

AN OVERVIEW OF THE URBAN
SILHOUETTE OF THE AVCILAR
NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR CANAL
ISTANBUL

POHLAD NA ŠTVRŤ AVCILAR
MESTSKEJ PANORÁMY KANÁLU
ISTANBUL


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Branding 'New Istanbul's' Residential Real Estate: A Thematic Analysis of Residential Real Estate Ads for 'Canal Istanbul' and Environs

Branding rezidenčných nehnuteľností „Nového Istanbulu“: tematická analýza reklám na rezidenčné nehnuteľnosti „Kanálu Istanbul“ a okolia

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Tento príspevok sa pokúša odhaliť a analyzovať dynamiku transformácie rezidenčných oblastí v okolí kontroverzného megaprojektu Kanál Istanbul v Istanbuli. Plánovaná mestská zástavba pozdĺž perspektívneho pobrežia Kanálu Istanbul je z veľkej časti obytná a mnohé z projektov sú rozsiahle, „značkové“ projekty. Túto oblasť s voľným názvom „Nový Istanbul“ vládla intenzívne propagovala v období pred parlamentnými voľbami v roku 2011. Bola súčasťou triády megaprojektov, ktorú vláda využila na získanie voličskej základne (išlo o nové istanbulske letisko, tretí most cez Bospor a Kanál Istanbul).

Posolstvá obsiahnuté v propagačných kampaniach, ktoré sa zameriavali na Kanál Istanbul a jeho okolie, mali mnoho vrstiev a od volieb sa zmenili. Vo všeobecnosti sa však zameriavajú na ambície Turecka stať sa do roku 2023 (sté výročie vzniku republiky) regionálnou veľmocou, na snahu priblížiť krajinu k jej osmanskej minulosti, na propagáciu rodinných hodnôt, ako aj konzervatívnejšieho svetonázoru. Tieto posolstvá sú v súlade aj s niekoľkými základnými princípmi Strany spravodlivosti a rozvoja (AKP), medzi ktoré patrí zavedenie jedinečnej verzie neoliberalizmu – zmesi islamizmu, neoliberalnej politiky a sociálne-populistického postoja. Strane AKP to veľmi dobre poslúžilo a pomohlo jej to zabezpečiť a udržať si dominantné postavenie pri volebných urnách. Pomohlo jej to aj pri realizácii svojej politiky rozvoja miest, napriek tomu, že má potenciálne negatívne dôsledky pre niektoré skupiny mestského obyvateľstva a najmä pre prírodné prostredie.

V pozadí tohto vývoja (a tvoriac neoddeliteľnú súčasť neoliberálnej politiky AKP) je financializácia trhu s bývaním v Turecku. Tá sa skutočne začala v roku 2002 a pokračovala viac-menej bez polavenia až do roku 2015. Financializácia trhu s bývaním bola zámernou stratégiou AKP, ktorá ju docielila sériou nástrojov, ako bol program obnovy miest iniciovaný v roku 2005, zákon o obnove miest z roku 2012; zákon o financovaní bývania z roku 2007 a séria právnych zmien, ktoré uľahčili zahraničným osobám nákup nehnuteľností v Turecku.

Tento výskum sa zameriava práve na deformované odrazy dizajnej kultúry, verejnej politiky a trhu s bývaním. Dekonstruáciu relevantných prvkov diskurzu o Novom Istanbuli prostredníctvom tematickej obsahovej analýzy vybraných webových stránok venovaných rozvoju bývania sa táto štúdia snaží odhaliť nepredvídanú sociálno-priestorovú štruktúru novovytvorenej mestskej periferie, ktorú formoval politický diskurz a exponoval ju trh.

Na analýzu sme vytvorili súbor údajov identifikácii 15 relevantných projektov bývania. Tie sme vybrali podľa nasledujúcich kritérií: (1) projekt sa nachádza v medziach špeciálneho územného plánu Kanálu Istanbul, (2) projekt je uzavretou komunitou alebo výškovou budovou s kontrolovaným vstupom, (3) výstavba projektu bola započatá k 1. septembru 2020, (4) projekt má oficiálnu webovú stránku s propagačnými médiami. Tieto propagačné údaje sme následne stiahli z príslušných webových stránok a analyzovali ich podľa zásad „tematickej obsahovej analýzy“.

V kontraste s posolstvami obsiahnutými vo vládnej propagácii Nového Istanbulu, témy, ktoré sa vynorili v tematickej obsahovej analýze reklám uvedených projektov bývania, vytvárajú odlišný obraz o *raison d'être* týchto projektov. Medzi najčastejšie opakované témy patrí investičný potenciál týchto nehnuteľností, pričom sa spomína aj možnosť získať turecké občianstvo. Projekty sú propagované aj na základe blízkosti občianskej vybavenosti, nákupných centier a dopravných sietí, avšak slová „Nový Istanbul“ sa objavujú pomerne zriedkavo.

