

## "Urban Housing Price Dynamics: two Residential Areas in Istanbul"

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### **Abstract:**

This paper aims at comparing and contrasting two adjacent urban settlements with respect to their housing price differentials. The selected geography is Istanbul; and the time delimitations is approximately the last decade; as the contrasting borderlines have become conspicuous /dominant during that particular era. The neighborhoods selected are Ataşehir residential quarter and Barbaros residential quarter nearby it. Both are located in Istanbul; and the community of the first quarter is well-to-do, above middle-income and high income; while the community of the second is mainly low-income. The major research question to be dealt in this paper is “how do the two bordering neighborhoods which are socio-culturally and economically very different from each other affect the housing prices in the housing market?” According to the Bailey’s model (1959) the housing market exists in a continuum and is linked *vis a vis* prices. The two neighborhoods will be analyzed through using a tri-partie scale of ascending order, namely; (1) building (2) neighborhood and (3) environment. At the building scale, the age of the building, its construction mode, total area of the house, number of rooms within a house will be considered as the major parameters. At the neighborhood scale, socio-economic qualities of the neighborhood, distance to the center of the city as well as to the health, educational and shopping facilities, and its location with respect to the main transportation axes will be considered. Finally, at the higher scale, environmental characteristics will be picked up with respect to both natural and the built environment. In this regard, the view, freeway connection, environmental pollution, natural borders, and existence of storage areas will be examined. Ultimately it is hoped that dynamics of housing price differentials in two contrasting residential areas / quarters in a large urban area is better understood.

**Keywords:** housing market dynamics, borderlines, social & economic differentiation, urban neighborhood.

## 1. Introduction

Today, contemporary cities became economic focal points and started to shelter big crowds, thus social structure of the city is transformed dramatically. The contemporary city that shelter homogenous and limited crowds in the previous periods, went under a brand new social atmosphere, with multifarious social groups living together because of the accelerating migration. The growing danger in the city, the dense migration -which is supported by late capitalism, consumption culture, and improving transport and communication technologies- and the fear of obscurity of the metropolis cause a highly detached social groups to emerge in the city.

This fragmented social structure of the city has its reflection also on urban space. Currently, the mentioned social fragmentation is especially embodied in housing and sheltering types. In urban space that is being restructured by this social process, residential areas begin to become fragmented and differentiated. Different types of residential areas adjoin each other in the city, they build sharp and invisible borderlines in-between; and boundaries get sharpened day by day between these economically and culturally differentiated areas. Spatial segmentation which has been triggered by the social fragmentation, acts on the communication between different social groups and these social groups start to live entirely disconnected. Thus, while social fragmentation gives way to spatial fragmentation, it also evokes an inverse impulse. Spatial segregation strengthens the social fragmentation by eliminating the public spaces, common sharing platforms of the city. Eventually, the public space which is open to and shared by “everyone” begins to become fragmented and dissolved.

The aim of the paper is to handle this dialectic relation and interaction between social fragmentation and spatial segregation and segmentation. Thus, the major issue to be dealt with is “how do two bordering neighborhoods which are socio-culturally and economically very different from each other affect the housing prices in the housing market?” In other words, the aim can be expressed as discussing the impacts of social fragmentation on urban space, such as segmentation/of urban space, emerging borderlines and the loss of public space.

In this context, firstly, social uneasiness and social fragmentation in the contemporary city is discussed, which are given rise by the globalization and the improvement of modern capitalist system. Then, the impact of social fragmentation on the urban space is to be picked up under three subtitles; closed housing sites and new life-styles they offer, the transformation of the concept of borderline, and the situation of public space in the contemporary city. Then these theoretically discussed issues are to be analyzed on the residential areas, Barbaros District and Ataşehir My World Settlements. The research undertakes both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The method of analyses consist of conducting surveys on the chosen residential area. The basic unit is family and the two different socio-economic groups are questioned to highlight the socio-economic characteristics, attitudes to each other **and their public life**. The sampling number is 50 in total, 25 residents from Barbaros District and 25 from Ataşehir My World Settlement.

