

Housing projects in Trabzon: Marketing discourses and physical environmental features

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Abstract

The housing projects, that have turned into concept projects promoted as a commodity since last decade in Turkey. These projects, are marketed with discourses such as “the long-awaited life”, “ideal home” and are constructed on the urban fringes. In this study, the housing projects that developed in Trabzon in recent years have been examined in this context. Marketing discourse and physical environmental characteristics of the projects have been analyzed. Thus, the study finds out to what extent the advertisement discourses are actualized and reveals physical environmental features. Kaşüstü and Yalıncak neighborhoods were chosen as the study areas. Firstly, discourse analysis carried out as the method for analyzing marketing discourse of the housing projects. Then, the applied projects were surveyed on site and observed, the physical environmental relations were examined and pattern analyzes were made. It is seen that, the meanings that ascribed to the house in the literature doesn't correspond with the marketing discourses in terms of content. In addition, the built environment that is promoted in the discourses is not realized. Finally, it has been observed that the environments created by the proposed housing projects cause destruction in the natural and physical structure of the city.

Keywords: *Marketing discourses, housing projects, physical environment, urban pattern.*

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Trabzon’da konut projeleri: Pazarlama söylemleri ve fiziksel çevre özellikleri

Özet

Türkiye’de konut projeleri son dönemde metalaştırılarak konsept projeler pazarlanmaktadır. Genellikle kent çeperlerinde gelişen bu projeler; ‘özlem duyulan yaşam’, ‘ideal ev’ gibi söylemlerle pazarlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada da, Trabzon kentinde son yıllarda gelişen konut projeleri bu bağlamda irdelenmiştir. Projeler pazarlama söylemleri ve fiziksel çevre özellikleri bakımından analiz edilmiştir. Böylece söylemlerde sunulan çevrelerin ne düzeyde gerçekleştiği ve fiziksel çevre özellikleri ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışma alanı olarak Kaşüstü ve Yalınca Mahalleleri seçilmiştir. Çalışmada yöntem olarak, öncelikle pazarlama söylemleri, söylem analizi ile kavramsal içerikte irdelenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, uygulanmış projeler yerinde tespit ve gözlem yapılmış, fiziki çevre ilişkileri irdelenmiş ve doku analizleri yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda pazarlama söylemlerinde konuta yüklenen anlam ile literatürdeki anlamların içerik bakımından örtüşmediği görülmüştür. Ayrıca, söylemlerle sunulan yapılaşmış çevrelerin uygulama sonucunda gerçekleşmediği sonucuna varılmıştır. Uygulanan konut projeleri ile yaratılan çevrelerin kentin doğal ve fiziksel yapısında tahribatlara neden olduğu saptanmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Pazarlama söylemleri, konut projeleri, fiziksel çevre, kentsel doku.

1. Introduction

Planning and design of dwellings and residential areas that meets the need for the most basic need of sheltering is one of the most important topics of architecture and planning. Depending on globalization, urbanization and social and economic developments, the demand and preferences for houses and investment and planning activities for residential areas have undergone a change and transformation [1].

During this period, the investments in residential areas, especially in the early period of the new republic, were realized with the support of public sector and some small local investors. After 1945, due to the rural-to-urban migration, the need for residences increased [2]. Developments in technology, communication and information web due to globalization have had an impact on residential production.

Local and global transformations, and especially the 1973 economic crisis, changed the normal flow of daily life and resulted in a postmodern lifestyle, which is called as a “consumer society” [3]. The gradual transition of the society into a consumption-oriented living resulted in the change of everything including the life-style. These changes and the process of globalization resulted in an increase in the pressure over the cities and urban areas and investments in lands and the consumer society have become a critical problem [4]. The spaces that are produced have become something that are consumed and recreated as an object of consumption in the pattern of social relations. In this system, which sees all kinds of objects of production as objects of consumption, the houses have also become objects of consumption. However, a house should not be considered solely as an object of consumption. Buying a house is both an economic and a social investment.

After the turn of the 21st century housing projects that are seen as objects of consumption have turned into concept projects with the effect of some new sectors such as the service sector. These projects, together with all their other functions, are planned as a package; are marketed with such discourses as “the long-awaited life”, “ideal home” [5], and are constructed in the large parcels of land on the urban fringes (outskirts, urban hinterland). This type of housing areas usually addresses high-income group, are given the names of new types of homes such as residence and loft, and their names are used as a tool for marketing though they do not hold the qualities that they refer to [6]. This is so much so that the types of their marketing precede the architectural characteristics of the houses and their positions in the urban texture [1]. As stated above, in the marketing of the houses that are seen as an object of consumption, strong advertising discourses are used in order to accelerate their consumption.

