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Production and marketing of gated communities in Istanbul

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Production and marketing of gated communities in Istanbul

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Abstract

Gated communities are part of the trend of suburbanization that is based on the creation of self-contained, separate communities with carefully constructed identities. There are many definitions of gated communities and they differ from country to country. However, a general definition can be given as “physical privatized areas where outsiders and insiders exist”. In parallel to the increasing diversity and multiplicity, gated communities have grown in both developed and developing countries and they have radically transformed the urban environment.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the phenomenon of “gated communities” which is one of the most important driving forces in housing market. The paper will focus on production and marketing of gated communities in Istanbul. How is the production and marketing process of gated communities? The paper will provide an answer to this question while evaluating the data obtained from the extensive survey questionnaires filled out by developers of gated communities.

1. Introduction

One of the defining characteristics of urbanization in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the rapid spread of proprietary urban communities (Webster, 2001). Gated communities have been the typical patterns of this development. Although, gated communities are as old as city-building itself (Blakely and Snyder, 1997b), recently they have become a new development trend in housing market. The roots of the gated communities phenomenon can be traced back to 300 B.C. In England, around 300 B.C roman soldiers were given land and estates after their term of service in the army in order to stabilize Roman order, in the vast and sparsely defended countryside. Later, fortresses also served to protect against invaders or internal warring factions (Housing, City Planning, Land And Environmental Planning Department, 2003). The system of walls and class division was deeply ingrained in England. Today, the heritage of this system can still be seen on the English landscape in the walled abbeys, manors and castles (Blakely and Snyder, 1997b).

The recent development of gated communities, however, is not shaped by specific regional predecessors but rather by global socio-economic changes, marketing strategies of developers and the spreading of architectural concepts and lifestyles by international migration (Blakely and Snyder, 1997b). Gated communities remained rarities until the advent of the master planned retirement developments of the late 1960s and 1970s (Housing, City Planning, Land and Environmental Planning Department, 2003). Blakely and Snyder (1997) have founded some 20,000 gated communities in the US accommodating over three million units (with seven to eight million residents), but more recent estimates (McGoey, 2003) put the number at more than twice that (Grant, 2003). However, walled and gated developments are not only an American phenomenon (Blandy et al., 2003), on the contrary, gated communities are a global phenomenon and they have grown in both developed and developing countries. One of the greatest challenges for a better understanding of radical urban transformation is perhaps the parallel emerging phenomenon of gated communities that is fast moving from the US cities to the UK and to other European cities (Moobela, 2003). However, gated communities differ from country to country, from city to city, and from development to development, and the reasons for their appearance are nearly the same. As Sonia Roitman (2003) mentioned these reasons are the raise of insecurity, fear of crime, the

failure of the state to provide basic services to citizens, increasing social inequalities and social polarization and an international trend encouraged by developers.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the phenomenon of “gated communities” which is one of the most important driving forces in housing market. The next section examines the literature of gated communities while addressing the development process of them. Section 3 focuses on gated developments in Istanbul. Section 4 describes the case studies that are taken into account, offers their empirical results, and examines the trends in gated communities development and production-marketing strategies on the basis of a comparative evaluation of the case studies. Section 5 concludes with a discussion of the results.

2. Gated communities and their development processes

Gated communities are part of the trend of suburbanization that is based on the creation of self-contained, separate communities with carefully constructed identities. There are many definitions of gated communities and they differ from country to country. There is no consensus about the concept and in the literature many concepts are used to refer this phenomenon (Landman, 2000b). Among these concepts used by researchers; “gated communities” (Blakely and Snyder, 1997b; Davis, 1992; Landman, 2000a-b; and Low, 2003), “gated enclaves” (Grant, 2003), “edge cities” (Garreau, 1991), “enclosed neighborhoods” (Landman, 2000c), can be mentioned. However, a general definition can be given as “physical privatized areas where outsiders and insiders exist” for the phenomenon. These physical areas can be either retail, commercial or residential, however, this paper focuses on residential gated communities.

Gated communities are the fastest growing housing types in the 21st century. They; (i) represent the hope of security; (ii) appeal to consumers searching for a sense of community and identity; (iii) offer an important niche marketing strategy for developers in a competitive environment; (iv) keep out the unwelcome; (v) often come associated with attractive amenities; and (vi) increase property values (Baron, 1998; Bible and Hsieh, 2001; Blakely and Snyder 1997a-b; 1999; Grant, 2003; McGoey, 2003; Townshend, 2002; Webster et al., 2002).