Rezidenčné realitné projekty „Nového Istanbulu“ využívajú viaceré stratégie brandingu, aby sa na trhu odlišili a, povedané Baudrillardovým termínom, nadobudli znakovú výmennú hodnotu. Tieto stratégie siahajú od dôrazu na polohu a blízkosť megaprojektov, ako je nové istanbulske letisko a samotný Kanál Istanbul, až po prízvukovanie rodinných hodnôt a tradícií či veľkoleposť projektov. Táto štúdia dospieva k záveru, že tým, na čo oficiálne propagačné materiály najvýraznejšie poukazujú, nie je znaková výmenná hodnota, ale ekonomická výmenná hodnota.

Introduction

This paper attempts to uncover and analyze the dynamics of residential urban transformation in Istanbul's periphery, namely Canal Istanbul and its immediate vicinity, through a scrutiny of real estate ads for large-scale housing developments in the said area. Shaped by a confluence of events, such as the ambitious national development plan 'Vision 2023', Istanbul's ongoing integration into the network of globally connected cities, the government's neoliberal policies, a series of mega-projects for the city, and a lingering real estate bubble, the western periphery of Istanbul began to develop into a new urban zone called New Istanbul.

While the term New Istanbul currently refers to a specific zone within the metropolis, as a concept and ideal, New Istanbul was in the making for at least four decades. As the largest city in Europe, Istanbul experienced rapid urbanization since the 1950s. After the 1980s, however, this urbanization became increasingly aligned with the government's desire to transform Istanbul into a globally integrated city, serving as a gateway for integrating the Turkish economy with global markets. In the initial spurt of this growth process, development plans restricted urbanization in Istanbul to a relatively tight, linear zone along the shores of the Marmara Sea, thus protecting the environmentally sensitive zones to the north.

This practice was to change after the Justice and Development Party (JDP) assumed power in 2002, both in terms of the areas opened to development, and of the centralization of planning efforts now affecting these areas. The word "centralization", in fact, is insufficient to describe JDP's modus operandi vis-a-vis urban development following the general elections of 2011. This era is marked by an increase in authoritarianism, and as Enlil and Dinçer note, "a tendency [in the planning process] towards immunity from legal sanctions and control created by a new 'framework of exceptions' consisting of acts, cabinet decrees, and omnibus bills". Within this new framework, JDP aimed to open large swaths of land to development, some of which were part of the aforementioned mega-projects. Three of these mega-projects, in fact, were promoted heavily by the government in the run-up to the 2011-elections. These were the new Istanbul Airport, the third bridge across the Bosphorus, and Canal Istanbul. Focusing on Canal Istanbul and its environs, the messages contained in the promotion campaigns were multi-layered, and have changed somewhat since the elections. However, they generally focus on Turkey's ambitions toward becoming a regional power by 2023 (the Republic's centennial), a desire to align the country more closely with its Ottoman (as well as Anatolian Seljuk) past, and the promotion of family values, as well as a more conservative worldview.

Incidentally, these messages also align with some of JDP's core principles, among them the implementation of a unique version of neoliberalism—a blend of Islamism, neoliberal policies, and a welfarist-populist stance, as Karaman notes². This has served JDP exceptionally well and has helped it secure and maintain its dominance at the ballot box. It has also helped JDP in implementing its urban development policies, even if these policies have potentially negative consequences for certain segments of the urban populace, and most notably the natural environment.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper draws upon several interwoven discourses that span urban governance, economy/finance, architecture, and urban sociology. The literature that undergirds this framework is equally diverse and must be thoroughly examined for a deeper understanding of the complex set of trends that have shaped Istanbul since the turn of the millennium.

In the aftermath of the severe 1999 Izmit Earthquake, Turkey's economy was already strained. However, the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was a banking crisis in 2001–2 that shook the country to the core. This precipitated a political crisis, which eventually led to the landslide electoral victory of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002. The party is in power to this day. The neoliberal policies adopted by JDP, along with the implemented economic recovery program formulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank in 2001³, hastened net capital inflows into the country.⁴ A sizable portion of these inflows, in turn, found their way into the housing market, as we will see in subsequent sections of this paper.

In a globalizing world, attracting foreign capital is increasingly seen as a cure for a country's economic woes. The tide of incoming funds tends to lift all boats, as spillover effects ripple throughout the economy.⁵ Yet research indicates that other factors, such as the level of economic freedom in the recipient country (as measured by the Economic Freedom Index) may be equally important in determining the positive effects of capital inflows.⁶ This latter fact seems not to have been lost on JDP, as crucial economic and legislative reforms were undertaken soon after the party assumed power. Among these are the enactment of International Arbitration Law in 2001, steps taken to reduce public debt, restrict domestic borrowing, grant formal autonomy to the Central Bank, and to enact a broad privatization program.⁷ With higher levels of economic freedom and macroeconomic stability thus achieved, investor appetite was stoked in Turkey. After reaching a nadir in 2000, net capital inflows increased steadily until 2013, except for a short reversal in 2008–9.

