Gated Communities in Turkey; Examples from Konya

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ABSTRACT

Transformations and changes in the consumption process affected the housing spaces together with the commercial spaces. This process generated newly developed housing types on the urban space in which new lifestyles displayed. These housing developments are not only designed as an accommodation or 'place' but also they are designed for a new 'lifestyle'. In recent years, parallel to the developments of housing market in Turkey, housing productions in Konya (Turkey) generally show a gated structure as well. These productions are getting warm interest from most of the medium-high income groups of the society. The basic aim of this type of housing productions which reflect medium-high income groups’ lifestyles, offer new living conditions, include not only accommodation but also consumption of the services is to produce and edit consumption-oriented spaces which consist of health and sport facilities, entertainment complexes, shopping spaces in some examples etc. In this study, the development process of gated communities in Turkey was examined. Then, the reflections of this process to Konya city were explicated through some gated community examples from Konya city on the basis of urban image. In the context of the study, changing visage of the city for the last five years with gated communities was evaluated too. Evaluations were made through the area observations by using maps and various photographs.

Keywords: gated communities, urban image, spatial discrimination, spatial integration, Konya.

1. Introduction

Gated communities have received significant attention in global academic and everyday debates. Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder (1997) describe gated communities in their work which is the pioneer work of this phenomenon titled ‘Fortress America’ as residential areas with restricted access in which public space is privatized. Many terms are used in the literature for this phenomenon such as ‘gated communities’ (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Davis, 1992; Low, 2003), ‘enclosed neighborhoods’ (Landman, 2000), and ‘gated enclaves’ (Grant, 2003). Although definitions and perceptions of what constitutes a gated community are quite varied, a general definition can be stated, as suggested by Atkinson and Blandy: gated communities are walled or fenced by boundary, and their public access was restricted, often guarded using cameras or security personal (Almatarneh, 2013).

Additionally, gated communities which bring lifestyle in the foreground and associated with consumption trends can be described as insulated housing areas which are designed with one of the concepts, offer leisure time opportunities, surrounded by high level security and generally target middle or high income groups (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

In most of the literature, gated communities are regarded as the results of global neo-liberal restructuring leading to class polarization and concerns about safety and security
The idea of gated or walled communities is actually not a new phenomenon. The earliest forms of gated communities were built by the Romans in approximately 300 B.C. to maintain order in the countryside (Almatarneh, 2013). But now, the situation is different from the past especially in terms of the scale. The gated community developments of today are not for defending the city, it is for securing one part of the society or group from the city.

These communities have been started to observe from the 1980’s onwards in the many metropolitan areas of the world. They have emerged in different parts of the world. At first, these communities rapidly increased in California and it emerged in the following years in the rest of the U.S. and in the countries of Europe, Latin America, Asia, Middle East, Russia, South Africa, the Arab world and also Turkey that have different levels of economical development and have emerged not only in the metropolitan areas of existing capitalist countries but also in the certain cities of post-socialists’ countries that have become recently acquainted with the capitalist urbanization processes (Al-Hamarneh, 1999; Low, 2003; Kurtuluş, 2011; Tanılkü, 2012; Almatarneh, 2013). Therefore, there can be said that gated communities are a global phenomenon, most extensively documented in the US (Blakely and Snyder 1997), and are now developing and becoming a major trend in the housing market in many countries (Grant and Mittelsteadt, 2004; Baycan Levend and Gülümser, 2007). And, they which were isolated from outside world with high walls and iron fences reached a significant level in the 1990’s.

However, their structure differs from country to country, with respect to their characteristics and in particular with respect to different reasons of development such as security, ethnicity or prestige (Gülümser, 2005). Gated communities developed in some countries as an indicator of prestigious (i.e. US cities), for some as a summer resorts in the beginning and then become a solution for ethnicity (especially in Latin American cities) (Coy and Pöhler, 2002). In Europe, in major cities like London and Amsterdam, they have become a fashion trend. Additionally, in Asia and Africa, these communities are solutions for daily problems like high crime rate and ethnic conflicts (Landman&Schöntiech, 2002; Glasze&Alkhayyal, 2002; Jürgens&Gnad, 2002; Baycan Levend&Gülümser Akgün, 2007).

Despite the different reasons of development, they dramatically restructure the urban patterns of many cities around the world, transform urban environment with their different characteristics in which social segregation and identity features have become more prominent and strict than the past (Baycan Levend&Gülümser Akgün, 2007; Almatarneh, 2013). They have increasingly become a trend for housing markets with these varying characteristics and also with differing degrees of amenities, exclusivity and security (Gooblar, 2002).

