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‘Ideal Home’ Assertion of Istanbul

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Abstract

As from 1980's and especially for the last decade, Istanbul seems to be a huge construction site, which is not a coincidence when all the policies related to construction such as housing, urbanization, urban transformation, marketing policies and stimulation of citizens' evolution to a consumption society are taken into consideration. In this period – from 1980's till today – a wide range of products belong to the “Ideal Home” assertion was built almost everywhere of the city. Nowadays with an increasing numbers of houses as ‘strolling instruments’ are for sale; but how about “home” itself? As is known, “someone’s home” is not just a location and a structure with natural or/and built environment of a neighbourhood, but it is a “place” socially, psychologically and emotionally meaningful to its user/owner. At this point, it becomes reasonable to examine the relation between the “ideal home” produced and the “ideal home user/owner” in the context of appropriation, attachment and identity as home making mechanisms. The theoretical background of the research depends on the literature of architecture and urban design particularly in the field of environmental psychology that is focused on the interaction between place and human. These related literatures are re-examined in order to designate the specific behavioural components of home making. According to these components identified a case study is carried out in the residential areas produced with an assertion of ideal home in Istanbul. In-depth semi-structured interviews searching for behavioural components of home making were conducted on thirty families from six different locations in the city. Findings indicate that behavioural adaptation differs in a variety of features of the houses such as; local characteristics of the urban areas the houses are built in, existing housing design, target group of houses, relations with other users etc. Additionally, it seems that housing modifications commonly provided a more supportive environment in a great deal of houses but on the contrary, modifications are disproving the “ideal home” assertion and in some families have adverse effects.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the history of research on gated communities which generally refers to residential complexes around the world, there have been several attempts to analyse the different motives of the new middle classes' tendency to escape from the city centres and to move to suburbia which have become the new settlement areas by the effects of globalization since 1980's. A new housing market came into existence in parallel with the neo-liberal policies due to the wish to globalize Turkey. This had an impact mostly on larger cities of the country like Istanbul. After 1980's Istanbul started to become a huge construction site and expanded head towards its hinterlands in the form of new settlement areas. In this period gated communities were produced and advertised as the new face of the city and they targeted new middle classes, upper-middle and upper classes. These residential complexes are "closed to outsiders through different mechanisms such as walls, gates and fences and they are protected against potential dangers through security guards and closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras" [1]. Right along with the features related to safety, they provide privacy by being isolated from the other gated communities and other parts of the city. Besides, by supplying various types of social facilities such as sports, shopping etc., it is expected to replace the urban life in city centres. Moreover, from the television commercials, billboard advertisements, brochures and social media commercials, it can be seen that these housing units and the life style of gated communities are introduced as an "ideal home" for a human being (Fig. 1). This ideal home assertion always includes mainly safety, privacy and social facilities.



Fig. 1. Advertisement examples of different residential areas [2].

At this point it is important to think about the difference between a house and a home. A house is a strolling instrument in the housing market. On the contrary "someone's home" is not just a location and a structure with natural or/and built environment of a neighbourhood, but it is a "place" socially, psychologically and emotionally meaningful to its user/owner. It then becomes reasonable to examine the relation between the 'ideal home' produced and the 'ideal home user/owner' in the context of appropriation, attachment and identity as home making mechanisms. The theoretical background of the research depends on the literature of architecture and urban design particularly in the field of environmental psychology that is focused on the interaction between place and human. These related literatures are re-examined in order to designate the specific behavioural components of home making. According to these components identified, a case study is carried out in the residential areas produced with an assertion of ideal home in Istanbul. In-depth semi-structured interviews searching for behavioural components of home making were conducted on thirty families from six different locations in the city. Every location defines a large area in/around the city and involves several gated communities which had been constructed since 1980. The reason for selecting large areas rather than selecting some specific gated communities is to analyse the "ideal home" owners'/tenants' behavioural adaptation to their homes as it is the main objective of the study.

In this context throughout the structure of the paper "Literature Review: Home Making Mechanisms" is the next section which examines the home making mechanisms including sense of place, place attachment, place identity and appropriation. This is followed by "Case Study in Istanbul" section which provides the overviews of the locations selected and the method of the study conducted. In the section called 'Discussion of the Data' consists of the data collected both from the surveys and interviews and tries to analyse and discuss the results. The last section, which is 'conclusions', involves comments on results and includes offers for the future studies.