## **2. Changing Social Dynamics and Alienation in Metropolis: Social Fragmentation**

“As we can see from the history, nothing stays stable and protected; everything is in a continuous motion and change.” (Moravia, 1987) As Moravia states, this unavoidable fact of change, while brings the continuous mobility of thought systems, beliefs, cultures of societies, also changes the lived physical environment, the cities. Thus, the social changes in thought system and culture have reflections on the physical environment and social dynamics transform the urban space, the city. Alongside it is a fact that the city produces new social dynamics. Then, it can be claimed that there is a dialectic, interactive relation between physical urban space and social dynamics.

On the onward phases of modernization, the speed of globalization, improving modern technologies and with the emergence of consumption culture, metropolises become places where social Dynamics spin out of control. As Bauman mentions, the concepts of change and temporariness become the main concepts of everyday life of metropolis, and social life cannot cope with a continuous revolution. (Bauman, 2003) Today, the social atmosphere of the contemporary metropolis is associated with the concepts of social uneasiness, alienation, fear and identity crisis, by most of the researchers.

Especially in the period beginning from 20th Century to today, globalization and modern capitalist system have an important role on the shaping of urban space and social pattern of the metropolis. Along with the progress of the modern capitalist system, metropolises became economic focal points and started to shelter big crowds, thus social structures of metropolises transformed dramatically. The contemporary city that shelter homogenous and limited crowds in the previous periods, went under a brand new social atmosphere, with multifarious social groups living together because of the accelerating migration.

The factor effective on formation of this new social atmosphere is quite easy to understand: With the accelerating population and variety, city life became shared with an improving population of strangers day by day. Lofland emphasis the important change that the city dweller faces: With the modern city life, people had to accept one fact. Stranger was a rule, not an exception anymore. (Lofland, 1985)

It is sure that new brand social atmosphere of the city, which is never experienced before, while considering the interaction between urban space and social dynamics, will restructure and transform the urban space of the metropolis. The life in metropolis, with the fear of obscurity and growing social uneasiness, brings the perception of “other” as danger. To eliminate this danger, city dweller isolates the differences brought by “other”, obscurity and chaos, on physical and social areas. Thus, anymore city is not a place where the differences can meet. City is divided into homogenous crowds. In the socially and spatially fragmented city, globalization creates a world of winners and losers world, where some groups of the society lives comfortably by socio-economic means, and some groups have to live in poverty and desperation. Bauman states that, globalization encourages the experience of insecurity and obscurity, which are the main reasons of fear, and causes the perception of stranger as an enemy. Strangers become neighbours, neighbours become strangers, and these bring lack of communication of city dwellers. (Bauman, 2006) Obscurity and insecurity are global realities, and in the contemporary city –space of globalization- this situation leads to social uneasiness.

And the in the city that is shaped by these social atmosphere, social fragmentation, thus spatial fragmentation is unavoidable.

### **3 Fragmentation of Urban Space: The Problem of Borderlines**

Today, urban settlements are spreading out of the city, with the improvement of the transport and communication technologies. With the restructuring of finance centres, and building multi-functional shopping malls on new transport joints, mid and high-income groups started to move closed housing sites that are situated out of the city, where they can live with familiar cultural groups, and without meeting the “other”. And low-income groups of the society keep living up in shantytowns, which are almost big as a city, and again out of the city.

It is not hard to say that this situation is the embodiment of the social fragmentation on the urban space. In the city, where urban spaces are divided into parts by borderlines, it is clear that common platforms of the society, thus public spaces will disappear.

#### **3.1 “Closed Circuit” Lives: Closed Housing Sites**

Mid and high socio-cultural classes of Istanbul, explored the over-crowds, noise, chaos, and the pollution of Istanbul. From the global consumption culture’s point of view, it was clear that life quality in Istanbul was insufficient. Environmental pollution, not only polluted the seas, weather, and water, but also the social and cultural atmosphere of the city. Istanbul, which is polluted, was an “unliveable” city any long. Thus the years of 1980’s, were the years that mid and high socio-cultural classes of Istanbul begin to leave city with the expectation of a healthy life and a clean environment.