When we compare the early examples of gated communities with todays, we can say that early examples were oriented toward high-income groups, nowadays; these settlements have also become oriented toward middle-income groups (Almatarneh, 2013). In this situation, we should ask why people directed to establish in such kind of residences and inside a wall, what are the advantages of these kinds, why do developers build gated communities and do they really provide spatial discrimination and do they affect the urban image/identity. In this study the effects of these communities will be analyzed only within the urban image concept.

Obviously, these types of housing productions are more profitable for developers and its potential users are willing to pay for them because of some advantages.

When approached on an urban and residential scale, gated communities appear to have a number of advantages and disadvantages. Besides advantages such as high quality of life, security, controlled traffic, the consequent creation of playgrounds for children, protecting privacy more easily, creation of a feeling of belonging to a community, existence of private management, social activity opportunities, suitable recreation areas and reduced potential
negative externalities, there are also certain disadvantages such as the loss of the heterogeneity found in city life, isolation, polarization, gradual decline of public spaces, that especially children cannot socialize with the public because of private common areas, public transport vehicles pass at a certain distance from the residences, vehicles like fire trucks and ambulances face problems when entering the settlements in states of emergency. The advantages that these residences provide mostly affect the residents, whereas the disadvantages have effects on the physical and social state of the whole city (Calderia, 1996; Özgür, 2006; Tümer&Dostoğlu, 2008).

Many studies conducted in different contexts show that the fear of crime is a leading motivation to move to a gated community (Low 2001; Wilson-Doenges 2000). Economic considerations are also important. A home in a gated community may be a better investment than one outside the walls, especially over the long term (Aalbers 2003).

Another subject is that these kinds of housing estates affect the townscape and image of the cities too. General character and identity of the cities can be changed by them. As an urban planner/urban designer, this subject is one of the important cases to analyze. For this point, gated communities which consist of a series of closed and physically attached monotonous compartments can be exemplified. In this study, economical, legal, managerial dimensions of the subject were excluded. And, the concept was evaluated only from the physical aspect through the concept of urban image in the Konya city sample.

In the context of the study, the development process of gated communities in Turkey was examined. Then, the reflections of this process to Konya city were explicated through some gated community examples from Konya city on the basis of urban image.

The aim of the study is to evaluate changing image of the Konya city which selected as a case study with these types of housing productions and their effects on the townscape. For this aim, changing townscape and urban identity of Konya city with these types of housing productions for the last five years was evaluated. Evaluations were made through the area observations by using maps and various photographs. These evaluations were made through some examples from 3 sample districts which have different physical development characteristics (historical center-Karatay District, modern center-Selçuklu District and green center-Meram district).

2. Gated Communities in Turkey

As neo-liberal policies went hand-in-hand with the developments in the world during the second half of the 1980s, Turkey entered a new era. In these years, the efforts to attract global capital played an important role in the organization of urban space. In this era, development of transportation, communications and production technologies were the main stipulations for integration within the global economy. Turkey met with the phenomenon of gated communities after the 1980s, when substitution policies were abandoned and liberal policies became effective. As new regulations that sought to attract multinational companies and investments to the country have emerged and Istanbul has been the most preferred city by the global capital (Keyder, 2000; Hacısalihoğlu, 2000). The changes and developments were firstly seen in the metropolitan cities of Turkey, also in Istanbul before the other cities. In this process, Istanbul underwent various changes in its commercial and residential areas (İnal Çekiç & Gezici, 2009). The globalization process is reflected in urban areas not only with prestigious business centers and shopping centers but also with the rapid development of gated communities, a new form of elite urbanism, a new lifestyle (İnal Çekiç&Gezici, 2009). Therefore, gated communities of Turkey appeared as a consequence of socio-cultural and economic changes related to globalization and economic restructuring like the other countries of the world as mentioned before.
After 1980s, in Turkey, the effects of economical politics, economical recovery, revival in construction sector and expanding of markets increased the housing construction. New mass housing legislation was also effective in this process. With this legislation, detached house settlement formats were changed and this format was not the only alternative anyhow. Whilst housing productions were constructed by micro-scaled private entrepreneurs at previous periods, after 1980s, mass housing productions were constructed by macro capital groups and also by public institutions.

When development occurred in metropolitan cities, high income groups, initially, established in the gated housings which were constructed in the limited open spaces of inner city. And then they left the city center because of the decreasing quality of life in the inner-city areas (such as crowded residential areas, lack of open and green sites, traffic and parking problems, increasing crime rates and etc.). Therefore, high income groups established in the gated housings which were in the suburban areas of the city (Bali, 2002) at the expense of destruction of the forest areas or open-green areas (i.e. İstanbul-Sarıyer District). In this situation, we could not say that these communities have environmentalist sensitivity.