Gating a housing estate is a way for developers to market a property as more exclusive. For developers, they can be a marketing angle, another way to target specific submarkets. Developers build gated communities to meet niche markets: demand for security-by-design, for prestige living and for life-style of community living (Webster, 2002). For some property owners, gating is a mechanism to protect property values from being affected by changes in the city. For many urban planners, gated communities represent a physical withdrawal from civic, urban life (Gooblar, 2002). For residents, gated communities are lifestyles choices.

There are many types of gated communities with differing degrees of amenities, exclusivity and security (Gooblar, 2002). Many authors have their own typologies (Blakely and Snyder, 1997a-b; Burke, 2001; Luymes, 1997). These classifications depend on the causes, consequences and significant implications of gated communities for several issues like ethnicity, income, travel etc. (Blakely and Snyder, 1997a-b; Burke, 2001; Luymes, 1997; Landman, 2000a). Basic typology of these kind of communities is defined by Blakely and Snyder. In this typology, there are 3 main categories, viz. lifestyle communities, prestige communities and security zone communities. For example, lifestyle communities are very much developed in South California, US, by retired communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997b). Gated communities in Turkey are examples of prestige communities because of their target user profile that is high-income group (Arradamento, 2003). South Africa has lots of examples of security zone communities because of high rate of crime in the country (Landman, 2000).

Gated community development is a process from the perspective of developers. Developers before deciding whether they will invest the projects or not, they follow some phases so-called “development process”. Development process contains 3 main phases (Miles, et al., 1996; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2004):

1. ***Pre-Development Phase:*** This phase includes whole the works must be done before the beginning of construction such as market analysis, identification of housing need and demand, types of units and target clients and the finding of alternative relevant sites for the project, structuring the team and organization of the actors.
2. ***Development Phase:*** This stage includes a more detailed analysis of the selected site. In this phase, main indicators are environmental, neighborhood and regulatory factors. With the analysis of these factors and

the achievement of the financial resources the project starts. This phase is the construction phase.

3. ***Last Development Phase:*** This is the most important stage of the process. During this phase the marketing strategies dominate the process. Beside the marketing strategies, the needs of end-users and the management are the main issues of this phase. The process is over with the establishment of the management structure and regulations.

In this study, we will evaluate the development process of gated communities from the perspective of developers. In the next section, we will introduce the gated developments in Istanbul, and then, in the following section we will evaluate the development phases of gated communities.

3. Gated Developments in Istanbul

Turkey met with the phenomenon of gated communities after 1980s by the formation of a new mass housing legislation. The first gated communities have emerged in metropolises and big cities. Today this type of housing increases its share in housing market not only in big cities but also in small cities, particularly, in coastal zones as second or summer housing.

There are 5 main developers for gated communities in Turkey. These are; (i) Cooperatives, (ii) Mass Housing Administration, (iii) Local Governments by the support of Mass Housing Administration, (iv) Private Developers, (v) TC Emlak Bank (Ozuekren, 2000). Generally these developers, especially private ones, are construction firms or real estate investment firms at the same time. There is no clear distinction between developer, investor or constructor and most of firms play all the roles. Private developers make their investments especially in Istanbul, the fastest growing city of Turkey.

Istanbul is one of the 10 most crowded cities of the world. Istanbul metropolitan area consists of 27 municipalities and the city is located on 2 continents, Asia and Europe that is separated by Bosphorus. While the European bank is basically business and commercial area including the Central Business District of the city, the Asian bank is basically residential area (Ergin, 2001).

Gated community development in Istanbul started in 1980s by economic and political changes. With the appearance of a new social class in this period, gated

communities became a marketing angle and another way to target specific submarkets for developers. Therefore, developers of large-scale real estate investments produced their projects by taking this reality, the needs of this new social class into consideration (Bali, 2002). Gated communities emerged in both inner and outer city; close to business districts, northbound (Göktürk-Kemerburgaz, Zekeriyaköy-Demirciköy), southwest (Bahçeşehir, Büyükçekmece) in the European bank and near the second Bosphorus Bridge (Beykoz) and northbound (Ömerli) in the Asian bank (Colliers Rescoe, 2003). Basically, these areas are located in northbound of Istanbul where large forests are located. Demand for new housing projects in these new residential development areas are usually walled developments with secured, featured with social amenities villa type houses. Due to lack of available land by size, price and construction permit, housing demand in the city center does not have a great increase, however, “vertical gated developments” are examples of inner city gated developments.

According to the study “Spatial Segregation’s Process” of J.F.Perouse (Tempo Dergisi, 2003), approximately 400 gated communities established in Istanbul and approximately 60-70 thousand people live in these communities. J.F. Perouse (1999, 2001) mentioned that people who live in gated communities, are usually stars, they are from media, sport and finance sectors or from international firms (Tempo Dergisi, 2003). Since 2000, total area of newly built housing has reached to approximately 30 million square meters (Colliers Rescoe, 2003). This new trend in housing developed in the last 10 years in the periphery of central business district of both continents Europe and Asia.