Slogans that are one of the strongest tools of marketing houses in the cities and especially in the metropolises show similarity in many housing projects. Some of these advertising/marketing slogans/discourses that become prominent are like the following: ‘Unique Living Spaces, Realizing the Dreams, A Lifelong Profit-bringing Investment, A Lifestyle Full of Privileges, A life in the Middle of the City in Touch with Nature, A safe and Comfortable Life, Aesthetic and Technology, A New Culture of Living, Appealing to Different Styles, Meeting Different Needs, Satisfying Different Preferences, Presenting New Living Spaces, Presenting Freedom and High Living Standards.

For the consumers, the producers try to ascribe certain meanings to the house and the environment that they describe in their marketing slogans/discourses. However, the contents of these meanings are not in accord/do not match up directly with the contents of the meanings that the individual ascribes to the house and its environment in the related literature.

In the recent years, the housing developments in the east fringe of the city of Trabzon has been promoted via various marketing tools; catalogues, billboards, web and other media tools. The housing projects show similarity in terms of life styles, conceptual features and marketing tools. Additionally, the urban environment shaped by the housing developments show no identity, are lacking public realm and create closed settings. The Kaşüstü and Yalıncağ neighborhoods, which represent similar housing development, were chosen as the areas of study. Within this context, the study investigated the marketing and advertisement discourses of 41 projects, some of which are completed and some under construction. The marketing discourses and physical environment characteristics of the projects have been analyzed. Thus, the study revealed to what extent the marketing discourses are realized and the qualities of the physical environments that have emerged.

1.1. Development of housing areas in Trabzon since 2005

Trabzon is located in the northeast of Turkey with a population of 800. 000 inhabitants. The city is a gateway to many international regions such as Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Asia. The Black Sea Coast has been shaping the way the city has been developed and parallel mountains limits expansion towards to the south. The city is an important port and a trade center for a very long time since the city served as an

important port on the Silk Road. Trabzon is the most effective city in its region with its qualifications of economic and political advantages and the city has been assigned as the main city in DOKAP (Eastern Black Sea Development Project). The reason why Trabzon is still an important trade center is because of the trade route between European and Asian countries with which the city has relations. Especially during the last decade, air transportation and ease of accessibility resulted in new connections to the Persian Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. In parallel with these developments, services varied and sub-centers occurred in the last decade, forming polycentric developments extending on the east-west axis due to topographic constraints. The expansion appeared in Kaşüstü-Yalıncağ in the east approximately 15 km away from city center and in Söğütlü-Yıldızlı in the west 13 km from city center. The creation of the sub-centers also triggered housing developments in those districts around the centers. In addition, Çukurçayır represents a distinct housing environment with an accumulation of high-rise residential developments (Figure 1).

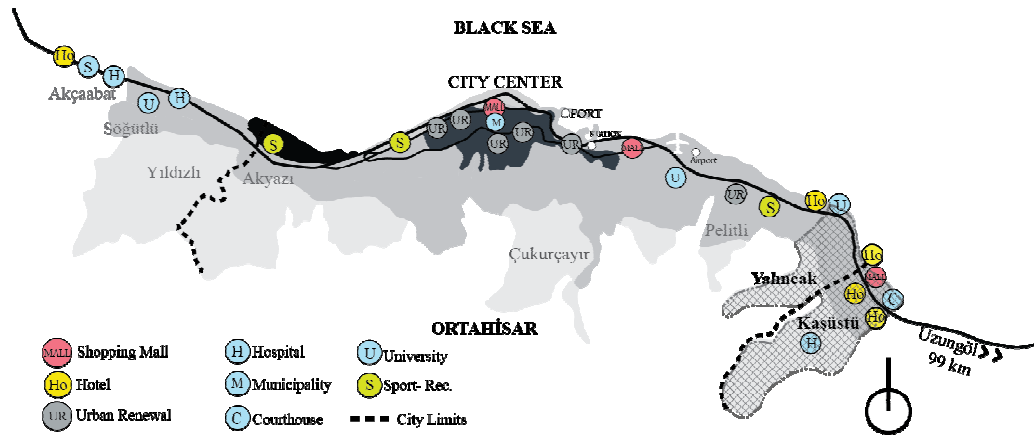


Figure 1: Spatial distribution of public and private investments in Trabzon.

