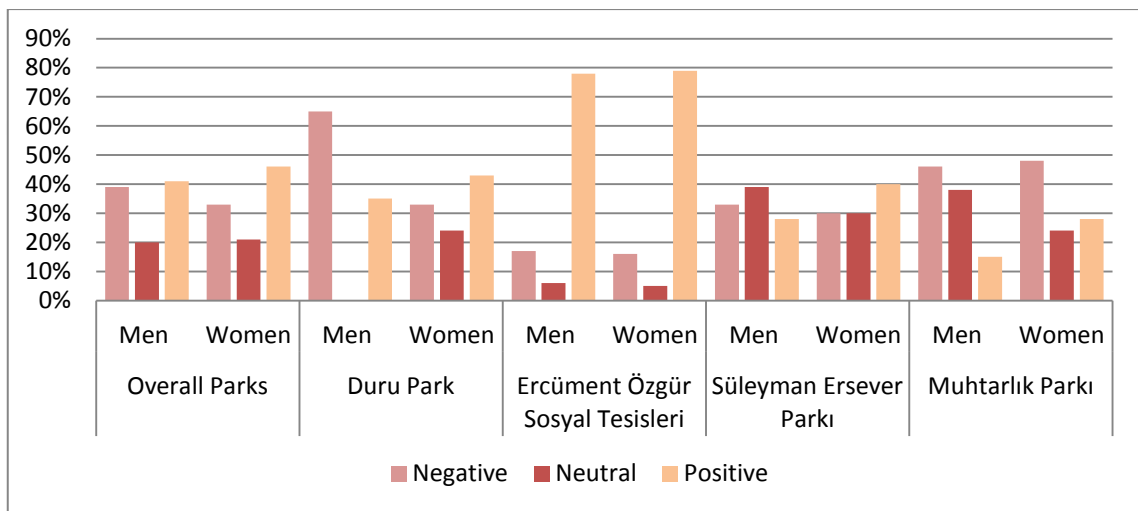


Figure 72. Having residential facilities around parks based on gender

When women are asked about their preference on having commercial or residential buildings around the park during the interviews, most of the women told that they would prefer residential buildings around the parks.

*“It is much better to have houses around. For instance I do not like Duru Park. It is very chaotic. It is much more comfortable here in Süleyman Ersever”* (Woman, 55, married with three children, elementary school).

*“I think it is much safer to have houses around. I feel more comfortable when the houses are facing towards the park. I am relieved when I come here. I trust the surrounding places. For instance there is the grocery of the neighborhood on the corner. I am amongst people that I know. When I think of Duru Park, it feels suffocating. I am a person who does not like crowd so I prefer here. I do not want my children to get lost in the crowd when they are playing in the park. So I prefer calmer*

*places. It is very crowded in Duru Park, I panic there. There are too many passer bys and it does not feel like safe there. I almost know everybody here. So it is more comfortable here (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).*

Not only the surrounding landuses but also surrounding streets, slopes or certain physical elements may affect people's access to and use of parks by creating thresholds. These thresholds not only makes it very hard and intimidating to go to parks but also decrease the level of comfort during park use. The coming section focuses on these thresholds in the example of neighborhood parks in Balçova.

### **Surrounding Thresholds Limiting the Access to Neighborhood Parks:**

Increased accessibility to parks increases the likelihood that a person will visit a park and potentially engage in physical activities. Clarke, Ailshire, and Lant (2009) showed that living in pedestrian friendly neighborhoods have serious effects on users especially based on their age. Older adults report less complaints of disability in mobility in environments with fewer thresholds (Clarke, Ailshire, & Lant, 2009).

Research results indicate important information regarding the issue of thresholds. While, it is not a serious issue for other parks threshold create an important barrier for the accessibility of Duru Park. Not only the surrounding land-use of Duru Park, but also the thresholds around the park such as Ata Street and other side streets with heavy traffic or barriers such as taxis parked along one edge, tea house tables and trash bins on the other edge disable the access to the park and affect the comfort of park users.

Surrounding thresholds may play an important role for the park use based on the *gender* of the user. Surrounding busy traffic can be intimidating especially for woman with children or for elderly people with limited mobility. Such conditions both affect the access to and getting into the park and also create tension and safety concerns for users. In the interviews women users with children complain a lot about the lack of safety measurements, proximity of heavy traffic and the use of motorbikes in Duru Park.

*“Since the street with heavy traffic is right there I do not think this park is safe. I have to follow my child constantly. There could be a wire mesh or wall so that children*

*could play safely without the risk of them to run and crashed by a car” (Woman, 34, married with two children, high school).*

*“Traffic is really disturbing me. It is almost impossible to cross that traffic and get to the park and even after I reach to the park, I keep hearing the noise and chaos of the traffic” (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).*

*“I do not like Duru Park. I do not know why. Maybe it is because the park is by a main street or maybe due to the users. First of all parks should be far from main streets and traffic. It is also very crowded. So I never use it” (Woman, 35, married with one child, high school).*

Thresholds also create problems for users depending on their **age**. As a large group of park users are elderly people in Duru Park. It creates certain problems for people that have limited mobility. For instance during the observations, I witnessed a case where a women with her elderly mom wanted to get into the park and sit on the benches, the elderly mother had difficulties in crossing the street and then crossing between the parked taxis at the edge of the park. So couple of taxi drivers had to help them and carried women to the benches. Following this incident, I realized an interview with those ladies and found out that the mother likes this park a lot and wants to benefit from the sun but day by day it gets harder for her to come because of the increased traffic and the “wall” (she defines the parks, kokoreç stand and thrash bin as wall) around the park.

Results indicate that people change their route to some other parks that are easier to reach or just give up going to park because of these thresholds. As mentioned by one of the respondents of the structured interviews who live at the Northeast corner of Duru Park, she cannot use the park as a cut through to go to the internet café or the pastry shop on the south side of the park. Due to the traffic and taxi stand, lots of cars park along one side of the park. There are also food carts and trash bins which makes it almost impossible to find a way in between all these obstacles to walk in to the park so she prefers to walk around the park.

*“The paths that we are walking should not be closed. The entrance is almost completely blocked by the döner kiosk’s tables. They put all these tables and when I want to enter to the park I have to walk in between all those people who eat there” (Women, 56).*

*“There is the kokoreç stand right at one of the entrances of the park. I cannot pass by because of the smell of it. Additionally, the people sitting at the tea houses are really disturbing. They keep talking very loudly and with a slang language. Do I have to walk in between those men?”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“I live right at the corner of the park but it is really hard to get into the park. First I have to cross the street and then the taxi stand where at least 3-4 taxis are parking at very close distances. So I walk around the cars and then there is the garbage bin that I have to pass by. Additionally there is the human traffic at the adjacent sidewalk. So it is really intimidating to get into the park. That is why instead of walking through the park, I walk around it and go wherever I want to go. Also the sign of the park is very weird it is in front of the döner kiosk so it looks like its sign not the park’s. It is not welcoming”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

## **6. 2. 2. Familiarity with the Park Space Increases the Park Use**

Parochial realm of neighborhoods enables a high level of interaction among the residents and this interaction increases the level of familiarity among people. This familiarity has a great influence on shaping preferences for the use of neighborhood parks. Especially in Turkey, social order of the parochial realm of neighborhoods plays a great role in residents’ lives. Traditional urban neighborhood can be defined as a place that creates intersections of the interior spaces of the private sphere and the public sphere of the residential street. Neighborhood spaces can house feelings of both individuality and traditional understandings of belonging and collectivity of certain social, financial, and physical mobility norms (Mills, 2007). More than defining a physical territory, parochial realm of neighborhoods define close relationships of daily lives in the Turkish urban context and can house to various narratives and ways of lives especially for women who are bounded to residential environments due to variety of reasons. Contradicting feelings of safety or being watched by the eyes of the acquaintances, and friendly neighborliness relations or alienation as the new comer to the neighborhood may have various effects on the users of neighborhood’s public spaces. Balçova is an area where all these above mentioned characteristics and the properties of parochial realms, parochial ordering system and the social bonds can clearly be seen. Among the most important properties of parochial realm, increased

feelings of place attachment, neighborliness relations, comfort and safety, chance of meeting acquaintances and socialization, and ease of carrying private realm activities, increase the chance of using neighborhood parks by different user groups

As Gedikli and Özbilen (2004) also states being in a familiar area cause feeling of comfort and increased use of a space. The length of time at current address, number of acquaintances, and neighborhood attachment are important determinants of familiarity for the neighborhood (Machabee et. al., 2006). This feeling depends partially on the length of stay in an area. User survey results indicate that most of the respondents are living in İzmir for more than 21 years and they are familiar with the city and physical and social life in İzmir. User survey results in four parks indicate the rate of frequent users is the lowest (40%) and non-frequent users are the highest (40%) for the people who recently moved to İzmir amongst other respondents. Results also indicate that the rate of frequent users and normal users gradually increase by the length of residency in İzmir and it supports that people who have been living in İzmir for more than ten years are mostly using parks frequently (Figure 73).

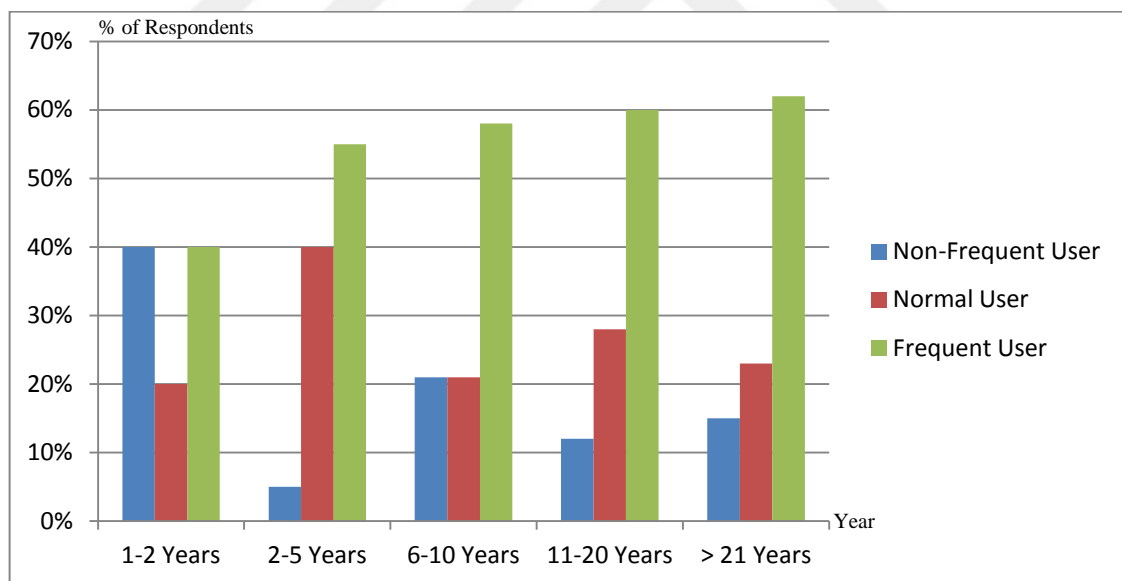


Figure 73. Park use frequency based on length of stay in İzmir

Interview results indicate that residents of Balçova who are living there more than ten years feel themselves more as a part of the parochial realm and embrace the characteristics of the local people; neighborliness relations and they have increased feelings of belonging to the neighborhood increases. However, people who are new to

this neighborhood or people who do not have too much chance of interaction with the neighbors due to their daily responsibilities such as working or childcare may not have such positive feelings and attachment to the neighborhood. This group of users generally state that they feel as if they are being observed and criticized all the time and that is why they do not use neighborhood parks.

*“I was living Edirne before I moved to Balçova and when I compare the neighborhood lives in both places, it is very similar. Even while I am passing through the park, I feel uncomfortable. Since I am coming from a small city, I know what it is like to live in a small neighborhood. People always observe each other. They know who is who. They know the time that you come to your home or when you leave. It is similar here. Park’s seating layout is also very suitable for people to be able to observe each other. Two rows of benches that are looking towards where people walk and pass by. Especially, when I walk there at late hours I feel the criticism in people’s minds. I feel nervous. All these people here are living in Balçova for very long years. But as a new comer to the neighborhood and as a person who knows the rules of neighborhood life I know that I am being criticized when I pass through the park at late hours. I can here people’s thought. What does this young woman do at this time of the evening in a park? Does not she have a home? (Duru Park)”* (Woman, 26, single, PhD student).

*“I would never go and sit there with my boyfriend. When I first moved in here, it had only been 2 weeks and although I did not talk to anyone, the guy in the grocery store below my apartment told me that he heard that I am an instructor and coming here from Bodrum. Everybody knows everything. Taxi drivers from the taxi stand all know who I am; they are constantly watching my behaviors. One day when I came home, one of them told me that my boyfriend just came and waiting me upstairs with a cynical tone. How can he tell me something like this? How does he know this? So if I go to park with my boyfriend, all of these people’s eyes will be on us and have more stuff to talk about. That is why I do not want to go. I just want to get into my home as soon as possible and get rid of those looks. It is not only the park; all the public spaces are like this. When I am walking on the street, guy from the grocery store yells at me “Hey sister, this fruit has just arrived fresh, taxi drivers start talking to me about daily issues. Those are the real users of public space, not me (Duru Park)”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).



*“Being in the neighborhood that I am living in does not make any difference to me. Because I do not know any of my neighbors, I am working all day; I do not have time for chit chat with neighbors (Duru Park)”* (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

Kara et. al (2011) state that parks provide chances to meet with acquaintances while participating to social, cultural and physical activities (Kara et.al., 2011). Neighborhood park create the highest chances of meeting with people that you know, your neighbors while enjoying the benefits of parks, so this user profile of the parks also have an effect on the feeling of comfort and being welcomed. These feelings affect the park use preferences of women significantly. For instance, according to Süleyman Ersever Parkı interview results, most of the users are frequent users and that is why they have a familiarity towards each other. Also the café is being run by the same family for the last 15 years and they also support this familiarity feeling. That is why most of the respondents mention that they feel like a family and they never experienced any negative looks or actions towards them in Süleyman Ersever Parkı. So they can comfortably use the park.

*“There is family environment here. Everybody knows everybody. I know who is coming here for which purpose. If a stranger comes, I can instantly recognize that outcomer. And if I feel any discomfort, I can go and tell this problem to Murat Ağabey (owner of the café) and he takes care of it (Süleyman Ersever Parkı)”* (Woman, 40, married with one child, middle school).

Although dominant male population in and around Duru Park is a major complaint reason for women users, several respondents from unstructured interviews defend that those male users are the people of their neighborhood and on the contrary to the feelings of insecurity by most of the respondents of structured interviews, existence of these men contributes to the creation of the feeling of safety in Duru Park.

*“If there is an unwanted event here in this park, the people from the tea houses would intervene firstly. They are people of this neighborhood”* (Man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).

*“We would see no harm from the tea houses. On the contrary they protect us more than anyone else as they are our own people from this neighborhood. They know whom to protect and whom to disturb”* (Woman, 71, widow with 5 children, elementary school graduate).

Another important quality of neighborhood parks is the chance that those public spaces create to bring together people from the surrounding residential environments and socialize there. This situation is valid for all different *age groups* from children to elderly. While children can easily find playmates in the playground who are living in close proximity and going to the same school, elderly people can also have a more active and social life through the interactions that they experience in parks. As disengagement theory suggests individuals gradually disengage from physical and social activities as they age (Atchley, 1980 cited in Hutchinson, 2008) and localized resources and services found within their proximate residential areas may become more important to their everyday lives (Glass & Balfour, 2003). Case study results indicate that residents of Balçova are advantaged to have nearby neighborhood parks that create chances for socialization.

*“The playground here in Duru Park is very important for my daughter. Children need such parks to get rid of their excessive energy and more importantly to socialize with other children. As we come here very often, she had many new friends and I also met with their mothers. So her socialization helped me to socialize as well”* (Woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate)

*“I’ve been living almost for twenty years. We all know each other here. When I come to this park I always meet with my friends. I know all the users of this park, all of them are from this neighborhood and I come here everyday to see them”* (Man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).

*“When I go to another park away from Balçova, I get bored as I do not know those people. They all hang out alone. So I do not want to go those parks by myself. I go there with my husband and child as a family. Otherwise, if I go there alone with my child, I only stay for half an hour. But here even I am alone with my child, I see people that are familiar to me and chat for a while and do not get bored”* (Woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate)

*“These people are all from our neighborhood. We all know each other and we are like family. Everybody comes and sits at the same place. Everybody’s seat is known. I can tell you the names of all these people here. For example this guy who just passed by, his name is Önder. His child grew up here in this park. He is a hairdresser across the street. He used to leave his child with me so that I take care of her while he was working”* (Woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school, toilet keeper).

All of these properties of the social order of the parochial realm of neighborhoods are important in attracting people to use neighborhood parks. Such parochial realms increase the level of familiarity with the environment and the feeling of security that derives from having familiar people or people with similar common characteristics around. The chance of encountering with those people is as important as the surrounding landuses or thresholds around the parks for the feeling of satisfaction from and attraction towards the park use.

### **6. 3. Summary of the Chapter Findings**

When use density of parks is compared with each other it is seen that the parks that provide better physical characteristics and increased social bonds that fulfill the needs of different users such as Süleyman Ersever Parkı and Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri are used more.

Most of the neighborhood parks in Balçova carry the typical park characteristics and provide very limited amount of programming and amenities. Moreover, existing ones do not give any chance of flexibility so do not fulfill the needs of different park user groups. For instance almost all women complain the lack of activity opportunities for themselves other than child related activities or for certain time frames such as morning or evenings and flexible sitable spaces that can appeal to different use alternatives. When there are activities, in the limited time during Ramadan, parks get very crowded. Limited activities decrease the use and cause dissatisfaction of certain users groups. Parks get underutilized and deserted which start to attract illicit uses and lead to increased safety problems.

Food related activities are specifically important as people start to gather in and around those places and it starts to build social relationship among people. Familiarity

of the people who are working, the design and the location of those facilities in a way that do not block a larger part of the park, the food type that they provide that do not pollute the environment, diverse customer profile, hygiene, affordable prices and the operating hours that enlivens the park during early morning and late hours have impacts on the satisfaction of different user groups. While the one in Duru Park appeals to only a limited number of people, mostly men usually for short durations; the one in Süleyman Ersever Parkı appeals to a larger crowd, to women for longer periods and men for shorter durations.

