

chapter four

Populist Democracy and Post-war Modernism

With the 14 May elections an important step [was] taken in a revolution that is far more important than anything that had been accomplished previously in our country . . . It used to be that only one person ruled and only a few hundred participated in politics. With our democratic revolution, with one leap, millions and millions of citizens acquired the vote and . . . became real citizens.

Adnan Menderes, *Cumhuriyet*, 2 February 1960¹

With the landslide election victory of the Democratic Party (DP) on 14 May 1950, Turkey's early republican period came to a decisive end. Abandoning the secular authoritarianism, statist economic policies and nationalist isolationism of the Republican Peoples' Party during the previous two decades, the DP regime promoted populist democracy, private enterprise and a more ambitious regional role for Turkey in the post-war international order. The initial Western-orientated cultural politics of the nation (as established by Atatürk in the 1930s) did not change, but the meaning of 'Western' in the nation's collective consciousness shifted considerably from 'European' to 'American'. Owing to her strategic importance for the American policies of containing communism and Soviet expansion during the Cold War, Turkey was included in the Marshall Plan of 1947 and admitted to NATO in 1952. American governmental and private agencies poured generous packages of development aid and technical assistance into Turkey to modernize her agriculture, industries and transportation network. Images of John Deere tractors in rural Anatolia or Mack trucks on the newly built roads across the country still offer vivid symbols of the mechanization of agriculture and the switch from railways to highways in the 1950s.

That the DP was able to deliver a brief 'economic miracle' in its first few years in power offered ample grounds for optimism in the early 1950s. Turkey was heralded as one of the most successful models of a universally defined process of modernization better known as 'modernization theory', as articulated by American social scientists and area

Hayati Tabanlıoğlu,
Atatürk Cultural
Centre in Taksim (AKM),
Istanbul 1956–69,
1977; front elevation
facing Taksim Square.

studies experts.² Central to modernization theory was a basic dichotomy between modernity and tradition, presenting the former as an unambiguous blessing and the latter as an obstacle to its realization. It was postulated that as societies became more 'modern' by increased literacy, increased mobility, spirit of enterprise, use of communication technologies, urbanization and other such indicators, their traditional traits and cultural practices (like fatalism, religion and lack of curiosity about the world) would give way to new patterns of thought and behaviour largely derived from the institutions and values of American society. Above all, the transition from a traditional to modern society was equated primarily with consumerism and entrepreneurship, thereby giving credence to Fredric Jameson's more recent characterization of modernization theory as 'a euphemism for the penetration of capitalism'.³

The capitalist expansion of Turkey's economy in the two decades after 1950 would usher in dramatic consequences in the form of social change, demographic movements, massive urbanization and environmental degradation. These decades witnessed, before everything else, the increasing homogenization of the population and especially the consolidation of a national (Muslim-Turkish) industrial bourgeoisie following the departure of the remaining non-Muslim entrepreneurs, merchants and businessmen inherited from the cosmopolitan Empire. The establishment of a strong private sector, buttressed by the 'import substitution' policies adopted by the state after 1958, led to rapid industrialization, the creation of a national market (especially for household goods, refrigerators, washing machines, domestically assembled cars and construction materials) and the cultivation of a new culture of consumption (in stark contrast to the early republican values of frugality and self-sufficiency). Images of Arçelik refrigerators or domestically assembled Anadol cars remain powerful representations of the everyday culture and middle-class aspirations of Turkish society after the Second World War. Industrialization, in turn, led to the emergence of new social groups (an urban working class and migrants in search of work) and new spatial transformations, especially in the urban periphery of major cities (factories and industrial zones, accompanied by 'informal settlements' and squatter housing for migrant workers). This was the beginning of a new experience of modernity as mass-culture, based not on a project dreamt up by nationalist elites, but on the everyday experience of millions of people coming into contact with the simultaneously liberating and alienating effects of urban life.⁴