Concomitant with the rise in capital inflows, steps were taken by the government to increase financialization in a wide swath of sectors, including housing.⁸ As several authors aptly argue⁹, this financialization of the housing sector was a deliberate strategy on the part of JDP to create, with reference to Harvey, a profitable outlet for surplus value accreted through a "crisis of overaccumulation".¹⁰ Thus, a shift occurred out of Harvey's 'primary circuit' of capital (investment in the production sector)

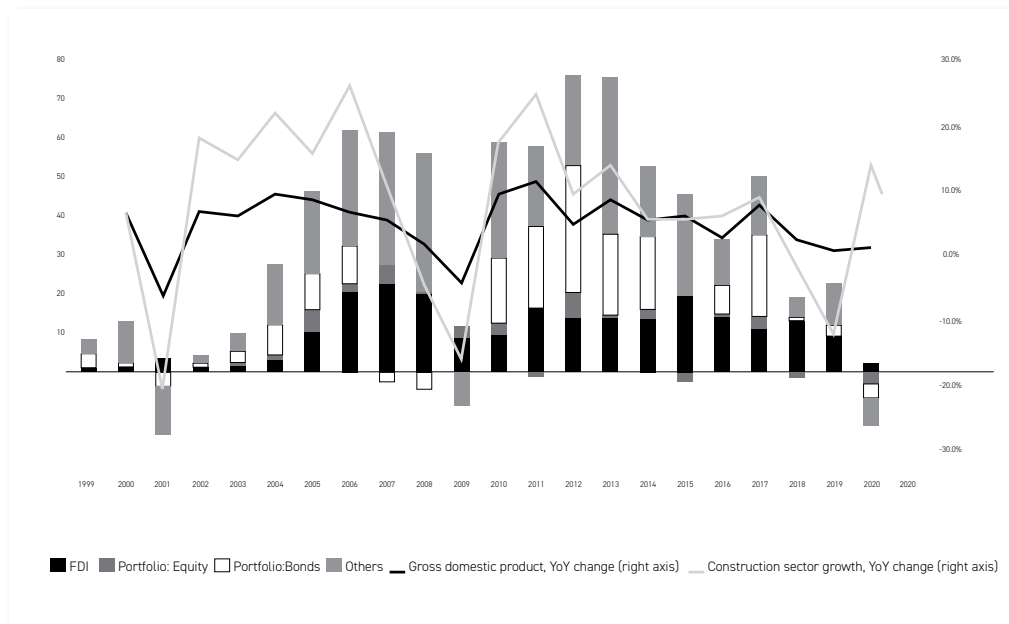
towards the 'secondary circuit'—i.e. investment in the built environment.¹¹

Through this shift, JDP was able to create and sustain what turned out to be a massive real estate investment bubble for roughly thirteen years. As measured by the Hedonic Price Index, the bubble finally burst in 2015.¹² All the same, the unprecedented level of economic expansion that accompanied the real estate bubble helped JDP sustain its popularity at the ballot box¹³ and created monumental wealth gains for construction companies that were close to the government, as well as smaller companies that jumped on the bandwagon.¹⁴

The promotion and financialization of real estate was achieved through a series of instruments, the most visible of which was perhaps the urban regeneration program (Act 5366) initiated in 2005; this accelerated significantly after the Urban Regeneration Law of 2012 (Act 6306).¹⁵ Equally important, however, was the Housing Finance Law of 2007, which led to the introduction and subsequent expansion of a hitherto non-existent mortgage market, as well as legal changes and tax breaks for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), which increased their profitability. Finally, a series of legal amendments were undertaken, which made it easier for foreign individuals to purchase property in Turkey.¹⁶

Yet by 2008, capital inflows into Turkey began to slow down, caused in no little part by the financial crisis that gripped most of the world. The situation worsened dramatically in 2009, and the construction sector experienced its first contraction in eight years. This setback was soon to be reversed, however, with a confluence of events such as massive monetary easing programs by most major central banks of the world, Istanbul's declaration as the European Capital of Culture in 2010 (which created renewed interest in the city and boosted investment both internally and externally), and the government's ambitions to make Turkey a macro-regional power by 2023. Several aspects of Vision 2023 pertained to urban policies, and a more general 'branding campaign' to recast Turkey as the rightful heir of powerful political entities such as the Anatolian Seljuks and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ As such, during the political campaign for the general elections of 2011, JDP introduced and heavily promoted a series of mega-projects, of which Canal Istanbul forms a part. This background has great bearing on how Istanbul was promoted anew, and how the branding campaigns were shaped for residential real estate around Canal Istanbul.

As noted above, another noteworthy buzz-phrase that JDP had begun to use with increasing frequency around this time was 'New Istanbul'. It is an important phrase that must be dissected, for it refers both to a physical place, and an abstract idea. As a physical place, New Istanbul refers to the prospective shores of Canal Istanbul, as well as a planned enclave around the New Airport. In terms of an idea, however, it hearkens both to Istanbul's break with its Republican past and is also a nod towards the "de-peripheralization" of the city. To note, Istanbul's shift towards becoming a globally integrated city followed, more or less, the theoretical frameworks laid out by Friedman¹⁸, Sassen¹⁹, and Brenner.²⁰ Yet it was also unique, due to the set of circumstances that have already been discussed, as well as



SHARES OF CAPITAL INFLOWS (VERTICAL BARS) WITH GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (BLACK LINE), AND CONSTRUCTION SECTOR GROWTH (GREY LINE) OVERLAYS, 1999 – 2020

ZLOŽKY PRÍLEUVU KAPITÁLU (STĽPCE) S HRUBÝM DOMÁCIM PRODUKTOM (ČIERNA ČIARA) A RASTOM STAVEBNÉHO SEKTORA (SIVÁ ČIARA), 1999 – 2020

Source Zdroj: Based on data from evds2.tcmb.gov.tr. CBRT Electronic Data Dissemination System [online] 2020 [Accessed 28 Oct. 2020]. Available at: <https://evds2.tcmb.gov.tr/index.php>

Istanbul's position as a city which did not fully experience the industrialization phase, typical of globalizing cities.