Öncü emphasis that, it’s not new that today the ‘house’ is the focal point of the urban mid class society. But today it’s new that ‘ideal house’ become an international truth, mythology with the globalization. The identification of ‘house’ with the consumption culture and becoming the most significant element of urban mid-class culture and lifestyle is endemic to contemporary city. (Öncü, 2005)

It’s a process begins in 1980’s, accelerates in 1990’s, and reaches a huge size today. Along with the opportunity to escape from the crowd, chaos, and pollution – not only natural pollution, but also social and cultural pollution- these new type of settlements –closed housing sites- make a chance for living in socially homogenous environment without meeting the “other” and symbolizing their social status. To own such a house means having a healthy life, an active social life, thus a new “life style”. In other words, not the house itself, but a homogenous and sterile social life, a modern “life style” was promoted. Öncü supports this notion: “For the mid and high-classes of the Istanbul, the most impulsive aspect of the ideal house mythology, which is generated by image market, was the promise of living in homogenous and sterile social spaces, far away from the traffic, pollution and crowds of the city.” (Öncü, 2005)

I want to discuss the factors that are effective on the selection to live in these closed housing sites, and the “closed circuit” lives that these new types of settlement offer by analyzing newspaper advertisements.

	Motto / Emphasis	Social Equipments	Location
..... Konutları New center of the city.	A self-sufficient project: Oportunity of easy living without going out of the project.	home offices, shopping mall, sports club, restaurant, cafe...	easy to reach everywhere: very close to E-5, TEM, coastal highway, and metro station.
..... Park	..... Park, is in the center of the city also in the nature...	open and closed swimmin pools, playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, fitness center, sauna...	In the center of the city, very close to Boğaziçi and FSM bridges, also inside the nature.
..... City The most valuable investment is the one which is made to life.	The life you are seeking for, where comfort is designed as a necessity, not as surprise...		
..... Kent	..... Kent, offers not just a hpuse, but also comfort and quality.	ice-skating, bowling ve mini-golf, swimming pool, SPA, shopping mall...	
..... Rezidansları A brand new life in .....Rezidansları...	In the nature, also residence comfort.	%85 green space, security system, swimming pool, sauna, jakuzi, fitness, tennis court, mini golf, social club, playground...	Only 15 minutes distance to Istanbul's new heart Maslak.
..... Kent A privileged life waits you in .....Kent...	The quality you are seeking for is waiting you in indoor and outdoor areas.	diafon, walking racetrack, basketball court, playground, green spaces, 24 hours security, closed car parking...	
..... bahçe	A safe and high-quality life starts in ....bahçe.	fitness, cafe, playgrounds, sports courts, closed car parking, shopping mall...	At the center of life: Located at the trade center of İstanbul, Beylücküzü.
..... Elite Key to an elite life...	Gift yourself a new life. An elite life begins with .....Elite, in the new prestige area of İstanbul.	tennis court, swimming pool, fitness, sauna, squash, walking racetrack, clubs, playgrounds, closed car parking, 7/24 security...	Very close to city, far away from chaos, very close to E-5, E-6 and coastal highways.

**Table 1.** Analysis of the Closed Housing Sites by the Newspaper Advertisements

We see that, two properties are emphasised at the advertisements of these housing sites of different quality and size. All are out of the city, but very close, it is easy to reach everywhere in minutes by the highway. All offers a “modern life” and necessary facilities of a “modern life”, and emphasizes a life without leaving the settlement: Car parking, playgrounds, sports areas, swimming pools, social clubs, 24 hours security, fitness centres, shopping malls, restaurants, and cafes, etc.

### 3.2 The Changing Concept of Borderline

In contemporary world, the concept of borderline is being transformed and there are emergent meanings of this concept, as well as traditional ones. While natural and topographical formations, walls, the lines on the maps, etc. are traditional representations of the borderline, with the new brand social and structural concepts modernization brings, the concepts that borderline represents, are becoming more complex and dynamic. For making the city dweller feel safe, the relation between modern metropolis dweller and “others” is being re constructed, and the concept of security comes into prominence. Thus the concept of borderline represents new meanings that are special to modern times.