Climate control in relation with the provided activities in parks is a major problem. Especially, playground areas are very problematic. Neither the play area for children, nor the waiting areas for mothers are protected from weather almost in all parks. Elderly users also complain from the lack of appropriate climate control elements in seating areas. In limited areas where there is protection from weather with trees or overhead structures, this time people are suffering from limited amount of seating units. While plants can be used as a solution to climate control problems, they are not used effectively in neighborhood parks in Balçova. There are mostly small scaled plants or deciduous plants in the parks and they are not sufficient to create shadow.

Maintenance and hygiene problems affect the use of neighborhood parks significantly. Although there is a certain level of formal control through periodical cleaning in parks by the municipality; parks are still not clean and in well condition due to people who do not embrace parks and clean after themselves. Most of the time, the respondents expect municipality to solve cleaning problems or to have personnel in the park for the control. Only in Süleyman Ersever Parkı informal control mechanism through the existence of café works and both users and the personnel of the café try to take care of the hygiene or maintenance problems of the park.

Having commercial or residential facilities around the parks change the uses and users of the parks significantly. While being surrounded by commercial activities (e.g. Duru Park and Muhtarlık Parkı) enable parks to be perceived as a part of the commercial facilities and used as a cut through or resting stop, being surrounded by residential and education facilities such as (e.g. Süleyman Ersever Parkı and Ercüment Özgür Tesisleri) make parks to be perceived as an extension of homes and such perception increases the feeling of comfort and safety. There are also certain negative aspects of each. For instance having commercial facilities around the park increases the variety of the users and attracts people from outside the neighborhood as well which

decreases the level of familiarity and feeling of safety especially women users. On the other hand, having residential facilities around the park may make users such as mothers to feel secure while it makes young women who use the park with her boyfriend feel trapped in between the looks of neighbors and restricted from behaving as they wish.

The level of familiarity with the parochial realm of the neighborhood space and the satisfaction from the neighborhood parks is related with the length of the stay in Balçova. Mostly people who live in Balçova for longer years know the surrounding environment better and have more acquaintances so this may result in stronger ties with the parochial ordering system and social ties which give a feeling of security. New comers are not that well integrated with the neighborhood yet so they may not feel as comfortable. Most of the Balçova residents are living there for long periods so there are intimate neighborliness relations; however the ones who recently moved carry their previous experiences of where they are coming from. It is possible to understand the reflections of intimate neighborliness relations in Süleyman Ersever Parkı from the interview results mentioning that it is a family environment which provide a chance for socialization with neighbors in the park. On the other hand since Duru Park is more open to people from all around so it is not possible to feel such strong relations other than couple of users who use the park everyday such as the old man sitting at the same bench everyday or the toilet cleaning lady who has been working there for the last 10 years.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **USERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS IN BALÇOVA**

As Hutchinson (2009) states based on the prejudice and assumptions by the society, defined social roles and expectations for appropriate behaviors can limit activities of certain groups in the society. Users develop certain perceptions about neighborhood parks based not only on physical and social characteristics of parks, its surrounding neighborhoods and other park users but also on individual experiences and limitations. All these perceptions have their bases on the patriarchal relationships in the society, attribution of separate spheres for women and men, gendered role divisions and planning decisions that do not consider the needs of different groups of the society that cause the hardship of fulfilling roles due to the separation of urban functions in the city, and finally experienced feelings of fear and exclusion while in public spaces. In addition to those, stories heard about certain incidents happening in parks, warnings from the family members or the messages from the media all affect perceptions about neighborhood parks. Deriving from the results of my study, this chapter firstly discusses the above mentioned issues with a specific focus on different perceptions about women's use of neighborhood parks and then effects of gendered role divisions and daily responsibilities of women on women's park use, and finally women's feeling of comfort and safety while using neighborhood parks.

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first section focuses on the details of users' perceptions regarding women's use of neighborhood parks. The second section explores the relationship between women's daily responsibilities and how they combine those with park use. The third section concentrates on women's perceptions of safety and comfort in neighborhood parks and how these perceptions are shaped by certain factors and reflected to use of neighborhood parks. Finally, the last section of this chapter summarizes all these findings regarding this issue.

## 7. 1. Previous Experiences Shaping Use of Neighborhood Parks

Generally the concept of public, is perceived as the domain of the white, upper-middle class heterosexual male which cause women in cities (and other disadvantaged groups) not to be able to use public spaces such as streets and parks, especially when alone (Massey, 1994), and simply cannot wander around in the city as much as men can do (Fenster, 1999). Women are among the least represented groups among the park users (Hutchison, 2009) and they experience major differences while using parks (Henderson, Hodges, and Kivel, 2002). Wearing and Wearing's (1988) state that, unlike men, many women think that they do not have the right or the time to participate in leisure activities and this reflect to their park use behaviors.

According to the 70% of user survey participants at the first sight there is not much difference between women and men while using neighborhood parks in Balçova. However when survey and interview questions go deeper results start to reveal the real thoughts of women and men, and explain their daily experiences which indicate the inequalities that they experience in parks..

*“We can sit here comfortably (showing the playground part) **but** as you can see men are everywhere, they can use the park more than women do. Men are sitting on all the benches. I was going to sit on the bench next to the playground. Even that one is occupied by a man”* (Duru Park, woman, 34, married with two children, high school graduate).

*“I think there are no differences between women and men **but** men are always more comfortable. We are not as comfortable as they are. For instance while I am sitting here I do not feel relaxed because of all the men sitting there at the coffeehouse”* (Woman, 37, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“**Of course** men are more comfortable than us. If there is a man sitting next to me I can neither talk with that man nor with my friend. Neither me nor that man can be comfortable”* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 61)

The user survey indicates that there are gender based differences between men and women while using parks. Results of the user surveys not only changes according to individual parks but also change according to **gender**. 60% of the respondents who think that there is gender based differences in the use of neighborhood parks think that

men are mostly more comfortable in parks (59% of this group is *women*), 20% of those think that women are more comfortable in parks (78% of this group is *women*) and 10% of those think that women can be more comfortable if other park users do not disturb them (75% of this group is *men*). However these results change significantly among four parks (Figure 74). While 75% of women think that men are more comfortable in Duru Park, 80% of women think that women are more comfortable in Süleyman Ersever Parkı. Süleyman Ersever Parkı is the only park where women think that they are more comfortable than men. The main reason can be the existence of high numbers of women that use the park for childcare purposes and being surrounded by residential facilities. On the other hand, Ercüment Özgür Tesisleri is the only park where men think that activities and use of parks for men and women are different so those cannot be compared and it is not possible to say that one is more comfortable than the other. This is mostly based on different activity preferences based on gender. While men prefer sports activities, women prefer using café in this park most of the time.

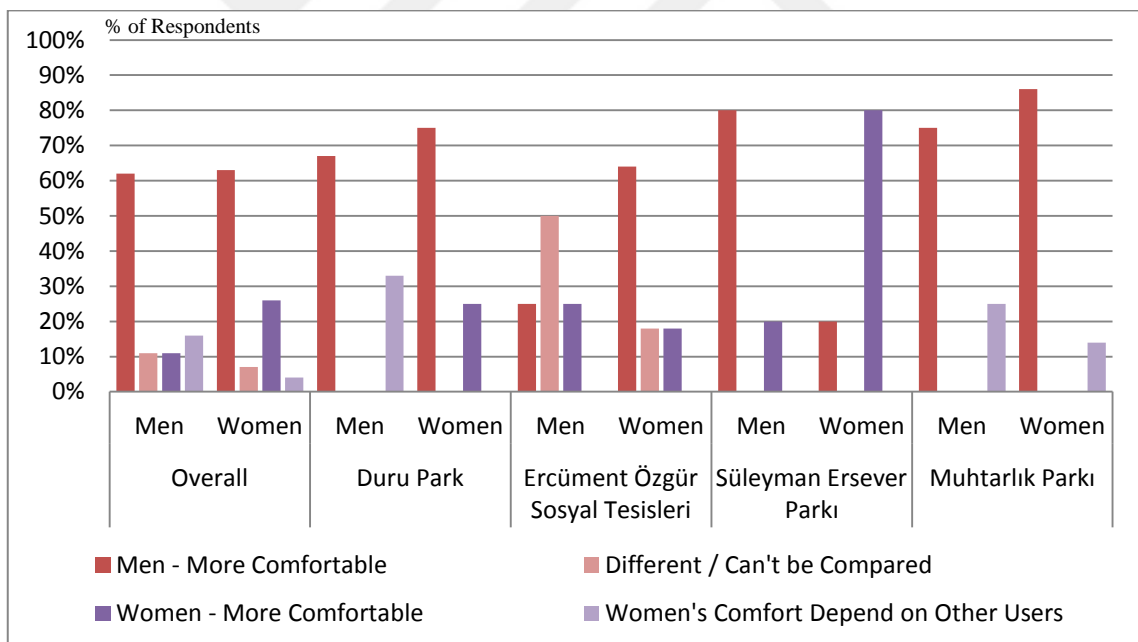


Figure 74. Perceptions of park use differences between men and women

Respondents who state that there are differences among women and men in the use of neighborhood parks are most likely to think that there are differences between women and men in terms of park use in general (Independent variable: Q24ii, positive, 1%). Additionally, respondents who state that they have a special preference between



using a neighborhood or out of neighborhood park most likely think that there are differences between women and men in terms of park use in general. (Independent variable: Q24i, positive, 5%)

According to individual park results stating that men are more comfortable in neighborhood parks, Muhtarlık Parkı has the highest rate (Overall: 18%, Muhtarlık Parkı: 23%) and Süleyman Ersever Parkı (Süleyman Ersever Parkı: 13%) has the lowest rate. This result can be evaluated as women’s park use experiences in Süleyman Ersever Parkı are more positive than the other parks while women are not as comfortable in Muhtarlık Parkı. (Figure 75).

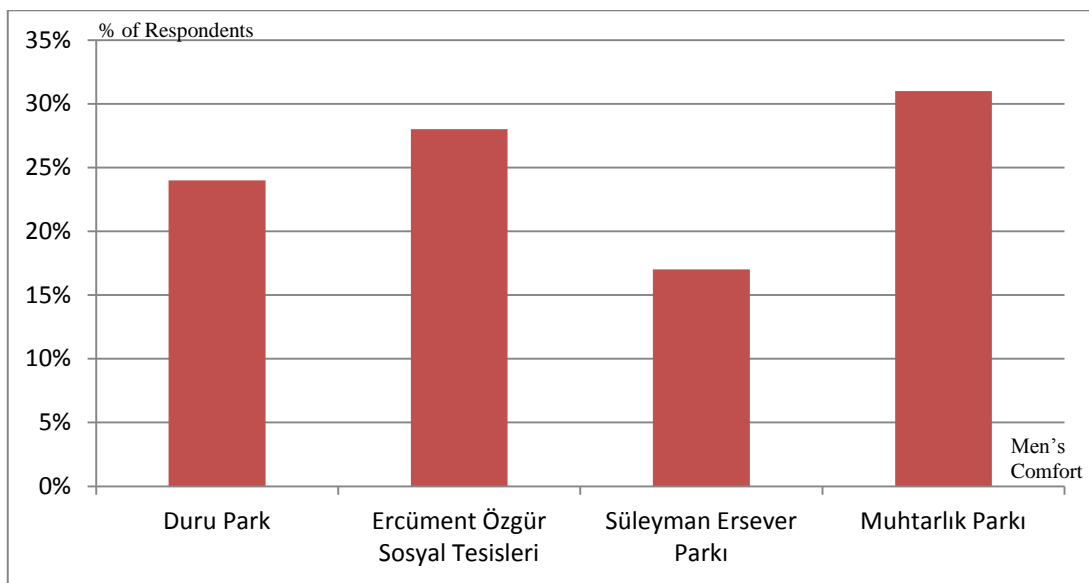


Figure 75. Men are more comfortable while using parks in each park

Result of the study indicates that women perceive neighborhood parks as an extension of private realm of the homes. Deriving from Lofland (1989)’s definition and Hunter (1985)’s discussions neighborhood parks can be considered important parts of parochial realms. This situation is mostly based on both men’s and women’s perception about the safety and comfort of women in neighborhood parks. Study results indicate that as a result of these perceptions, women see Süleyman Ersever Parkı as an extension of the private space that they are assumed to belong to and an area where women create opportunities to get together with their friends and carry certain household habits to parks which starts to convert these public spaces into areas of family spaces. With these

aspects neighborhood parks are different than other public realms which is the social life with strangers (Pitkin, 1981).

*“I am very comfortable here. Instead of sitting at home, I prefer to sit here together with my friends and do my handcrafts or read book. It is my favorite, I like being here. It is an open air environment and very calm. Noone disturbs me here. I am happy. It is the best quality of this park. I never experienced any negative event here”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, Woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

*“I have two daughters and we like to have our breakfast here. I prepare everything and come here to the park. We sit on the picnic tables and have our breakfast. It creates a change. When we are here, I also see my friends and they join us. We sit for very long hours. It is so nice to have these opportunities”* (Women, 45 married with two children, university)

In Duru Park, the existence of a single user group in dominant number is another factor that changes women's perceptions. In such places where there are large groups of men and elderly, women and men start to think that in those spaces women need to be more careful about their behaviors. Respondents in Duru Park mostly think that men are much more dominant in parks in terms of number so they can behave more comfortably in the ways that they are using parks.

*“Of course there are differences between women and men. It is haremlik selamlık. Women have certain constraints so there are more men than women”* (Woman, 51, widow with no child, university graduate).

*“First of all men are using the park more actively. Women hardly find places to sit and sit close to each other. When tea houses put their tables in the park, I never see women here. Women are mostly sitting in groups of 2 or 3 and waiting their children. Additionally, the surrounding stores are mostly men dominated. They also use the park for talking on the phone or sit. Men can also build a psychological tie with these public spaces starting from their youth. Look at them they give names to parks, have memories from the days that they were drinking there after school. They go to any park at any time they want, they can sit there together with their friends and drink. Noone would tell anything. I cannot think of any such memories”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

*“We cannot go to park as comfortably as men. There are mostly children young and elderly men. Especially elderly men go there and sit all day long. Even if we want to go to the park, we cannot find a place to sit”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“Even if there are close numbers of men and women in the park during the day, after a certain time of the day, there are only men”* (Woman, 26, single, PhD student).

According to user survey results in four parks, when respondents are asked whether there is a difference between using a neighborhood park or other parks for different genders or not, 40% of the respondents state that there is a difference and 82% of those would prefer neighborhood parks for variety of reasons. Majority of those, 80% state that women should use neighborhood parks because they think that neighborhood parks are safer (39%) and used by more “appropriate” users that they are familiar with (32%). User survey results of four parks indicate that the main reason to choose neighborhood parks is the location (53%). As these parks are easy to reach and in close distance to respondents’ homes, they prefer using neighborhood parks instead of other parks in Balçova such as Engelliler Parkı or Teleferik Parkı. Individual results also indicate similarities to overall results (Figure 76). These results are based on the perceptions of neighborhood parks as an extension of the home environment that are in close distance, used by familiar people and suitable for women’s daily routines.

In terms of gender results also indicate certain slight differences. For instance in Duru Park 24% of men thinks that the reason to choose Duru Park is to meet acquaintances, the rate for women is much lower (10%). However, in Süleyman Ersever Parkı the women (20%) who think that one of the main reasons to use a neighborhood park to meet acquaintances is much higher than men (6%) in the same park. This result is mainly based on the existence of crowded men group in Duru Park and women group in Süleyman Ersever Parkı.

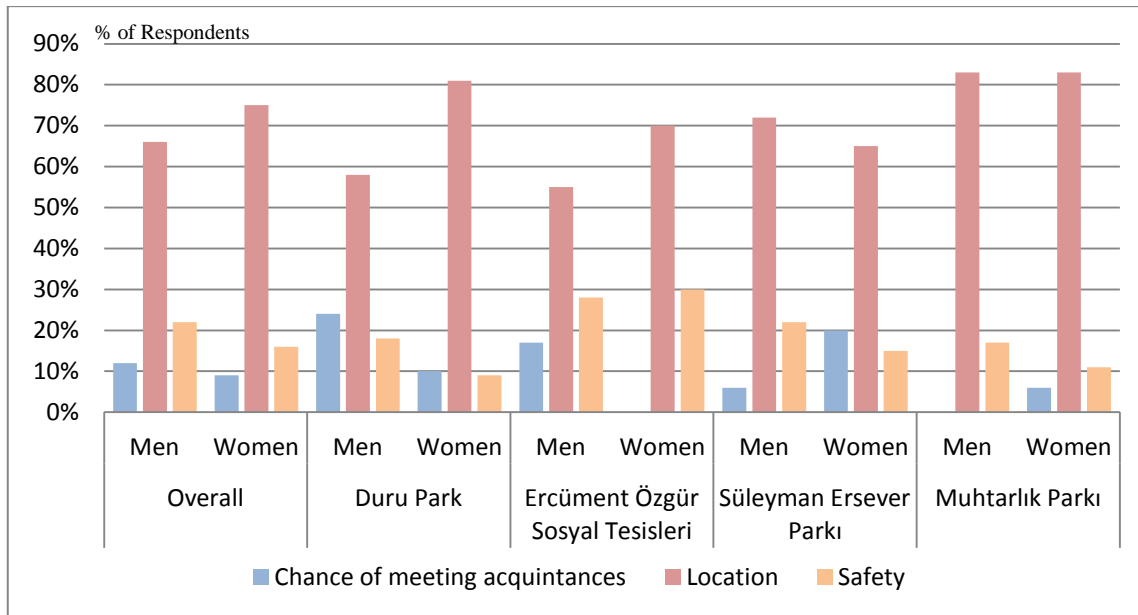


Figure 76. Respondents' neighborhood park preference reasons in each park

There are also certain issues that are important which affect users' perceptions and cause not preferring to use a park such as lack of design/activities (25%), fear (23%), lack of leisure time (19%) and park location (17%). These overall results also indicate differences among individual parks. When people are asked what could be the reasons for not using a neighborhood park (regardless of the park that they are surveyed), respondents in Duru Park state that lack of leisure time is one of the major reasons (36%), respondents in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri state the design (35%) and fear (32%) could be the main reasons. Location (32%) for respondents in Süleyman Ersever Parkı and fear (26%) for respondents in Muhtarlık Parkı can be significant reasons for not using those parks and those results are higher than the overall results (Figure 77). Although the question does not ask specific reasons for not using the parks that the respondents are found, there can still be effects of those parks and users previous negative experiences on the answers.