2. Literature Review: Home Making Mechanisms

In academic literature the concept of ‘home’ is not understood as the physical structure of a house or the natural/built environment of a neighbourhood. “Instead, homes can be understood as ‘places’ that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups” [3]. A number of academics discussed this relation between ‘home’ and ‘place’ several times. Easthope (2010) gives examples from these discussions: “Prohansky et al. state that among those theorists who discuss place-identity, ‘without exception, the home is considered to be the *place* of greatest personal significance’ [4]. McDowell points out that Heidegger argued that the home is ‘the key location in which a spiritual unity is formed between humans and things’ [5]” [3].

Tuan (1977) defines “place” and “space” in his book called ‘Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience’ and says “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other. There is no place like home” [6]. ‘Topophilia’ is the most important concept that took place in his literature and definition, using his own words, is that “Topophilia...include all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment” [7]. Therefore, it can be stated that home is a place in which people experience attachments to the environment.

The concepts senses of place, place attachment, place identity and appropriation have been widely researched in academic literature. Sense of place can be defined as “a factor that converts the space into a place with special behavioural and emotional characteristics for individuals” [8]. Smaldone [10] discussed place attachment and defined it by the help of Low& Altman’s (1992) [9] work as “one’s emotional or affective ties to a place, is generally thought to be the result of a long-term connection with a place” [10]. Place identity is defined by Proshansky as “those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment...” [11].

Marcus (1992) explains appropriation and its relation with attachment and identity as “Appropriation, attachment and identity refer collectively to the idea that people invest places with meaning and significance and act in ways that reflect their bonding and linkage with places. Appropriation means that the person is transformed in the process of appropriating the environment” [12].

Thus, it can be uttered that in appropriation process human interaction with places occurs in three different dimensions which are cognitive, behavioural and emotional (Table 1).

Table 1. Different aspects of human interaction with the environment and its association with different components of place [13].

	Type of Relationship	Details of Relationship	Place components
Interaction between human and places	Cognitive	General perception in order to understand the geometry of space and orientation	Form
	Behavioural	Perception of space capabilities to obviate the needs	Function
	Emotional	Perception of satisfaction and attachment to place	Meaning

Hashemnezhad et al. explain these aspects as follows: “The cognitive aspects pertain to the formal aspects of spatial perceptions during which people know the environmental elements of the place and use them to navigate their long way. Behavioural aspects refer to the functional aspects of activities and functional relationship between people and environment, while emotional aspects point to people’s satisfactory emotional experiences of a place and resultant attachment to it which can be so strong” [13].

Shamai (1991) discusses seven different scales of sense of place which are “(0) not having any sense of place, (1) knowledge of being located in a place, (2) belonging to a place, (3) attachment to a place, (4) identifying with the place goals, (5) involvement in a place and (6) sacrifice for a place”. These levels of sense of place indicate how one’s sense of place develops from no sense of place to sacrifice for a place. In other words, one’s having knowledge of being located in a place turns in time to a feeling of belonging to that place and what’s happening in the place starts to be important for the individual. Later then place has a meaning to the one and place begins to be different from other places for the individual which means that the emotional attachment to the place shows up. The next stage is the one in which the individual has an interest in the place’s needs and this means that one is attached to the place deeply. The highest level in these scales is ‘the sacrifice for a place’ and the resident takes an active environmental role in the community [14]. Shamai’s seven different scales from ‘sense of belonging to a place’ to ‘sacrifice for a place’ show

residual place attachment of an individual. There are some factors that affect place attachment in the literature which can be aligned as physical, social, cultural and personal factors, memories and experiences, place satisfaction, interaction and activity features and time factor [13]. By the role of these factors, creating place attachment in every scale becomes comprehensible.