The gated developments have different types and the characteristics can be changed from city to city. However, our study shows that generally four types of gated communities are developed in Istanbul. We define these types according to unit types and land use characteristics. Our distinction for gated developments in Istanbul is as follows:

- 1. Vertical Gated Developments:** These types of developments are usually high-rise buildings located in the city center or near the central business district (CBD). They can be called residences or hotel houses. They are generally integrated with a shopping mall or office blocks and usually built for urban elits.
- 2. Horizontal Gated Developments:** They are single unit dwellings. Depending on their size, they need large areas, therefore, they are usually

established in the periphery of the city. The units can be detached or attached single dwellings. They are built for families with children of upper or upper-middle class.

3. ***Semi-horizontal Gated Developments:*** They are apartment blocks. They can be established either in inner or outer city. They are built for upper or middle class.
4. ***Mixed Type Gated Developments – Town Gated Communities:*** They are a type of new towns or satellite city. They constitute two or three of the other development types together. They are basically self-contained little towns and built for any class.

In this study, we examine all four types of gated developments in terms of their location in the city and also their development processes from the perspectives of their developers. In the next section we describe our study and offer the empirical results of four case studies based on these four types of gated community developments.

4. Production and Marketing Process of Gated Communities in Istanbul

4.1. Prefatory remarks

The aim of this paper is to investigate the phenomenon of “gated communities” which is one of the most important driving forces in housing market in Istanbul. This paper is based on four case studies conducted in Istanbul among different gated developments including, residences, small-large projects constructed in and after 1980. The sample of this study is 151 gated developments and 90 developers or construction firms. The sole eliminatory factor for these gated developments is that they have privatized physical areas with restricted entrance where outsiders and insiders exist. Either large or small, either populated or not, the differences in projects are based on their design and amenities, therefore, unit types are taken as a differentiation factor of these developments. By this factor, it is found that there are four types of development in Istanbul, such as vertical, horizontal, semi-horizontal and mixed type/town gated developments. In this paper we will evaluate the empirical results of these case studies in order to highlight the housing production and marketing strategies of developers (Figure 1).

