
BODY CLEANING AND AGEING: AFFORDANCES AND CONSTRAINTS OF SANITARY WARE PRODUCTS

Dr. Berrak KARACA ŞALGAMCIOĞLU

Istanbul University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Industrial Design, Istanbul, Turkey

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To all the women in my country

... and in memory of my father, Mesut Karaca

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berrak Karaca Şalgamcıoğlu holds BSc degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Product Design from Istanbul Technical University (ITU). She has an MSc degree in Mechanical Engineering-System Dynamics and Control from ITU, with her thesis titled “Modeling and Optimization of Dolphin Swimming Movements” under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kuzucu. She received her Ph.D. degree in Industrial Product Design from ITU in 2014, with her thesis titled “Body-cleaning of Older Women Living Alone in Turkey: An Ethnographic Exploration of the Affordances and Constraints of Sanitary Ware Products,” under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Özlem Er. Her Ph.D. thesis was funded by Eczacıbaşı Building Products/VitrA and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK).

Her working experience is spread through various fields, including her position as an R&D Engineer at Makel, which is a leading electric appliances company in Turkey, and as a mechanical design engineer at Arçelik Electronics Plant in Istanbul. She was a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan’s Design Science Ph.D. program in 2010. She worked as a research assistant at ITU’s Department of Industrial Product Design from 2011 to 2013. She worked as a part-time lecturer at Özyeğin University in 2014. From 2015 to 2019, she worked as an Assistant Professor and the Founding Head of the Department of Industrial Design at Istanbul Medipol University.

Karaca Şalgamcıoğlu was the project lead, Turkey, at “loo-lab; a campaign for better bathrooms,” which is a collaborative research inquiry between design researchers in the UK and Turkey that was made possible by funding from the British Council’s UK–Turkey Higher Education partnership program in 2012. She is also one of the inventors of an international patent for the packaging mechanism used in the production processes of television devices. She also has various national patents and industrial designs.

She is currently an Assistant Professor and the Head of the Department of Industrial Design at Istanbul University. Her research interests include inclusive design, design research methods, aging, and ethnography.

FOREWORD

Body-cleaning, which is an indispensable part of our daily life, is also the source of countless difficulties and fears for many older people. The problems and accidents experienced during body-cleaning significantly affect the lives of the elderly and turn a pleasurable activity into a troubling one. In this respect, it is important to investigate in detail the use of the bathroom and the products in it where body-cleaning is carried out and to determine the necessary regulations. One of the strengths of this book is that it is the most comprehensive research in recent years made in Turkey related to ageing and bathroom design.

The book, which reveals bath and body-cleaning activity through the narration of bathroom users, is also important in terms of presenting the study participants' live body-cleaning poems, which display the body-cleaning activity from the point of view of older women in their purest form. The representation of the research study using poems rather than plain text distinguishes the book from other studies. Thus, it enables the issues of washing - bathing - old age to be handled in the context of psychological - emotional dimensions.

This precious study will be appealing to professionals working in the fields of Design, Architecture and Interior Architecture as well as undergraduate and graduate students in these fields. Moreover, it will be interesting to readers who study or are interested in ageing and gerontology. It will also attract not only Turkish researchers, but also international readers as it is a universal subject.

Human life is being prolonged and the number of people defined as elderly in society is increasing rapidly. Ageing healthily or living a healthy life is becoming more and more important every day. It is observed that in developed countries, comprehensive studies are conducted on elderly people, who constitute a significant percentage of the society. Unfortunately, such studies are limited in our country. On the other hand, there is also a need for research on the space that constitutes the living environment of the elderly. This study, prepared by Dr. Karaca, provides a comprehensive overview of the issue of bathing and body-cleaning, which is or will be important for everyone.

The author, Dr. Berrak Karaca Şalgamcıođlu deserves to be celebrated for carrying out successful work on a very original subject at the intersection of architecture and industrial design. I wish for this book to be a guide to healthier years for everyone.

Prof. Dr. Kemal Kutgün EYÜPGİLLER

PREFACE

This book consists of my PhD thesis which I completed in April 2014 at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) Department of Industrial Design. It is like a miracle for me that it has turned into this book in 2021, after 7 years. This happened with the suggestion of Prof. Dr. Kemal Kutgün Eyüpgiller, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at Istanbul University, after I presented this study at the Beyazıt Seminars, organized by the Faculty of Architecture. I am fortunate to be working with Prof. Dr. Eyüpgiller and I am proud to be working at Istanbul University.

'This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill - the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill - you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.'

Morpheus, The Matrix (1999)

In so many ways, doing a PhD is like taking the red pill in the famous movie *The Matrix*. While the rest of the world is happy with living in the Matrix, you have to deal with your own choice of staying in Wonderland, travelling deeper and deeper into the rabbit-hole and challenging yourself, your limits and abilities. In my case, without having intended to do so, the red pill took me to my future, my older adulthood and it was not easy. However, I was lucky to have so many people providing support and guidance to me in Wonderland.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my PhD advisor, Prof. Dr. Özlem Er, for providing tremendous support on many levels. I am indebted to her for her enduring advice and mentoring. In difficult moments of my doctoral research and my life, she also offered emotional support and encouragement. I feel truly honoured to have been one of her PhD students. Today, I am happy to be one of her close friends, talking every day and still learning from her.

Being a woman, especially being an old woman and living alone is difficult in Turkey. I wish to express my gratitude to the women who generously participated in my research. Due to confidentiality rules, I cannot name them here, but without their helpful and patient participation in this project, I never would have been able to complete such a large undertaking. I hope one day, we will make this country a better place for women.

