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EXPIRING NEIGHBORHOOD: ARCHITECTURE AS A TOOL FOR MARKETING "HOME" IN ISTANBUL/TURKEY

Abstract:

Istanbul is one of the metropolitan areas connected to the globe in many ways. Since 1980, Turkey is open to the effects of the consumer culture. TV series, imported goods, brand names, commercials, working practices, etc. changed not only our everyday life, but our values as well. "Competing", "show off" and "money" are the basic motivation for the society instead of "solidarity", "sensitivity" and "respect".

Architecture is in use of the economy policy as one of the tools supporting the social change towards a capital oriented mass. The criterion to buy a house is its exchange value instead of its use value as a "home". A house is not considered as a "home 'to enjoy our individual/family life any more. Masses are being manipulated to think the house as an asset for investment on sale. The program and the spatial organization of the houses depend on the rules of marketing, instead of beauty, strength, or use as it used to be in the history of architecture.

Considering the percentage of housing in the context of the built environment, and the effect of the space on the human mind/body, it is easy to imagine this consumerist approach of housing will cause a big change on the urban dynamics. The neighborhoods in Istanbul are already under attack of the contractor companies. High-rise residences with some commercial facilities have been constructed and sold for high prices. In a short period, this pattern of production has become a conventional practice of the production of housing.

This paper presents a fragment from the current everyday life in Istanbul drifting attention to the contradiction in-between the demands of the housing market and the embedded value of the societal relations at the neighborhoods. The target is showing the upcoming danger of losing the human values, values of architecture and the city as a living organism, and questioning the possibilities for a better future.

Keywords:

Istanbul, neighborhood, housing, gated community, everyday life, consumer thought, society, architecture

JEL Classification: R31, A12, Z00

Introduction

An individual becomes an existence when she/he takes action through her/his genuine character. In other words, activities are the possibilities for an individual to become an existence.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) defines the being as an individual becoming a united whole when he realizes his/her activities freely (Heidegger, 1996). Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) explaines the concept of space as an opportunity for the individual to become complete. The space has the power to inspire the individual to become creative to realize his/her existance (Lefebvre, H., 1991).

"Eating" is one of the existential activities. Mc Donald's restaurants turned eating into a cunsumption activity by changing its spatial organization, the food, the way of eating and the way of introducing. The restaurant's space was organized as a Fordist factory for a fast production. The food was turned into a product having a mediocre taste and hygene in place of good food and pleasure of eating. It was announced that it is a family place having familiarity and trust for the people to come together just like a "church". The image of the restaurant turned into a church, which is moral and worldwide. Eating at Mc Donald's became an opportunity for us to feel satisfied with the moral values, the time and the money we saved. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Mc Donald's image

Source:http://fm.cnbc.com/applications/cnbc.com/resources/img/editorial/2014/01/08/101321660-
85019124.jpg?v=1389234239

"Sheltering" is another existential activity. Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) defines the house is the place to dwell as the topography of the intimate being (Bachelard, 1958). According to Martin Heidegger, the built world can illuminate and support the being's recognition, life and experiential qualifications. The house is the closest and the most private place to face our own existence. It is not just a building. It is an activity about dwelling by building, seeing, conceiving and thinking. The house is the place where we live our unique existence.

The liberal economy and politics created tools for producing money by money. The Real estate market is one of them, which turns the "home life" into an accommodation package of facilities like security, entertainment, easy transportation and panorama, instead of a shelter for the individuals to become a united whole. The house and the neighborhood were marketed with the popular images of the day instead of raising the value of use or love and respect for each other. Buying a house has become an opportunity for us to feel satisfied with the image and money we possessed.

This paper presents a vision to see architecture as one of the tools to save or to trap people in the consumer culture.

Phenomenon of Neighboring

There is a saying in Turkey: have a neighbor instead of a house. Before the policies of annuity had changed the world view of the individuals, the neighboring relations was the most important criterion for buying/renting a house. Trust is built in time at the neighborhoods. Therefore, "time" is one of the most important components of the neighborhood.