Regardless, parallels can be found with cities such as Seoul, Jakarta, Guangzhou, Mexico City, among others, both with regards to how these cities became globally integrated, as well as the mega-projects that helped them become as such.²¹ Douglass²² and Flyvbjerg et al.²³, in fact, list a host of reasons for the proliferation of mega-projects in cities aspiring to become globally integrated. Some of these reasons, such as the globalization of finance capital, institutional innovations in syndicating loan packages, promotion of 'world city' status by the local political elite, the difficulty of accurately analyzing feasibility/risk, and the 'green light syndrome' (wherein efforts to stop mega-projects that are underway become politically damaging to rival entities) hold true for Istanbul's case as well.

The nuances of Istanbul's urban development are also captured by the pertinent literature related to neoliberalization. Brenner and Theodore, perhaps the most ardent supporters of neoliberalization, argue that per the Efficient Market Hypothesis, unregulated markets possess a degree of efficiency and agility that other forms of governance/regulation fail to achieve. Yet consecutive waves of economic crises around the world, many of which revolved around real estate or financing mechanisms thereof, have shown us that unregulated markets cannot always be relied on to provide economic stability.²⁴ As Leitner et al. argue, the neoliberalist doctrine has an inherent flaw in that its power to dispose and to displace eventually becomes self-destructive.²⁵ This destruction has certainly been the case in Turkey, and particularly in Istanbul, as a growing body of literature aptly demonstrates.²⁶

Finally, the theoretical framework related to the commodification, branding, and marketing of real estate helps us understand how residential developments have ceased to be only places of dwelling, but have acquired new layers of meaning, and derived value. This is explained perhaps most lucidly by

Baudrillard, who notes that through such strategies, "economic exchange value" is converted into "sign exchange value".²⁷ Thus, the exchange value of the property in question begins to exceed its use value, hence making it a vehicle of investment. This is also captured by Harvey's discussion of the primary and secondary circuits of capital, as noted earlier. Applebaum's work allows us to look at this phenomenon through a branding/marketing lens, wherein the term "sign value" is used to signify the "prestige factor" that branded projects are expected to have.²⁸ Bourdieu refers to the same phenomenon when he highlights the process of maximizing value by a distinctive mark.²⁹ Riesman et al. takes this one step further, where he views branding as a "reconstitution of self through the force of signs".³⁰ It is precisely this reconstruction that JDP strives to achieve, to demonstrate the power of the state in implementing large-scale projects, and thus, to gain global recognition.

It is at this juncture that the new housing developments along Istanbul's ambitious mega-project—Canal Istanbul—come into the limelight. As a new waterway between the Black and Marmara seas, Canal Istanbul is a massive project by any standard, and the housing developments that line its prospective shores are equally grandiose. It is these distorted reflections of design culture, public policy, and the housing market that this research focuses on. By deconstructing pertinent elements of the New Istanbul discourse through a thematic content analysis of selected housing development websites, this study aims to uncover the unforeseen socio-spatial texture of a newly constructed urban periphery, shaped through the political discourse, and exposed via the market.

To that end, we ask the following research questions:

What are the keywords used in the branding of residential real estate along the prospective shores of Canal Istanbul?

How does the branding of residential real estate along Canal Istanbul fit into the New Istanbul discourse in general, and the promotion of Istanbul's mega-projects in particular?

Can an in-depth analysis of the branding strategy for the residential real estate along the shores of Canal Istanbul contribute to the over-arching debates on Istanbul's quest of becoming a global city, and the neoliberal policies that support such globalization?

In attempting to answer these questions, we have performed a fine-grained reading of real estate ads for large-scale housing developments in the environs of Canal Istanbul. Methodologically, this falls under the rubric of 'empirical discourse analysis' (EDA), or alternatively, 'thematic content analysis' (TCA), though there is considerable overlap in these methodological approaches, as explained by Mayring³¹, and Vaismoradi et al.³² EDA itself constitutes a subset of 'discourse analysis', which focuses on the complex set of interactions between humans and the variety of symbols (verbal, written, or manual) they use to convey meaning³³. It thus casts a wide net that spans different disciplines, and, as Johnstone notes, "set[s] out to answer many kinds of questions about language, about speakers, and about society and culture"³⁴.