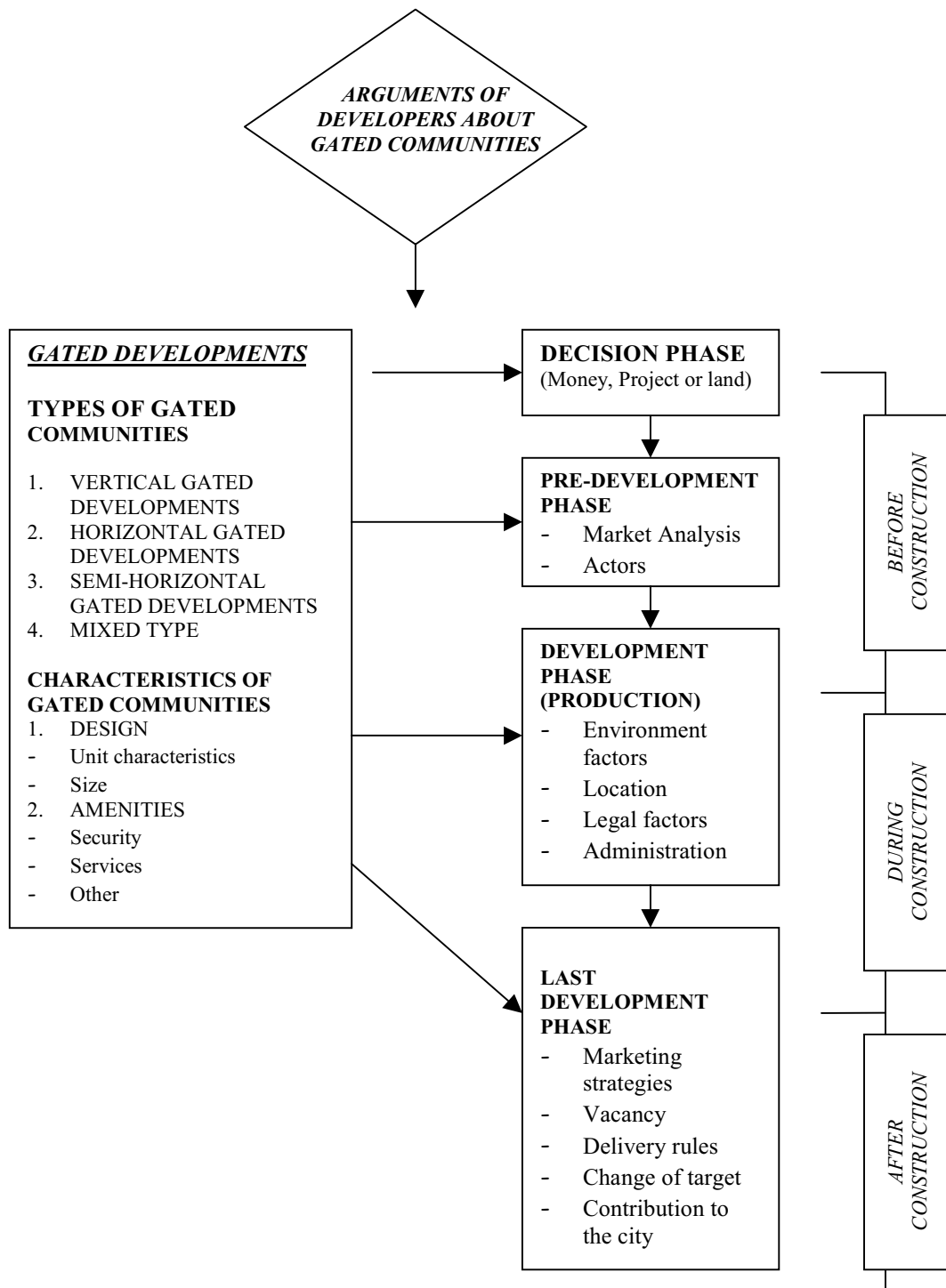


Figure 1 Model of the study

Our evaluation will be based on a comparison of these four case study researches; the first one was conducted among "vertical gated developments" which can be also called residences, while the second one was conducted among "horizontal gated developments" which are detached houses, the third one was conducted among "semi-horizontal gated developments" such as apartment blocks and the fourth one is "mixed type of gated developments" in Istanbul. In the next sub-section (Sub-section 4.2.), we will describe these four case studies and we will offer the empirical results of these studies, while examining the development process of gated communities. In the following sub-section (Sub-section 4.3.) we will compare the empirical results of these four case studies from the perspective of developers and development process.

The survey is based on two main parts; the first part focuses on developers and their opinions about gated developments and housing, whereas the second part addresses gated community itself which constitutes three categories of development process, viz. pre- development, development, and last development phases (Figure 1).

4.2. Empirical results of case studies

Case Study1: Vertical Gated Developments – Residences in Istanbul

This case study focusses on vertical gated developments that appeared as residences in 90s for urban elits because of the lack of land reserve in inner city of Istanbul. These types of housing can be called as multifamily hotel houses. Usually they are studio types with a changing size from 70 square meters to 532 square meters (Gorgulu, 2002). (Table. 1)

Residences are produced for consumers as a style. Their common quality usually is being combined with shopping malls or office blocks, such as BJK Plaza and Akmerkez. They can also be called hotel houses where usually services given in this kind of housing are 24 hours security, health, ambulance, cleaning, CCTV, technical support, fitness center and also shopping, restaurants, meeting rooms, hotel for visitors, open and closed carpark services. The first examples are BJK Plaza, Akmerkez Residence, Polat Tower Residence and Elit Residence. Basically 10 residences are found out in this study 7 of these are located in the European bank, while 3 of them are in the Asian bank (Figure 2).

Table 1. Vertical Gated Developments in Istanbul

<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Name of the Project</i>	<i>Number of unit</i>	<i>Sq. Meters</i>
Beşiktaş	Fulya	Polat Tower Residence	405	70-80
Beşiktaş	Levent	Metrocity Millenium	210	120-370
Beşiktaş	Etiler	Akmerkez Residence	83	96-230
Beşiktaş	Akaretler	BJK Plaza	54	72-82
Şişli	Şişli	Elit Residence	63	365-530
Beşiktaş	Fulya	Selenium Residence	71	93-380
Kartal	Dragos	Dokuz Palmiye Residece	252	71-185
Kadıköy	Kalamış	Kalamış Residence	40	130
Umraniye	Umraniye	Bambu Residence	123	76-90
Beşiktaş	Levent	Project of Istanbul Kanyon	157	Not Given



Figure 2 Residences in Istanbul

Residences located in the European bank are in CBD, Beşiktaş and Şişli districts, where office blocks and shopping malls are spreading very rapidly. But on the

contrary, in the Asian bank, we can easily observe that two of them are located near the sub-business districts Umraniye and Kadikoy while the other one is located in residential district, Kartal.