Many people helped me to reach the women who participated in my research. To keep the identities of my participants confidential, I cannot write the names of the people who brought me together with them. But they know who they are and I am grateful to these dear friends.

I would like to thank the members of my PhD thesis monitoring committee: Prof. İsmail Tufan for inspiring me with his work, for his invaluable feedback and for offering extensive insight into my research methodology and Prof. Şeniz Ertuğrul for keeping my feet on the

PREFACE

grounds of science, engineering and technology. I would like to thank one of the members of my PhD thesis exam jury, Prof. Dr. Şebnem Timur, for introducing me to ethnography in her lectures and for inspiring me with her perspective on the daily interaction between products and users.

I would like to thank the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) Science Fellowships and Grant Programmes Department (BİDEB) and Eczacıbaşı Building Products/VitrA, for their generous financial support. Their support was vital to my project.

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Professor Richard Gonzalez and Associate Professor Carolyn Yoon, who co-supervised my study during my visiting scholarship in the design science PhD program at the University of Michigan. The contribution of the Claude D. Pepper Center Research Participant Program in the University of Michigan Geriatrics Center was also important to this project. I also gratefully acknowledge the help of Linda V. Nyquist, research support staff at the University of Michigan Geriatrics Center.

I am grateful to have been able to collaborate with Prof. Paul Chamberlain in the loo-lab project; he always inspires me with his work. I am also thankful to Steve Portigal and Liz Sanders for their tremendous help with my methodology.

Without my family this work would not be possible. I am extremely lucky to have such a supportive and loving mother, Neşe Karaca, who is my superhero and my source of strength. She has taught me that it's important to be an independent woman and to be able to have the ability to take care of yourself without having to rely on anyone else. I want to thank my love, my friend and my husband Mehmet Emin Şalgamcıođlu for always being there for me and having so much love for me. My sons, Eren Kavi and Alp Onat, were born after this work. Their presence and love have made me better understand the miracle of life. I would also like to thank my dear grandmother Güngör İnan for inspiring me to undertake this research and for making me feel loved.

I am fortunate to have many supportive and caring people in my life. Thank you all for believing in me, even deep down in the rabbit- hole.

Dr. Berrak KARACA ŞALGAMCIOĐLU

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

This book is the outcome of Berrak Karaca Şalgamcıoğlu's PhD study at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) of which I had the pleasure of supervising. As her master's study at the Department of Mechanical Engineering focused on a very technical subject, I was somewhat hesitant in accepting to be her PhD supervisor as I specialize in qualitative research methods. However, knowing Berrak since her undergraduate years in the Department of Industrial Design, I was also confident that whatever research subject she chooses, she would do what it takes to explore it with utmost care and effort. So, we started...

Berrak wanted to focus on ageing and the needs of the older adults, particularly their needs in body cleaning processes. She started the study in Michigan, United States where she spent a year as a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan, Design Science PhD program. In order to explore older adults' perceptions on their bathing environments, Berrak conducted qualitative research between January and October 2010. Sixteen community-living individuals aged over 65 from Michigan participated in the study through in-depth, semi-structured interviews in their homes. Although this initial study provided Berrak invaluable insight into the needs of older people in relation to body cleaning and bathroom use rituals in general, it also showed that body cleaning rituals are very much culture specific and called for in-depth qualitative research methods.

Upon her return to Turkey, we were involved in a project funded by the British Council's UK-Turkey Higher Education Partnership Program together with our colleagues from Sheffield Hallam University and Eczacıbaşı Building Products. In this project, that we called 'loo-lab', inspired by the number 100 in Turkish and word 'loo' in English, we designed a research platform on the use of the bathroom and its products focusing on user emotions, attitudes and opinions. For this, we created an exhibition-setting with images, set-ups and items that would prompt bathroom and toilet use discussions among the participants and lead them to give feedback on these activities. As part of this project, we hosted older adults in our exhibition space and undertook group interviews with them asking about their needs and difficulties that they face in bathroom spaces.

Although these methods provided invaluable data and insight, they were not sufficient in developing an in-depth view into the actions of body-cleaning influenced by religious beliefs and practices, sexuality and culture. At this point, we approached Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan, a leading researcher on gerontology in Turkey and sought his advice on the possibility of undertaking an ethnographic study with a select group of old women in different parts of Turkey. Prof. Dr. İsmail Tufan not only became a member of the dissertation committee, but also offered his extensive insight into the research. Additionally, two prominent design researchers, Steve Portigal and Elizabeth Sanders reviewed the methodology chosen for the rest of the study and gave their feedback on it.

Following this phase of joint exploration for the most suitable method for the rest of the study, Berrak carried out an ethnographic study consisting of unstructured interviews

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and observation with eight women aged 65 or older, living alone in their own houses in different cities and who volunteered to take part in the research. Besides gaining their trust and understanding their life contexts by staying with them for two days, Berrak recorded their voices in the process of body-cleaning and turned the transcripts of these voices into poems, translating their words into English with the utmost care to stay true to their meaning. This was a major methodological contribution and it was recognized as such and they were published in a journal article (Karaca Şalgamcıođlu, B., & Er, Ö. (2018). Behind the Shower Curtain: Seven Poems on Ageing and Body Cleaning. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 18(4), 272–282). This book contains those poems which enable the readers to understand the feelings, heartaches and difficulties in all their richness and complexities faced by older persons in doing an ordinary task such as body cleaning.

The book is the outcome of this unique and important research that I am proud to be involved in as a supervisor. I hope it would inspire and inform fellow researchers and lead to further studies on age related issues and difficulties in Turkey and abroad.

Prof. Dr. Özlem ER