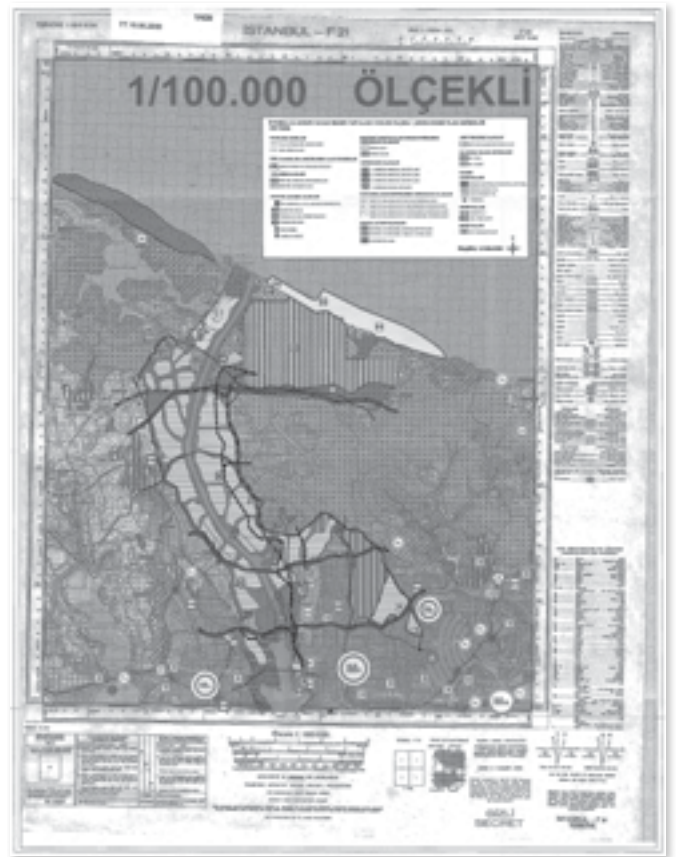
By contrast, EDA and TCA both constitute concrete, procedural methods for analyzing communicative material, with emphasis on identifying and interpreting patterns or "themes" within the data under scrutiny. The communicative material is carefully read by at least two independent "coders" to identify recurrent themes. After 10–50% of the material is processed, a revision of categories is performed to add new themes, or to prune redundant ones. The material is thus processed to completion, after which subsequent passes are made to identify linkages between themes, and to enumerate the frequency of occurrence of each theme³⁵.

Contextualizing New Istanbul

To contextualize New Istanbul, one must start by dissecting the mega-project to which it partly owes its existence. In 2011, the Canal Istanbul project was announced as a 45-km-long channel to be built as an alternative passage between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea. As promoted by the government, the project would serve to minimize the risk posed by maritime traffic on the historic mansions of the Bosphorus; and the channel would be constructed to withstand the periodic earthquakes that the city of Istanbul experiences.³⁶ Announced as a 'special zoning district', Canal Istanbul neglected most of the stipulations of the 1:100'000-scaled Master Plan of Istanbul.³⁷ With a total area of 244,750,000 sqm, the plan area affects the districts of Arnavutköy, Başakşehir, Küçükçekmece, Avcılar, Bağcılar, Bakırköy, Başakşehir, Esenler, Eyüp, Küçükçekmece, and Sultangazi.

The Canal Istanbul Special Zoning Plan was drafted by the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning (MEUP) in 2014, and, as the Ministry spokesperson noted, would feature a design language focused on 'Anatolian Seljuk patterns'.³⁸ The project was hailed as the new attraction hub of the city by numerous political figures, both from the local and the central governments, and was marketed heavily to foreign investors in particular.

Although the zoning plan mandated a total population of roughly 500 thousand people in the area, Emlak Kulisi estimates



THE CANAL ISTANBUL MASTER PLAN

HLAVNÝ PLÁN KANÁLU ISTANBUL

Source Zdroj: İstanbul İli Avrupa Yakası Rezerv Yapı Alanı 1/100.000 Ölçekli Çevre Düzeni Planı Değişikliği [online] 2019 [Accessed 7 May 2022]. Available at: <https://webdosya.csb.gov.tr/db/istanbul/duyurular/yen--aski-20191230122327.rar>

that if all the announced 800 thousand housing units are built, a population of 2.4 million people can be expected in the area. The housing developments located in and around the planned zone, concurrent with Turkey's 'cultural and aesthetic values'³⁹ are to highlight the promoted New Istanbul city image, ideology, and culture.

Methodology

We derived the data set for the study through a perusal of the popular real-estate portal Zingat.com. Zingat allows users to run searches for real-estate projects using filters for location, project size, project type, and project price, among others. By cross-referencing the information on Zingat with official documents such as the Canal Istanbul Special Zoning Plan, and cadaster records obtained from the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadaster (Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü), were able to derive a list of housing projects that fit the following criteria: (1) The project is within the Canal Istanbul Special Zoning Plan, (2) the project is a gated community or controlled-entry high-rise,

CASES WITHIN THE PLANNING ZONE

PRÍKLADY V RÁMCI PLÁNOVACEJ ZÓNY

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	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	NAME OF THE RESIDENTIAL SITE
Başakşehir		
1	B1	Park Maveria IV Lounge
2	B2	Maveria Residence
3	B3	Kuzey Yakası
4	B4	Park Maveria 3. Etap
5	B5	Adım İstanbul
6	B6	Avrupa Konutları Başakşehir
Avcılar		
7	A7	Banuevleri Ispartakule 4
8	A8	Banuevleri Ispartakule 1 – 2.Etap
9	A9	Ebruli Ispartakule
10	A10	Sur Yapı Bahçeyaka
11	A11	Firuze Konakları
12	A12	Banuevleri Ispartakule 2
13	A13	Bizim Evler 7
14	A14	Alya Park Ispartakule
15	A15	Banu Evleri Ispartakule 3



LOCATION OF EACH CASE WITHIN THE ZONING PLAN

UMIESTNENIE JEDNOTLIVÝCH PRÍKLADOV V RÁMCI ÚZEMNÉHO PLÁNU

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(3) the project has broken ground as of September 1, 2020, and (4) the project has an official website with promotional media.