In stark contrast to the early republican project of taking modernization to Anatolian towns and villages, Istanbul now became both the centre stage and the leading actor of this unfolding drama. After two decades of

relative insignificance in the shadow of the new capital, Ankara, the old imperial capital enjoyed a spectacular revival under the new DP regime and became the showcase for massive urban modernization projects following a master plan by the French urban planner Henri Prost (1874–1959): the opening of new roads, public squares and parks and the construction of new, iconic modern buildings that will be introduced below. In İzmir too, Turkey’s third major city on the Aegean coast, French urbanists René and Raymon Danger prepared a *plan d’aménagement* in collaboration with Henri Prost in 1924, only partially implemented during the 1930s. After the Second World War, Le Corbusier also produced a schematic *plan directeur* for İzmir in 1949, structured around the idea of a ‘green city’ with a population of 400,000 people. It followed the functional zoning principles of the 1933 CIAM Charter, separated vehicular and pedestrian traffic, proposed residential blocks raised on *pilotis* and enforced a *tabula rasa* approach for the historical districts. Ultimately, however, its destructive approach and its disregard for the existing land ownership in the proposed new areas were found to be unrealistic by the municipal authorities. A new international competition was held in 1951 and the winning master plan of Kemal Ahmet Arû, Emin Canpolat and Gündüz Özdeş structured İzmir’s urban development throughout the 1950s and ’60s.⁵

A younger generation of Turkish architects established themselves in private practice outside state patronage and produced works that reflect the aesthetic canons of ‘International Style’ in all its post-war variations: from the American corporate style of the 1950s to works of Le Corbusier and Latin American modernism. Whereas early republican modernism manifested itself primarily in austere-looking government complexes, educational buildings and cultural institutions, cutting-edge architectural production after 1950 was most visible in hotels, offices, shopping centres, commercial and recreational projects, with taller apartment blocks emerging as the dominant residential typology. What follows is a closer look at the urban and architectural developments of the 1950s, setting the stage for this second major phase of Turkish modernity (1950–80) following the early republican period.

Urban Interventions in Istanbul

After its multi-ethnic and multi-religious population had grown steadily throughout the nineteenth century to reach 1,200,000 people on the eve of the First World War, Istanbul’s urban population declined by almost by half in the early republican period (691,000 in 1927), mainly as a result of losses in recent wars, the departure of non-Muslims and the

transfer of the state bureaucracy to Ankara. During the years that Ankara was rising as the new capital, Istanbul was reduced to a shadow of its former self: a city shrinking in population, area and national significance, with crumbling infrastructure, old buildings and empty plots that were not rebuilt after successive fires had taken their toll. As discussed in the previous chapters, during the radical Kemalist nation-building of the 1930s the limited resources of the young republic were mostly directed to Ankara and other Anatolian towns. Istanbul had to wait until the 1940s for the first planning efforts and until the 1950s before catching up with and rapidly surpassing its turn-of-the-century population of one million inhabitants.

The urban interventions of the 1950s largely followed the blueprints laid out earlier by Henri Prost, who led the planning office of the Istanbul Municipality between 1936 and 1951.⁶ Prost's 1939 masterplan for Istanbul equated modernity with open spaces (*espaces libres* as he called them): wide boulevards, large squares and public parks modelled after European precedents. As such, it responded to the early republican quest for making modernity visible by showcasing the openness, spaciousness and cleanliness of modern public spaces, positioning them as the anti-thesis of the congestion and unhealthiness of traditional (especially 'oriental') cities. As Dr Lütfü Kırdar, the popular governor/mayor of Istanbul, put it in 1943, 'Istanbul [was] a diamond left among the garbage' and the task of urban planning was to clear away 'the garbage' to reveal the diamond.⁷ Demolishing chunks of the old fabric (old wooden houses, small shops, warehouses and unseemly derelict structures), opening new roads or widening existing ones, and laying out urban squares and landscaped public parks (in contrast to the more private Ottoman garden or *bahçe* tradition) were the primary devices employed by the Prost plan.

Although the implementation of the Prost plan was hindered substantially by the difficult circumstances of wartime, urban historians agree that the transformation of Istanbul from an Ottoman city into a republican one started in those years and continued in the latter part of the 1950s under the personal direction of the DP's charismatic prime minister Adnan Menderes, for whom the re-making of Istanbul was a colossal PR campaign – a 'prestige struggle' both at home and internationally.⁸ Guided by a modern Haussmanian vision sponsored by the national government, extensive demolitions were undertaken during his administration, not only to build new roads and thus make the city compatible with modern traffic, but also (and in line with the more conservative and populist values of the DP, in contrast with the radical secularism of the early republican period) to clear the areas around mosques, *medreses* and

Demolition during Istanbul's urban renewal in the late 1950s.



other historically significant structures of the Ottoman era, making them visible for Istanbulites and tourists alike. Criticizing the neglect of the Ottoman capital in the early years of the republic, which his administration was determined to reverse, Menderes declared in 1957: 'Istanbul's redevelopment is a story of a triumphal parade . . . We will conquer Istanbul one more time!'⁹

The impact of these new roads on the subsequent growth of the city and its eventual macro-form is a vast topic beyond our scope, but a selective focus on a few urban fragments can effectively illustrate the unprecedented nature of the new scale and urban aesthetic introduced by them.