Before the liberal economy, the value of living at a neighborhood has been recognized by the neighborhood as a part of the society. No conditions were needed to be to be involved in the neighborhood except being herself/himself and open to the neighbors. The needed facilities have been the supported by the neighbors. The support might have been to take care of each other's child, to help with the housework, to share equipment, etc.. The state of the individual has been familiarity, confidence, trust in the neighbours. Neighborhood is a part of the societal system. Being a neighbor has been a kind of relationship in-between individuals to be a part of the society. The neighboring process starts by an individual becoming familiar to the other neighbors. Familiarity of the neighbors has been a step towards trusting each other for help, to feel free to appropriate and support each other. The neighborhood has been secure and offers a sustainable living. The neighborhood has been a system supporting the confidence for the political, economic and social system.

According to Niklas Luhmann (2000), confidence is the basic situation for participation in the system. "You are confident that your expectations will not be disappointed… The alternative is to live in a state of permanent uncertainty and to withdraw expectations without having anything with which to replace them…" We are supposed to develop not only in science and in technology, but also in ethics, to determine the direction where science and technology should follow. Luhmann says that if the society has confidence, then there will be trust for choosing the direction to follow. Neighborhood is a special social institution for transferring trust from the family to the society. In other words, "trust and confidence are being supported by the familiarity. The individual draw a distinction when they come on earth. The familiar things inside of this distinction make the individual be open to the others at the same side and participate in the system" (Luhmann, 2000). Neighborhood is a special social institution for transferring trust from the family to the society.

Luhmann points the danger of alienation in the society in case of lack of confidence depending on familiarity with the changing conditions. "If there is a lack of confidence there will also be a diffuse sentiment of dissatisfaction and alienation or even anomie… (Luhmann, 2000).

Here the real estate as a tool for the liberal economy takes the charge for setting up a future of the consumer culture.

The Real Estate Market

All of us need a shelter to live in. The real estate market gives direction to architecture by positioning in-between the people and their shelters. The quality of the house is determined by the real estate market.

The construction sector has some other shareholders as well**. Contractors** decide together with the **material suppliers** about the architectural characteristics of the housing in the context of the maximum profit in the shortest time. Use the **media** for re-shaping the needs related with their production and activate the greediness of the people as consumers.

Architects are little soldiers to fulfill the orders of the big contractor companies to draw the right projects, which are slightly different from each other protected from the risks of offering the NEW.

Media creates the needs for the people via advertisements, TV series, magazines, social networks, etc. Videos and pictures from fragments of everyday life at "new" gated communities are presented as the gospel of our future social life we will enjoy with our neighbors. Security, entertainment, transportation and/or panorama are presented as the

values we buy with the package of accommodation. Number of the rooms and facilities of the compound are the criteria to buy a house as an "investment".

Department of Taxation and Finance in USA point the topics of value how to estimate the market value of houses to buy or sell for the year 2016:

Property Condition

Year Built

Square Feet

No. of Bedrooms

No. of Baths

No. of Garage Spaces

Location

Lot Size

Basement

The neighborhood after the liberal economy became a matter of image for sale. The house became a property to invest money. The individual became a consumer and an investor. The value became location, facilities and amounts of the units. The conditions for the people turned into an obligation to have money to be involved in a neighborhood. The facilities presented with the house borrowed from the existing neighborhood customs like image, security, panorama, transportation, number of the rooms, construction quality, etc.

This change in the understanding to buy a house changed the state into alienation, inconfidence, trust in the politicians, parties, goods, firms, employees, credit, etc.

As a conclusion, the neighborhood is a property/tool to promote the individual wealth. Political and economic liberalism shifted the expectations from confidence to trust. Everything is for a greater control over the property taxes, insurance premiums, and the sale or refinancing of the house.

Considering our house is a possibility for us to live the real life embedded in our existence, it is supposed to be very careful and conscious while choosing the correct house for our existence. Consumerist culture is a powerful system, which directs us to make this crucial choice not over our recognition, life and experiential qualifications, but over its characteristics as a real estate to invest money. The control mechanisms of the consumer society destroy our confidence in the self and the system we are connected to.

"Insisting on freedom of choice, liberalism focuses on the individual responsibility for deciding between trust and distrust with respect to politicians, parties, goods, firms,

employees, credit, etc. And it neglects the problems of attribution and the large amount of confidence required for participation in the system" (Luhmann, 2000).