The most important factors affecting the macro-form of the city are the investments made in the areas of commerce, health, accommodation, sports and recreation (Figure 2). In addition, the city raise great interest and land planning authorities encourage developers to collect lands and support developments.

The spatial arrangements of these investments create a pull factor also on different urban functions. The investments and the concomitant functions appear in the urban fringe towards the free spaces along the important transportation routes (Figure 2). Thus, such developments concentrate in the west (Söğütlü-Yıldızlı) and a sub center has been created in the east (Kaşüstü-Yalıncağ) end of the city.

As can be seen in Figure 2, commercial sector (shopping malls) is followed by both public and private investments and during the same period the city developed some urban regeneration projects. Trabzon hosted the European Youth Olympics in 2011 and a memorial park, a tennis complex and other sports courts, as well as some accommodation facilities were built. Other activating investments were primarily public and private health institutions. The majority of the hospitals were built in the west side of the city (Medical Park, Haçkalı Baba, Yıldızlı Güven) and one regional hospital in Kaşüstü built in the east side. In addition to the health institutions, a

courthouse was also constructed in the east side of the city and has been in operation since 2014. These investments were parallel with the investments in accommodation units; large hotel chains opened branches in Trabzon starting with Novotel in 2009 in the east side and in the last three years the construction of three hotels started, two of which in the east side (Figures 2).

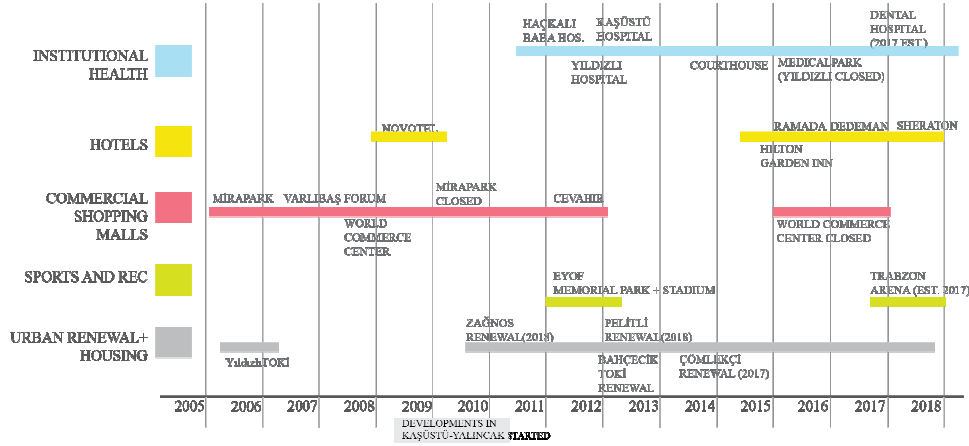


Figure 2. Timeline of the primary investments in Trabzon since 2005.

All these developments not only affected the macro-form of the city but also the available land in three districts and triggered the pace and appearance of residential developments. Housing developments that occurred in the east and west ends started by both planned and speculated public and private investments. The main reasons why developers choose to construct in this area are the generation of urban rent, the availability of larger parcels, and lower construction costs. However, the essence of land and its previous use and potentials are overlooked and even in the least suitable areas developers claim land and construct buildings.

2. Study area

The Kaşüstü and Yalıncağ neighborhoods are located approximately 15 km east of city center. Luxurious housing Projects, urban facilities such as commercial areas, shopping centers, health institutions and hotels, etc. are accumulated in this east fringe. The factors that attract investors are; closeness to the international airport, health, education and residential services, view and advantageous topography, availability of large land parcels, high-income level and foreign investors (especially Arab investors) preference of the area and high urban rent. In a 55 ha area, approximately 4,171 units will be completed by the end of 2017 [7]. This circumstances cause growth in housing market, however uncontrolled developments trigger differentiations and negation in the space (Figure 3). The characteristics of the housing types in the study area are; most of them are individual housing developments, secured, offer large floor area and have various outdoor uses such as swimming pool, playgrounds, sports center etc.



Figure 3. A view from the study area [7].