Townsend and Cloud claims that, borderlines help people and societies to define their existence areas and build their identity. It is only possible with the existence of borderlines to understand what belongs to others and what belongs to us. (Townsend and Cloud, 1996) According to this definition, one side of the borderline is differentiated from the other side of

the borderline, and the differences between two part is spaced as an objective borderline. Visible and invisible borderlines as physiological lines, which are at the centre of the differences inherently, also appear in the modern city life between social identity differences. However, the increase of social uneasiness with the sharpening borderlines of the metropolis makes essential to inquiry the objectiveness of the borderlines. Marcuse claims that borderlines that emerge on the contemporary city cannot be objective. According to him, the aim of these borderlines is to separate social activities and people. And they are quite far away from being objective, with their changing social context with the modern times. (Marcuse, 1997)

Today in the contemporary city most of the borderlines are not rigid and visible, while sometimes they can be embodied in concrete shapes. Marcuse mentions about this issue by saying that, even if all walls define a borderline, not every borderline is defined by a wall. (Marcuse, 1997) As a supporting notion Simmel states that borderline is a sociological reality, which is embodied in physical forms, rather than being a spatial reality that has sociological consequences. (Simmel, 1997) The physical elements that frame the borderlines are the tools or signs of the sociological realities. In other words, elements such as walls, garden fences, signboards, etc. that made borderlines visible, are not the real borderlines themselves. Yet, sometimes social and cultural separations are made without using any concrete elements, basic signboards, or just mental conditioning is sufficient. According to Virilio, although their increasing effect, borderlines are fading and becoming transparent. As we usually see in the metropolis, borderlines are built by not conventional techniques but by techniques such as electronic cameras, electro-magnetic doors, etc. (Virilio, 1986)

### **3.3 Living Between Boundaries: The Loss of Public Space**

City centres define a public space where different social groups, different belief systems, different cultures come together, interact with each other and where differences collide and transform each other. Thus, public space, by being reachable by city dwellers and open to everyone, is a common platform where different points of view come together. (Lefebvre, 1998)

Today, as Sennet asserts, the concept of public space, where different social groups meet and observe each other, is dissolved and give way to fragmented settlements that are separated by strict walls. City centres became a space where lonely crowds are passing by. (Sennet, 2002)

To sum up, the changing relations express the characteristic of contemporary city very well: in contemporary city the sharing values-based relations are replaced by the profit-based relations. This situation brings social fragmentation as well as alienation. In this context, societies lose their heterogeneity, and they become fragmented homogenous groups according to their social, cultural identity and economic income level.

The transformation of society to fragmented homogenous groups means the disappearance of “differences”, which is one of the main properties of public space. Differentiated social groups build private areas that are defined by borderlines, where the entrance of “other” is prohibited. Thus, the common platform of the city, public space, is being fragmented and disappears.



Social fragmentation leads to spatial fragmentation on the contemporary city, and urban space is restructured. Here at, public space disappears. But the contrary effect is also exists: The loss of public space and fragmentation of the urban space will sure strengthen the social fragmentation.

#### 4. Comparison

##### 4. 1. A Comparative Analysis of “Barakalar” (shelter) – Apartment Blocks

In today’s metropolis social fragmentation is especially embodied in housing and sheltering types, the fragmented urban space clearly observed in residential areas. So the case study area is chosen in Nişantaşı District, a highly prestigious area in Şişli region of İstanbul; and the section where the two extreme neighborhoods are located cover approximately an area of 0.6 hectare. The land is very valuable due to its central position in the city; and is close to shopping, educational and health facilities, as well as to the work places. The site is located on a slope towards a valley; and on top, the apartment blocks are facing the Deryadil Street. Below is the Barakalar street where the squatter houses are facing. On the shorter sides of the rectangular site are slopy streets. The site is accessible from Beşiktaş, a node of transfer in the city to the North, to the old city and to the Anatolian side of the metropol. The site contains about 40 houses.



**Figure 1.** Case Study Area: Barakalar and Apartment Blocks, Google Earth Image.

shantytown of low income group– and Ataşehir My World Settlements –a group of closed housing sites of mid and high-income groups– where two different types of settlements and socio-cultural groups adjoin and build a borderline between.

Barakalar is a squatter quarter where low-income groups are settled, while the Apartment blocks on top consists of multi-story housing blocks of high-income groups. There is only a wall between them to separate the two. Such cases exist elsewhere in Istanbul, turkey and other countries in the world, both developed and developing. Gated housing sites, which are placed too close to shantytown, have elements such as high walls, security systems, etc. To sum up, chosen area is a good example where two different types of socio-cultural groups adjoin and built a borderline between.



