

Chapter 2

Background: Methodological and Contextual Aspects

ABSTRACT

Re-Coding Homes searches for flexibility in the standard layout of contemporary housing units very common in the big cities of Turkey. The project differentiates from other studies with its unique design model characterized by an expert system that generates complete home environments according to parameters defined by user needs. In this sense, certain methodological and contextual aspects were employed throughout the study. Among these, flexibility, modularity, adaptability, and user participation were discussed as methodological aspects that identify the design model. Urban regeneration and mass housing are investigated as contextual aspects that affect the overall quality of present living environments in the specific context of Istanbul.

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey the discussions about new housing settlements have different perspectives. In housing market new housing units even the most luxurious apartments are evaluated according to their overall areas, number of rooms and other quantitative properties. Housing projects developed for high income groups differ from the others only by the quality of construction and the existence of an artificial identity. According to Ek (2012), architects design only the characteristics of settlements and services by attaching some popular concepts to them for underwriting rather than designing alternative spatial-organizations providing different living qualities for different inhabitants. Mostly even the purchasers are not aware of the lack of qualitative

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properties that need to be evaluated in housing units. Issues like the cultural and social background of inhabitants; spatial properties that support domestic activities and environmental factors are often being disregarded.

The research project Re-Coding Homes searches for flexibility in the standard layout of contemporary housing units very common in the big cities of Turkey. Başbüyük Housing is chosen for the case study because of the presence of users with different backgrounds (Figure 1). Maltepe is one of the developing districts of the Anatolian side of Istanbul and Basibuyuk is the second biggest neighbourhood of Maltepe district. It is located in the northern part of E5 international highway. The rapid urbanization process beginning in 2000s and transformation from illegal settlements to Mass Housing Units are related not only to its close connection to main transportation axes but also to its wide forests and open views of Marmara Sea and Princess Islands provided by its high altitude (Deniz, 2010).

Until 1970s Basibuyuk was a small village with two sources of income; farming and employment at the Surreya Pasa Tuberculosis Hospital nearby (Deniz, 2010 & Ergun, 2011). The massive immigration from rural to urban grew in size respectively in years and gave rise to the first flux of informal settlements in Basibuyuk. Until 2000's municipalities and state authorities allowed the existence of these settlements for different economic and political purposes (Figure 2). New housing units were built for owners, who were obliged to long-term payment plans and informal settlements were converted to high-rise residential complexes. Although this process was similar in all urban transformation areas in Istanbul, the reactions of the residents differentiated. In TOKI Basibuyuk Mass Housing case, although various news in local and mass media reported some negative responses, no organized resistance was observed. Ergün (2011) drew attention to the “fear” of Basibuyuk dwellers both because of their fragile position against the state and their very low participation

Figure 1. Istanbul-Maltepe Başbüyük Housing

Source: Re-coding Homes Project Archive, 2018.



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