Case Study 2: Horizontal Gated Developments – Single Unit Dwellings in Istanbul

The second case study investigates the phenomenon of horizontal gated development which are single unit dwelling, viz. villas, attached houses etc. This new trend of housing developed in the last 10 years in the periphery of business district of both continents Europe and Asia in Istanbul.

Due to lack of available land with size, price and construction permit, these developments emerged in suburbs or around the metropolitan boundaries of Istanbul. Not all the projects, but especially the pioneer projects reflect a concept or a luxury housing project; Kemer Country and Alkent 2000 in the European bank and Casaba in the Asian bank are the main examples. The other projects are built in surroundings of these pioneering projects.

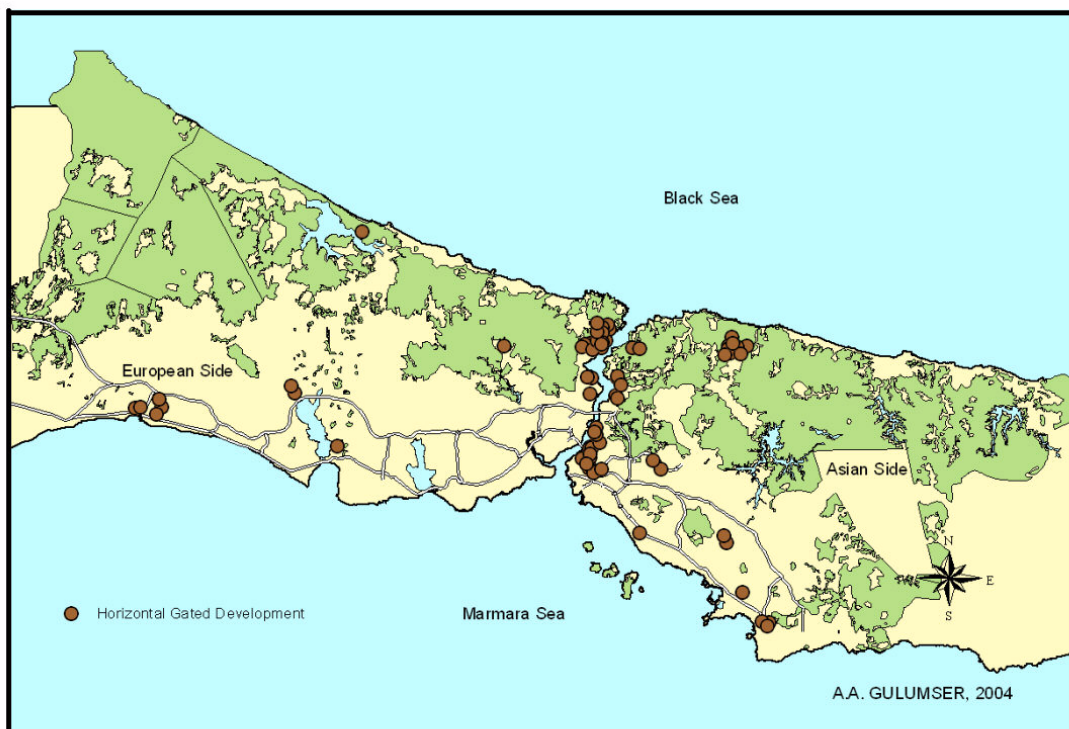


Figure 3 Horizontal Gated Developments in Istanbul

As can be seen in Figure 3, horizontal gated developments are located on the sea sight and they have a tendency to spread through northbound peripheries of the city. As the Asian bank is mainly residential area of the city, horizontal developments are expanded much more in the Asian bank than the European bank. In this study, there are totally 71 horizontal gated developments that 39 of them from the Asian bank, and 32 of them from the European bank.

Case Study 3: Semi – Horizontal Gated Developments – Konaks in Istanbul

The third case study's sample is 51 semi-horizontal gated developments. This type of gated communities has a similar tendency with the horizontal gated developments, but a large number of semi-horizontal gated developments is located in the city center. They are apartment blocks or usually Konaks – an archetype of old Turkish houses - that built for middle-upper and middle classes. 32 semi-horizontal gated developments are established in the European bank. Most of them are in the districts where high societies are the inhabitants. The rest of semi-gated developments, 39 ones in the Asian bank are located in the new residential development area and again in the center of the Asian bank (Figure 4)