3. Method

The study investigated a total of 41 housing projects that were constructed in the past 10 years. First and foremost, the marketing discourses of the chosen projects were studied. To this end, their web sites were visited, meetings were held in their sales offices, and their catalogues were examined. In addition, the projects were examined on site. The study revealed the meanings that were ascribed to the houses in the advertising and marketing discourses of each housing project. In addition, the researcher reviewed the related literature and defined what the home mean to people. For this purpose, in table 1 the studies of such researchers as Depres (1991) [8], Sixsmith (1991) [9], Dovey (2010) [10], and Moore (2000) [11] and Yener (2010) [12] were studied. Then a list was created consisting of the concepts that become prominent in both the related literature and the advertising and marketing discourses of the projects. In this list, the concepts were classified under three main groups as personal, social and physical. This classification was made according to the Sixsmith’s (1986) classification of the meanings of home (Table 1).

Table 1. List of concepts.

PERSONAL CONCEPTS	SOCIAL CONCEPTS	PHYSICAL CONCEPTS
Identity	Status	Urban infrastructure
Security	Social environment	Natural Environment
Privacy	Spatial accessories	Accessibility
Commodity		Technology
		Company Profile
		Architectural Discourse

The sub-notions of these main groups were defined by considering the notions that are repeated frequently and become prominent in both the related literature and the advertising and marketing discourses of housing projects. The meanings that are ascribed to the houses and their environments in the advertisement and marketing discourses of the housing projects were also investigated in terms of their physical environments. To this end, aerial photos, available maps and layout plans of the projects were obtained. The 2D spatial analyses of these data were made by using

software such as Sketch Up, and GIS. Based on these analyses, the study discussed the extent to which the physical environments of the residential projects are reflected in their advertising and marketing discourses and the relationships of these projects with the existing natural and built-up environments.

4. Findings

The findings of the study were defined in terms of two basic contexts. The first is to find out about the advertisement and marketing discourses of the housing projects under investigation as to compare them with the concepts in the related literature in terms of content, and to identify the concepts that become prominent in their discourses. The second is to identify the extent to which they realize the prominent qualities of the physical environment that they pronounce in their discourses, and to reveal whether these environments are compatible/incompatible with the natural and built environment.

The discourses in the investigated housing projects were classified as “Personal Meanings”, “Social Meanings”, and “Physical Meanings”. Within this context, the study first investigated the prominent discourses of 41 projects, some of which are completed and some under construction (Table 2). According to the findings, the meanings of “natural environment” (63%), “technology” (54%) and “company profile” (37%) in the physical group were found to be the most prominent in the marketing and advertising discourses of the studied housing projects (Table 2).

Physical concepts especially natural environment, company profile, technology, and company profile are the most prominent concepts within the discourses (Table 2). The “Social Environment” in the “Social Meanings” group was found to be repeated 51% in 21 of the investigated 41 projects. Personal meanings are the least repeated concepts within the three main concepts. Within this group, commodity and security are found to be the most repeated concepts. As stated in the literature, the findings prove that houses are being promoted as consumer goods. However, privacy concept, which is defined as the fundamental need for shelter, did not take place in any discourses of the completed and ongoing projects. Furthermore, the concepts that are ascribed to the house in the discourses are cross-examined. In this context, no meaningful relation detected between social and personal concepts. The only meaningful relation was found between the company profile and technology; the housing projects emphasizes technological improvements are also use company profile as a powerful advertising tool. In summary, the housing projects in this study are generally promoted with following discourses: reflecting the natural character of its surrounding and social and technological advancement that are supported by valuable firm profile.

Table 2. Table showing the concepts that each housing project use in its discourse.