Figure 2. Map

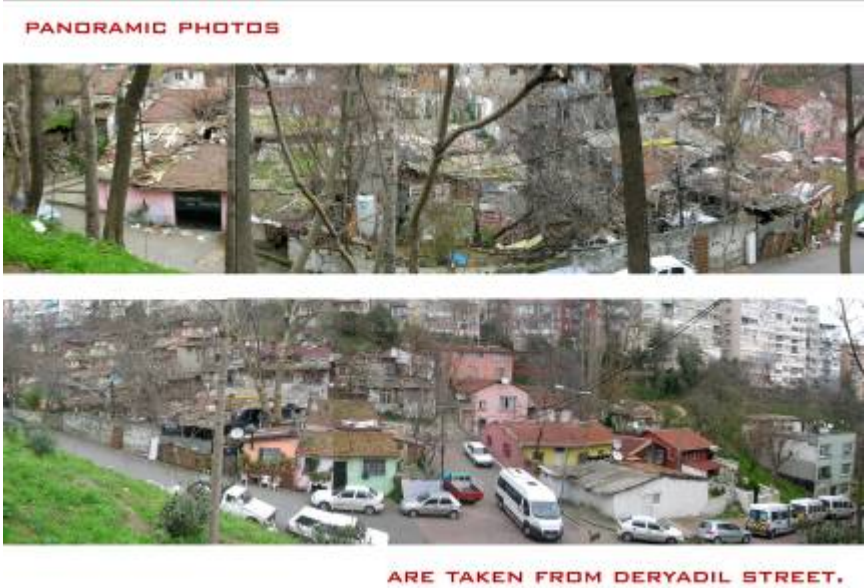


Figure 3. Photo



## 4.2. Different levels of comparison:

11 Children, 21 from barakalar and 12 from the Apartment Blocks (City Blocks) are surveyed.

### 4.2.1. Building Level

At the building scale, the age of the building, its construction mode, total area of the house, number of rooms within a house will be considered as the major parameters. More than half of the monthly income of Barakalar households are spared for rent; while in the Apartment Blocks, it is a much lesser proportion. Yet, the rents in the Apartment Blocks are at least twice as much.

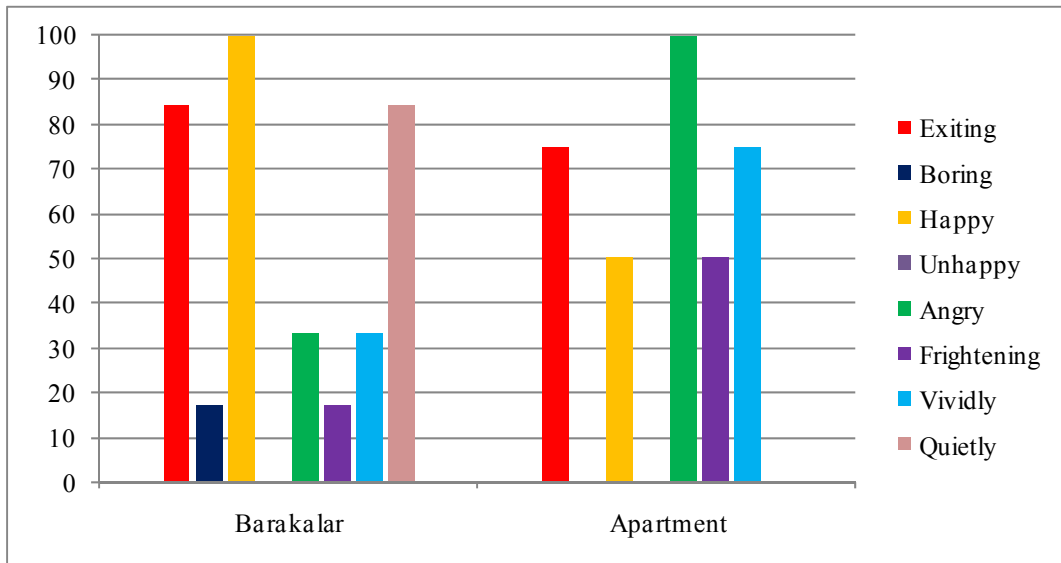
- **Age of the buildings:** The squatter houses are about half a century old; while the apartment blocks were constructed in the Eighties.
- **Construction Mode:** When the squatter settlement was first founded in Fifties, the buildings had tin roofs and the quarter was called tin settlement.
- **Total area of the House:** Houses of the apartment blocks mostly have over 100m<sup>2</sup> up to 120m<sup>2</sup> (41% of the apartment block dwellers) Only one fourth has 80-90m<sup>2</sup>. The total area of the houses in barakalar is much more smaller.
- **Number of the Rooms:** The squatter houses in Barakalar are not only small but also have fewer rooms than their counterparts in the apartment blocks: the rooms are fewer and smaller. They are densely used.
- **Quality:** the houses in the Barakalar region are dilapidated; the construction is that of simple load-bearing, roof materials are temporary and improper for resisting rain and wind. The apartment blocks on the other hand, are constructed in reinforced concrete, have well-established roofs on top and spaces within the house has stable and permanent and durable material. Furthermore, in barakalar in some house on the slope, have room's) with no window, therefore have no natural light and air circulation. The apartment block houses are fully obeying the housing and construction codes and regulations. Some houses in the Barakalar, have no separate bathrooms and this problem was expressed by the dwellers.