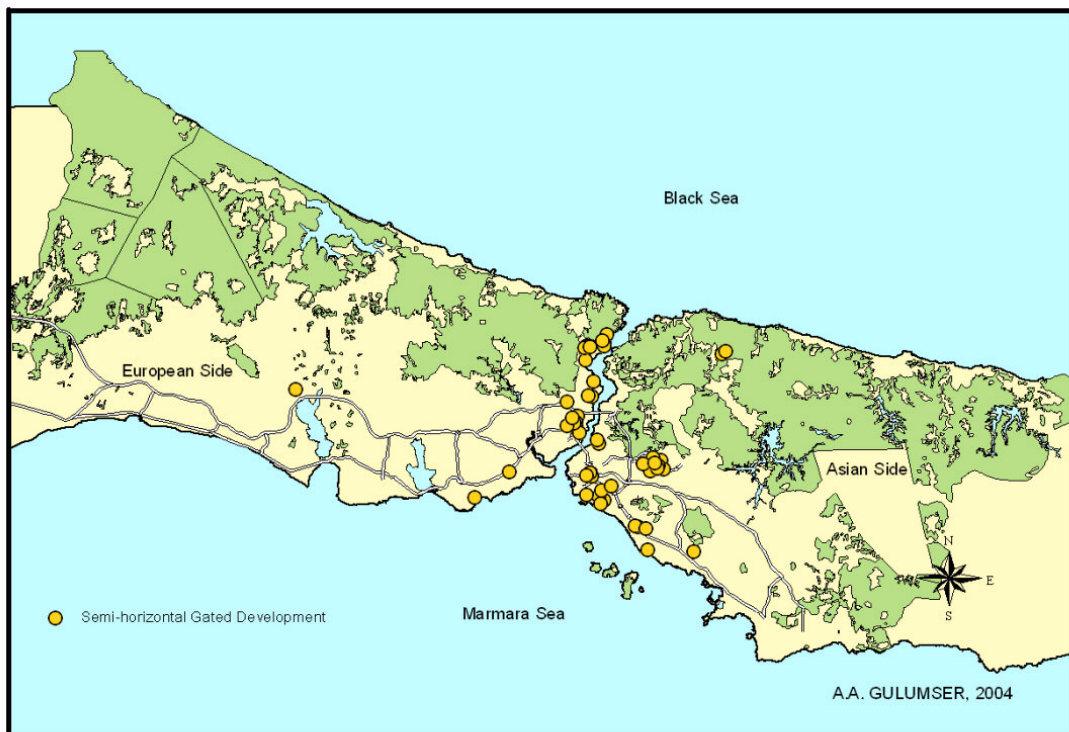


Figure 4 Semi-Horizontal Gated Developments in Istanbul

Case Study 4: Mixed Type Gated Developments – TOWN/CITY

In this case, 19 mixed type of gated developments, 10 in the European and 9 in the Asian bank are taken into consideration. This type of developments, as they need large lands, are located in the new development zones in northbound of Istanbul, Göktürk, in the European bank, and in the new residential zone, Umraniye, in the Asian bank (Figure 5).

They usually called with a *town or city* word at the end of its name that is to insist on concerns about developing a new suburb or satellite city.