Concomitantly, we visited each of the identified project sites and documented them photographically, as well as engaging in unobtrusive observation. We then scoured the official websites of these housing projects and turned the verbal content into raw textual data (we downloaded each text-containing page of the websites in HTML format, and then converted these into ASCII code text). Consequently, we analyzed the raw data as per the principles of thematic content analysis as laid out by Mayring in “Qualitative Content Analysis”.⁴⁹ The data was coded independently by two of the authors. In the initial pass, the authors performed line-by-line coding, while in the second pass, axial and selective coding was adopted to identify emergent themes.

Findings and Outcomes

Through the thematic data analysis outlined above, we were able to identify a series of pertinent, emergent themes. These are outlined below, based on frequency of occurrence, beginning with the most frequent.

The new developments’ investment value is duly emphasized in the respective project websites. The word ‘investment’ appears a total of 156 times, with related words such as ‘opportunity’, ‘earning’, and ‘advantage’ appearing 30, 26, and 24 times. The phrase ‘investment opportunity’ also appears 16 times, with special focus on ‘foreign investors’, which appears a total of 12 times. Turkish citizenship through investment is also emphasized, with the phrase being mentioned 10 times in the textual data under scrutiny.

Not surprisingly, the number of words focusing on the location of the new properties, and the advantages that these locations behold, are also quite high (see figure 9 and 10). The word ‘center’ appears a total of 123 times, while the word ‘location’ is

used no less than 77 times. Here, the focus is on proximity to 'transportation networks' (50), as well as to different locations in the city, such as the 'new airport' (72), and 'Canal Istanbul' (47). Reference to 'North Marmara' is also made (40), but interestingly, the phrase 'New Istanbul' appears much less frequently (8). Proximity to shopping malls is also of lesser concern in the branding of real-estate in New Istanbul, with such references appearing only 13 times. The phrase 'city square' however, is rather prominent, with 41 mentions.

A third cluster of keywords focus on the perks and exclusivity of living in the new residential developments under scrutiny. Here, the most prominent words are 'safety' (119), 'special' (105), 'serene' (55), and 'dream-like' (47). Emphasis on a 'high-quality lifestyle' is also made (19), as well as 'happiness' (8).

Also notable are words that focus on family values, as well as the importance of tradition, and history. The word 'family' appears 87 times, while 'child' follows close behind with 63 mentions. In fact, if 'children' is also added into the count, the two combined are mentioned slightly more frequently than 'family' (93). The word 'neighbor' appears 64 times, with terms such as 'neighborly relations' (13), 'culture of community' (14), and 'tradition of [being in a] neighborhood' (2) appear relatively frequently as well. Emphasis is also made on 'nation', with the word appearing 13 times in total. A number of developments also boast apartments with 'Turkish baths' (11), thus emphasizing tradition, and traditional ways of personal hygiene.

A fifth cluster of words focus on Turkey's image as a new economic powerhouse, and the country's ability to finance and realize so-called 'mega-projects'. The word 'Turkey' appears a total of 64 times in the texts under scrutiny, while 'largest' is mentioned 39 times. Reference is also made to 'mega-project', 'huge project', and 'huge investment' 12, 6, and 3 times respectively.

Finally, the sixth cluster of words focus on the brand image and architectural style of the new residential developments. The word 'brand' appears 59 times in the textual data under scrutiny, while related phrases such as 'branded development', or 'branded housing project' are used a total of 10 times. The word 'design' appears 16 times, with references to 'architecture', 'modern architecture', 'special architectural style', and 'stylish architecture' appearing 24, 12, four, and three times respectively.

Also of interest are words that might be expected to appear in the data set, but which appear very infrequently. Among these are words such as 'earthquake', which appears only three times in the data set. Following the devastating Marmara earthquake of 1999, earthquake safety was a very important selling point for new residential developments. Likewise, being in a natural setting, away from the hustle and bustle of city life was an important requirement for would-be buyers of residential real-estate. However, the words 'nature' or 'natural' appear very infrequently (a total of 15 times) in the data set at hand.

Conclusion

The residential real-estate projects of 'New Istanbul' employ a number of branding strategies to differentiate themselves in the market, and, to use Baudrillard's terms, to gain semiotic exchange value. As noted in the "Findings and Outcomes" section, these range from an emphasis on location, and proximity to mega-projects such as the New Istanbul Airport and Canal Istanbul itself, to an emphasis on family values and tradition, or to the grandeur of the projects. Yet it is not the sign exchange value, but economic exchange value of these properties that the official promotional materials point most markedly towards.