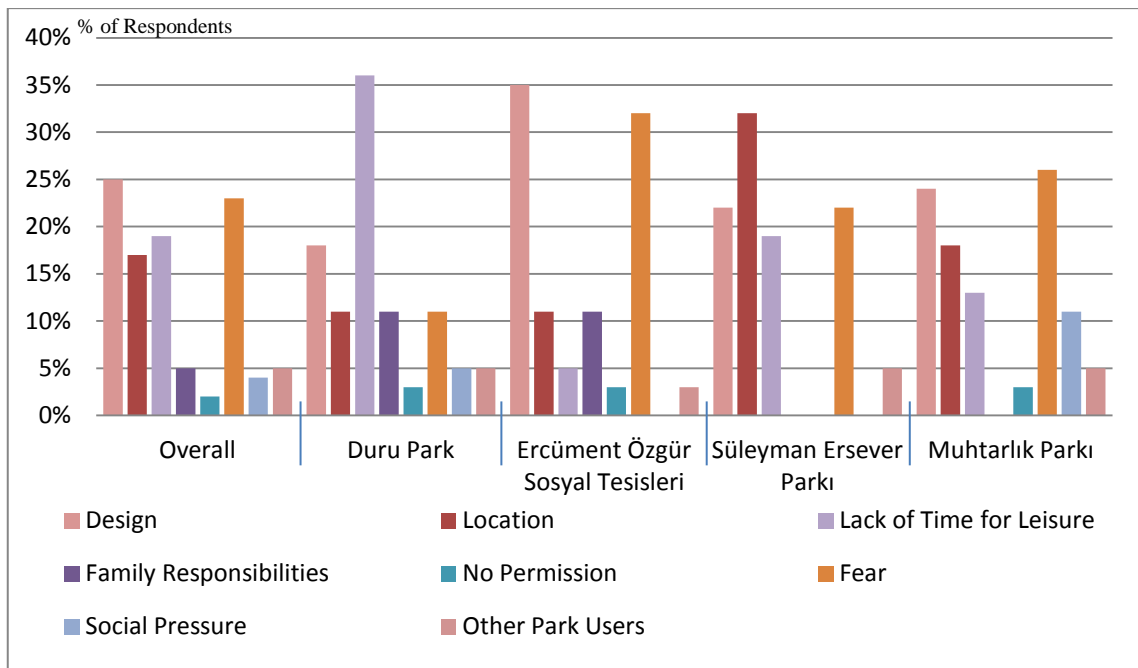


Figure 77. Respondents' reasons for not preferring to use a park in each park

Previous negative experiences have a major effect on perceptions regarding park use. Majority of the respondents, 65% state that they did not have a negative experience in a neighborhood park and majority of those are men. However, women respondents are more likely (70%) to state that they had a negative experience while using neighborhood parks (Independent variable: Q25, positive, 10%). The ones who experienced a negative incident state that those experiences are caused by other user's socio-economic characteristics (40%) such as age or gender or based on the incidents they have seen or experienced personally (27%). Individual park results indicate differences among themselves and based on *gender*. Highest number of male users (77%) experienced a negative incident based on the experienced or heard incidents in Duru Park. On the other hand all of the women's (100%) negative experiences are based on the experienced or heard incidents in Süleyman Ersever Parkı (Figure 78).

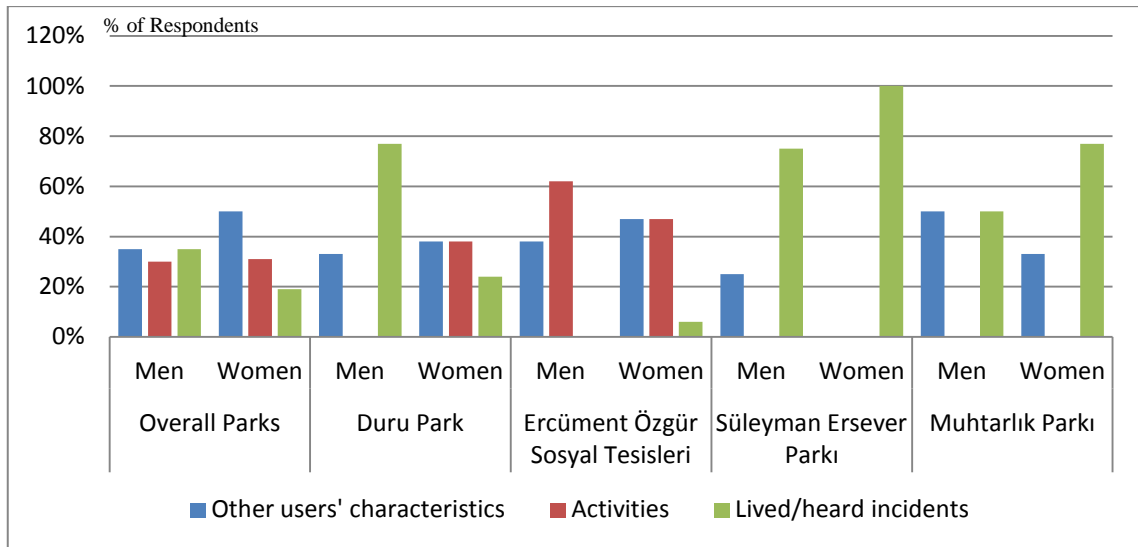


Figure 78. Experienced negative incidents based on gender in each park

These perceptions and previous park experiences cause especially for women to create a mental map of the places that they feel security concerns (Valentine, 1989). User survey results indicate that respondents are most likely not to use parks as a result of their park perceptions based on psychological reasons such as fear and social pressure while men respondents are most likely not to use neighborhood parks as a result of reasons that are based on physical characteristics of parks such as the design and the activities in the park (Independent variable: Q25, positive, 5%). All of these indicate the role of perceptions regarding park space on the definition of park user patterns. Another issue that has effects on park perceptions and park use is the daily responsibilities of women. As mentioned before women especially the ones with childcare responsibilities use parks as an opportunity for their own socialization needs. The coming section explores how daily responsibilities shape women's perceptions regarding their right to use neighborhood parks.

## 7. 2. Traditional Gendered Daily Responsibilities: A Barrier or an Opportunity to Use Neighborhood Parks

Gendered constitution of job distributions have important reflections on women's lives as those cause assignment of child and elderly care as well as all other reproductive and household related duties to women in addition to their paid job responsibilities (Tokman, 2010). Such responsibilities consume most of women's time

and energy which leaves less possibility to use neighborhood parks. As women is the mother, caregiver, belongs to home, responsible from taking care of her home and family; she has certain roles such as taking children to school, going to grocery shopping and so on. Feminist critiques argue against the planning of the cities and comment on problems that women face in their daily lives because of these gendered roles (Wilson, 1991; RTPI, 2007).

Results of my study indicate that all these daily responsibilities have important effects on the creation of a perception that reinforces the idea that women belong to home and should not spare any time for their own recreational needs. Most of the women interviewees mention that they cannot use parks at all mostly because of lack of time.

*“I am working, and on top of it I have duties at home. So I do not have time. I am only at home on Sundays and I spent it with household chores, children and so on. So I never think about going to a park”* (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

*“If you have a child, you cannot do anything for yourself. I have to plan all my day according to him. What else can I do?”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 55, married with three children, elementary school).

*“I do not have time to come to park. Since I’m working for very long hours, it is not very possible to go to any park. Even if the problems of Duru Park have been solved, I would not be able to come here.”* (Duru Park, woman, 30, married, pregnant, graduate level).

*“My household chores has the priority, I do not have time for park”* (Woman, 37, married with one child, high school).

Women’s existence in parks or other leisure activities is mostly a continuation of family and gender roles (Deem, 1986 cited in Hutchinson, 2009). Even if women use parks, the main motive for using is still related with daily roles – childcare – or the need for a break in the middle of daily work. For instance children’s school hour is a very important constraint for women’s daily programs. However, user interview results indicate that thanks to the location of Süleyman Ersever Parkı, which is next to a school, they can use it while they are accomplishing one of their daily responsibilities.

However, even such a use of neighborhood parks requires women to make several arrangements to be able to come to park.

*“I finish all of household chores in the morning and then I come here to pick my child up. I arrange my day accordingly. Actually, this is a part of my daily routine works”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

*“I come here everyday since children are at school. I come to pick them up everyday and wait him for 40 minutes or so while he is playing. There is not much to do just for myself since I am dependant on my child. Children are so young so I have to do everything together”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

*“Women come to parks mostly in the afternoon hours since they have children at school. After school they pick them up, bring home to feed them and finish their homework. Later, in the late afternoon or depending on the weather after dinner women bring children to park for play”* (Duru Park, Unstructured Interview – Woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school, toilet keeper).

One of the good examples of such a dependence on childcare is the two women from the focus interview group. They had children at school but since the school ends in the middle of their jewellery design class, they had to get permission from the instructor to go and pick up their children from the school. As the community house’s principle lets children spend time there, women could come back with children and continue the class. They say that, if they did not have the chance to bring their children to community house, they would not be able to join the class.

*“Having children is the biggest barrier for us to join these kinds of leisure activities. I can hardly come here for a day and other than that I cannot do anything just for my own sake due to all work at home. Even here, I am not that free. We have to go and pick our children from the school with my friend. Thank God they let us to bring them back here and spend some time with our friends here and learn something”* (Focus Group Interview)

The time that women can spare for their leisure activities and especially for park use is directly related to their household chores. Especially the location of Duru Park,



surrounding commercial activities gives an opportunity to combine daily routine work with leisure activities. Such a result also highlights the importance considering the needs of different groups (Bondi, L. & Rose, D., 2010; Burgess, 2008).

*“I do not come here very often since I’m working all day. Usually women work and after they finish working outside they go home and continue working at home. For example, normally I should have been at work at this time of the day but I got out early from work today. I should have stayed at home and cook dinner but I needed to do shopping and when we got outside my daughter starts crying to go to park and play here for a while. That is why now we are here. After she is finished playing I will continue shopping and go home and cook”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, married with one child).

*“Women use this park too. But do you know how? They do their shopping and then come here for 5-10 minutes to rest and they go home to finish household chores.”* (Duru Park, woman, 50, married with four children, elementary school graduate).

*“Most of the time, we come here on Sundays with my mother. I do not have much work to do at home on Sundays. My mother’s caretaker is on leave and I have to take care of my mother. That is why I take here to the park”* (Duru Park, woman, 51, widow with no child, university graduate).

These findings indicate the effects of certain traditional gendered roles that are assigned to men and women in their decision making processes to use neighborhood parks. Public infrastructure and transportation facilities are important factors that reinforce these roles in daily lives of women. As Burgess (2008) also state poor planning decisions have a major impact on women’s mobility in the city and access to urban resources (Burgess, 2008). Urban land-use patterns and the design of transportation systems create barriers for women to travel easily in the city. Such planning approaches reinforce gendered inequities in access to many facilities of the urban life and maintain traditional gender roles (Bondi & Rose, 2010). Interview results indicate that when women go parks with their children, they have certain concerns for the park selection. One of these concerns is the location and distance of park to their home and whether they have to take public transportation or not. Because having children means that women may have to carry not only the children but also their carriages, toys, food and so on. Many women state that having a park nearby their house

is very important since it is really hard to use public transportation with all these stuff with them and also it is not always possible to find suitable public transportation methods to go to parks.

User survey results in four parks prove the importance of the proximity of home to park clearly. People who live in close distance to parks are very likely to visit parks more frequently (Independent variable: Q4, positive, 1%). More than one fourth of the respondents state that park's proximity to living space is very important for using the specific park that they are interviewed. The mostly mentioned advantage of neighborhood parks is their proximity to their living spaces (37% - 58 out of 159) and ease of reach by walking (20% - 32 out of 159). (Figure 79). Use frequency analysis according to user survey results indicate that most of the non-frequent users live in 30 minutes walking distance. Almost none of those people who live in 30 minutes walking distance are frequent park users. On the other hand all of the users, who live in very close distances, 2 to 5 minutes walking, are either frequent or normal park users.

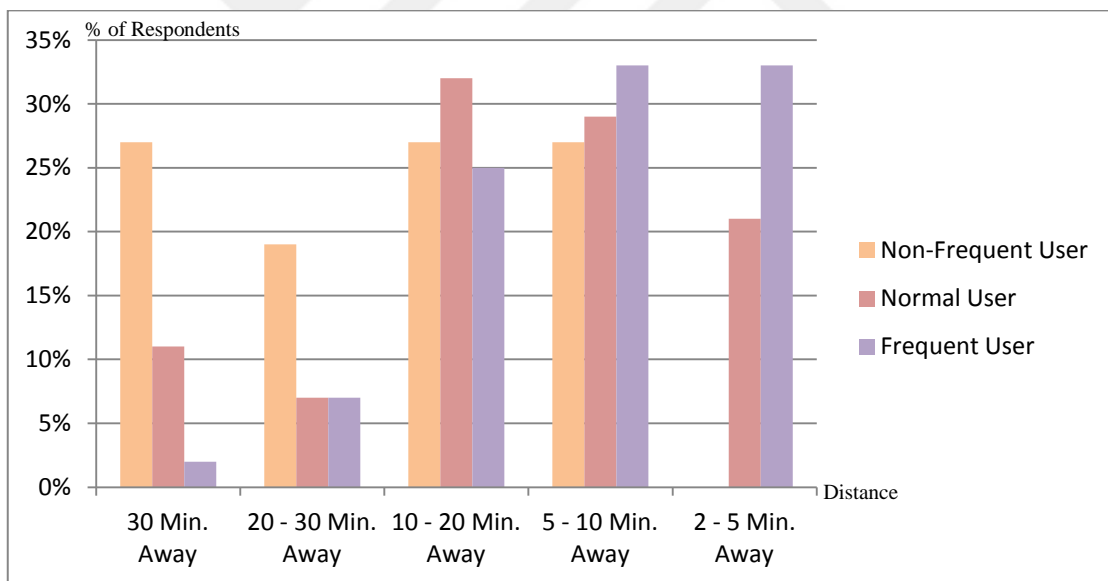


Figure 79. Use frequencies basedon distance between home and park

*“If you do not have a private cars, no park for you! Because it is really impossible to travel by dolmuş or bus with a small child constantly. Parks should be at walking distance. We have car so in the weekends we can go to seaside or picnic areas that are far from our home. But not everyone can have such a possibility or you may not have it all the time. For example during the weekdays, I cannot drive the car so we cannot go far”* (Woman, 35, married with two children, high school graduate).

*“Our lives are directly linked with our child. I go to park for him. But since it is really hard to travel with child I can only go as far as Agora or the park near Migros. But when I have limited time I come here to Duru Park since it is very close to home”* (Woman, 28, married with one child, high school graduate).

*“We cannot go to other parks. How can I go together with 3 children. I like the park near Koçtaş but it is not a park that I can go easily. We go to the closest parks. We can go to those far ones only in the weekends with my husband”* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 28, married with three children).

As mentioned previously, one of the primary reasons for women’s use of neighborhood parks is based on childcare since parks provide important benefits, especially for children. Children can participate to activities that are not possible at home, such as being involved into games in mud and water, explore nature and invent new games (Proshanski and Fabian, 1987) with other children. Interview results indicate that majority of women respondents (45%) in the user survey in four parks use neighborhood parks for their children to be able to benefit these issues. When women have childcare as the primary concern, their park perceptions directly relates with children’s benefits from parks. Those women can hardly think of any other reason to go to a park other than childcare and associate parks with mothers and children.

*“Park means an area where children can get rid of their extra energy. So it is very normal to have women in the park”* (Woman, 43, married with one child).

*“Park means child for me”* (Woman, 27, married with two children).

*“Park means a place where children can play but it is not like that here, the park is full of old people”* (Woman, 26, married with one child, high school).

*“It is for sure that there will be mothers in a park full of children. So the design of those places should be shaped according to women’s needs not men’s.”* (Focus Group Interview).

Park characteristics such as park size, active recreation facilities, active recreation programs, perception of safety, landscape design and aesthetics, maintenance, comfort and location are affecting children’s use of parks (Sideris & Sideris, 2010). When women’s primary reason to use a park is childcare, their design improvement requests mostly include child related activities. User interview results indicate that,

especially traffic around Duru Park and existence of elderly users and limited play equipments and safety features for children affect women's perceptions.

*“As a woman, to come here when I have my child, first of all, I would want these cars to be further away and there should be a distance between the traffic and playground”* (Duru Park, woman, 30, married, pregnant, graduate level).

*“I come to this park only for my child. Since she does not like swings we do not go to parks with swings but we come here to play with seesaws and slides”* (Duru Park, woman, 27, married with one child, university).

*“I would want these play equipments to be suitable not only for 3-4 years old children but also for older children. Otherwise our children get bored and start to run around. It gets harder to control them for us. So there should be more activities to keep them busy”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

### **7. 3. Perceptions of Safety and Comfort in Neighborhood Parks**

Research indicates that fear is socially constructed. Advices from parents, stories heard from friends, warnings that women hear almost from anybody that they see, culturally constructed ideas and feelings about women and the family (Valentine, 1992), all of those help to the construction of fear and perceptions regarding parks as dangerous places for women. Most of the time media presents crime news in a way that blaming women for their behaviors and imply that those incidents are deserved. Such an approach also empowers the violence in the society and increases the feeling of fear (Smith, 1985; Karisto and Tuominen, 1993). Additionally, education, crime-prevention advice and other warnings constantly supports the feeling of crime and remind women that they should be prepared and careful for something violent to happen if they do not listen to all these warnings (Gardner, 1990 cited in Koskela, 1999). Such a feeling of fear may convince women to follow the constructed gendered rules for how women should act in public which limit their freedom in public space (Day, 2001). Women experience a much higher threat of sexual violence than men, and as a result, tend to avoid certain areas they feel dangerous (Koskela, 1996). Roberts also emphasizes that

the fear of facing with violence limits women's use and enjoyment of public spaces in the city (Roberts, 1998; Valentine, 1998; Pain, 1991; Madge, 1997).

Feeling of safety and comfort are among the most important criteria that affect women's perceptions regarding the use of neighborhood parks. Interview results indicate that reasons of such a perception of safety are mostly based on the parochial social orders of neighborhood parks as areas that women are familiar with and social bonds among users who know each others differences and needs.

*"It is always better to be here with people that I know. You are safer. I feel safer"*. (Woman, 28, married with one child, high school graduate)

*"I never experienced a negative incident in Duru Park but I feel safer in a park close to my home as there are people that I know from the neighborhood, there is my grocery store on the corner. It is much more comfortable and safer. People that I know give a sense of safety"* (Woman, 27, married with one child, university graduate)

*"At least this is a place that we are familiar with. When we are in another park that is far away from my neighborhood, I cannot stay there until late hours. We know this area so we are more comfortable here"* (Woman, 34, married with two children, high school graduate).