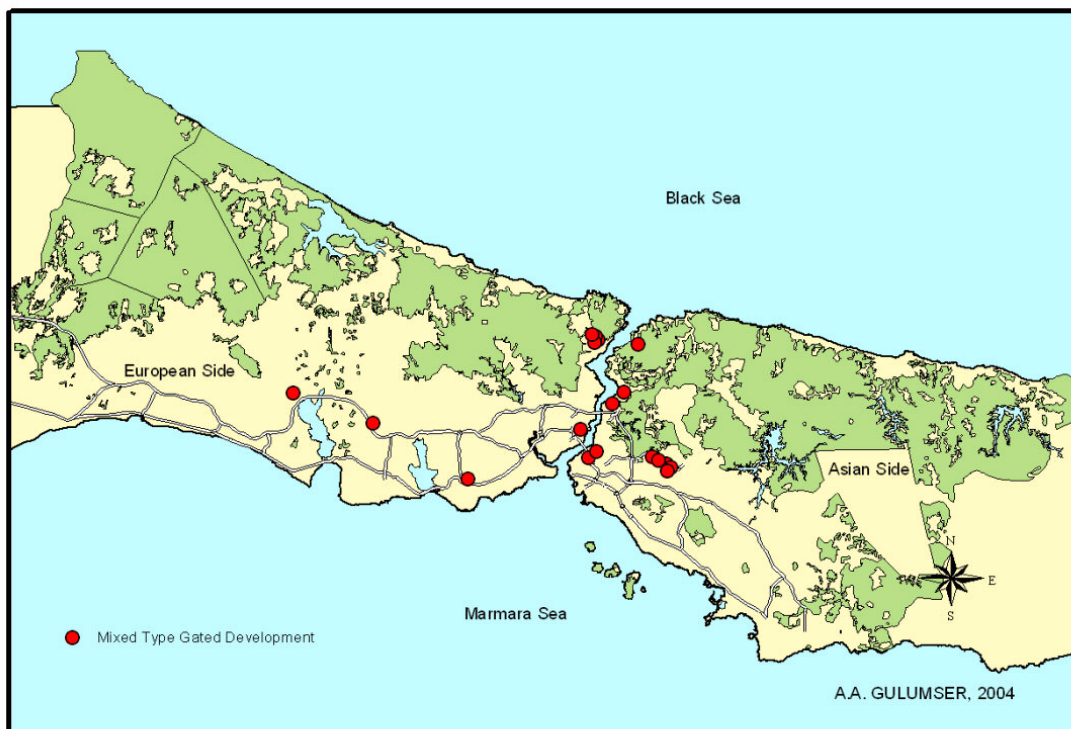


Figure 5 Mixed Type Gated Developments in Istanbul

4.3. Production and Marketing of Gated Communities: A Comparative Evaluation

When we evaluate the existing trends in housing we can say that Istanbul has no strategies or definite areas for this new development of housing. On the contrary, the present developments of these new types of housing, gated developments, determine the urban development and sprawl. The main reason behind the development of these gated areas are the pioneering projects that had a great success and therefore, became a brand.

For developers, these types of housing were first a space market but nowadays they become asset market as well. In other words, either there is a need or demand of gated developments, developers built up new gates to force and protect property values stable. This gives to developer the opportunity of being trusted by its customer. Common characteristics of these communities are arised walls, restricted gates, 24 hours security and social facilities with an attractive landscape. As they choose northbound of Istanbul, the peripheries and the Bosphorus as location, natural environmental factors for a good panorama of either forest or sea and resistance to earthquake due to a better soil condition of this area are being provided. Additionnally, with the appearance of new social classes, and the rise of living standards, developers also increased their standards of quality of life. This situation pushes developers to create a main strategy for the market. This marketing strategy is usually “a lifestyle” or a “neighbourhood life”, because of the regeneration of the lost social values as reflections of globalisation and also because of the need to escape from crowded city. While pionnering projects are large-scale projects, secondary ones are small-scale projects that have not more than 50 units, to make feel customer special and chosen from the others. Another common marketing strategy of developers is the “name” of these developments. Developers try to attract their target customers first by the name of the project, these names are generally in a foreign language such as “town”, "country", "city", "village” to impress psychologically and aim to show that there is a new life waiting for them. However, these marketing strategies are not sufficient for today to attract users. Because of the fast spread of gated developments, developers, especially, who develop the pioneering projects, by taking risks they try to offer new designs and features. These are sometimes decoration of houses, a new type of publication or different technologies of construction like smart home. We can easily observe that many of these projects are using popular cultures or phylosophies like Zen, as their concepts and try to stimulate customers to buy a gated dwelling. Almost every project has a great success, however, they are expensive. As can be understood by these circumstances, the beginning marketing strategy such as gates, walls, security facilities, become indispensable features for a newly built housing either they are not a solution for thieves or providing the security. These features are just to ensure privacy and show insiders as important persons.

Gated communities as being driving force of housing market in Istanbul, address now not only to high-income families but also to middle-income families. The spread of

these developments affects both users life and city development. Istanbul has structured and transformed by these developments. This radical transformation of gated communities, is not a disturbing issue for daily life of inhabitants of Istanbul. But by the choice of location they are a threat as they are located in the north of Istanbul that is called as "lungs of Istanbul" (Figure 6). Particularly, the two types of gated communities, horizontal and semi-horizontal gated developments, as they need large areas and as already their share is 80% in total gated developments in Istanbul (Figure 7), they create a big pressure on natural areas. On the other hand, although, the social facilities and activities in these communities bring back the concept of “mahalle”-neighborhood-, it is observed that these neighborhoods are all alone.