Consumer society learned to make money out of money. The invested real estate is supposed to bring a profit in time. Production is a challenging method for the conformist society. In addition, production is not needed to make living. Metropolitan/Modern lifestyle needs the money to change hand. Possibilities of production in the metropolitan areas are reducing day by day. So are the people who take the risks and load of production. Tools and mechanisms to buy/sell are already developed in the society. Instead of supporting the confidence to the social system, the liberal economy produces more tools to promote the individual wealth.

Everything is for a greater control over the property taxes, insurance premiums, and the sale or refinancing of the house. Many people hire professional appraisers to estimate their home's market value under normal conditions. Instead of the quality/characteristics of their individual everyday life, the consumerist thought points out the quantity of the spaces in a house.

Marketing the "Neighborhood" in Turkey

Loss of confidence in the system developed the behavior of investing in houses for annuity instead of requiring proper living conditions. In other words, the real estate market changed the concept of "home" into a "property for sale" naming the houses as 1+1, 2+1, 3+1... completely focusing on the number of the rooms determining the prices. People communicate with each other using this terminology, so do architects.

Houses are designed to be consumed by the market over their property condition (brand name and trends for the material used), year built (the fine construction materials expire very quickly, so that the house has an expire date as well), area (possessing a definite amount of territory is important as long as one square meter has a definite value depending on the image of its neighborhood), number of bedrooms (considering everybody will sleep separately, no. of bedrooms shows the number of the people who can live in the house), number of bathrooms (it is a sign for the luxury), number of garage spaces (it counts for the area), and location (the city has "trendy" neighborhoods more valuable among the others. Also being closer to some strategically locations like the airport, the city center, etc. is another decision making criterion).

Society in Turkey is considered over the "ability to buy" by the real estate market. They used their loss of confidence in the economic system. The neighborhood turned into a fiction built upon an image (to be a part of an economical state), offering security (trust in the company), panorama (view of the compound), transportation (closeness to the

motorway for a vehicle based transportation), number of the rooms (amount of the house in the context of the number of the people it allows) and construction quality (trust in the company).

Gated communities in the poor neighborhoods popped up as closed compounds of the housing blocks with the facilities and a specific standard of living is considered very attractive for the consumers. Gated communities are closed to the neighborhood they are located in. Therefore, the initial conditions of the housing units stay stable. There is no risk of interference from the real city life. This frozen characteristic of the compounds make it possible to create an image with no reference to the city. In other words, the gated communities consumed neighborhoods. (Figure 2) (Figure 3)

Figure 2: Common characteristics as the selection criteria of the gated communities consuming the neighborhoods

Source: Uyanik, K., "İstanbul'da Kapalı Konut Yerleşimleri: Medyanın ve pazarlama stratejilerinin konut yerleşimlerinin oluşumundaki rolü ve kente etkisi. 2000 sonrası örnekleri.", PhD Course, Naime Esra Akin, 2013

Figure 3: Relationship in-between the gated community and the neighborhood

Source: https://www.emlakwebtv.com/viaport-venezia-satilik-daire-fiyatlari/40951

Spatial Way of Killing the Societal

Consumed neighborhoods brought a schizophrenic mood to the settlers in the compound (Figure 4) Borders in-between the familiar and the unfamiliar became visible. People living in the neighborhood are considered as the enemies ready to attack to the gated community. Same mood of alienation covers the existing neighborhood occupied by a gated community. There is no access to a big piece of land where the children used to be playing games one year before. The land seems taken from the existing society. The outsiders feel provoked to throw little bombs into the gated community, while the insiders look at them with dark eyes of hate and insulting. The closed settlement starts a war in-between not only the insiders and the outsiders, but also among the insiders. The gated community society doesn't have the spatial possibilities to learn to become neighbors.

Figure 4: Border elements in-between the gated community and the neighbourhood

Source: Naime Esra Akin

Fictive spatial organization of the gated communities builds a new kind of a society. Social harmony is established by the rules set by the management of the gated community. The rules define the way of life inside of the compound for a "peaceful" atmosphere. Actually the rules are the limitations about the public life inside and outside of the houses including the level of sound, storing the personal belongings at the public places, hours and attitudes to use the pool, garden, etc. People living inside of the compound start to act like police detecting the other people who evade the regulations.

The neighbors lost their supportive role for each other, with the visible borders and the rules. The security staff took the role of a neighbor, who is being expected to protect the playing children in the garden from falling down. The need for a neighbor is substituted by the service offered by the security company. No activities are supported to become a united whole and become a society in contact.