### 4.2.2. Neighborhood Level

At the neighborhood scale, socio-economic qualities of the neighborhood, distance to the center of the city as well as to the health, educational and shopping facilities, and its location with respect to the main transportation axes will be considered.

- **Socio-economic level** .....The residents of the city blocks, including children think that the only bad characteristics of the neighborhood is the existence of Barakalar. Interestingly, all children of Barakalar think that the life at barakalar can be described as happy, while all children of the apartment blocks describe the quarter of Barakalar as angry. All groups find similarly exciting, although less than one fifth of the apartment children find the place as frightening. Furthermore, while the children of Barakalar find the houses old and small, therefore these as the bad aspects; the

children of the apartment think that the worst aspect of living here are the Barakalar, their uneducated and rude dwellers , dirtiness, and cars.



**Table.** Description of Barakalar (So:D.Çetin, 2009) p.6

- **Accessibility and site layout.** The streets of the barakalar are disorderly and quite irregular. Between the top and bottom street the inner street is lost within the Barakalar. This is a semi-privately used-street by the Barakalar Community. It is an unpaved street, while the surrounding streets are well-finished.
- **Location**

--*City centre* Geographically the two settlements are not only very close to each other, but also equally close to the city centre. Yet, socially they are too far away from each other and do not interact.

--*Distance to work* The area is close to the new business centre. The dwellers of Barakalar work mostly in the service sector and they are located in Nişantaşı, Taksim and Beşiktaş. They are easily accessible from the settlement.

--*Distance to educational facilities* There are schools nearby and a playground which is not so close. The children play on the streets. Inside Barakalar there is plenty of green area to play but the parents at the apartment blocks do not allow their children to play there inside the Barakalar settlement. The segregation starts from early ages.

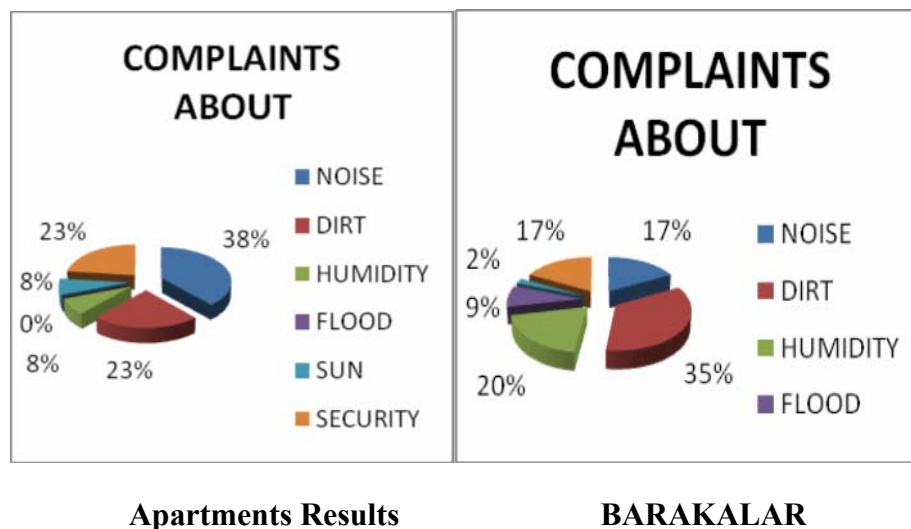
--*Distance to health facilities and others:* the interviewees in Barakalar, dwellings expressed that they were not using the parks and sports facilities in the vicinity (83%): while most of the Apartment block dwellers declared that they were using them (by 73%). This is an interesting finding because the facilities are of equal distance to both settlements but one utilizes it while the other does not. About third of the Barakalar residents mentioned they benefited from the health services while 40 percent of the apartment dwellers said they benefited the health services, meaning that both groups had less than half utilizing the health facilities around them.