3. Case Study in Istanbul

Case study was conducted in order to examine the home making mechanisms in residential areas which are constructed as “ideal homes” in Istanbul. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out on thirty families from six different locations in the city. These locations are (1) Beylikduzu, (2) Bahcesehir-Basaksehir-Halkalı, (3) Sariyer, (4) Atasehir, (5) Cekmekoy and (6) Maltepe which define large areas in/around the city within several gated communities and shown in Fig. 2. The reason for selecting large areas was to analyse the “ideal home” owners’/tenants’ behavioural adaptation to their homes as it is the main objective of the study. The second purpose of the study was to understand the differences of the areas (if any) from the users’ perspectives. Due to these objectives the names of the gated communities constructed in the selected areas did not gain importance along the study. On the contrary it is given importance to the existence of ‘ideal home’ assertion and the way the houses sold/rented.

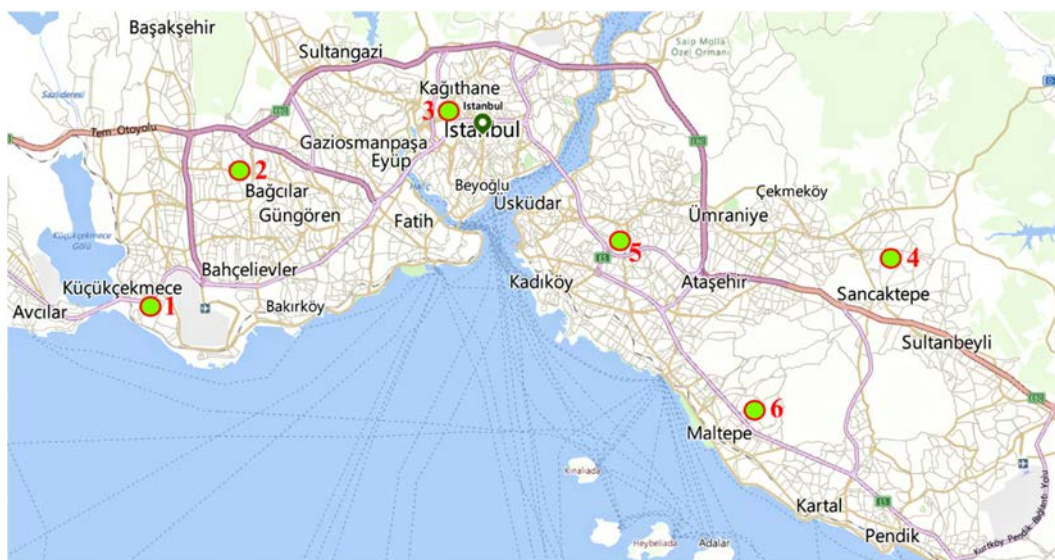


Fig. 2. Six locations selected in Istanbul for the case study, Here: 2016.

3.1. Overview of six locations: Beylikduzu, Bahcesehir-Basaksehir-Halkalı, Sariyer, Atasehir, Cekmekoy, Maltepe

From six locations Beylikduzu, Bahcesehir-Basaksehir-Halkalı and Sariyer are in the European Side whereas Atasehir, Cekmekoy and Maltepe are in Anatolian Side of Istanbul. All the locations have been developed in the last 20-25 years and have become highly populated counties in the meantime. After the earthquake in 1999, Beylikduzu became one of the most popular counties when new settlement areas were required. Its development started in 1980's with the construction of its first gated communities and after 2000 the constructions in the area were accelerated. Today the district has its own centre and several gated communities around it. Bahcesehir-Basaksehir-Halkalı defines a development zone which consists of these three districts - Bahcesehir, Basaksehir, Halkalı- and they are almost at the outlying. For the last 20 years these areas have been developing with new settlement areas constructed, but the zone has remained still at the borders of the city. Sariyer was a village before 1920's and starting from the following years it has been developed, expanded and it reached its present borders. After 1970's Cekmekoy started to become an industrial site which let in immigrants and this affect its socio-economic and natural feature. Cekmekoy faced the

problems of illegal housing and squatting but after the earthquake in 1999 it became one of the most popular counties in terms of construction because of its load-bearing ground. Today it is a county with new settlement areas and gated communities. In 2000's Atasehir was established and opened to settlement as a satellite city in Istanbul. In time new gated communities were constructed all over the area. Today there are several housing projects carried out in the region. After 1960's Maltepe district was developed and expanded through its forests in the north by the effects of immigration. After 2000's several gated communities constructed in its new settlement areas in spite of its illegal housing.