Connecting People for a Better Future

People from different cultures must get in contact with each other for a better future. No fragmentation is needed anymore. Instead, individuals must come together to constitute a society that is well organized for the crisis. Different cultures bring various approaches to problems for creative solutions. People from different cultures inspire each other to choose the best direction to move.

For a better future, we need "a social evolution which achieves increasingly complex societies may in fact generate systems which require more confidence as a prerequisite of participation and more trust as a condition of the best utilization of chances and opportunities" (Luhmann, 2000). People from different cultures must get in contact with each other. "...Hence it may be possible to build up trust on the micro-level and protect systems against loss of confidence on the macro-level"(Luhmann, 2000).

Reactivating the neighborhood system as a micro-level intervention might reconstruct the confidence. Some suggestions have been produced at existing neighborhoods for connecting people separated by the walls of the gated communities. Workshops and architectural design studios are creative environments for re-thinking on the practice of architecture. In addition architectural education is supposed to plant the seeds of sustainable development thought in the fresh brains to support the young architects against the consumer thought. Architects and urbanists can learn from the neighborhoods and develop the existing values.

Architectural Design Studio as a Research Platform for the Possible Solutions

Short-term workshops or one semester long course can become platforms to discuss the possible solutions to develop the neighborhoods as real and sustainable social structures in the city.

Architectural Design Studio 7 at Istanbul Kultur University as a one-semester course became a possibility for the students to think on the neighborhood issue in the city. They searched for the existing situation by observing the everyday-life taking place around the streets of a definite and ordinary neighborhood in Istanbul. They suggested sustainable spatial solutions departing from the data they collected. (Figure 5, Figure 6)

Figure 5: Re-designing the border wall in-between the Seyrantepe/Istanbul neighbourhood and the gated community to start a new kind of relationship in-between two sides.
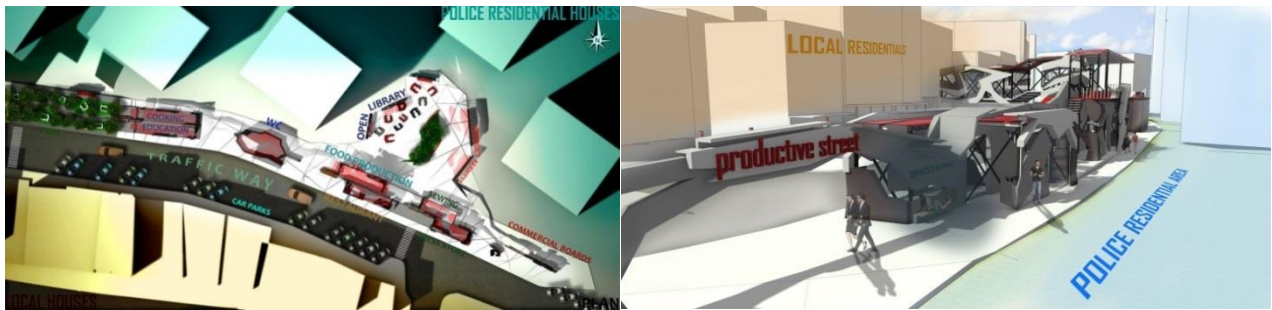
Source: Emre Gunduz, Architectural Design Studio 5-Naime Esra Akin / Seyrantepe / Istanbul