Perceptions change according to individual parks. User survey results according to genders indicate that men and women have certain perceptions regarding women's use of neighborhood parks. When the respondents are asked whether there is a difference between men's and women's park use majority of the men (55%) and women (64%) stated there are differences. Such result clearly proves the perceptions both in men's and women's minds regarding women's place as the private space of the home not the public space of parks. In all parks except from Süleyman Ersever Parkı the rate of users who state that there are differences is higher. Only in Süleyman Ersever Parkı a higher percentage of men (55%) stated that there are no differences. This is mostly based on the existence of high numbers of women in Süleyman Ersever Parkı so men's perception starts to change (Figure 80).

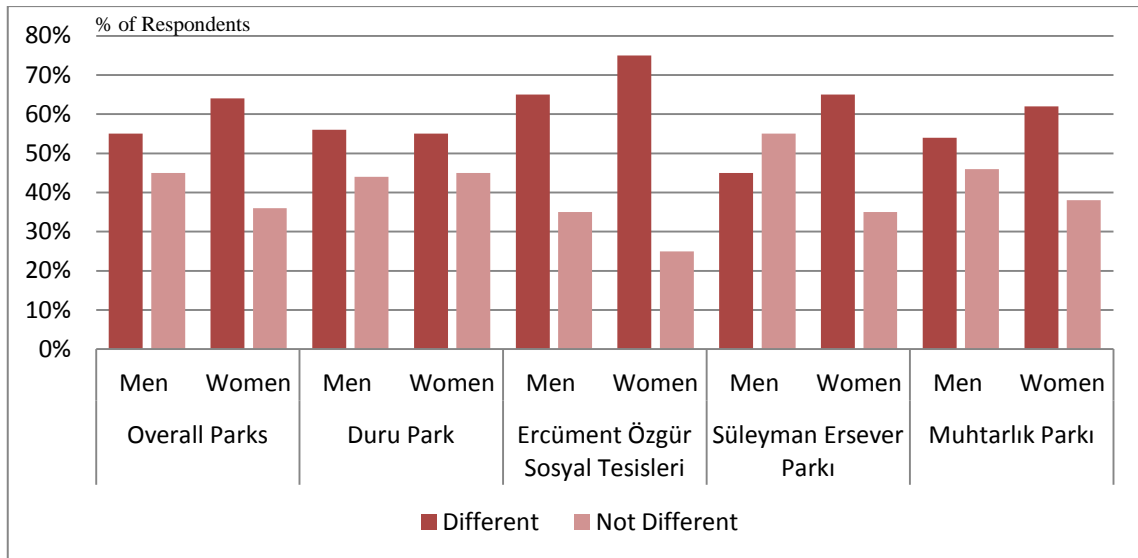


Figure 80. Difference between men's and women's neighborhood park use

While the mostly mentioned feeling in Duru Park is fear by women, it is comfort in Süleyman Ersever Parkı. However, when I analyze women's safety in Duru Park and go deep with the interview questions, I found out that the common perception is that Duru Park is a safe environment both for women and men. None of the respondents stated that they experienced any negative incident and the common perception is that if any unwanted event occurs, the other users of the park and the surrounding stores would intervene as they are all the people of the same neighborhood. Here this result also indicates the importance of the neighborliness feeling. Even if people do not know each other personally, being from the same neighborhood create a kinship and feeling of safety.

*“No one disturbs me here, they are all decent people from this neighborhood. There are very good neighborliness relations here”* (Woman, 28, married with one child, high school).

*“Everybody can spend time here with no problem. No one disturbs each other”* (Woman, 43, married with one child, high school).

*“No, never, I did not see any negative incident here. I come here very often and no one disturbed me. For instance, I am sitting here alone as a woman and read newspaper for the last hour. No one disturbed me, no one said go away, and sit somewhere else. I haven't seen such a thing for years. I can sit here and eat and no one*

*would look at me (yan gözle)*” (Woman, 50, married with four children, elementary school).

Fear in public spaces negatively impacts women’s lives. Even though there are no negative incidents and the level of danger is not high, the perception of women being in danger still continues mostly because of the construction of gender identity for men and women (Day, 2001). Interestingly, although none of the respondents experienced a negative incident in Duru Park or in any public spaces, the feeling of fear still becomes a limiting factor for women’s use of public spaces. The main cause of this fear is based on the factors that diminish the familiar and perceivedly safe environment of the parochial realm such as the existence of certain landuses that invite outsiders and resulting stranger domination in the surrounding environment. Mostly mentioned reasons of women’s fear are the crowd, traffic around the park and the dominant existence of male users. Also the park’s design is very important in terms of creating sense of safety. For instance when one of the respondents compares Duru Park with another park, she states many important clues about the reasons of perception of fear.

*“There would be groups of young men drinking in the park. It was very large and no one would walk through the park. There were so many blind spots there. It was surrounded by houses and there were paths circling in the park. Although it was much larger and greener, I do not remember seeing women there. It was more like a gathering spot for men. I would be very scared to walk there in the evening. Duru Park is right by the main street so there are women there but still men are more dominant. Women are not active park users as men are. I think it is the same for all public spaces. Maybe it is because of the commercial facilities around. I would not use Duru Park in the evening either. There are so many men because of the coffee houses. I would pass by quickly rather than walking through the park”* (Woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

*“Duru Park feels insecure to me. It is very crowded and chaotic. People come and go, look at women. I would not prefer to sit there”* (Focus Group Interview).

Due to the perception that men can harm women in physical and psychological ways, existence of male users is one of the mostly mentioned concerns of women users. Even most of these women did not see any disturbing gesture or talk from those men;

they still state unrest about the dominant existence of men in and around the park. This perception significantly changes when men exist in public space with his family and children. Then the perception regarding that men change from “voyeur” and “dangerous” to “dad” or “family man”.

*“When you pass by all those men sitting at the coffeehouse, you should be ready for men staring at you”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“No, I never experienced a negative incident. It is just all those men sitting there. It makes me uncomfortable”* (Duru Park, woman, 30, married, pregnant, graduate level)

*“You go to park together with your family but there are 100 men sitting and gambling there. It is really uncomfortable for a woman. You cannot go there with your young daughter. Once we went there together with my daughter, one of the men came and sat next to us. So we couldn’t stay there any longer”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“When men also come here for their children, they do not create any problem for me. If he comes and sits alone, then it may be a problem. Noone can say anything to them as long as they are with children. This is the truth. There is difference from giving a look to staring. If that disturbs me then it is a problem. If he is with a child, he has to take care of him so he cannot look at anyone else”* (Süleyman Ersever Park<sub>1</sub>, woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

Results indicate that especially elderly women have these kinds of perceptions regarding men. In one of the focus group interviews, during the discussions, one of the younger respondents interrupted these older women stating their concerns regarding the existence of men in the park, and said:

*“Why is it us, women, who always afraid of men and ask for secure places where no men can enter? What can men do to us? The more we detach ourselves from parks, the more they think that the park is theirs. We should be there, use the parks and be confident so that they also respect us. If we behave properly no one can disturb us. If they are not happy with women being in the park, then they are free not to come to the park”* (Focus Group Interview)



Also during the unstructured interview with the toilet keeper in Duru Park, she stated the absurdity of women's such perceptions regarding men as something that needs to be careful about while in the same public space with man.

*"Haah, those women are so virtuous for sitting next to a man in the park. Then I ask them do not you go to a supermarket and stand in the same queue next to a man? Do not you ride on the dolmuş and sit next to a man? Eee you do! So why is it different for the bench in the park?"* (Duru Park, woman, 58, widow with 6 children, elementary school graduate, toilet keeper).

Men also have certain perceptions regarding women's existence in public space. Most of the respondents have a perception that based on women's behaviors, clothing and the time that they are going to park or certain types of use, they can be inviting trouble. So they state that women should be careful otherwise it is normal to experience any physical, psychological and verbal abuse. Such a perception also has impacts on women. Since women keep hearing these from the media or from their families while they are being raised, their perceptions are being shaped accordingly.

*"If a lady comes here and sits decently no one looks at her but if she does not know how to sit and behave then you should look for the blame on the woman. Who would disturb a woman sitting here with her integrity? What happens if such a decent woman sits among 50 men? Nothing!"* (Man, 62, widow with one child, university graduate, sitting at the same bench all day and everyday).

*"If you come here with inappropriate low neck clothes at the night time, of course they would look at you, even I would look at her. Or she should not go and sit next to a man if she did not come here to look for a husband"* (Unstructured Interview – Woman, 28, married with three children).

*"Experiences in parks changes from one person to other. It depends on your own behaviors"* (woman, 28, married with one child, high school graduate).

*"If a woman's eye is not always at outside then noone would disturb her. I was charming and very attractive girl when I was young. But noone disturbed me neither back then nor now"* (Woman, 50, married with four children, elementary school graduate).

*“If you do not look towards them (men), they would not look at you”* (Woman, 51, widow with no child, university graduate).

Interview results indicate that perceptions of users of Süleyman Ersever Parkı are slightly different than the users of Duru Parkı. Although the same interview questions are asked to participants, in Süleyman Ersever Parkı, the main focus was on the comfort of women in the answers. Respondents constantly mentioned the importance of being together with people in the park that they see almost everyday and the existence of a café which is run by people that they know and trust. Respondents also mentioned that existence of high numbers of children and women, and male parents increase their feeling of comfort. This clearly signifies one of the most important characteristics of neighborhood parks is being a parochial space that brings people from the same neighborhood together and create chance of encounter, socialization and share the commons.

*“I never felt discomfort here. It is mostly women here. There are male parents as well. There are also male teachers from the school. There is a family environment here. Everybody knows each other. We know who is here for what purpose. We can easily identify an outcomer. When we feel discomfort, we tell to Murat Ağabey and he takes care of it. We trust him a lot. We can let our children play here without worry and we can sit here, drink tea. When I am not there, there are other parents in the playground who also know me and my child. If anything happens to one child, all other parents look after him. It is a family environment. For instance, I can even leave my bag here and go to school. Nothing happens or I do shopping and leave bags to Murat Ağabey while I finish my other chores”* (Woman, 40, married with two children, secondary school).

*“I’ve never experienced a negative incident here. I live very close. My older daughter also studied in this school so I am familiar with this environment. I spend all my leisure time here and never had any complaint. It is very comfortable here”* (Woman, 40, married with two children, high school).

*“Usually women use this park. Men and young people are very rare. So I never felt discomfort here and never saw a negative incident. For instance the café in the park is open until 2-3 am. If I get bored I can come here with a friend and sit here comfortably. Because I know Murat Ağabey is here”* (Woman, 38, married with two children, high school).

*“I’ve never seen any discomforting event here. It is mostly parents here as far as I know. Outcomers are very rare and it also does not create a problem”* (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

When Duru Park and Süleyman Ersever Parkı interview results are compared in terms of perceptions regarding women’s feeling of safety and comfort we see similar results with user survey results. As mentioned before Duru Park has the lowest level of satisfaction and Süleyman Ersever Parkı has the highest level of satisfaction by women. This result is based on the existence of strangers and more complex uses in and around Duru Park which lowers the levels of the parochial order and social ties in Duru Park.

*“It is much more decent here in Süleyman Ersever Parkı when compared to Duru Park. I feel like I am sitting on needles in Duru Parkı. You know children kidnapping rates are increasing these days and parks are open to everybody. In Duru Park I cannot take my eyes off my children. I need to follow constantly so I get very nervous”* (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school).

*“Süleyman Ersever is a family park. There are not that many men around. So there is not much to disturb women. It is not like Duru Park. It is comfortable here. It is for families, husbands and wives and for kids. It is peaceful. But there are tea houses in Duru Park and it is captured by elderly men. It needs to be redesigned. My house is very close to Duru Park but I do not go there anyway, I come here because I do not feel safe there. So I bring my children to here (Süleyman Ersever Parkı)”* (Woman, 50, married with three children, elementary school).

*“The existence of so many men in Duru Park is very disturbing. There is such a problem there. I cannot sit there comfortably when I go there. Tea houses are so close and integrated with the park. That is why I cannot spend time peacefully. But for instance, here men and women can sit together. Noone disturbs each other. I’ve never seen a disturbing incident. So it is very comfortable here. Everyone can spend time here. I think it is because of school. But I feel unsafe in Duru Park, I cannot spend time there”* (Woman, 40, married with two children, high school).

*“There are tea houses and so many men in Duru Park. I do not feel comfortable there so I do not go there alone. If I go, I go with my husband. I think it is not an appropriate place for an alone woman”* (Woman, 44, married with two children, elementary school).

#### 7. 4. “Unwanted Users” Shaping Park Perceptions

One of the most important characteristics of urban public spaces is being a shared space that gets its qualities from those who use and enjoy. Citizens create valuable public spaces by indicating their behaviors, emphasizing their claims and by using these areas for their own benefits (Goheen, 1994). However, today’s public spaces are formed of exclusions. That is why instead of a single “public” occupying a symbolic public space, there are multiple “counter-publics” who creates multiple sites for public expression (Fraser, 1990). Although most negative experiences such as assaults, murders and rapes are realized in the private realm of the home by people whom the victim knows, people mostly afraid of strangers in public spaces. So it can be said that “fear of crime is the fear of strangers” (Hunter, 1985, p. 217).

As mentioned previously, one of the comforting aspects of the neighborhood parks as parochial realms is the existence of familiar faces from the network of the neighborhood; however, when outsiders start to appear in the neighborhood parks this may start disturb people and especially women users who have “fear of strangers”. Most of the people have certain fear, prejudices and resulting perceptions towards ‘others’ whose existence creates worry and concern (Sibley, 1995). These ‘others’ may be older children, young men, some ethnic minority groups, people who are homeless or have mental health problems and may be simultaneously feared and fearful (Pain, 2001). These divisions and conflicts can also be seen in the results of my case study. Results clearly state that users may have certain concerns about specific user groups based on their socio-economic characteristics such as age and gender. Deriving from these characteristics women perceive and label “men at tea houses”, “young men”, “older children”, “elderly men” and “appropriate people” as “unwanted users”. In the following part I will try to reflect the mostly mentioned issues related with other park users and their effect on women’s park use preferences.

According to user survey results, “unwanted” park users have a significant effect on the use frequency and duration of people. User survey results indicate that although 53% of the respondents think positively regarding park users in Balçova, still almost the other half of the respondents (47%) think that park users are very disrespectful, noisy and dirty. It is seen that the negative comments usually include mostly socio-economic characteristics based labels such as “teenagers”, “men” and “drug addicts” whereas positive comments include “our neighbors” and “families”. Individual park results

indicate certain differences from overall results. For instance while almost all respondents in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri (94%) and majority of the respondents in Süleyman Ersever Parkı (59%) is satisfied with other park users, majority of the respondents in Duru Park (62%) and Muhtarlık Parkı (58%) are not satisfied with other park users. Deriving from the previously mentioned results, this result may be related with the location of the parks and the surrounding landuses (Figure 81).

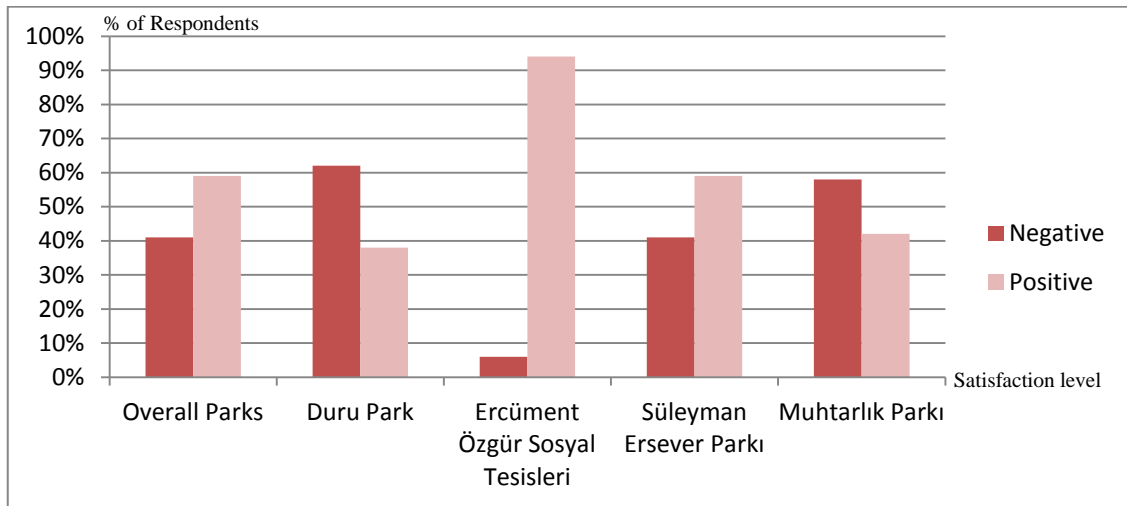


Figure 81. Respondents' satisfaction levels from other park users in each park

Based on the gender of respondents, ideas of respondents regarding other users of the park change significantly. For instance while 65% think positively, 59% of women think negatively regarding other park users in Duru Park. As explained previously this satisfaction mostly derives from the male users of the surrounding tea houses and elderly men who occupy all the seating for all day. Different than other parks, in Ercüment Özgür Sosyal Tesisleri only a few people have negative thoughts regarding other users and the rest think positively (Figure 82).