		PERSONAL MEANINGS				SOCIAL MEANINGS			PHYSICAL MEANINGS					
		SECURITY	IDENTITY	PRIVACY	COMMODITY	STATUS	SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	SPATIAL ACCESSORIES	URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	ACCESSIBILITY	TECHNOLOGY	COMPANY PROFILE	ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE
COMPLETED PROJECTS														
1	ORNA PARK RESIDENCE				X		X	X		X	X	X		
2	YOMRA SAFİR KONUTLARI					X	X			X	X			
3	AK CENTER KAŞÜSTÜ				X			X						
4	TRABZON ŞANA EVLERİ	X	X		X		X			X		X	X	
5	PARK KAŞÜSTÜ EVLERİ						X	X		X		X		
6	PREMIUM PARK YALINCAK		X				X			X		X	X	
7	ŞEHR-İ NAZ EVLERİ	X				X	X	X		X		X		X
8	AKLIFE YALINCAK									X		X		X
9	AK ORAN PARK YALINCAK						X	X				X	X	
10	KAŞÜSTÜ DENİZ PARK		X		X		X		X	X	X	X		
11	CUMBALI PARK EVLERİ						X		X	X	X			
12	AY YAPI YILDIZPARK KONAKLARI		X							X		X	X	X
13	AKLIFE YALINCAK	X	X			X	X			X		X	X	
14	MYKENT YALINCAK 1 RAM YAPI							X		X	X			
15	YALINCAK ELİT-1													
16	TUĞRA İNŞAAT ŞANA ELİT SİTESİ	X										X	X	

Table 2. (Continued).

ONGOING PROJECTS																
17	GOLDEN RESIDENCE													X		
18	KAŞÜSTÜ AQUAMARINE	X					X	X						X		
19	AKLIFE KAŞÜSTÜ	X						X		X	X					
20	İNCİ PRIME				X	X		X		X						
21	YALINCAK VİLLALARI		X			X										
22	SEVİNÇ SİTESİ											X	X			
23	VİRAPARK							X				X				
24	AKS AQUAMARINE															
25	AKCITY KASUSTU															
26	AQUAMARINE PLATINUM						X	X				X				
27	MY YAPI 117 RESIDENCE				X		X			X		X				
29	AYÇİÇEK RESİDENCE							X		X		X	X			
30	KAŞÜSTÜLIFE	X					X		X	X	X					
31	NADİR KONAKLAR						X	X		X						
32	AŞIYAN YALINCAK		X		X					X						
33	AYGÜN İNŞAAT	X					X			X		X	X			
34	AL AJAJI BLUE GREEN				X		X			X		X	X			
35	ÇANKAYA ALTINŞEHİR	X	X				X			X		X	X			
36	YALINCAK ELİT 2															
37	VIVA-NORTH		X		X		X			X	X	X	X			
38	ŞEHR-İ SEYİR KAŞÜSTÜ				X		X		X	X	X					
39	YALINCAK TERAS						X		X	X	X					
40	TRABZON TOWERS				X	X			X		X					
41	YALINCAK SEYRAN	X			X			X		X	X	X				
	QUANTITY OF INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS	10	11	0	11	10	21	14	6	26	12	22	15	8		
	FREQUENCY OF INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTS	24%	27%	0%	27%	24%	51%	34%	15%	63%	29%	54%	37%	20%		
	FREQUENCY OF MAIN CONCEPTS	32%					45%					89%				

4.1. Findings regarding physical environment

The main aim in investigating the findings regarding the physical environment is to find out about the kinds of urban spaces that the projects whose marketing discourses were investigated in the previous section created, to unveil the extent to which these projects reflected their discourses in the environments that they created, and to unveil whether or not these environments are/are not in harmony with the natural and artificial environments. To this end, the transportation to and from the project areas, the development and transformation of the housing areas, and the urban texture were questioned.