Figure 6: Developing the existing values at the neighbourhood
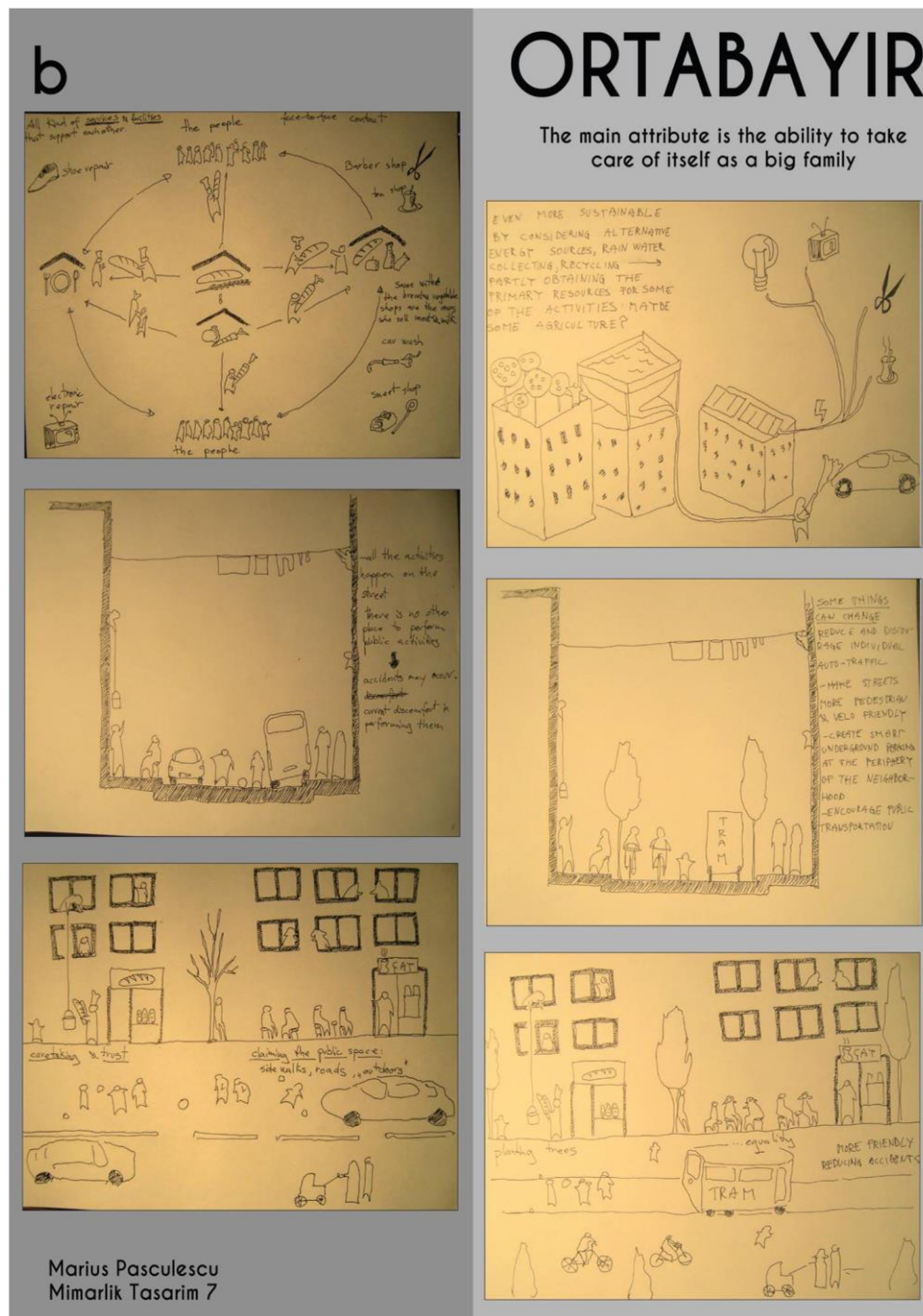
Source: Marius Pasculescu, Istanbul Kultur University, Architectural Design Studio 7-Naime Esra Akin / Ortabayir / Istanbul

The Big Reset on Neighbourhoods Design: Living Together / Istanbul international workshop/summer school was one of the international workshops we studied on the everyday life at a definite but ordinary neighbourhood in Istanbul. (Figure 7) The students

prepared spatial proposals depending on their readings over the everyday life for stopping the negative effect of the gated communities at the neighbourhood.