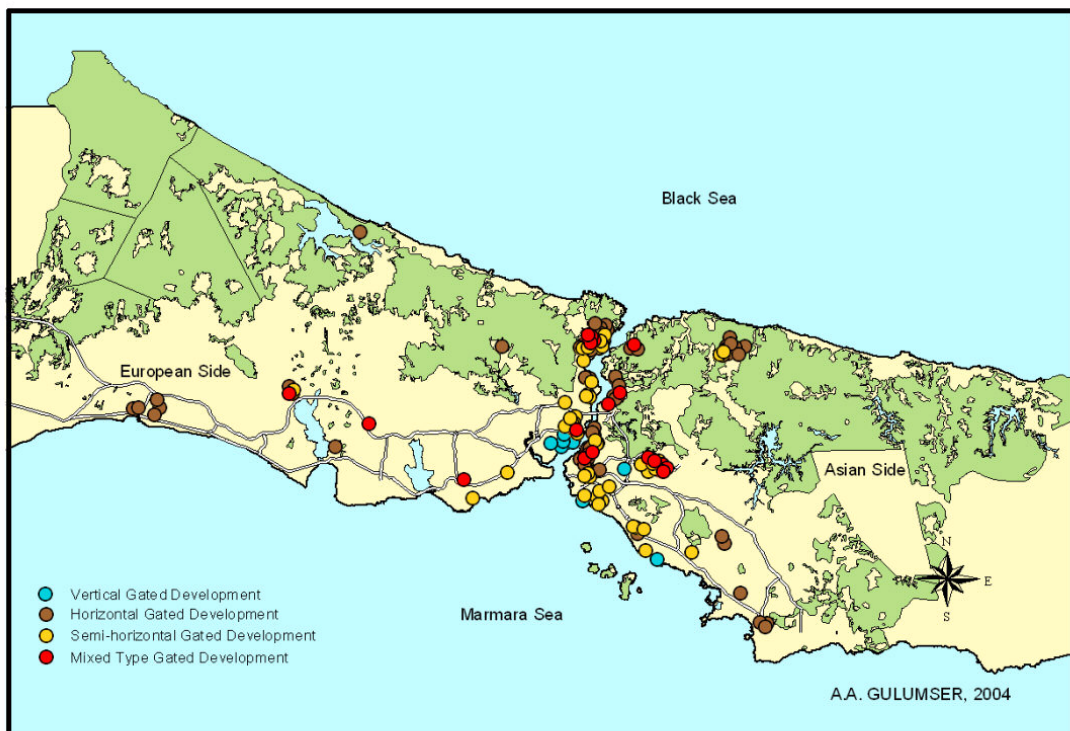


Figure 6 Gated Developments in Istanbul

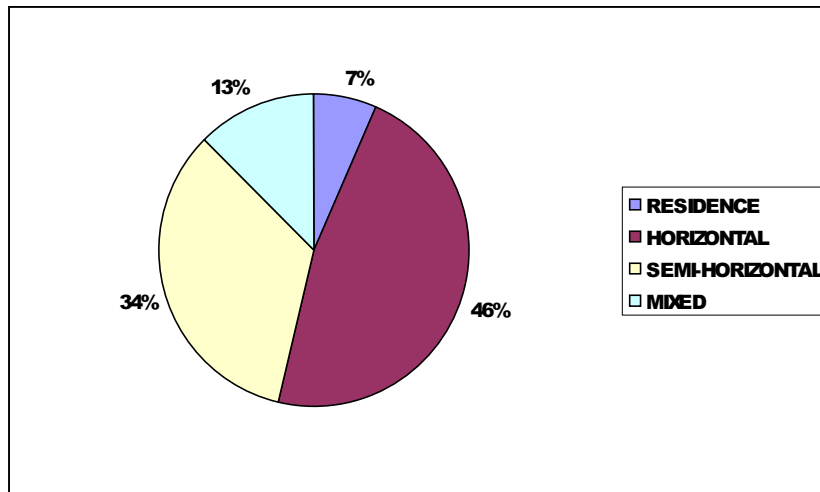


Figure7 Distribution of Gated Developments by their Types

5. Conclusion

Gated communities have increasingly become a new development trend in housing market by global socio-economic changes, marketing strategies of developers and the spreading of architectural concepts and lifestyles by international migration. In parallel to the increasing diversity and multiplicity, gated communities have grown in both developed and developing countries and they have radically transformed the urban environment.

Gated communities in Istanbul, is the result of such a tendency. With the appearance of a new social class by economic and political changes in 1980s, gated communities became a marketing angle and another way to target specific submarkets for developers. After the first wave in gated development that this type of housing was a space market, nowadays they are becoming an asset market for developers. The marketing strategy is usually “a lifestyle” or a “neighbourhood life” that is based on the regeneration of the lost social values and also the need to escape from crowded city. This lifestyle strategy enriches sometimes by decoration of houses, a new type of publication or different technologies of construction like smart home. Today, gated communities address not only to high-income families but also to middle-income families. Sociologic researches show that gated communities in Istanbul are not appeared because of need of security but also because of prestige and changes in living standards. The results of our study show that gated communities have emerged in both inner and outer city, however, due to lack of available land by size, price and

construction permit, 80% of gated communities is located as horizontal gated settlements especially in the northbound of Istanbul where natural areas and large forests are covered. With their choice of location gated communities create a big pressure on natural environment and they become a threat for sustainability of natural resources. The existing trends in housing and urban development show that Istanbul has no strategies to control this new development. On the contrary, the present developments of these new types of housing determine the urban development and sprawl.

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