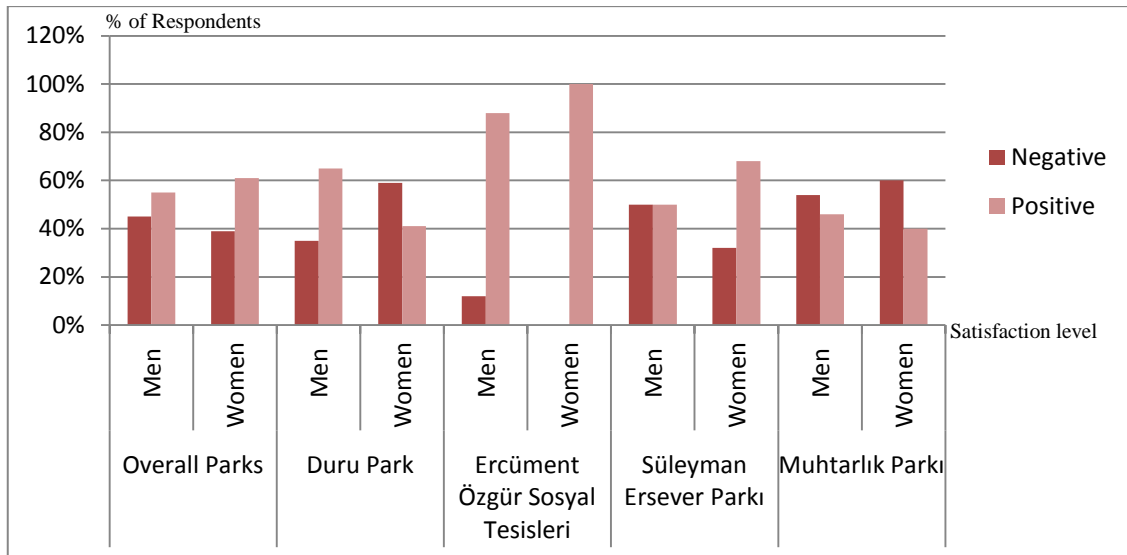


Figure 82. Satisfaction levels from other park users based on gender

### Men at Tea Houses:

As McDowell (1999) states when ‘public’ spaces are dominated by certain groups they may exclude others either by their actual behaviors or by the threats that their presence poses. What these experiences cause is a sense of exclusion from public spaces because of fear and lack of safety. Result of the study clearly proves this situation. User survey results indicate that a large group of women in Duru Park (38%) state that they would be uncomfortable depending on other users behaviors while in neighborhood parks. Additionally during the face to face and focus group interviews, women kept mentioning their discomfort regarding the men sitting in the adjacent tea houses. However, when they are asked if they ever experienced any problem or any incident related due to those men sitting at tea houses, all the answers were: No. Although none of these women experienced or witnessed any negative incidents, they keep complaining about the existence of those tea houses and men. So this situation expresses the gendered prejudices in the minds of women and their perception of men as “others” and as a source of danger.

### Young Men:

During the interviews, responses also indicated that women have certain perceptions about young male park users who are around 15 and 18 years old significantly. It is mostly stated that this group of young men generally gets together to drink and smoke in the parks. They prefer obscure locations inside the parks and late

hours of the day to spend time there for “inappropriate” behaviors. Due to this perception, existence of young men (even if women do not see them most of time other than the ones who mostly use Duru Park in the weekends while waiting internet café) generally creates a safety concern for women especially for evening hours.

*“If I come here in the evening, I feel nervous as generally groups of young people use the park at that time and they realize indiscreet behaviors and make me uncomfortable”* (Duru Park, women, 30, pregnant, married, graduate level).

*“I cannot go to Muhtarlık Parkı as it is in an obscure location. We hear some negative incidents happening there. Generally young people create these problems. They prefer these calm places to drink and fight”* (Focus Group Interview).

*“Sometimes young guys who are around high school age come and sit at the top part of the play equipment and they smoke there and talk with a very bad language so I do not want my children to play there”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 35, married with two children, high school graduate).

### **Older Children:**

For women respondents who use parks mostly for childcare purposes, there is a group of users which they keep calling “older children”. These women keep complaining about older children as they are too old to use the play equipments in parks and they disturb younger children who are playing there. On the other hand, mothers of older children complain as well regarding the lack of appropriate play equipments that are suitable for their children.

*“Sometimes older children come to the park and they start fights with other children. These are mostly middle or high school students who are too old to play here. They disturb my son a lot. So as soon as they come I tell them to go and play somewhere else”* (Duru Park, woman, 35, married with two children, high school graduate).

*“My only problem is that older children come and throw away their trash or spill fruit juice over the slide. One day my daughter was playing there and she got all messy with the juice that is spilled over. I also hear that once those older children pissed on the slide and the other child sliding afterwards got all wet and dirty”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 27, married with one child, university graduate)

### **Elderly Men:**

As user survey results indicate Duru Park is generally being used by retired men, store owners and people working around. Not only the men sitting at the tea houses, but also the men sitting inside the park become disturbing for women from time to time. According to my observations and results of the user interviews, women and men prefer different sides of the park as long as it is possible. Apart from the vertical separation in the park (playground and the pool side) there is also a horizontal separation. Since there are two rows of bench on the south and north sides of the pool, in certain times of the day women prefer one side and men prefer the other side sometimes.

*“Since there are too many men in and around the park on top of the tea house issue I would never fancy Duru Park and spend time here. It is not a place that I can sit and spend some time as a woman”* (Duru Park, woman, 29, single, PhD student, landscape architect).

*“The users of döner kiosk are known. They are single men who cannot cook properly everyday. So they come and eat there. So it is not a suitable place for a woman”* (Duru Park, woman, 26, single, PhD student).

*“Park became like a wedding show on the TV. On one side, there are elderly men and on the other side elderly women. They throw comments to each other from time to time and start chatting. It is as if they are selecting themselves spouses. It is interesting that there are more elderly people here than younger ones and more men than women. Because most of them are retired men with no responsibilities”* (Süleyman Ersever Parkı, woman, 43, married with one child, high school graduate).

According to observations most of the users especially at the pool side of Duru Park are elderly people. Depending on the socio-economic characteristics and use purposes of interview respondents their ideas regarding the elderly people changes. As the respondents' age increases their sympathy for elderly users increases as well. As respondents are younger, they use the park mostly for their children and they start to criticize the existence of elderly people.

*“Most of the users in this park are retired old people who are from this neighborhood. They come, sit, eat, drink, chat and leave. They do not disturb anybody”* (Duru Park, woman, 50, married with four children, elementary school graduate).



*“Retired people generally want to escape from home, they do not have any responsibilities at home so they come and stay here in the park for very long time. However, they keep complaining about the noise of the children. So I feel very annoyed at every time that they complain. I am trying to understand them but this is the only place that my child can play and get rid of her extra energy. Sometimes elderly women put a table at the playground area to play cards and chat but they constantly complain about children and say that we are running away from home as it is hot but we cannot stand to this noise of your children. It is not a place for them to chat. It is a child’s to play. Sometimes it gets too crowded that I cannot follow my child running around. There should be separate parks for elderly people and children”* (Woman, 26, married with one child, high school graduate).

#### **“Inappropriate” People:**

People have certain prejudices in their minds and classification of people according to their income or education status and even according to the outer look as well which is one of the causes of negative perceptions regarding other park users. So in some of the respondents’ answers we can see such prejudices.

*“Culture is very important. Since there are people from **different cultures** in Balçova, the parks are in such bad conditions”* (Woman, 42, married with two children, high school graduate).

*“Of course I never go to parks; I go to places like cafes. There are **better people** in terms of **their levels** in cafes. Parks are generally scary for me. If it is right to say that **free places are full of people** and I do not feel comfortable in such a place that I do not know those users”* (Woman, 27, married with one child, university graduate)

*“It is very crowded and there are people from **different classes**. I cannot stay there comfortably”* (Woman, 37, married with one child, high school graduate).

## **7. 5. Summary of the Chapter Findings**

Men and women have perceptions on the use of neighborhood parks by different user groups. Women’s neighborhood park use is also shaped by these perceptions. Most of the men and women perceive public spaces as places where men are freer, more

secure, more welcomed and more dominant in number. They think that women should prefer to use neighborhood parks as they are more of a parochial realm where private lives of homes that is assigned to women instead of other parks in the city.

Men respondents' perceive neighborhood parks as more "suitable" for women than other parks as long as women behave, dress up, speak "appropriately" and use between "appropriate" hours. Especially Süleyman Ersever Parkı and parks that are used dominantly by women or by men who are from the neighborhood and use the park with a purpose such as childcare are "suitable" for women.

Women also perceive neighborhood parks as more "suitable" for women's use and comfort due to the ideas that neighborhood parks are more secure through the existence of unofficial control mechanisms of the parochial realm of neighborhoods. They are in close distances to homes and other daily routines such as school and shopping, easy to reach, provide "appropriate" activities for women and an area where they can realize activities that they carry from their homes such as sitting together with friends, feeding children or knitting and can be together with familiar people from the neighborhood. Results indicate that women do not prefer to use certain out of neighborhood parks due to feeling of fear towards people that they are not familiar with, feeling of chaos and crowd, location of the park in relation with the surrounding environment and its accessibility.

Since women perceive neighborhood parks as an extension of the private realms – as parochial realms – they develop certain strategies to use neighborhood parks by combining their traditional daily responsibilities with socialization purposes and reflect use of neighborhood parks as a part of daily roles and responsibilities. Most of the time women and men associate parks with children and their mothers. Since there is such an assumption, women with no childcare responsibility state that they do not need to use parks. Majority of the regular park users in Balçova is mothers who have childcare responsibilities.

So the common perception is shaped based on legitimizing women's existence in parks through other daily responsibilities. Parks that provide opportunities to combine traditional daily roles with leisure activities such as Süleyman Ersever Parkı are perceived as a part of parochial space and as an area where they can realize certain activities of the private life of homes. One of the most common activities in Süleyman

Ersever Parkı is the women's get togethers<sup>8</sup> (*gün*) where they bring food from home sit together and chat, gold days<sup>9</sup> (*altın günü*) or birthday celebrations in the park while waiting for their children to get out of school or finish playing in the playground. In addition to these, women request events such as courses and areas where they can learn and practice certain handicrafts which are also activities of private life carried to parochial realm of the park. Parks' location is also important in terms of creating resting points in between different daily routines. Duru Park is a good example for such a use as it is located in a very crowded region of Balçova and surrounded by commercial activities. So when women come to this region for shopping or realizing other daily duties, they use Duru Park to rest for a while.

Feeling of fear and traces of previous experiences has important effect on perceptions on women's park uses. Although none of men and women respondents experienced any negative events while using neighborhood parks they still think that neighborhood parks may be dangerous for women. This is mostly based on the stories heard, previous experiences and socially constructed prejudices. Deriving from these previous experiences, there are certain user groups whom women perceive as "unwanted" and when parks are dominantly used by those groups, women's feeling of fear increases and they do not use such parks frequently and for long durations.

As a result of men's and women's perceptions, women use the parks that they feel secure, used by familiar users, providing variety of activities, close to home, far from noise and crowd, and surrounded by landuses/activities that provide opportunities for women's use as well such as Süleyman Ersever. Women hesitate to use the parks that they do not feel secure, not providing various activities, crowded with unfamiliar people coming from all other parts of the city, dominantly used by people whom they perceive as dangerous or elderly people who keep complaining about the noise of their children or leave no space for women's use in the park and surrounded by activities that women cannot use such as Duru Park.

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<sup>8</sup> Women periodically meet, usually in one's house in turns. Homeowner cook pastries and get prepared. Women sit and chat together. Sometimes they play card games. Most of the time children of those women also come after school if they have no one to take care of the children.

<sup>9</sup> Women get togethers to make savings. Every week women get together in one of the women's house and each women bring gold to the homeowner. This routine goes on until all women get their golds.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION: DIFFERENCES IN THE USES AND NEEDS OF NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

This thesis aimed to answer the questions below to analyze the relationship between park users' socio-economic characteristics, social and physical characteristics of parks and surrounding neighborhoods and women's experiences based on their park perceptions while using neighborhood parks.

Q1: How do people use neighborhood parks? How do user's socio-economic characteristics relate to their neighborhood park use?

Q2: How do physical and social characteristics of parks affect individual's use of neighborhood parks?

Q3: How do the gendered perceptions affect women's neighborhood park use?

The results of this study indicates that women's park use habits such as use purposes, frequencies, durations or the activities and social lives that they participate to in parks seriously change according to the provided amenities and programs in the parks, their design and locations. Additionally, surrounding landuses around the parks such as residential, commercial or education and users of those areas and park users have significant affects on women's preferences on using or not using the parks, the time selections and decisions to use a park alone or with a company such as child, friend or family member. First section of this chapter summarizes the results answering each research question of the study in detail and then the second section proposes suggestions to improve park use of different user groups.

***How do people use neighborhood parks? How do user's socio-economic characteristics relate to their neighborhood park use?***

User's socio-economic characteristics shape people's uses and needs of neighborhood parks as well as their individuals' preferences, limitations, daily responsibilities and routines. These directly change people's neighborhood park use

habits such as park use purposes, frequencies, durations, preferred park use times and preferences on using parks with someone or alone. Among all other socio-demographic characteristics, gender and age directly changes people's park use and needs in parks in Balçova.

*Gender* is one of the important socio-economic characteristics that affect park use habits of people and what they need from neighborhood parks. Attributed traditional roles such as picking up children from school or shopping and limited mobility opportunities such as lack of access to private car or hardship of using public transportation with children affect women's park uses and needs so these needs force them to combine some of their daily responsibilities with neighborhood parks use to get together with their friends, to socialize. Such opportunities help women to construct a social identity that is different than the ones that they have as a mother, wife or daughter. Most of the women perceive park use as a work to be completed so they arrange their park visit times and durations in relation with their daily responsibilities such as children's school hours, work hours and so on. Women's behaviors and the way that they get ready for their park visit – baking cakes and preparing *sarma*<sup>10</sup> –as if they are getting ready for *gün* or *gold days* which are activities that traditionally belong to private realm and women's outer appearance and the way they dress – fancy outfits, make-up and shoes – as if they are going to a very important social activity which is a part of the public realm, indicate that neighborhood parks start to serve the combination of the functions of both public and private realms: parochial realm. So being in a park is more than waiting for the children or rest in between shopping but it is a chance to get the latest news and gossips of the neighborhood, to learn the success of other children in the school or to chat regarding their daily problems. Being in a neighborhood park, in close distance to their home, being together with people that they are familiar with and not being have to spend high amounts of money ease women's participation to the social life of the neighborhood park.

This result clearly proves that neighborhood parks are important parochial realms. Similar to McKenzie et. al. (2006)'s findings, results show that women are transforming the space of a public space – a park – into a semiprivate or even a private realm with their relationships, activities, behaviors and perceptions regarding those areas. On the contrary to what Deem (1986) states women's existence in neighborhood

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<sup>10</sup> A traditional Turkish food that is generally prepared for guests.

park is not only an extension of their family roles and responsibilities but also a great opportunity that they create for themselves to socialize and be a part of public life of the neighborhoods.

Women's traditional roles and work can not only be assumed as a part of the physical environment of the home and a part of the private space. Similarly, park use can not be defined as "recreation from paid employment" since such an assumption fails to perceive the "hidden" forms of leisure associated with the home, with children, or related to household work, shopping, or everyday consumption" (Aitchison, 2003 cited in McKenzie et. al., 2006). So this thesis states that neighborhood parks are great examples where the works that are associated to women intersect with the hidden forms of leisure and create opportunities for its users in the parochial realm.

Age has a direct affect on the amount of leisure time and personal limitations so it has direct affect on park uses and needs. Older people have relatively more time for leisure activities as they are retired, not working for a paid job and have no childcare responsibilities. On the other hand, although they have more time for leisure activities they have limited mobility and they start to experience detachment from the social life. Bedimo- Rung et. al. (2005) states that due to these reasons elderly people do not use parks in large numbers or they are mostly non-users of parks (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005). This thesis proves the opposite of this situation. In Balçova, elderly people are frequent users of neighborhood parks, especially of Duru Park because of its location and easy accessibility with its surrounding thresholds and landuses, other park users with similar socio-economic characteristics. As Day (2008) suggests designers and decision makers should be careful about providing neighborhood environments that do not impact negatively its older residents (Day R. , 2008) and results indicate that especially certain parks in Balçova have very positive impacts on elderly people and prohibit alienation from the society with the possibilities of chatting with friends about politics, having a drink and watching passer bys or playing games with other friends.

***How do physical and social characteristics of parks affect individual's use of neighborhood parks?***

Parks' design, provided amenities and programming, maintenance, surrounding landuses and social characteristics of neighborhood life have significant effects on the use. People with similar individual characteristics such as gender and age and even the same people may use different parks for different purposes.

*Design of the parks*, especially its *size is an* important factor that affects people's park use. Since Balçova provides very limited amount of space for public open green spaces and every little piece of green area is valuable. However, those spaces are not sufficient to fulfill the needs of residents. For a high level of use and satisfaction from the neighborhood parks a certain area with activities that answer the needs of different user groups is necessary. Differences between parks that provide a larger area with better physical and social conditions and other smaller parks indicate the importance of designing parks with a consideration of the amount of potential users and their differing needs.

*Provided amenities* shape the ways that neighborhood parks are used. Results of the thesis indicate that provided amenities in neighborhood parks such as seating alternatives and climate control solutions do not fulfill the needs of different user groups and they do not provide significant benefits in terms of ecological and natural aspects. Flexibility of furnitures and their potentials for being used by different user groups for different activities is the most important aspect of provided furniture in parks. Especially for mothers who use the park as an extension of their private lives want to have flexibility both for waiting for their children's play activities alone and for their group activities such as "gün".

In a *climate* like İzmir's, people want to use parks in all seasons, however, limited climate control elements like pergolas with non-suitable materials and locations limit the use of parks in different weather conditions. Especially playground areas for children and the areas for mothers to wait their children and areas that are mostly used by people such as elderly who use the park for longer durations lack climate control solutions in almost all parks.

In terms of *providing ecological benefits*, results indicate that parks are perceived as pieces of concrete cityscapes rather than a part of natural environments. Most of the parks carry typical park design elements and do not consist of dense planting with suitable species and have dominant hard surface treatments more than soft surface elements such as lawn or groundcover plants. Lack of dense evergreen plants and dominant use of hard surface materials and related lack of ecological benefits is problematic almost for all users from all ages and genders in Balçova.

Lack of *programming* limits the alternatives for park use for people with different park needs. Especially for women parks work only use for waiting their children and sit, chat and drink some beverages in the meanwhile. Most of the people

(both men and women) associate parks with children and women who do not have a child or have grown-up children state that they cannot find any reason to use neighborhood parks. With the provision of a rich programming in the parks, people can be attracted to parks for purposes other than childcare and they can find opportunities to enrich their skills, knowledge and socialization level with activities such as courses, lectures, theater plays, concerts, bazaars and so on. Literature focuses on the activity preferences of different user groups (e.g. Loukaitou & Sideris, 1995; Payne *et al.*, 2002; Byrne & Wolch, 2009). However, it is limited to the activity preferences based on women's needs. This thesis provides valuable insights of women regarding their activity needs and preferences.

In Balçova there is a common negative perception regarding the *maintenance levels* of neighborhood parks in Balçova. Although, Godbey (1985) states that there is no significant relationship between the maintenance level of a park and its users, findings of the thesis indicate that there is a direct relationship with the maintenance of parks and park use habits of people. Places that are not well maintained causes people to think that place as a leftover space that no one cares and such areas starts to be perceived as open to security problems.