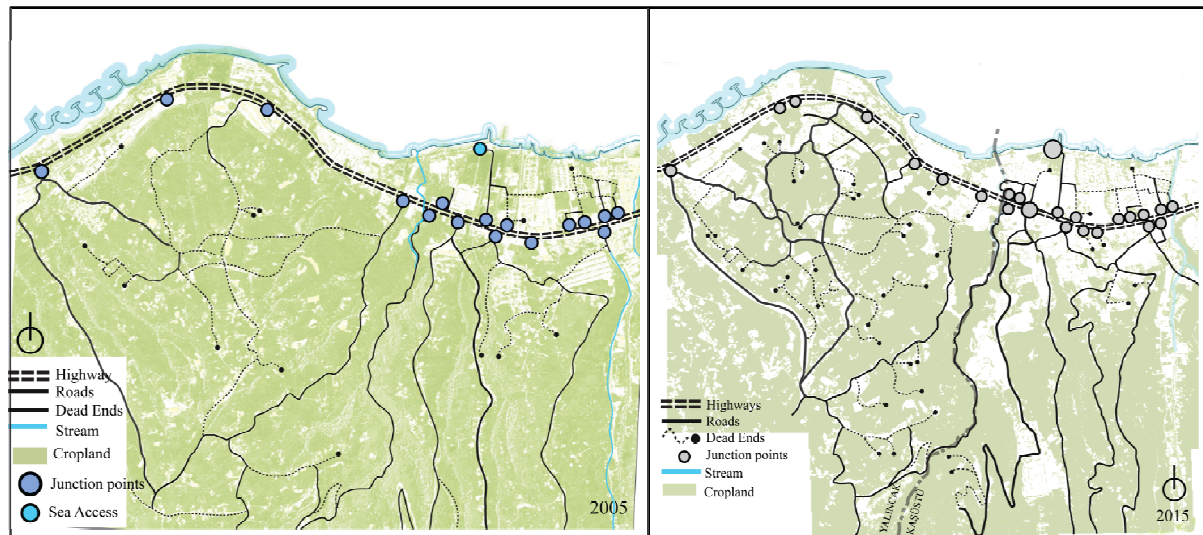


Figure 4. The spatial change of the study area (2005-2015).

As can be seen from Figure 4, the transportation to and from the housing areas is done through the E70 expressway, which is 25-km long. Therefore, the constructions and the pressure of the increasing population generated a pressure on the expressway. As a result, from 2005 to 2015, the number of connections on the expressway has continuously increased and 23 junction points have been created from the residential areas on both north and south sides along the expressway. Some of these connections are direct connections from the personally owned lands. Besides, the lack of enough infrastructure and transportation planning in this area has hindered the controlled and planned development of the area. Besides, the lack of enough infrastructure and transportation planning in this area has hindered the controlled and planned development of the area. The rather heavy structuring in the area has shown a quick increase over the past 10 years and it still goes on to increase in the same way in the present day. All the developments brought with them the problems of traffic. The lack of a transportation planning that is prepared in line with the planning principles by considering a projected population of the area has been an important problem especially for the housing areas that is developed along the hills in the south. When we have a look at the network of transportation, we see that there is not any hierarchical structure among the roads and that some dead ends have appeared with the quality of urban roads (Figure 4). Furthermore, there is not enough public transportation to and from these residential areas, and that public transportation is active only in certain lines. There is also no strong pedestrian access that is continuous and integrated with the residential and green areas.

When we examine the change and transformation of the residential areas and house types in the areas that this study investigated, we see that until 2005 housing developments were

usually in the form of villas in the coastal areas (Figure 5). Especially the development plans prepared by the Kaşüstü Municipality after 2008 allowed the construction of multi-story apartment buildings. As a consequence of these development plans, this type of development started to appear without completing the necessary infrastructure requirements, and this type of development has continued to sprawl till the slopes and hills in the south (Figure 5,6).