3.2. Area study in six locations

In the selected locations/counties in-depth interviews had been done with thirty families (5 families per location) who live in gated communities in the areas and the profile of the participants can be seen from Table 2. 11 males and 24 females took a part in the area study. The data about the profiles of these participants shows that there have been no significant differences in education levels. Only seven out of 35 participants were the graduates from high school and rest of them have been graduated from university. When their family status is examined, it can be seen that there are 5 unmarried, 2 divorced and 28 married participants. Most of the participants are homeowners except seven of them.

Table 2. Profile of participants (Age range: 35-65, time range: 6 months-11 years).

Location	Population	Family Status	Education	Homeownership
Beylikduzu	5 female	All married, have children	3 university graduates 2 high school graduates	3 homeowners, 2 tenants
Bahcesehir-Basaksehir-Halkali	4 females 1 male	All married, have children	4 university graduates 1 high school graduate	3 homeowners, 2 tenants
Sariyer	2 female 3 males	2 married, have children 2 unmarried 1 divorced, have children	3 un university graduates 2 high school graduates	All homeowners
Atasehir	3 females 2 males	3 married, have children 2 unmarried	5 university graduates	4 homeowners, 1 tenant
Cekmekoy	3 females 2 males	All married, 3 have children	3 un university graduates 2 high school graduates	4 homeowners, 1 tenant
Maltepe	2 females 3 male	2 married, no children 1 married, has children 1 divorced, has children 1unmarried	5 university graduates	4 homeowners, 1 tenant

Every interview consisted of two main parts. The first part was a survey study in order to get the general features and perspectives of the participants. The second part involved discussions about their appropriate environment and place attachment to their homes.

There were three main groups of questions in the survey study. The first group refers to the period of deciding to buy/rent the house and start living in it. The second group tries to figure out the "ideal home" idea of the participant and in which proportion their home meets their idea of "ideal home". The last group of questions was asked to understand the changes made in the interior design of the house (if any) by the participants. The main questions of the survey by groups have been given in the Table 3 without their sub-questions.

The discussions were done in order to examine the participants' emotional ties to their home, the factors that affected them in the period of creating place attachment; their place satisfaction about the quality and security of their home; the memories/experiences through the time they spent in their home (from moving to the house to today); the effects of the time itself to their attachment.

Table 3. Questions of the survey study.

First group of questions	Second group of questions	Third group of questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main reason you live in this house? • What did you pay attention while choosing your house? • Which one affected your choice? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Brochures ✓ Advertisements ✓ Advertisements through social media ✓ Conversations with sales marketing ✓ Other.... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the features of an “ideal home” according to you? How should be the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social reinforcements’ standards? ✓ Essential social reinforcements? ✓ Relations with neighbours? ✓ Design of the house? ✓ Security? ✓ Relation with city centre? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you made any changes in the interior design of your house? • If any, which of these have changed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stable furniture ✓ Kitchen ✓ Bathroom/s ✓ Divide a room/reunite a room ✓ Floor covering ✓ Changing doors/windows ✓ Changing balcony (taking balcony inside etc.) ✓ Other....

4. Discussion of the Data

The data gained from the area study is discussed in two main sections: survey study and discussions with participants. In the ‘survey study’ section the answers given to the questions are analysed in three groups as mentioned above and the discussions with the participants are given in order to examine the home making mechanisms.

4.1. Survey study

It is seen that the main reasons to live in a house differs from one location to another. The reasons of the ones who live in Sariyer are closeness to the city centre and their work. The other locations’ residents show family and relatives’ closeness to their neighbourhood with a percentage of 40 and their owning the house with a percentage of 50 as their reason to live in their house. The attention, while choosing the house, was mostly paid to the security features of the neighbourhood and only seven participants didn’t talk about security out of 30. In the last decade the ideal home assertions are designed mostly around the idea of security and it is figured out that almost all the participants do not want to live in the city centres anymore and believe that city centres are dangerous for their family and especially for their children. Additionally, design and size of the house and transportation were the important features while selecting a house. Only five participants told that they searched the features of the neighbourhood where they planned to live.

Conversations which had done with the sales and marketing departments of the construction firms affected most of them in the period of deciding to buy their houses. It is seemed that the television advertisements, social media advertisements are not that affective in the persuasion period. In the advertisements of the ideal homes, social reinforcements have significant importance. On the contrary from the first group of questions it is discovered that social reinforcements are not as important as they are told to be.