Neighborhood parks should have the parochial social orders that defend the voluntary contributions to the control and maintenance of those spaces by the users (Hunter, 1985). However, the common tendency of neighborhood park users in Balçova is expecting the municipality to realize all the necessary services. Municipality can only provide a limited amount of periodical maintenance for the parks. Lack of constant maintenance by the municipality and lack of awareness of the responsibilities of park users for keeping parks clean lead to a messy, deteriorated look of parks and to be perceived as unsecure places. Such a perception decrease the use of neighborhood parks especially by women and children, and satisfaction level of all users. Existence of informal control such as a café and its owner or the toilet and the woman who is responsible of it create a feeling of thrust and security to other park users as those people always keep an eye on parks.

*Surrounding landuses* have reflections on the design and layout of park interior, its uses and users' satisfaction levels. Users' perceptions regarding the safety and comfort of parks, and the purpose, frequency, duration, time that they are using the parks are directly related with the surrounding landuses and their users. This thesis highlights that when surrounding landuses house to a single dominant user group



(teahouses around Duru Park) and have conflicting landuses and target users with the park activities (sports facilities surrounded by commercial activities and busy traffic) decrease the comfort level of park users and their sense of safety.

*Social characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood and users* play an important role on how neighborhood parks are perceived and used by women. Familiarity with the neighborhood, neighbors and social life increase perception of safety of neighborhood parks. When people are amongst people that they are familiar with they feel much more comfortable. Hunter (1985) also state that outsiders, people who are from the out of the neighborhood network, may cause conflicting feelings for the users of the parochial realm (Hunter, 1985). Depending on the level of familiarity, belonging and territoriality which is directly related with the level of use and life in the streets (Appleyard and Lintell, 1972 cited in Gehl, 1986), some people who are new to the neighborhood and not familiar with the customs feel a sense of being watched and criticized while using the parks in different patterns such as using Duru Park at night as an alone woman. While being in a neighborhood creates advantages and positive perceptions for older residents of the neighborhood, it may create disadvantages and negative perceptions for the newer residents. In addition to being new to the neighborhood, being different than the accustomed user profile of the park also create a sense of being criticized by the other park users.

The location of the park also affects the perception of familiarity. For instance since Duru Park is located in a commercial area it is open to all people from all over İzmir, so the level of familiarity is lower when compared to Süleyman Ersever Parkı which is located in a residential environment which is mostly inhabited by older residents of Balçova.

### ***How do the gendered perceptions affect women's neighborhood park use?***

Women's perceptions regarding neighborhood parks – or for all public spaces – are directly shaped by urban inequalities that women experience while participating to public spaces, definitions of gender, their traditional role and responsibilities and perceptions regarding appropriate behaviors for women. For women to overcome these urban inequalities and participate to public life parks should be perceived as safe, welcoming, well maintained, physically attractive, providing different activities, and promoting social interaction (Byrne & Wolch, 2009). Women's perceive neighborhood park perceptions as parts of parochial realm.

*Women's traditional roles and responsibilities* directly affect women's perceptions regarding neighborhood park use. Women develop certain strategies for using neighborhood parks as a part of their traditional daily roles and responsibilities. Neighborhood parks in Balçova are directly associated with children in most of the women's minds and childcare responsibility of women is one of the main factors that shape women's park use. When women are asked about missing things in parks, they usually start asking for things related with children activities or they state that they would never use a park if they did not have a child. I think one of the reasons for such a perception is those women's low levels of awareness regarding the possibilities of parks. Since there is not enough variety of amenities and programming in parks it is harder for most of the women to think of any reason to visit parks other than for their children. With certain characteristics such as being close to home and other stops of the daily routines and possibilities that neighborhood parks serve change the reasons of using parks for certain women. Women use neighborhood parks as a resting spot, a place to talk on the phone or smoke during a break in the work. Here it is important not to miss the needs of all women groups as well. Neighborhood parks should not only be perceived as an extension of daily roles of private realm but as an opportunity to participate to the public life of the cities. Parks should be designed in a way that appeals to all women users with its design, location, provided amenities and programming, surrounding landuses, and accessibility of these parks.

*Expectations for the defined appropriate behaviors* limit women's use of urban public spaces and affect their decisions or preferences while using neighborhood parks. Similar to what Bernard (1981) states, results of the study indicate that both women and men think that men are always more free, more secure, more welcomed and more dominant in number while using public spaces so they are also more comfortable while using neighborhood parks as well. On the other hand women have to behave according to certain social norms which affect the cloth that women should wear, the language that they should use, the way they should act and the people that they should be together. Majority of women behave according to these norms and the ones who are not behaving accordingly, feel hesitancy. Almost all women and most importantly most of the men think that if they do not behave according to these norms, if they come to parks alone, if they come to park at night, if they sit next to a man, if they laugh loudly, if they look around with no purpose, neighborhood parks or any other public space can be

dangerous for women. These perceptions are perpetuated with everyday news and chats or warnings among family members.

*Women's feeling of safety and comfort* shape their perceptions regarding neighborhood park use. Women (and also men) perceive neighborhood parks in Balçova as safe and more “appropriate” for women when compared to other public spaces. The reason of such a perception is the consideration of neighborhood parks as extensions of private realm in the public spaces. They can repeat their private life habits, behaviors, assigned roles and norms almost as comfortably. In addition to the unofficial control and security mechanisms of parochial realm (Hunter, 1985) of neighborhoods with the lady on the window watching the street, owner of the grocery store reading newspaper outside of his store or the fruit vendor that is located on the corner of the park, neighbors using the parks, mother of the children from the school, lady owner of the pastry shop on the corner who uses the park for smoking, owner of the café that is located in the park all help to construct the safety perceptions of neighborhood parks. When neighborhood parks are perceived as such, women start to feel more comfortable while using the parks and their husbands or fathers also feel more comfortable to let their wives or daughters to use these parochial spaces – neighborhood parks.

Feeling of safety also affects women's preferences for not using parks alone. Most of the time women use parks together with their children, friend and/or spouse. When women go to a park alone, then they prefer the ones that are mostly used by people who they are familiar with. When these spaces are used by women jointly who are there for their traditional daily responsibilities, the public space of the park turns into the parochial space where women not only can share of stories of their daily lives and problems with their friends but also places where they can express their identities and the performance of caring (McKenzie et. al., 2006). While women do not come to Duru Park alone most of the time, they come to Süleyman Ersever Parkı alone as they know that they will meet with a friend there or even if they do not meet with a friend, they know almost all other users as they see each other everyday.

When there are welcoming and educating activities in a neighborhood park which is designed as providing flexibility while using them with or without a company; when parks give opportunities for the combinations of traditional daily responsibilities with leisure use purposes of women; when the park, its surrounding neighborhood and all users in and around the park are familiar with the ties of acquaintance relations;

when there are no experienced or heard events that cause feeling of fear; when parks are well maintained through the informal control mechanisms, easily accessed and safely and comfortably used then we can talk about those neighborhood parks as areas that are open and accessible to all user groups with different needs and uses. Deriving from these findings, it is possible to say that neighborhood parks can not be only perceived as a single kind of a space – a public space – but also with the different levels of relationships that they provide for different user groups, they can be considered as parochial realm which is the intersection of public and private realms.

## **8. 1. How to Improve Neighborhood Parks for Different User Groups’ Needs**

Neighborhood parks are great opportunities for users who are mostly bounded to neighborhood space due to many reasons such as limited leisure time, daily responsibilities of professional or in home works. That is why more neighborhood parks in Balçova should be provided and provision of these parks should be according to the needs of Balçova residents. Park provision policies should follow a need based approach that also values the participation of the users in the decision making processes.

This thesis reviewed the discussion on public spaces, parks and neighborhood parks together with a focus on women’s experiences of urban inequalities based on patriarchy, social constructions of gender, daily roles and responsibilities of women and their feelings of fear and comfort in these public spaces. Filtering these discussions with a need based approach which means “unequal treatment of the unequals” (Talen, 1998), I propose certain park improvement suggestions in Balçova, neighborhood and park scales for an increased and more satisfying neighborhood park use that fulfill the needs of different women. I think that as Varna & Tiesdell (2010) also suggests, not only the design of the park (micro design) but also its relationship with the design of the surrounding context (macro design) should be considered as those affect the use of neighborhood parks by different user groups. (Figure 88).

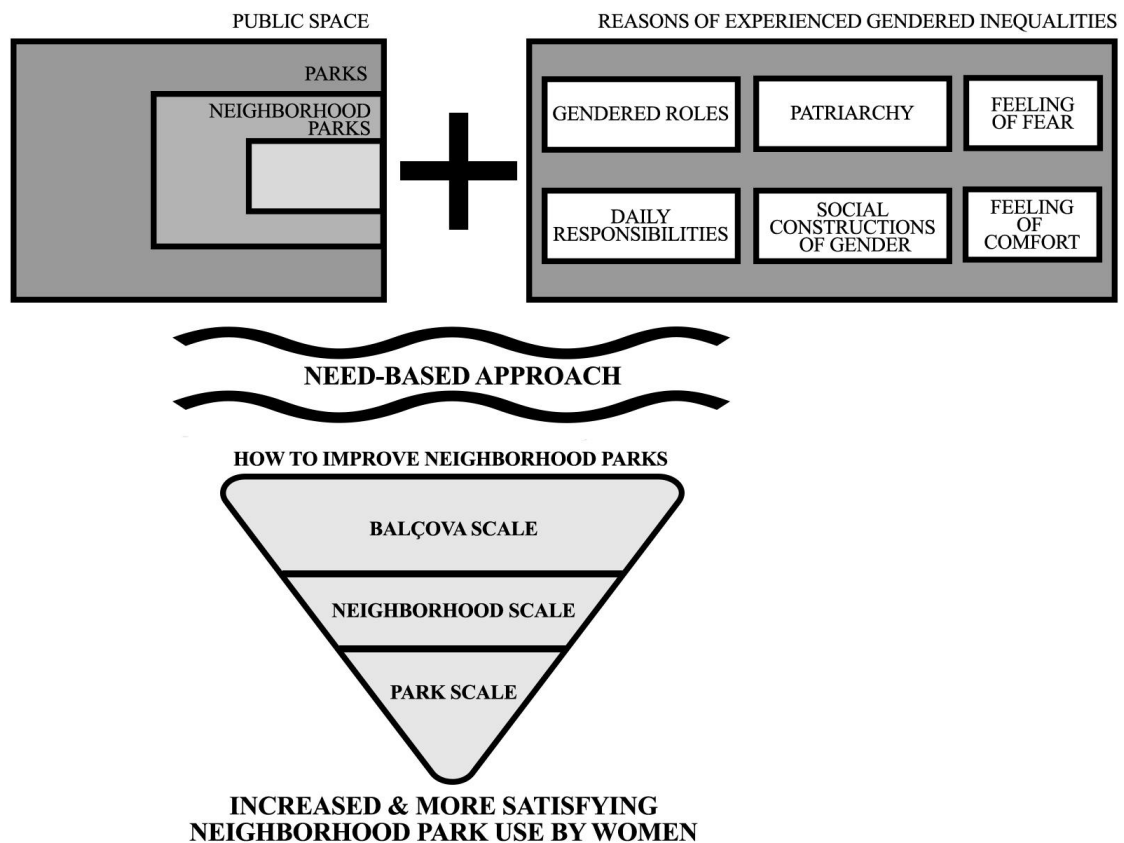


Figure 83. Structure of the study

**In District (Balçova) Scale:**

All residents of Balçova should have an access to a neighborhood park by walking maximum of 400m. In ideal conditions plan layout should enable small open spaces in every residential group. However, due to existing plan layout of Balçova such public open green spaces may not be possible. So first of all in whole Balçova, the locations of open areas, left over spaces, thorn down buildings and possible areas for public open green spaces should be determined and start to be designed as neighborhood parks.

As it is found out that the users who are satisfied with the overall quality and comfort of public spaces in Balçova are more likely to use neighborhood parks, in order to increase the use of neighborhood parks in Balçova, first of all the satisfaction from the provided service areas in whole Balçova is necessary. Results indicate that physically well designed spaces that are used by familiar group of people increases the satisfaction of users. So to increase the satisfaction and comfort level improvement of

the physical conditions and hygiene of the whole public spaces is very crucial. Additionally, social relations in the community, neighborliness relations among the people who live in Balçova are important to gather people together in neighborhood parks. For increasing the neighborliness relations and awareness regarding the existence of neighborhood parks and provided facilities there can be certain events. These events can be perceived as a promotion activity for the parks. They can both gather people together and increase social relationships between these people and they start to get to know existing neighborhood spaces in their living environments.

As Niepoth (1973) suggested that knowledge and awareness regarding the existence of public spaces increase the use of those spaces. To increase awareness of neighborhood parks in Balçova can be a design of a wayfinding system for neighborhood parks. Observation and interview results indicate that other than the poster that is hung on billboards about the Ramadan activities of Balçova Municipality for a limited time; there are no signs of information regarding the existence, locations, facilities and activities of neighborhood parks in Balçova. Certain people do not even know the existence of neighborhood parks other than the ones that are close to their homes or daily routes. So there can be special signage system design that is distributed to all around Balçova and lead people to the closest park in the surrounding. These signs cannot only be used to direct people to neighborhood parks but also be used to give information regarding the existing plants, activities and provided facilities (Figure 89).

Similar to community houses which are also part of the parochial realm where certain activities and programs are developed, there can be certain organizations in neighborhood parks. Balçova Municipality can also provide flyers to homes, stores, schools or to community houses that give information about certain weekly, monthly and seasonal programs for neighborhood parks. As it is found out Balçova Municipality and Mayor use the social media very effectively for giving information regarding their services so these social media accounts can also be used to increase awareness of Balçova residents regarding their neighborhood parks. Together with community houses and schools there can be periodical organizations, courses and lectures not only for women but also for children in neighborhood parks. These not only help women's and children's cultural and educational improvement but also provide chances for women to leave their children to these courses and enjoy the park in the meanwhile. Additionally these courses can be also welcoming for the new comers to Balçova and create a chance to get used to the area and people faster. Since all the courses for women in community

houses are during school periods, during the school break times such as summer months, the courses can be carried to open air to neighborhood parks. On the other hand during the school times, the park can house to children courses and activities as well. Schools can carry their sports and arts classes to the neighborhood parks.

Additionally, it is found out that the products that women design in community houses are being sold during certain fairs such as New Years Gift Fair. There can be other events that are organized in neighborhood parks to exhibit and sell the products of women. Such activities can also support women's economic status as well as the livelihood of the parks. Also such uses of parks can increase the sense of belonging to those parks.

### **In Neighborhood Scale:**

It is found out that, especially for women who have to carry children's cars, bags and so on, women who stop by the neighborhood park while doing shopping or women who do not have time or money to go distant parks the location of parks is very important. When locations of neighborhood parks are determined one of the first criteria should be the ease of access by walking to the parks. Neighborhood parks should be located in areas where there are no steep slopes around and vehicular circulation routes should be separated from the pedestrian routes that enable pedestrian connection to the parks. There should be no high level of traffic in the immediate surroundings of parks but there should be public transportation opportunities for certain spots that are very close to neighborhood parks.

Especially to attract women to neighborhood parks, while neighborhood parks are being designed women's daily routines should be considered and the locations of parks should be decided in relation with the possible stops that women visit everyday as a part of their daily responsibilities. Neighborhood parks should be located in close distances to homes and on the route to schools, commercial areas or areas where offices or work opportunities are concentrated to ease women's daily responsibilities. So it should not require an extra effort to go to a park but it can be a stop in between duties. Surrounding landuses should be selected in relation with women's daily routines.

While designing parks, inner layout of the parks, the provided facilities and the surrounding landuses should be considered simultaneously. For instance providing sports equipment in a park that is surrounded by commercial activities cause people who are exercising feel uncomfortable from staring people. Providing seating units

facing towards tea houses such as Duru Park make women uncomfortable from the men sitting at the tea houses. For such conditions either surrounding landuses should be selected accordingly and neighborhood parks that are expected/hoped to be used by women should not be surrounded by activities that house large numbers of men but should be surrounded by activities that women can also use often. Another solution can be blocking the visual connection between these uses by the help of plants or the seating units can be placed at a part that is not visible from those tea houses. While provision of a playground in a park that is surrounded by traffic, such as Duru Park, creates potential danger for children, providing a playground in a park such as Muhtarlık Parkı that is very close to houses may cause noise problems for the residents of surrounding homes. Such activities either should be located at locations that are far from traffic routes or there should be barriers or dense planting to restrain unwanted events. Dense planting can also be used to create a buffer zone between playground and houses to block noise of children. Additionally materials that can absorb sound such as soil and soft plastic with acoustic treatment for the surface and wood for the play equipments can be used.

### **In Park Scale:**

Results of the thesis indicate that in order for a neighborhood park to be used frequently it is necessary to create an environment that enables high level of comfort and feeling of safety, familiarity, and friendliness. It is important to increase the feeling that women are secure, welcomed and free in neighborhood parks. One of the ways to increase the feeling of safety is to attract large groups of women to neighborhood parks, than this crowd will start to attract more and more women to parks. However, in order to attract women there are certain issues that needs to be considered.

In terms of physical design, the level of comfort can be increased with appropriate park size that is providing necessary amenities and programs. Size of the parks should be according to the surrounding environment's characteristics and the potential user numbers. While, out of scale parks can be intimidating for people, very small parks cannot provide necessary park qualities and benefits. Thus the size should be considered carefully. However since Balçova has a limited area that can be reserved for parks, there can be green routes that connects small open green spaces with neighborhood parks. These green routes can include pocket parks, streets with dense planting, leftover building lots, community gardens, roof gardens, neighborhood parks and even larger district parks such as Teleferik Parkı. With a conscious planning of



green routes a web of green routes can enable all Balçova residents to walk from one part of Balçova to another through public open green spaces.

According to the findings of the study, in order to attract women to neighborhood parks for purposes other than childcare or other extensions of daily responsibilities, in neighborhood parks there should be facilities that enable different activities for different groups with various needs. In addition to previously mentioned courses, lectures and bazaars, there can be small cafes, kiosks, selection of furniture alternatives such as movable seating units; tables that provide opportunities for eating, studying, painting, or crowded, overhead structures that are in relation with the seating units and playgrounds, soft pavement materials, and water elements is very important.

Especially sitable spaces are the core elements of a space that enlivens the social life. Sitting units should provide flexible seating alternatives with or without tables. The quantity, location, comfort level and physical characteristics of these seating alternatives should enable users arrange the layout by moving sitting units as they wish according to the activities that they want to do in neighborhood park. Such an adjustable layout give the opportunity to be put together and create areas for larger groups or get separated for more private single uses. Such layout also allows users to obtain the level of privacy that they want. Along with sitting units, existence of different sized tables are important especially in neighborhood parks where certain household activities such as having breakfast or studying and school or community house activities such as courses, lectures and art classes can be carried to. Also creating protection from weather conditions for these areas is also important.