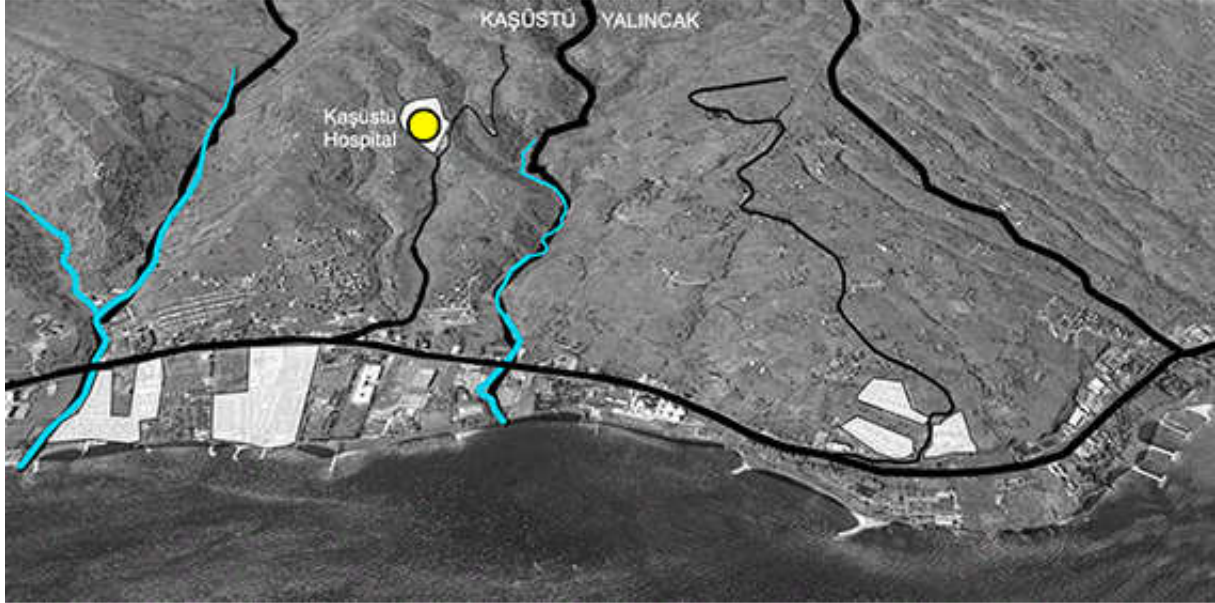


Figure 5. Distribution of the housing areas in 2005.



Figure 6. Distribution of the housing areas in 2015.

Agricultural areas where mostly hazelnut production was common were zoned for housing development in an uncontrolled way. During this process, the construction of Kaşüstü Public Hospital and the concomitantly developed commercial functions became effective on the improvement of some transportation axes in the south and on the concentration of the residential areas along these axes. As a result of this fast housing and transformation, the

housing areas has risen from 5,3 ha in 2005 to 55 ha in 2016 (Figure 5-7). In addition, the residential areas were planned and developed very close to such unsuitable land uses as industrial areas, furniture production areas, petrol storage areas, and integrated plants. As mentioned earlier, the Kaşüstü-Yalıncağ areas have a rural character, and due to both the planning decisions, increased investments in the area and their natural and central locations, they have become the growing peripheries of Trabzon in the last decade.

The residential areas that have developed in these peripheries usually resemble each other in terms of intensity, building types, architectural characters, and the texture that they created. Though, their marketing and advertising discourses differ to some extent, textural discordance of these residential areas with the natural and built-up environments are clearly visible (Figure 7).