These gated communities hold foreign effects in their architectural style and also users’ lifestyle (i.e. Kemer Country Houses). With these properties, it reflects a different image for the city. Kemer Country is a leading upper-income gated community and a pioneering force that has introduced the concept of gated living to İstanbul.

These communities emerged after the dynamics of 1980s by the reasons of income distribution profile, new elites, searching for status and identity of these elites, escaping from the city center, dreaming of rural life, limited city spaces, focusing on investment and rent on the basis of consumption culture. Today they can be seen all over the city; in the city center or outside the city and designed not only for the urban elites but also for the middle income groups.

In Turkey, interest for gated communities, especially in Istanbul, has increased rapidly. This situation has been reflected in the literature with different dimensions; global, economic, physical, psychological (Keyder & Öncü, 1993; Keyder, 2000; Hacisalihoğlu, 2000) and their effects on social segregation and tension within the urban environment (Kurtuluş, 2002). The “luxury-showy consumption” that has been identified with the rich living spatially separate from society also became a much debated dimension of gated communities (Yıldız & İnalhan, 2007). Deprivation of public spaces by privatization of land has been another focal point of national academic literature (Kurtuluş, 2005). These kind of housing productions in Turkey are supported on the legal and managerial dimensions by the methods of privatization of the land, preparing legal basis for them and by plan changes.

Additionally, today, gated housing communities in Turkey have increasingly become a profitable segment in the real estate market and also provide a new marketing angle for developers as offering security, status/prestige and new lifestyle. Nonetheless, these communities increase the housing market values.

When we look at their locational choices, in many cases, we can see that gated housing communities for the upper classes (i.e. gated towers, residences) or other type of high rise gated housings are generally accompanied by nonresidential developments, such as shopping centers or office complexes, which bring jobs into the neighborhood.

There is a big demand for these high-standardized communities which started from Istanbul city and continue to build in the other cities of Turkey like Ankara, Izmir, Konya, built in the inner or outer city and they have become popular production style. Kemer Country, Acarkent, İstanbul İstanbul, Beykoz Mansions, Alkent 2000, Zekeriyaköy Houses, Bahçeşehir, Ataşehir, Mashattan, Uphill Court are the gated community examples from Istanbul and Mesa, Portakal çiçeği valley, Dikmen valley are from Ankara city.
3. Method

Information based on direct observation was gathered from some gated community examples from different districts of the Konya city. These districts have different physical characteristics, identity properties and development processes. Maps and photographs are the main materials of the study.

4. Case Study: Konya

In parallel with the developments in the world, developments in Turkey affect Konya city like the other metropolitan cities of Turkey in a short time. Since the beginning of 2000s, gated housing productions started to rise in Konya city. Due to the crowd in Konya city center like the other cities created some problems as car parking, environmental pollution, insufficient open and green areas and traffic problems. The dense urban fabric and problems in Konya caused high-income groups to move out of city centers. Luxury buildings with car parking areas, green areas, kindergartens, swimming pools etc. began to be built in Meram District which is near the city center. They were not built very far from the city because of the transportation problems. Upper income groups began to move to the areas out of the city center in time because of the lack of land. These were constructed by big enterprises’ own designers and architects who work on behalf of them in line with the market’s demand with a marketing anxiety. New speedy production techniques (tunnel module etc…) prefabricated façade elements, import and domestic luxury materials (such facings as metal, marble, ceramics, granite, reflected glasses etc…) were used in these projects (Yıldız Kuyrukçı and Ulusoy, 2012)

Self-enclosed and self-sufficient gated housings have increased rapidly in number especially in the Havzan Region of Meram District, the vicinity of M1 Tepe Real Shopping Center of the Selçuklu district and the vicinity of Adliye Court House of the Karatay District (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows the magnitude of this flourishing phenomenon in Konya city. To evaluate the gated communities appearing in the city of Konya in terms of the development dynamics of the city; the city is located on a flat land and develops to the north according to the existing plans. A process that occurs in the form of the transformation of the existing housing structures is observed in the west and the north of the city (Figure 1).
Figure 1. Locations of gated communities in Konya city (blue line shows the boundary of the districts)
4.1. Changing Image of the City with Gated Communities

Konya city was divided into 3 district municipalities in 1987 (Selçuklu, Meram and Karatay Municipality). Different plan decisions of each of the municipalities and the changes and transformations of these districts in historical period inevitably reflected their identity components and images in different ways. It was seen that Konya city stand out with three different district character which are come from the historic period, differ in properties of man-made environment elements and acquire a shape with today’s different plan decisions (Deniz, 2004). Accordingly, in the context of the study, with the diagnosis of trio-structuring pattern which were produced differently or had a different character in the Konya city, examples of gated communities from each of these districts were evaluated through the appropriateness to district identity and image.