As per the findings of this study, in addition to emphasizing Turkey's position as an economic powerhouse, the selected projects also point to their potential as 'Turkey's (64) largest (39) investment (156) opportunity (30)'. Rather than promoting their spatial, physical, and architectural characteristics, they prefer to circumscribe their *raison d'être* through an economic-political discourse based on New Istanbul, investment opportunity, and economic power. The projects clearly display preference for a new environment that is 'safe' (119), 'special' (105), 'serene' (55), and 'dream-like' (47), rather than being in the hustle and bustle of the city's historic neighborhoods. The promotional materials also emphasize the practicality of being near the center of New Istanbul, as well as proximity to main transportation axes, and shopping malls. 'Turkey's largest investment opportunities invite their investors to projects that are centrally (123) located (77) and in close (proximity with 50) to the city's main transportation network (airport 72, Canal Istanbul 47, shopping malls 13, New Istanbul 8, city square 41 and North Marmara 40), which is a special (105), serene (55) and a safe (119) neighborhood (64) for families (87).

EXPOSITION OF THE THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS PREZENTÁCIA VÝSLEDKOV TEMATICKEJ OBSAHOVEJ ANALÝZY

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Uluengin, Mehmet Bengü Uluengin,
Zeynep Ceylanlı

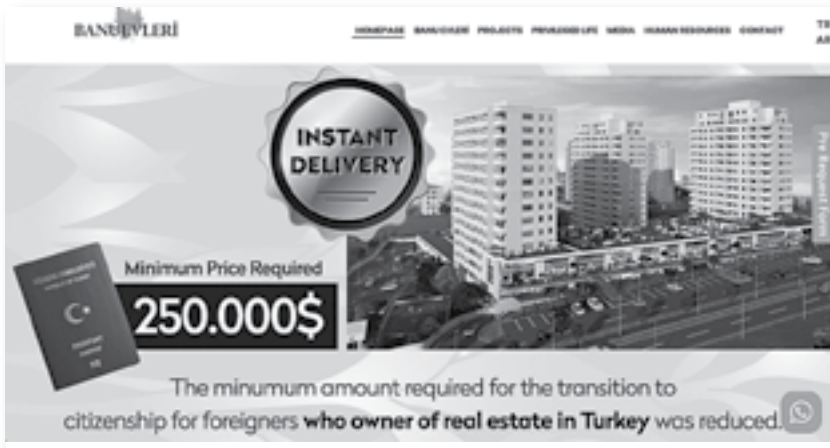




PROMOTION OF PROFITABLE INVESTMENT THROUGH THE WEBSITE CONTENTS OF THE ADIM İSTANBUL PROJECT

PROPAGÁCIA ZISKOVÝCH INVESTÍCIÍ NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE PROJEKTU ADIM İSTANBUL

Source Zdroj: Adim Istanbul [online] n.d. [Accessed 8 May 2018]. Available at: <http://www.adimistanbul.com.tr/dukkan>



PROMOTION OF THE PROJECT THROUGH CITIZENSHIP OFFERS ON THE WEBSITE CONTENTS OF THE BANUEVLER PROJECT

PROPAGÁCIA PROJEKTU PROSTREDNÍCTVOM OBČIANSTVA NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE PROJEKTU BANUEVLER

Source Zdroj: Banu Evleri [online] n.d. [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]. Available at: <https://banuevleri.com.tr/en/>



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN FROM BAŞAKŞEHİR NEIGHBORHOOD OF CANAL İSTANBUL, SHOWING A REAL ESTATE AGENCY TERMING ITSELF AN 'İSTANBUL GATE'

FOTOGRAFIA ZO ŠTVRTI BAŞAKŞEHİR KANÁLU İSTANBUL, NA KTOREJ JE REALITNÁ AGENTÚRA NAZÝVANÁ „İSTANBULSKÁ BRÁNA“

Photo Foto: Demet Mutman Uluengin, 2022



OVERVIEW FROM BAŞAKŞEHİR NEIGHBORHOOD OF CANAL ISTANBUL, WITH A CITY SQUARE IS SURROUNDED BY NEW INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, SHOPPING MALL CONSTRUCTIONS AND A CITY PARK

POHLAD ZO ŠTVRTE BAŞAKŞEHİR KANÁLU ISTANBUL, KDE NÁMESTIE OBKLOPUJÚ NOVÉ INVESTIČNÉ MOŽNOSTI, STAVBY OBCHODNÝCH CENTIER A MESTSKÝ PARK

Photo Foto: Mehmet Bengü Uluengin, 2022.