Figure 7: Tactics at the neighbourhood to produce space joining the neighbours inspired the students to interfere the wall of the gated communities at Karanfilkoy / Istanbul.
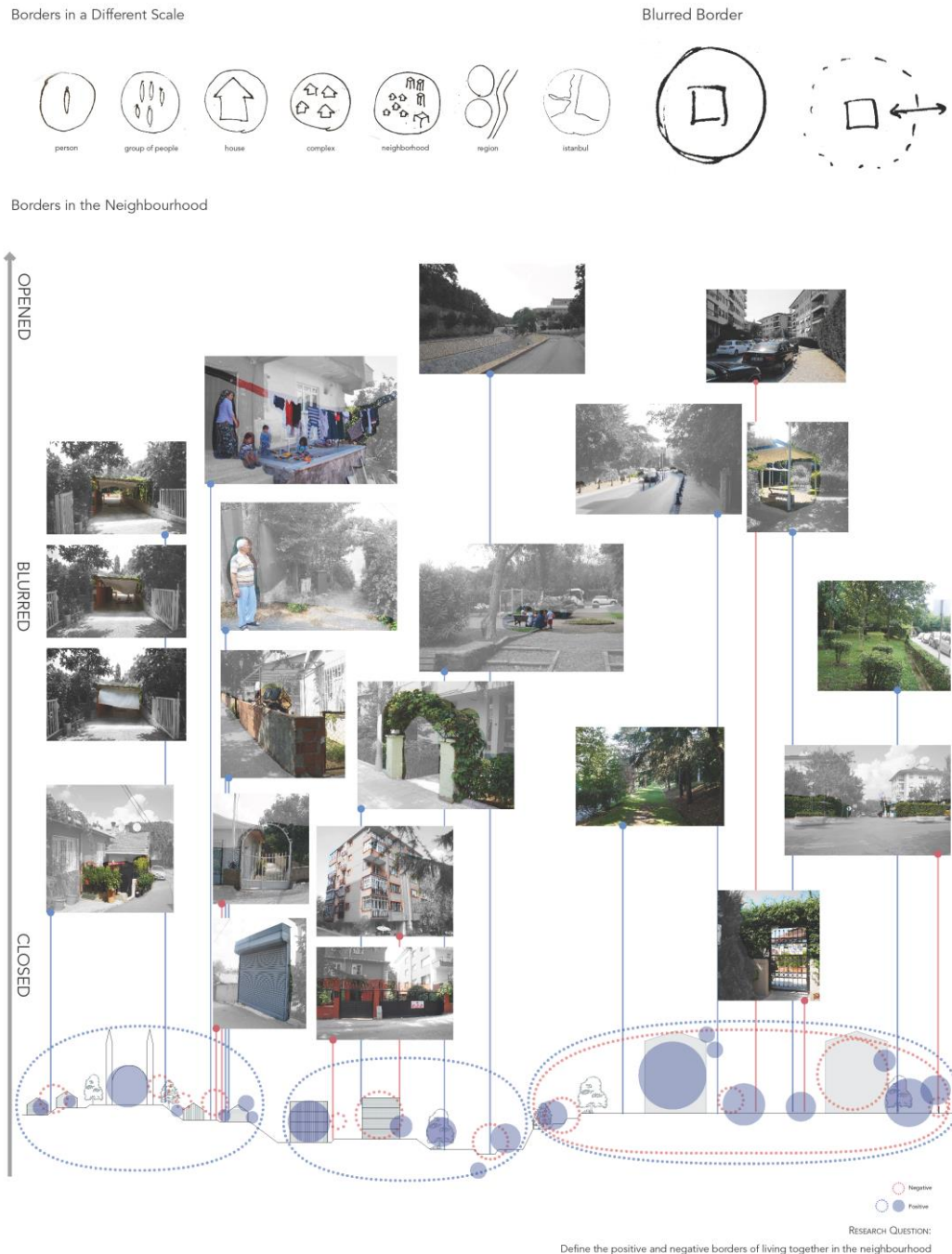
Source: Olivier Hortensius - Helena Mullie - Tolga Odabasi - Asuna Segawa, The Big Reset on Neighborhood Design: Living Together / Istanbul international workshop/summer school part of the Design in Urbanism Project of the EAAE Chaired by the Academie van Bouwkunst Amsterdam and Istanbul Kultur University for the 2015 edition awarded with 3 ECTS – credits of the European summer school started in Amsterdam in 2014. August 13 to 22, 2015

Conclusion

Metropolitan areas are the powerful arenas to spread the consumer life as the only option to the individual. The society as masses focused on investing on houses instead of choosing a neighborhood to live with the other people developing the city culture and the city for the better future. Architecture is a tool for the big companies to design and construct gated communities instead of developing the existing neighborhoods.

Social system in the city is supposed to be supported for a better and sustainable way of living in a respectful way and start contact with each other, instead of separating people to create tension. Architectural education should take the initiation to raise awareness for a sustainable and collaborative future. Students of today might take the control over the real estate market by changing the targets and strategies of living in the city, as the professionals of tomorrow.

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