As results of the thesis indicate, one of major problems in neighborhood parks in Balçova is the climate control. In most of the parks there are either no climate control elements such as plants, overhead structures or water features or the existing ones are not sufficient to protect from weather conditions. Overhead structures and planting should be considered in a way that can block the sun shine during summer and rain during winter. Especially evergreen plants that have large crowns to create shadow during all seasons should be located in relation to seating areas. Water features can be proposed both for climate control purposes and also for creating a natural and relaxing environment in the park. Of course the design, dimensions and the location of those water features should be well considered according to the needs of different user groups. For instance they should not be located close to children playground areas in order not to create any dangerous conditions, but they can be located closer to the areas

where mostly used by adults for leisure purposes. Water features can be located closer to the edges of the parks as well to create a physical barrier between the exterior traffic and crowd and the inner environment of the park.

According to the results of the study, playground areas are one of the most important and mostly used facilities of neighborhood parks in Balçova and mostly complained issues by mothers at the same time. Their design and location are crucial. First of all, playgrounds should be composed of play equipments that appeal to different age groups and provide a safe and clean environment for children. These areas should be located away from the edges of the park, surrounding traffic, existing water elements, and toilets. While designing playgrounds, seating areas for mothers where they can easily follow their children should be designed as well. Also protection of both playgrounds and adjacent seating areas from weather conditions should be considered as well. Additionally, the materials, colors and the forms of the playground equipments should be carefully considered in a way that will create a look that will be appropriate to a natural environment and not cause any harms for kids (Figure 84 & 85).



Figure 84. Shadow with planting  
(Source: <https://franklin.thefuntimesguide.com/2011/07/centennial-park-nashville.php>)



Figure 85. Shadow with overhead structure  
(Source: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/melbournes-top-25-playgrounds/news-story/6e6b8a5d5dec935a23292da62849f97f>)

Since results indicate that a large group of park users are formed of children and elderly (along with all users) who may have urgent toilet needs while using parks. Toilets are among the most necessary facilities in neighborhood parks which are being used by children and elderly people who may have hard time for reaching to a toilet at the required time. There should be a toilet in each park in a way that is not visible from the sitting areas and should also be away from the playgrounds in order not to create hygiene problems for children. Maintenance and cleaning of these toilets should be very well followed up by someone who is responsible of the whole maintenance of the park. In certain parks that are more crowded self cleaning automatic toilets can be provided.

Areas where people can eat clean and affordable snacks and drink hot and cold beverages are important in neighborhood parks as they create opportunities for coming together and socialization. Especially in Turkish culture drinking tea and coffee is a very strong habit and areas where people can find those gets more crowded and lively. Of course the location and the size of these places should not dominate the park and should only cover a very small portion of the park. The personnel working there needs to create a feeling of welcome to the users and preferably these personnel should also be from the same neighborhood. In addition to socialization benefits of cafes, these kinds

of places and people working there serves the function of a “passive policeman” (Adams, 2011).

Not only personnel working in the park, but also the people that café attracts by being open during late hours of the night create a continuous existence of people around through day and night. This crowd prohibits isolation of the park and be intimidating for invicil activities as it creates “natural surveillance” in the site as Newman (1996) stated. Jacobs also raises attention to the importance of the continuous crowd around “eyes on the street” for increasing the perception of safety (Jacobs, 1961 and Newman, 1996 cited in Efe Güney & Demircioğlu, 2015).

In addition to the provided physical amenities, programming in parks is also important to raise the awareness regarding the park and increase the use. There is a high need for different activities in parks such as different play activities for children, courses for women, small festivals, concerts, small scaled theater plays or celebrations for certain days like Hıdırellez, New Years Eve, bayrams and so on. These activities can increase the awareness regarding the neighborhood parks, bring different user groups together; promote interaction and socialization and increase the intimacy between different user groups. This lively environment helps to increase users’ feelings of safety and comfort and can create more reasons for women to use parks other than for their children. Even if they come to parks for their children, they can still spend quality and fun time while waiting for their children. Additionally, women who do not have opportunities to invite friends to their home, can benefit from neighborhood parks to get together with their friends, start to socialize and participate to public life more actively through these activities.

These kinds of different activities can also increase the level of night use together with a proper lighting. Results indicate that, when there are active uses in a park, the use hours for those parks increase. For night time use, lighting is very crucial in terms of feeling of safety. In darker environments especially women do not feel secure and refuse to be in those spaces. That is why park should provide a well lit environment during the night to attract more users. On the same time the lighting should not be very bright and artificial looking in order not to disturb both users and residents in the immediate surroundings.

Visibility of the park’s interior is important for security purposes however there is still a need for privacy for the park users. So instead of having a bare park with no plants to create visibility, large scale plants (large crowns on the top and openings under

it) can be used to provide shadow for the users, a sense of green natural environment at the same time visibility for the control of the park.

The view to park from the surrounding buildings is important. From the buildings the park should look green with lots of planting. This empowers the feeling of nature in the urban context and creates privacy for the park users. On the other hand in terms of creating a secure environment, along with the café employee as passive policemen, there can be security cameras in the park that are on the eye level to record the activity in the park. Signs indicating that the park is being watched with security cameras all the time can also be intimidating for any possible negative incident.

As results suggest there is a direct relationship between the maintenance of parks and use level. In order to create a feeling of safety maintenance of all necessary repairing and cleanings should be done periodically. When there are garbage, seeds or papers all around on the floor then people think that there is no harm to throw their own garbage as they think that someone will clean it. But when an environment is clean all the time then people will start to feel guilty when they throw garbage all around. So as an parochial space users should have the awareness regarding the importance of the parochial control instead of expecting a formal control by the state. As a solution to increase the awareness on the importance of cleaning of neighborhood parks, there can be certain events both for children and adults where they go to neighborhood parks and collect garbage and cigarettes from the floors.

Related with maintenance and cleaning of parks, results indicate that animals are quite problematic. So there can be separate subspaces in the parks where pets are allowed to be walked and people should be informed with signs regarding that they have to collect the dirt after their animals. Additionally, municipality should provide a safe and comfortable shelter for stray animals and collect all of them from the streets and take them to these shelters.

By achieving all these improvements (Table 13) in Balçova, neighborhood and park scales, integration of non-working women who are stuck with household responsibilities and childcare, women who are afraid of being in public space, women who cannot get permission from their husbands or fathers, women who do not have too much leisure time to go parks that are away from their home, women who complain that there are no more neighborliness relations in apartment buildings, women who do not have opportunities to invite friends to their home can be possible and all can benefit from neighborhood parks, start to socialize and participate to public life more actively.

Table 13. Park improvement suggestions

<b>NEED BASED PARTICIPATORY DESIGN</b>	<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<b>Social Characteristics</b>
<b>In District Scale (Balçova)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking parks not individually but as a part of a web of public open green spaces</li> <li>• Improvement of the physical conditions and hygiene of the whole public spaces</li> <li>• Wayfinding Design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase neighborliness relations with organized events that bring people together</li> <li>• Increase awareness regarding neighborhood parks</li> <li>• Increase awareness on the cleaning of public spaces</li> <li>• Creating a familiar environment that feels secure</li> </ul>
<b>In Neighborhood Scale (Immediate Surrounding of the Park)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location (Close to houses)</li> <li>• Location in relation to daily routines</li> <li>• Surrounding thresholds (traffic &amp; slope) should be limited</li> <li>• Access by walking and public transportation</li> <li>• Selecting appropriate landuses</li> <li>• Relationship of the surrounding landuses to inner activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase neighborliness relations with organized events that bring people together</li> <li>• Increase awareness regarding neighborhood parks</li> </ul>
<b>Park Scale (Individual Neighborhood Parks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size of the park</li> <li>• Suitable planting</li> <li>• Flexibles seating layout</li> <li>• Table alternatives</li> <li>• Climate protection</li> <li>• Water features (design, location and dimensions)</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Toilets</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of safety</li> <li>• Level of familiarity with the neighborhood,</li> <li>• Level of privacy</li> </ul>

## 8. 2. Future Research Suggestions

Although the case study of this thesis is realized in Balçova, İzmir, Turkey, with the developed literature review and model suggestions for the understanding of underlying causes of different experiences of women based on their park perceptions, this study can be expanded and applied in other counties or the total area of İzmir. For a deeper understanding of women's park use experiences and to obtain a comparative data among different counties of İzmir with different socio-economic characteristics I can realize more interviews with women and men park users. I can also increase the length of interviews by asking appointments for interviews rather than on site

interviews. This can give me the chance to obtain a more detailed information to compare women's and men's perceptions regarding parks and park users.

Another future research suggestion and one of the main ones, I am planning to realize interviews with women who never use neighborhood parks (non-users of neighborhood parks) in order to understand the underlying causes, previous experiences that led to this decision or personal factors for not using neighborhood parks. In order to find non-users of neighborhood parks I can benefit from the focus group interviews that I realized in community houses. During those interviews, I met with women who state that they never used neighborhood parks in their lives or stopped using neighborhood parks very long time ago after their children grew up. I can realize detailed interviews with these women and if necessary I can use snowball technique by asking those women if they know any other woman who does not use neighborhood parks.

For future research I can use video recording together with motion sensors to participants of the study to record women's daily use patterns and details of their park use can be mapped.

Finally deriving from the findings of this study and proposals in "How to Improve Neighborhood Park" section, a pilot park plan with the surrounding layout can be designed and proposed to Balçova Municipality. Together with the decision makers of Balçova Municipality and residents of Balçova a green system that includes neighborhood parks, green corridors and all other public open green spaces can be developed with a participatory approach.

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## APPENDIX A

### PARKS' PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS CHART

Tarih:  
Saat:  
Haftaiçi  Haftasonu

Bölge No:  
Park İsmi:  
Gözlem Yapan Kişiler:

#### PARKLARIN FİZİKSEL ÖZELLİKLERİ ANALİZİ

	VAR / EVET	YOK / HAYIR	DiĞER / AÇIKLAMA
<b>PARK – YAKIN ÇEVRE İLİŞKİSİ</b>			
Park Giriş Sayısı:			
Etrafi Çeviren Duvar / Çit / Bariyer			
Park Girişleri Yaya Yollarını Referans Alıyor			
Etrafında Yoğun Araç Trafikliği			
Sakin Bir Çevrede mi? (Sessiz, trafikten uzak gibi)			
<b>PARK SERVİS ALANLARI / EKİPMANLAR</b>			
Bank			
Piknik Masası			
Gölge Elemanı			
- Gölge Yapıyor mu?			
- Yağmur Geçiriyor mu?			
Havuz / Su Ögesi			
- Dolu			
Çocuk Oyun Alanı			
Spor Aletleri			
Spor Alanı			
- Spor Türü:			
Yürüyüş Yolu			
Bisiklet Yolu			
Aydınlatma			
Güvenlik Kamerası			
Kafeterya / Büfe			
- Varsa belediyeye mi ait?			
Tuvalet			
Araba Park Yeri			
Bisiklet Park Yeri			
<b>PARK BİTKİ ÖRTÜSÜ</b>			
Herdem Yeşil Bitkiler			
Yaprak Döken Bitkiler			
Yerörtücü Bitkiler (Çim, katırtırnağı vs.)			
Park Bitki Örtüsü Gölge Yapıyor mu?			
Park Yumuşak Zemin mi Sert Zemin mi Ağırlıklı? (Park alanının yarısından fazlasının yumuşak/sert zemin olması durumu)			

## APPENDIX B.

### USER BEHAVIOURS IN PARKS ANALYSIS CHART

Tarih:

Saat:

Haftaiçi  Haftasonu

Havadurumu:

Bölge No:

Park İsmi:

Gözlem Yapan Kişiler:

#### PARK KULLANICILARININ DAVRANIŞ ÖZELLİKLERİ ANALİZİ

**ÖNEMLİ:** Her parkta her gözlem seansında yarım saat geçirip bu yarım saat içindeki toplam sayıları dikkata alınız.

	YAŞ GRUBU	CİNSİYET	AKTİVİTE	KULLANILAN DONATILAR / ALANLAR	SÜRE	TEK/GRUP (Grupsa kim ile)	GİRİŞ #	DİĞER
Kullanıcı 1								
Kullanıcı 2								
Kullanıcı 3								
Kullanıcı 4								
Kullanıcı 5								
Kullanıcı 6								
Kullanıcı 7								
Kullanıcı 8								
Kullanıcı 9								
Kullanıcı 10								
Kullanıcı 11								
Kullanıcı 12								
Kullanıcı 13								
Kullanıcı 14								
Kullanıcı 15								
Kullanıcı 16								
Kullanıcı 17								
Kullanıcı 18								
Kullanıcı 19								
Kullanıcı 20								
Kullanıcı 21								
Kullanıcı 22								
Kullanıcı 23								
Kullanıcı 24								
Kullanıcı 25								

**YAŞ GRUBU:**

- Çocuk (0-16)
- Genç (17-30)
- Orta Yaşlı (31-50)
- Yaşlı (51 - ...)

**AKTİVİTE:**

- Oturuyor
- Oyun Oynuyor
- Kitap Okuyor
- Spor Yapıyor
- Köpek Gezdiriyor
- gibi.....

**HANGİ DONATILAR / ALANLAR:**

- Bank
- Çocuk oyun grubu/aletleri
- Spor aletleri
- Spor sahası
- Kafeterya
- Gibi.....

**TEK / GRUP (Grupsa kim ile)**

- Kadınla / larla
- Bir adamla / larla
- Çocukla / larla
- Yaşlı
- Gibi.....

**GİRİŞ #:** Yaptığınız parkın fiziksel özellikleri analizinde park girişlerini numaralandırdınız. Burada o numarayı yazabilirsiniz.

**DİĞER:** Burada kategorilerde olmayan ama ilginç / sıradışı gelen olayları / hareketleri yazabilirsiniz.

## APPENDIX C

### DETAILED PARK OBSERVATION DATES

#### Detailed Park Observation Schedule:

- Fall, winter, spring and summer seasons
- At noon and evening
- On special dates such as Ramadan and Hidrellez at noon and evening (dinner times and sun set hours have been considered)

14 October (Wednesday) –13.00 & 19.00  
17 October (Saturday) – 13.00 & 19.00  
4 February (Thursday) – 13.00 & 19.00  
6 February (Saturday) – 13.00 & 19.00  
13 April (Wednesday) – 13.00 & 20.00  
16 April (Saturday) – 13.00 & 20.00  
Hidrellez – 5 Mayıs (Thursday) – 13.00 & 20.00  
Ramadan – 22 Haziran (Wednesday) – 13.00 & 22.30  
Ramadan – 25 Haziran (Saturday) – 13.00 & 22.30  
10 August (Wednesday) – 13.00 & 21.00  
13 August (Saturday) – 13.00 & 21.00



## APPENDIX D

### SURVEY

Bu anket çalışması İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi öğretim görevlisi İpek Kaştaş Uzun'un, İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü, Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü'nde tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Fatma Şenol ile birlikte yürüttüğü "Kentsel Mahalle Parkları Kullanımında Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Deneyimler" adlı doktora tez çalışmasında kullanılmak için yapılmaktadır. Ankete verdiğiniz cevaplar herhangi başka bir amaçta kullanılmayacak ve sadece doktora tezi için bir araç niteliğinde kullanılacaktır.

#### 1. BÖLÜM: Bireysel Park Kullanım Özellikleri ve Alışkanlıkları ile İlgili Sorular:

##### 1. Bu parkı ne sıklıkta kullanıyorsunuz?

4  Hergün    3  Haftada 3-5 defa    2  Ayda 3-5 defa    1  Yılda 3-5 defa    0  Hiç

##### 2. Hangi amaçlarla bu parkı kullanıyorsunuz?

0  Sigara içmek    1  Dinlenme    2  Boş zamanımı değerlendirmek için  
3  Spor    4  Buluşma – Sosyalleşme    5  Çocuklarım için

##### 3. Bu parkta en çok hangi alanları kullanırsınız?

0  Diğer    1  Kafeterya    2  Banklar    3  Yeşil alanlar  
4  Oyun alanları    5  Spor alanları    6  Hepsi

##### 4. Eviniz bu parka kaç dakika uzaklıkta?

4  2-5 dk    3  5-10 dk    2  10-20 dk    1  20-30 dk    0  30 dk'dan uzak

##### 5. Parka nasıl geliyorsunuz?

1  Diğer    2  Toplu taşıma    3  Özel taşıt    4  Bisiklet    5  Yürüyerek

##### 6. Parkta zaman geçirirseniz

###### i. Ne kadar süre alanda kalıyorsunuz?

4  120 dk ve fazlası    3  60 – 119 dk    2  30 – 59 dk    1  10 – 29 dk    0  5 – 9 dk

###### ii. Yalnız mı birileriyle mi alanı kullanırsınız?

1  Birileriyle    0  Yalnız

###### • Birileriyle ise kimle?

0  Yalnız    1  Erkek arkadaşlarımla    2  Kadın arkadaşlarımla  
3  Akrabalarımla    4  Eşimle    5  Çocuğumla

###### iii. Günün hangi saatlerinde alanı kullanıyorsunuz?

5  Her Saat    4  8.00 – 12.00    3  12.00 – 16.00    2  16.00 – 20.00  
1  20.00 - 24.00    0  24.00 ve sonrası

###### iv. Hangi saatlerde bu parkta bulunmayı istemezsiniz? Neden?

5  Yok    4  8.00 – 12.00    3  12.00 – 16.00    2  16.00 – 20.00  
1  20.00 - 24.00    0  24.00 ve sonrası

**7. Genelde hangi kamusal alanları kullanırsınız?**

- 1  Park gibi yeşil açık alanları                      0  AVM gibi kapalı alanları

**8. Mahalleniz dışındaki yeşil açık alanları kullanır mısınız?**

- 1  Kullanırım                      0  Kullanmam

• **Kullanırsanız hangisini tercih edersiniz?**

- 0  Kullanmam

- 1  Sayfiye Yerleri

- 2  Şehir dışı piknik alanları

- 3  Fuar

- 4  Körfez çevresi yeşil alanları

- 5  Kent Ormanı ve Narlıdere Sahili

- 6  Balçovadaki diğer mahalle içi parkları

• **Kullanırsanız, ne sıklıkta?**

- 4  Günde 1-2 kez

- 3  Haftada 1-2 kez

- 2  Ayda 1-2 kez

- 1  Yılda 1-2 kez

- 0  Hiç

**2. BÖLÜM: Parkın Fiziksel ve Sosyal Özellikleri ile İlgili Sorular**

**9. Bu parkı kullanma sebepleriniz nelerdir?**

- 1  Daha iyi servis alanları, aktiviteler

- 2  Etrafındaki aktivitelerden dolayı

- 3  Arkadaşlarım geldiği için

- 4  Daha güvenli

- 5  Ulaşımı kolay

- 6  Yakında başka park yok

- 7  Evime / mahalleme yakın - Evden uzaklaşmam

**10. Bu parkın sunduğu hizmetler ve aktivitelerden memnun musunuz?**

- 1  Evet – (Soru 11'e geç)

- 0  Hayır – (Soru 12'ye geç)

**11. Parkın hangi özelliklerinden memnunsunuz?**

- 1  Tasarımından (Yeşil alan, yürüme yolları, mobilyalar vs.)