All the participants think that social reinforcements are one of the features of an ideal home. The essential social reinforcements according to them are having a supermarket, a sport centre, open-green areas, playgrounds and a community clinic. Most of them told that they like to have neighbours with limited relations. The design of the house and living in a modern gated community is very important to the participants. Here it is substantial to remember that design and size of the house was very important in the period of choosing the house to live in for the participants. When security’s features were asked, they mostly mentioned walls and security services. When asked whether their home and neighbourhood met their idea of ideal home, 80% of the participants told that they did.

Relation with city centre was another question in the survey. Most of them told that the ideal home has to be close to city centre. However, the participants except the ones’ living in Sariyer and Atasehir added that this feature of their home did not fit into their ideal home idea.

All the homeowners have made changes in the interior design of their home whereas tenants did not want to spend money for a householder. Almost all the changes that were written in the list of survey took place in the houses of the participants. Most of the changes were made in kitchen, bathroom and balcony.

When all the locations are examined in a comparative way through all the groups of questions, it is seen that only answers about the main reasons of living in the houses differ from one location to another and the rest of them are common in most of the cases. Thus it can be said that the expectation from the life style of gated communities and the idea of ideal home does not depend on the location of the residential area.

4.2. Discussions with participants

All of the 35 participants shared their memories and experiences in this part of the study. The discussions were mainly about attachment to their home. Most of the participants told that they have come to this residential area after living in city centre. Some of the memories and experiences about moving to a new residential area are as follows:

“At the beginning, I wasn’t used to this residential area. I didn’t know who my neighbours were, I still don’t know much. But I got used to their faces... We moved here to raise our children in a safe place. They can play in the garden, do sports activities, and have friends... The area is not very close to the city centre and I believe this feature of the area keeps us safe... We made some changes in the interior design of the house. I like the way my kitchen looks now. After 5 years I now got used to the area and my home.” (P23)

“We moved here because our home in city centre did not have a security service and a thief stole some stuff from our house. This residential area, as you have seen, has high walls and a security service who watches all the cameras on a television. After moving here, I started to sleep at nights again...” (P1)

From the discussions done with the participants it has been discovered that one of the most important necessities is to feel safety. Most of them think that city centre is not a place to live in anymore. Even though the participants found the gated communities odd at the beginning, they got used to it in time. They made changes in the interior design of their houses. They painted walls to the colours they like, they changed the kitchen furniture, floor covering, got the balcony in. After all these steps they could talk about their attachment to the house.

“If one endeavours for something, it starts to become special for him. I spent too much money and time for the changes in this house in order to look in the way I like. Additionally, I met too many people in the area. We don’t go to each other’s houses but we meet in the social centre. We drink and eat together and chat. Here is my home, I like to live here. This place is ‘home sweet home’” (P15)

“I spent too much money to buy the house. The day I entered the house, it became my home.” (P9)

“When I bought the house I thought I wouldn’t spend any money for it. But I did. I didn’t like this situation but it does not matter. This is my home.” (P28)

Some of the participants have a higher place attachment than the others. Especially the ones who live more than 3 years, the ones who have friendships in the residential area and who spent money for the house feel themselves as a member of the community.

5. Conclusions

Through the case study conducted in six different locations in Istanbul, the paper has unexpected inferences. As is known, gated communities constructed in Istanbul has been sold as the strolling instruments but at this point it has been discovered that people do not talk about city, city rights, urban life and etc. The features of the neighbourhood lost importance and the relations with neighbours limited as preferred. It is seen that the ideal home assertion become

a reality through gated communities by using “security” as an element for marketing. Social reinforcements are the additional supports which replace the urban life. All the participants, even the tenants, have an attachment to their homes. Most of them had difficulties during the adaptation period but there is no one not adapted to his home or neighbourhood, and time is one of the key elements of attachment. Another key element is the money spent for the house. For some of the participants spending money for the house became a reason to feel it as a home and this seem distracting.

In the academic literature different aspects of human interaction which are cognitive, behavioural and emotional with places are studied. ‘Money spent for the house’ is not an issue studied in these researches. Due to these findings new life styles and related issues like money’s effect on attachment have to be studied in the future researches.

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