**--Distance to shopping areas** Markets and the open bazaar are the most frequented areas that barakalar people shopped; while supermarkets and then the markets are the most frequently used shopping areas around fort he apartment dwellers. Interestingly, this group used the nearby open bazaar by a quarter of its sample. This indicates that squatters prefer the cheapest shopping places, while the apartment dwellers uses expensive ones, and do not to use bazaars where a possible integration with two neighborhood groups could possibly take place.

- **Infrastructure:** In the apartment blocks, the dwellings are all formally built and therefore all have infrastructural connections to the city However, the dwellings in the Barakalar, have problems with the sewer system; and aout 60% complain about it.

#### 4.2.3. Environment

At the environmental scale, both natural and built, the view, freeway connection, environmental pollution, natural borders, and existence of storage areas will be examined.



**Figure 4.** Opinions about the environmental factors (so.: S.S.Alpagut, 2009, )

- **Natural environment** The within the Barakalar settlement there is green and park area, which makes it nice on photo.
- **Built environment** The bad appearance of the Barakalar neighborhood seems to be a problem for the apartment block dwellers.
- **The view:** the view of the apartment blocks are the Barakalar.
- **Air pollution** During the winter, the coal is burnt in Barakalar, while in the vicinity the houses use natural gas connection to the city for heating. Humidity seems to be a problem: In Barakalar, it is the second issue by 20percent of the dwellers' answers while in the apartment blocks it was considered to be a minor environmental problem., by only 8 percent. This möay be explained by the compact, irregular and the non-ventilated and non- air circulated rooms in some houses.
- **Dirt/ garbage** This garbage collection, not done regularly everyday seem to generate problems in the environment. Especially the bad smell of it causes complaints.

Considering the compactness of the Barakalar housing, and the slope, garbage control is likely to raise quarrels among the neighbors. While dirt is the number one complaint in the Barakalar, it is second significant complaint in the apartment blocks.

- **Noise** In Barakalar, noise is the third significant complaint by 17percent; and in the Apartment blocks, about 38percent complain about the noise. Noise is the number of issue for the Apartment blocks
- **Security.** In the apartment blocks, security is mentioned to be the second important issue, as the dirt (by 23 percent). This may be due to the biased attitude of the apartment block dwellers towards the Barakalar dwellers. For Barakalar, surprising it is also an expressed issue and is in the third order (by 17 percent just like noise.
- **Traffic.** Both of the streets on top and the bottom are frequently used by the traffic.
- **Aesthetical Outlook:** With its dirty look and irregular layout as viewed from the bottom street, the whole area seems to be unaesthetical. Yet, the contrasting physical height of the apartment blocks which look like high rises due to the topographical advantages, is as if to fall down on the one story squatter houses at the bottom. Ironically the tall apartment blocks mock over the short one storied and dilapidated housing. The facades are also highly contrasting.

## 5. Conclusion

Lack of interaction between the two settlements which are physically so close and adjacent, and the reluctance of the residents to accept each other's existence have caused finally that the squatter settlers to consider themselves temporary in there and excluded from the city. The place attachment and feeling of belongingness does not exist. The economic reflections on the land values are quite direct: formal housing versus informal housing; two paralleling markets but with different prices in house cost and sale. The land ownership pattern is also differentiated as the squatted land has a confusing and mixed ownership pattern, mostly belonging to the public authorities of one sort.

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