- 2  İklimsel tasarımından (Gölge, güneş, rüzgar, sıcaklık vs.)

- 3  Aktivitelerinden (Kullanım çeşitliliği, faaliyetler/organize aktiviteler, yeme-içme)

- 4  Kullanıcılarından (Yazınız... )

- 5  Güvenliğinden (Yazınız... )

- 6  Hepsi

- 7  Konum

**12. Parkın hangi özelliklerinden memnun değilsiniz?**

- 1  Tasarımından (Yeşil alan, yürüme yolları, mobilyalar vs.)

- 2  İklimsel tasarımından (Gölge, güneş, rüzgar, sıcaklık vs.)

- 3  Aktivitelerinden (Kullanım çeşitliliği, faaliyetler/organize aktiviteler, yeme-içme)

- 4  Kullanıcılarından (Yazınız... )

- 5  Güvenliğinden (Yazınız... )

**13. Eğer bu parka yeni bir düzenleme yapılacak olsaydı hangi aktiviteleri / fiziksel özellikleri içermesini isterdiniz?**

- 1  Parkın fiziksel özellikleri (Oturma, tuvalet, bakım, güvenlik kam., aydınlatma vs)

- 2  İklimsel tasarımından (Gölge, daha çok ağaç vs.)

- 3  Çevre Kullanımları (Kahvehane, trafik vs.)

- 4  Daha çok aktif kullanım, spor. (Spor sahaları, bisiklet yolları, çocuk oyun alanları... )

- 5  Sosyal aktiviteler (Kafeterya, sosyal programlar... )

### 3. BÖLÜM: Parkın Çevresi ile İlgili Sorular

#### 14. Park çevresinin ağırlıklı olarak konut olması size nasıl hissettirir?

- 0  Tedirgin / Rahatsız / Olumsuz  
1  Konut yerine yeşil olsun isterdim  
2  Farketmez  
3  İyi / Olumlu  
4  Güvenli

#### 15. Park çevresinde ağırlıklı olarak ticaret aktivitelerinin olması size nasıl hissettirir?

- 0  Olumsuz / Kötü / Kalabalık  
1  Güvensiz  
2  Yeşil olsun isterdim  
3  Farketmez  
4  İyi / Olumlu  
5  Güvenli

#### 16. Parkı ve etrafını kullanan insanlar ile ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?

- 0  Kötü / Eğitim Seviyesi Düşük  
1  Kirli  
2  Kalabalık / Gürültülü  
3  Kullanıcı karakterine bağlı olumsuz (Erkek, gençler, tinerici, serseri vs)  
4  Kullanıcı karakterine bağlı olumlu / İyi (Yaşlılar, aileler, komşular vs.)  
5  Zararsız / iyi / Saygılı

#### 17. Balçova'da parkları ve kamusal açık yeşil alanları kullanım kalitesi ve rahatlığı açısından nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? (Parklar, sevgi yolları, spor alanları, piknik ve mesire alanları vs.)

- 4  Çok memnunum  
3  Memnunum  
2  Kararsızım  
1  Memnun değilim  
0  Hiç memnun değilim

#### 18. Sizce mahallenizdeki parklar / kamusal açık yeşil alanlar

##### i. Sayıca yeterli mi?

- 1  Evet  
0  Hayır

##### ii. Kullanım kalitesi açısından yeterli mi?

- 1  Evet  
0  Hayır

### 4. BÖLÜM: Parklarda Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Deneyimlere Dair Sorular:

#### 19. Mahalle içi parkları kullanmanın sizin için ne gibi avantajları olabilir?

- 0  Yok  
1  Tanıdıklarla karşılaşma şansı  
2  Ulaşımı kolay  
3  Daha güvenli  
4  Evime / iş yerime yakın  
5  Çocuklarımın gözümün önünde  
6  Daha kolay izin alabilmem

#### 20. Bir mahalle parkını kullanmama sebebiniz ne olabilir?

- 1  Tasarım / aktiviteler  
2  Maddi sebepler  
3  Konumu  
4  Boş vakit olmaması  
5  Ailevi sorumluluklar  
6  İzin alamamak  
7  Korku  
8  Sosyal baskı  
9  Kullanıcılarından dolayı

**21. Mahallenizdeki parkları kullandığınız sırada yaşadığınız olumsuz bir deneyiminiz oldu mu? Olduysa nedir?**

1  Oldu 0  Olmadı

0  Olmadı

1  Kullanıcı Karakterine Bağlı

2  Aktivitelere Bağlı

3  Sana yapılan ya da yapıldığına şahit olduğun olaylara bağlı

**22. Mahallenizde tek başınıza kullanmayı tercih etmediğiniz alanlar var mı?**

0  Yok

1  Boş / açık alanlar

2  Ara sokaklar

3  Park gibi yeşil alanlar

**23. Sizce park kullanımında kadınlar ve erkekler arasında fark var mıdır? Varsa nedir?**

1  Var 0  Yok

0  Yok

1  Erkekler parkları daha rahat kullanır, güvende hisseder

2  Erkek ve kadınlar farklı aktiviteler yaparlar

3  Kadınlar parkları daha rahat kullanır, güvende hisseder

4  Kadınlar parktaki diğer kullanıcılara bağlı olarak parkı kullanır

**24. Mahallenizdeki bir park ile mahalleniz dışındaki bir parkı karşılaştırsak;**

i. **Özellikle kullanmayı tercih ettiğiniz biri var mı (mahalle içi ya da dışı gibi)? Varsa hangisi ve neden?**

1  Var 0  Yok

a. 1  Mahalle İçi 0  Mahalle Dışı

0  Yakınlığa göre

1  Güvenlik algısına göre

2  Parktaki fiziksel donatı ve aktivitelere göre

3  Mikroklima özelliklerine göre (Yeşil, gölge vs.)

4  Park kullanıcılarına göre

ii. **Sizce bir kadının ve erkeğin mahalle içindeki bir parkla dışındaki bir parkı kullanması arasında bir farklılık var mıdır? Nasıl / neden?**

1  Var 0  Yok

a. 1  Mahalle İçi 0  Mahalle Dışı

0  Yakınlığa göre

1  Güvenlik algısına göre

2  Parktaki fiziksel donatı ve aktivitelere göre

3  Park kullanıcılarına göre

**5. BÖLÜM: Kullanıcıların Sosyo-Demografik Özellikleri ile İlgili Sorular**

**25. Demografik özellikler:**

1  Kadın 0  Erkek

**i. Kaç yaşındasınız?**

0  15 - 25 1  26 - 35 2  36 - 45 3  46 - 55 4  56 - 65 5  66'ten büyük

**ii. Çalışıyor musunuz? Ne tür bir işte çalışıyorsunuz?**

1  Evet 0  Hayır

**iii. Gelir durumunuz? Aylık**

0  Yok 1  1000 TL altı 2  1000-2000 TL 3  2000-3000 TL 4  3000-4000 5  4000 üstü

**iv. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?**

0  Halen öğrenci 1  İlkokul mezunu 2  Ortaokul mezunu 3  Lise mezunu  
4  Üniversite mezunu 5  Yüksek Lisans mezunu

**v. Medeni durumunuz?**

0  Bekar 1  Dul 2  Eşinden ayrı 3  Evli

**vi. Hane halkınız kaç kişi?**

**vii. Bakımınıza muhtaç çocuğunuz var mı?**

1  Var 0  Yok

**Kaç tane:**

**Yaşları:**

**viii. Bakımınıza muhtaç yetişkinler var mı?**

1  Var 0  Yok

**Kaç tane:**

**Yaşları:**

**26. Kaç senedir İzmir'de yaşıyorsunuz?**

0  1 yıldan az 1  1 - 2 yıl 2  2 - 5 yıl 3  6 - 10 yıl 4  11 - 20 yıl 5  21 yıl üstü

- **Önceden başka bir yerde yaşadınız mı? Nerede yaşıyordunuz?**

**27. Sürekli yaşadığınız eviniz:**

1  Apartman Dairesi 2  Site İçinde 3  Müstakil ev

**28. Oturduğunuz evin / apartmanın / sitenin özel bahçesi var mı?**

1  Var 0  Yok

• **Varsa, kullanıyor musunuz?**

1  Evet 0  Hayır

• **Kullanıyorsanız ne amaçla?**

• **Ne sıklıkta?**

4  Hergün 3  Haftada 3-5 defa 2  Ayda 3-5 defa 1  Yılda 3-5 defa 0  Daha az

**29. Yazlık eviniz var mı?**

1  Var 0  Yok

**i. Varsa özel bahçesi var mı?**

1  Var 0  Yok

**30. Yazlık veya kışlık evinizin özel bahçesi varsa kamusal açık yeşil alanlara gitmek yerine bu bahçeleri tercih eder misiniz?**

1  Ederim 0  Etmem

## APPENDIX E

### PARK USER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Bu röportaj çalışması İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi öğretim görevlisi İpek Kaştaş Uzun'un, İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü, Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü'nde tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Fatma Şenol ile birlikte yürüttüğü "Kentsel Mahalle Parkları Kullanımında Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Deneyimler" adlı doktora tez çalışmasında kullanılmak için yapılmaktadır. Ankete verdiğiniz cevaplar herhangi başka bir amaçta kullanılmayacak ve sadece doktora tezi için bir araç niteliğinde kullanılacaktır.

1. Boş vakitlerinizde ne gibi aktiviteler yaparsınız?
2. Mahallenizdeki parkları ne sıklıkta kullanırsınız?
3. Parka gittiğiniz zaman yaklaşık ne kadar süre kalırsınız?
4. Genelde bir parka hangi amaçlarla, ne yapmak için gidersiniz?
5. Günün hangi saatlerinde parklara gidersiniz? Neden?
6. Günün hangi saatlerinde parklara gitmezsiniz? Neden?
7. Genel olarak mahallenizdeki parklardan memnun musunuz?
  - Tasarım
  - Aktiviteler
  - Kullanıcılar

*Peki ya çevresinden?*

- Konut*
  - Ticaret*
  - Kullanıcılar*
8. Parklarda daha çok vakit geçirmeniz için nelerin değişmesini veya olmasını isterdiniz?
    - Tasarım
    - Aktiviteler
    - Kullanıcılar
    - Çevresi
  - 7a. Peki ya hayatınızda, günlük alışkanlıklarınızda nelerin değişmesi gerekirdi?
    - Çalışsam / ev işlerim daha az olsa*
    - Çocuklar*
    - Eşim / ailem izin verse*
  9. Daha çok ne tür ve nerelerdeki açık alanları ve parkları kullanırsınız? Neden?
    - Yakınlık

- Güvenlik
- Dost / komşu
- Göz önünde olmak

10. Parklara giderken yalnız mı yoksa birileriyle (eşiniz dostunuz, çocuğunuz gibi) mi olmayı tercih edersiniz?

11. Parklarda kadınlar ve erkekler arasında farklılıklar var mıdır?

- Komşular ne der?
- Korku
- Ailevi sorumluluklar
- Süre
- İzin

12. Parklardayken sizi rahatsız eden bir olay / kişi ile karşılaştınız mı?

13. Biraz kendinizden bahseder misiniz?

- Cinsiyet,
- Yaş,
- Eğitim,
- İş,
- Çocuk,
- Medeni durum

14. Eviniz bu parka yakın mı?

- Apt / müstakil
- Süre?
- Kendi bahçeniz var mı? Ya da başka bir açık alanı kullanma imkanınız var mı?

## APPENDIX F

### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Bu röportaj çalışması İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi öğretim görevlisi İpek Kaştaş Uzun'un, İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü, Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü'nde tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Fatma Şenol ile birlikte yürüttüğü "Kentsel Mahalle Parkları Kullanımında Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Deneyimler" adlı doktora tez çalışmasında kullanılmak için yapılmaktadır. Ankete verdiğiniz cevaplar herhangi başka bir amaçta kullanılmayacak ve sadece doktora tezi için bir araç niteliğinde kullanılacaktır.

1. Mahallenizdeki parkları ne sıklıkta kullanırsınız?
2. Bir parka gittiğiniz zaman yaklaşık ne kadar süre kalırsınız?
3. Genelde bir parka hangi amaçlarla gidersiniz?
4. Semt evine gelmenizin nedeni nedir?
5. (soru 4'ün cevabına göre) bunun yerine parkları tercih etmeme nedeniniz nedir?
6. Günün hangi saatlerinde parklara gidersiniz? Ya da gitmezsiniz neden?
7. Genel olarak mahallenizdeki parklardan memnun musunuz?
  - Tasarım
  - Aktiviteler
  - Kullanıcılar

*Peki ya çevresinden?*

- Konut
  - Ticaret
  - Kullanıcılar
8. Parklarda daha çok vakit geçirmeniz için nelerin değişmesini veya olmasını isterdiniz?
    - Tasarım
    - Aktiviteler
    - Kullanıcılar
    - Çevresi

**\*\*7a. Peki ya hayatınızda nelerin değişmesi gerekirdi?**

- Çalışmasam / ev işlerim daha az olsa
- Çocuklar
- Eşim / ailem izin verse



9. Parklara giderken yalnız mı yoksa birileriyle (eşiniz dostunuz, çocuğunuz gibi) mi olmayı tercih edersiniz?
10. Daha çok ne tür ve nerelerdeki açık alanları ve parkları kullanırsınız? Neden?
- Yakınlık
  - Güvenlik
  - Dost / komşu
  - Göz önünde olmak
11. Parklarda vakit geçirirken kadınlar ve erkekler arasında farklılıklar var mıdır?
- Komşular ne der?
  - Korku
  - Ailevi sorumluluklar
  - Süre
  - İzin
12. Parklardayken sizi rahatsız eden bir olay / kişi ile karşılaştınız mı?
13. Biraz kendinizden bahseder misiniz?
- Cinsiyet,
  - Yaş,
  - Eğitim,
  - İş,
  - Çocuk,
  - Medeni durum
14. Eviniz bu parka yakın mı?
- Apt / müstakil
  - Süre?
  - Kendi bahçeniz var mı? Ya da başka bir açık alanı kullanma imkanınız var mı?

## APPENDIX G

### WORKPLACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Ne kadar zamandır buradasınız / çalışıyorsunuz?
2. Bu parkın 24 saatini anlatır mısınız?  
06.00.....12.00.....18.00.....24.00.....06.00
  - a. Kimler kullanıyor?
  - b. Neler yapılıyor?
  - c. Mahalleli? Mahalle dışından?
  - d. Hafta içi & haftasonu fark oluyor mu?
3. Bu parkın geçirdiği değişimleri hatırlıyor musunuz? Neler değişti?
  - Tasarım
  - Aktiviteler
  - Kullanıcılar
4. Bu parkı düşününce kadın ve erkek kullanıcılar arasında bir fark var mı?
5. Sizce bu parkı bir erkeğin kullanmasında ne gibi sakıncalar olabilir?
  - a. Peki ya bir kadının kullanmasında ne gibi sakıncalar olabilir?
  - b. Bu söyledikleriniz bu parka dair özellikler mi yoksa bütün parklar için de geçerli mi?
6. Biraz kendinizden bahseder misiniz?
  - Yaş,
  - Eğitim,
  - İş,
  - Çocuk,
  - Medeni durum

## APPENDIX H

### CONSENT FORM USED IN CASE STUDY

Bu çalışma, İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi öğretim görevlisi İpek Kaştaş Uzun'un, İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü, Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü'nde tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Fatma Şenol ile birlikte yürüttüğü "Kentsel Mahalle Parkları Kullanımında Toplumsal Cinsiyete Dayalı Deneyimler" adlı doktora tez çalışmasında kullanılmak için yapılmaktadır.

Çalışmanın amacı, katılımcıların park kullanım alışkanlıkları hakkında bilgi toplamaktır. Çalışmaya katılım tamimiyle gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Röportajda, sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamimiyle gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır.

Röportaj, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek soruları içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Röportaj sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır.

Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için öğretim görevlisi İpek Kaştaş Uzun (İzmir Ekonomi Ün. D Blok 35; Tel: 488 43 53; E-posta: ipek.kastas@ieu.edu.tr ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

***Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.*** (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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## VITA

Born in İzmir in 1984. Received her bachelor degree in Landscape Architecture and Urban Design from Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey in 2007 and her M.UP degree in Urban Design from City College of New York, USA in 2008. During her graduate studies she took “Gender and the Environment”, “Urban Revolution” and “Urban Ecologies” courses as electives. Following graduation she worked as a landscape architect and urban designer in Lee Weintraub Landscape Architecture in New York and participated different scaled landscape architecture projects such as waterfront park designs, roof-top gardens, campus design and residential open green space designs in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

She completed her Ph.D degree in City Planning in İzmir Institute of Technology in 2016 with the TUBITAK 2211-National PhD Scholarship. Between the years 2011 – 2014 she worked as a research assistant in İzmir University of Economics, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design and since April 2014, she has been working as an instructor at the same department. She teaches "Arts and Design Studio", "Introduction to Contemporary Landscape Design" and "Environmental Control Systems" courses. "Gender Studies" and "Urban Design" and “Environment and Behavior” are among her research interests.

She attended several international conferences in U.S.A and in Turkey with research that focus on the “Gendered Experiences in Urban Environment” (İ.Kaştas, 2011, Effects of the Social Environment Design on the Perception of Gender. *Environment and Design Congress*, ISBN: 978-975-461-480-0; İ.Kaştas Uzun and F.Şenol, 2014, An Overview of the Design and Planning Approaches of Neighborhood Parks in Turkey. *Environment and Design 2014 Re-Thinking Residential Environments International Congress*, 467-478; İ.Kaştas and F.Şenol, 2013, Effects of Gendered Experiences on Women’s Psychological Health in an Urban Environment. *The Environmental Design Research Association/Proceedings of EDRA 44 Conference*; İ.Kaştas, 2012 Spatial Organization of the Urban Space In Relation to Gender Use. *EKOKAM / Gender Violence Conference*.)