A newspaper article titled “What about the hungry children in the schools?” criticized the Children’s Protection Society for overspending funds for its headquarter in Ankara (referred as Children’s Palace). According to critic, ‘one million Turkish Lira is spent for the Children Palace in Ankara, while we don’t even know what has been done in Istanbul; the province with the highest population.”

Criticized by a few in the 1930s, Cocuk Sarayi (Children’s Palace) indeed represented republican utopia and demographic policies centered around child welfare. The grandeur, the location, and the role of the Children’s Palace were highly symbolic for the emergent Turkish state. Children’s Palace is located at the heart of the newly constructed national capital Ankara and gave its name to the avenue on which it is located: Children’s Palace Avenue. It is surrounded by other governmental and administrative buildings, such as the courthouse, the center of rural affairs, the center of mining and research affairs, as well as cultural centers, like the famous movie theater; Sus, and positioned in front of the primary and secondary schools.

Children’s Palace was a combination of four buildings (attached to one another with internal bridges) and a large private backyard accessible by all four buildings. The complex included a daycare center, outdoor playground, a swimming pool, dormitory, a milk center (distributing sterilized milk, and regulating wet nursing), soup kitchen, public and private baths, a conference room, a library for children, a dispensary for children, and a delivery room (also providing supervision during pregnancy).

This chapter takes a spatial perspective and questions the ways in which the nationalist discourse on child-protection and childrearing in 1930s was practiced on the ground, in and though the newly built childrearing spaces. (Tentatively & cautiously) I argue that Children’s Palace can be analyzed as a space of encounter between Ottoman and Turkish forms of charity, a space through which state can control destitute children (“potential juvenile delinquents”), a space of interaction between children, mothers, nurses, and state officials, as a space where the modern state displayed and legitimized its agenda on hygiene and scientific childrearing practices, and as a performative/commemorative space where the yearly celebrations of the National Sovereignty and Children’s Day (April 23rd) starts and ends.

1 “Mekteplerdeki Ac Yavrularin Hali Ne Olacak? (What about the hungry children in the schools?).” Cumhuriyet, November 2, 1930. P.2
2 For the theoretical framework on the spaces of encounter, I partly use Ann L. Stoler’s discussion. For further