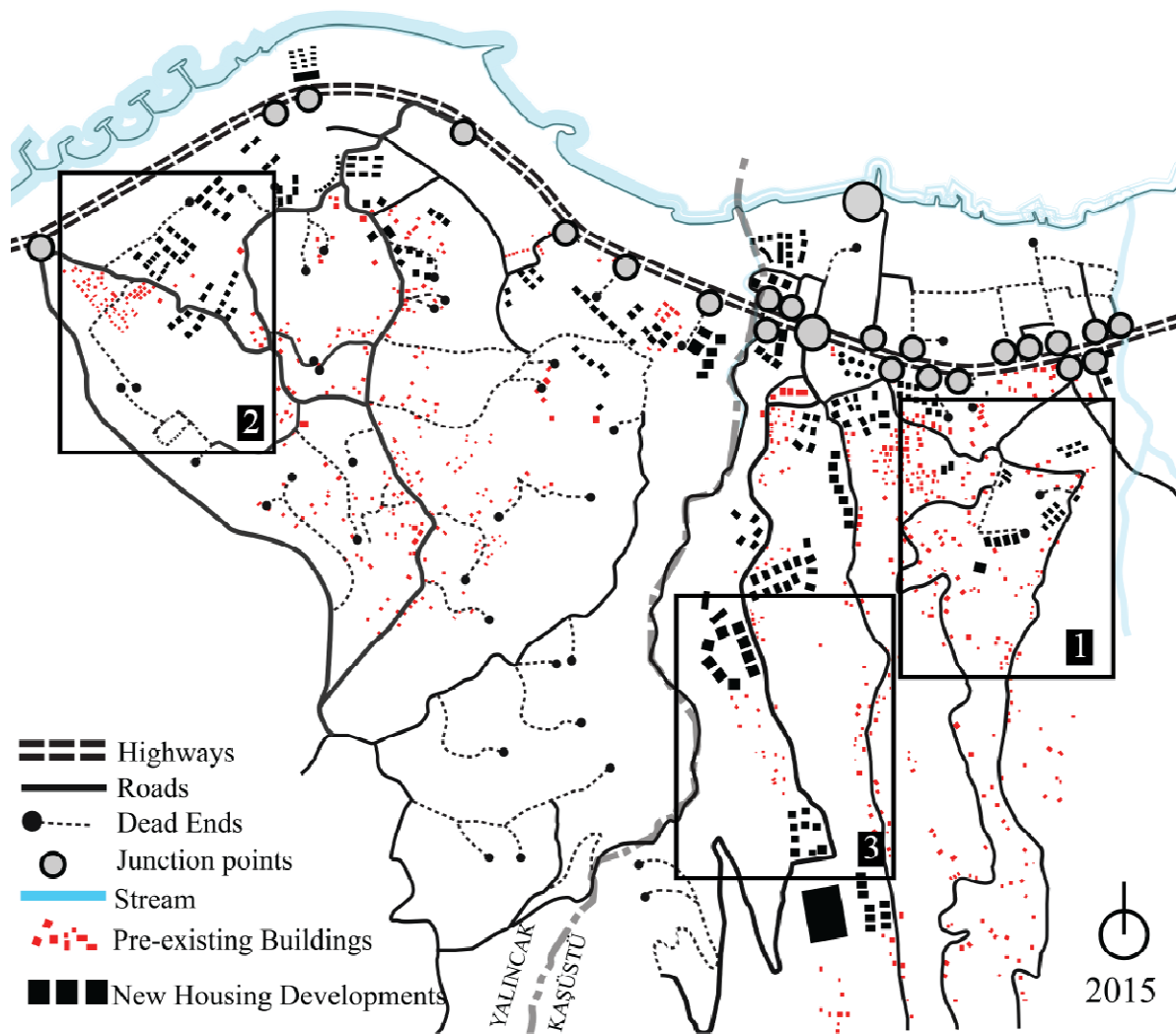


Figure 7. The present and newly developing housing patterns.

The existing housing patterns on the southern hillsides that mostly have a rural character have started to become deformed due to the pressure created by the recent housing developments. This issue was examined for three residential areas with different patterns chosen from the area of study (Figure 8).



Figure 8. The present and newly developing urban textures.

In the residential areas of 1st type of pattern, which have a dispersed settlement type, it was found that patterns with large, multi-story apartment buildings and with secondary road access appear around the detached houses (Figure 8). Therefore, it cannot be said that these new buildings are in harmony with the surrounding buildings. Around the residential areas of 2nd type of pattern, which have cluster settlement type with attached buildings and defined streets, new apartment buildings have been constructed. These buildings appeared in a vacuum due to the retaining walls which were built to overcome the topographic restrictions of the area and which are private residential areas with security, which are not integrated with their environment, and which are self-enclosed. Housing blocks that are self-enclosed and that contain large, multi-story apartment buildings were built around the housing patterns of rural character along the roads on the southern hillsides and these are not compatible with the existing pattern. Due to the cross-sectional interventions in the roads/streets, the existing road/street patterns become deformed, and this self-enclosed housing area that have developed along the roads result in the destruction of the continuity of the roads/streets (Figure 8).

5. Results

In general, both the physical designs and marketing discourses of the investigated projects show similarity. It was found that in the marketing discourses of the projects, the living spaces where the house is are emphasized and that the discourses cannot go beyond a standard scheme. It was also found that during the marketing process of the housing projects, such personal meanings as security and privacy, which are the basic sheltering needs of the individual, are not emphasized. Instead, such physical and social meanings as social environment, nature, and technology, which are commonly used in the housing market, become prominent. It was found that the sizes of the houses, plan schemes and the brands of the materials used in the houses are usually shown in the project catalogues. The houses are presented to the users without a flexible design approach and with standardized spatial arrangements.

The housing projects in this study seem to be promoted with advertisement and marketing discourses: reflecting the natural character of its surrounding, social and technological

improvements that are supported by valuable firm profile. Physical concepts especially natural environment, company profile, technology, and company profile are the most prominent concepts within the discourses. Personal meanings are the least repeated concepts within the three main concepts. However, commodity and Security concepts that represent home, as a consuming object are the most repeated within the personal meanings.

Pattern analyses have shown that the spatial organizations of the housing projects and the resulting urban textures are incongruent with their locality and natural environment. Housing zones, which are not integrated with its environment, which are self-enclosed and which have high-rise buildings also lack urban infrastructure (transportation, sewer system, waste, etc.). There is no effective transportation infrastructure and public transportation system, which will help access to the existing urban services. Although the marketing discourses contain such things as 'in touch with the view and nature', the unplanned and uncontrolled construction result in concreted environments that destroy the topographic structure and virgin green areas.

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