The identity and image of these districts can be generally evaluated briefly like below;

- **Meram District:** is an prestigious urban pattern which is in the natural protected area, has one or two-storey buildings or villas in a large lots, generally appeals to high-income groups, has a green pattern that collectively termed in historical process as ‘Meram gardens’ and sustain this property to the present. Because of it has been in a natural protected area, zoning plans of the district let the urban sprawl with low-densities (Photograph 1).

- **Karatay District:** is an historical urban pattern which has important historical values, historical center, initial residential developments and in which one can feel historical pattern densely. It is in the context of Conservation Plan. It generally appeals to low-income groups. However, to the east of this district (on the outer skirts of historical center) there has been started to be build some big investments like Court House, Shopping Center, Karatay University. Therefore a newly-developed tertiary center has been emerged (Photograph 2).

- **Selçuklu District:** is an urban pattern in which one can observe the dense, high-rise apartment blocks (8-10 storey buildings) comes from the modernization and rapid urbanization processes. It reflects present properties and patterns of the modern cities. It has Selcuk University, coach terminal, shopping centers and various public institutions. It generally appeals to middle-high income groups. It has the secondary center of the city (Deniz, 2004) (Photograph 3).
5. Findings

According to the observations at the gated communities constructed at these above districts, we can say:
1. The housing construction process that occurs in the form of gated communities in the Meram District, which is a district that appeals to high income groups in terms of social status, is observed as the emergence of prestige areas. That is, a different urban fabric comprising of high housing square meters, numbers of rooms and housing values has been presently woven in the district with mostly duplex and garden house structures. Despite these types of buildings which are appropriate for Meram District image, there is some inappropriate gated housing with high-rise buildings, especially
in Havzan Region of Meram. These high rise buildings are also affect the identity of Meram in negative way. They damage the natural environment of this district (Photograph 4, 5)

*Photograph 4. Examples from Pakpen Houses which appropriate to the image of the Meram District*

*Photograph 5. Examples from Beyzade Houses which inappropriate to the image of the Meram District*

2. Another district that was examined within the scope of the study is the area located in the east of the city within the borders of Karatay District, which is occupied generally by low income groups (of the countryside) and have a significant urban values, historical center and also newly developed urban center (*i.e. Court House and its environs*). When we look at this district, gated housing productions are not established within the historical core, but, they are at close quarters of it. Therefore, it can constitute a threat for the next years. Because, these types of gating housing can magnetize the others. It can be said that the role of gated communities is as important
as the policies of the local government in the transformation process of the spatial structure also in this area (Photograph 6).

3. The last district is a fast developing area of the city named **Selçuklu District** which has coach station area, some shopping centers, public institutions and Selcuk University Campus area. It is possible to say that housing values have recently shown a significant increase in this district and the housing construction process in the form of gated communities has had a serious catalyzing effect on housing productions in this district and the fast growth of the city. The locational choices of gated housings are generally directed to establish in the environs of M1 Tepe Real Shopping Center and Coach Station of the City with high-rise building types (Photograph 7, 8, 9). In this situation, it can be said that the physical character of gated housings are appropriate to the image of the district. But, this situation generates a homogenous effect for the city identity.

*Source; (Metro Properties, 2012)*
Photograph 7. M1 Tepe Real Shopping Center and the gated communities around it (Konya Life Journal)

Photograph 8. A security gate from Selçuklu District
4. Conclusion

It is obvious that gated housing types are increasing in number by the effects of the dominance of the market forces and marketers’ strategies which appear to be the real directors of urban change. In this process, urban images and identities are generally changing in the negative way. Because, their spatial structuring are generally the same or similar to each other. This leads the urban identity and image to be more monotonous and the city to have more closed compartments that have limited communications with the city life.

Three important points are emphasized here for Konya city;

- The first is that gated communities in Meram District offer a prestigious lifestyle and this district has appropriate gated housings for its image but in some examples, this appropriateness could not be seen because of high rise, similar type buildings.

- The second is that gated communities in Karatay District do not coherent with its spatial identity. Despite they are not established in the historical core, they are at close quarters of it. And, this situation can be a threat in the future.

- And the third one is that Selçuklu District has more gated communities around M1 Tepe Shopping Center, their spatial characteristics are harmonious with the district but sameness of them constitutes urban spaces which lack of identity. They create monotonous urban spaces.

Significantly, for overcoming these above concerns, a need for cooperation between planners and authorities is essential to develop regulations and codes that will provide the appropriate viable alternatives to current forms of gated residential development to avoid the monotonous settings and physically undesirable results.
References


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