ACCESSIBILITY TO OTHER 'MEGA' PROJECTS AROUND THE MASTER PLAN AREA IS PROMOTED THROUGH THE WEBSITE CONTENT OF THE BANUEVLER PROJECT IN THE AVCILAR NEIGHBORHOOD

BLÍZKOSŤ K ĎALŠÍM „MEGA“ PROJEKTOM V OKOLÍ HLAVNÉHO PLÁNU JE PROPAGOVANÁ NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE PROJEKTU BANUEVLER ŠTVRTE AVCILAR

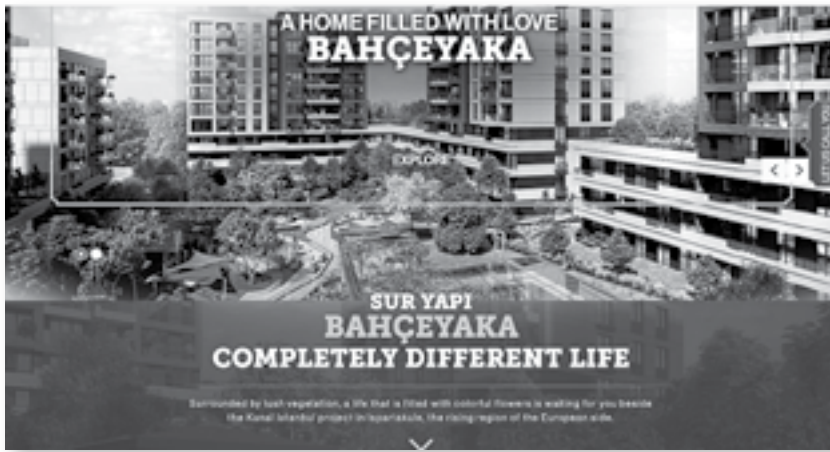
Source Zdroj: Banu Evleri [online] n.d. [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]. Available at: <https://banuevleri.com.tr/en/>

This finding is of particular interest, because the official rhetoric of the country's governance is focused almost entirely on the grandeur of the mega-projects that New Istanbul is to be constructed around, as well as ties to an imagined or reconstructed history, tradition, and family values that the residential developments in New Istanbul are expected to have. Yet collectively, in the promotional materials of these developments themselves, the words 'investment' 'opportunity', 'earnings', and 'advantage' scream most loudly at potential buyers. Furthermore, the fact that these are, at least in part, aimed towards attracting foreign investors (and hence, foreign funds) is evidenced by the emphasis on acquiring Turkish citizenship that these properties can afford their new owners. Hence it seems that Turkey's financial stability is indeed at center stage when it comes to the country's housing sector in general, and the residential developments around Canal Istanbul in particular.

This is not to negate the importance of other strategies of branding employed by the residential developments of New Istanbul. Indeed, these have come to differ significantly from branding strategies employed by other housing developments of recent years. For example, nature and natural environments

were (and often still are) important for other peripheral gated communities in Istanbul. Yet, as noted above, the words 'nature' or 'natural' appear very infrequently in the data set. The same is true for earthquake safety.

Thus it seems that a complex, and multi-layered branding strategy is employed for the residential developments that are expected to comprise New Istanbul. Looking at the data itself, investment value and earnings potential seem to be the most prominent selling points for these properties. Yet these are cloaked in a new and emerging set of keywords that are quite different than what the housing sector in Istanbul has hitherto seen. While it is not the aim of this article to gauge the success of such branding strategies, nor to document them, it would, nevertheless, be interesting to see if they are game changers for a market that seems to be almost fully saturated. Another trend that would be interesting to follow is whether these projects will act as triggers for a new set of ambitious, and equally grandiose projects. One such project is planned for the holiday village of Çeşme, near the city of Izmir.⁴¹



PROMOTION OF FAMILY VALUES AND LIFESTYLE THROUGH THE WEBSITE CONTENT OF THE BAHÇEYAKA RESIDENTIAL PROJECT IN THE AVCILAR NEIGHBORHOOD

PROPAGÁCIA RODINNÝCH HODNÔT A ŽIVOTNÉHO ŠTÝLU NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE REZIDENČNÉHO PROJEKTU VO ŠTVRTI AVCILAR

Source Zdroj: Suryapi Bahçeyaka [online] n.d. [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]. Available at: <https://suryapibahceyaka.com.tr/en>



AN OVERVIEW FROM THE AVCILAR NEIGHBORHOOD OF CANAL ISTANBUL'S EBRULI HOUSING BLOCKS WELCOMING THE VISITORS OF THE COMPLEX TO THEIR 'NEW HOME'

POHĽAD NA ŠTVRŤ AVCILAR KANÁLU ISTANBUL, BYTOVKY EBRULI, KTORÉ VÍTAJÚ NÁVŠTEVNÍKOV KOMPLEXU V ICH „NOVOM DOMOVE“

Photo Foto: Demet Mutman Uluengin, 2022.

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PROMOTION OF INTERIOR DESIGN APPROACH THROUGH THE WEBSITE CONTENTS OF MAVERA RESIDENCES

PROPAGÁCIA PRÍSTUPU INTERIÉROVÉHO DIZAJNU NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE MAVERA RESIDENCES

Source Zdroj: Park Maverá [online] n.d. [Accessed 25 Sep. 2020]. Available at: <https://www.parkmavera4.com/zevk-ve-dusleriniz-icin>



PROMOTION OF DESIGN QUALITY CRITERIA THROUGH THE WEBSITE CONTENTS OF ADIM İSTANBUL RESIDENCES

PROPAGÁCIA KRITÉRIÍ KVALITY DIZAJNU NA WEBOVEJ STRÁNKE ADIM İSTANBUL RESIDENCES

Source Zdroj: Adım İstanbul [online] n.d. [Accessed 8 May 2018]. Available at: <http://www.adimistanbul.com.tr/standards>

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