Istanbul's historical peninsula, with its centuries-old macro-form of domed Ottoman mosques on hilltops surrounded by the tight fabric of wooden houses, became the site of some of the most radical urban interventions of the 1940s and '50s. Following Henri Prost's proposal, Atatürk Boulevard, a major new artery 50 metres wide, was cut transversely across the peninsula, connecting it to the Galata-Pera-Taksim section to the north of the Golden Horn. Perpendicular to this first major modern intervention of the 1940s, Menderes added in 1956 what would become one of his most enduring urban legacies: the convergence of Vatan Avenue and Millet Avenue, two roads of an unprecedented width, on Aksaray Square, the busy hub of the historical city. The new coastal road along the Marmara shore to the west of the city was opened in the late 1950s, connecting the city to the new residential suburbs of Ataköy and



New avenues cut through the urban fabric of Istanbul's historical peninsula.

Yeşilköy, the beaches of Florya and, above all, to the new modern gateway to the city, Yeşilköy Airport, which was completed in 1953.¹⁰

The impact of this coastal road upon Istanbul's growth has been substantial. While the residential suburbs of Ataköy and Yeşilköy still constitute the most representative example of post-war modernist architecture in Turkey, the development of industrial zones in the hinterland along this coastal road (especially in Zeytinburnu, where a cement factory was in operation from 1938, and Kazlıçeşme, where highly polluting leather factories operated until their removal in the 1980s), would attract the first squatter settlements from the 1950s (see chapter Five). Outside the historical peninsula, roads along both shores of the Bosphorus were widened and another major new artery, the Barbaros Boulevard, was

opened to connect Besiktaş on the Bosphorus shore to what was then the outer limit of the city beyond the ridge overlooking the Bosphorus. As on the western shores of the Sea of Marmara, industrial developments, squatter settlements and new residential suburbs rapidly emerged along this hinterland, defining the future direction of Istanbul's northward urban growth towards what is today's CBD (Central Business Districts) along the Levent-Maslak axis. Istanbul's transformation from a shore city to a hinterland city would accelerate and become an irreversible sprawl after construction of the first Bosphorus Bridge and the city's ring road in the 1970s (see chapter Seven).

On a more architectural scale, the primary focus of modernist interventions in republican Istanbul was the Taksim area on the northern side of the Golden Horn, the major urban hub from which new roads radiated towards the historical peninsula to the south, the Bosphorus to the east and the newer residential and commercial neighbourhoods of Harbiye and Nişantaşı to the north. Following Prost's schemes, the traffic around Taksim Square was reorganized and the old military barracks flanking the square were demolished to make room for a large European-style public park (Inönü Gezisi), complete with rows of trees, flower beds, paved pedestrian paths and terraces. To complete this overall geometrical order visualizing modernity, the Taksim Municipal Casino (Taksim Belediye Gazinosu, 1938–40, now demolished) was built at the northern end of the park, giving Istanbul its paradigmatic early republican public



The public promenade park (Inönü Gezisi) Taksim, Istanbul, by Henri Prost and built during the 1940s. Taksim Municipal Casino is visible at the far end of the park.



Rükneddin Güney,
Taksim Municipal
Casino, İstanbul,
1938–40, dining hall
and plan.

Paolo Vietti-Violi,
Şinasi Şahingiray and
Fazıl Aysu, Palace of
Sports and
Exhibition, İstanbul,
1949.

space (café, restaurant, ballroom and wedding hall) where modern (that is, Western), secular norms of recreation, entertainment and civility were displayed. Designed by Rükneddin Güney, it was an elegant reinforced concrete structure with a double-height dining hall flooded with light, a semicircular transparent wall or bay window projecting towards the park and an open café terrace with a spectacular view of the Bosphorus.

The tree-lined Cumhuriyet Avenue connecting Taksim Square to the modern neighbourhoods of Nişantaşı to the north was conceived in the Prost plan as the new face of İstanbul, lined with modern apartments



Skidmore, Owings & Merrill with Sedad Eldem, Istanbul Hilton Hotel, 1952–5 (isolated in the centre of the photo), which overlooks the Bosphorus. The Open Air Theatre (1947–8) can be seen to the left of the Hilton.

connected at street level by a covered portico, a likely remnant of Prost's colonial urbanism in North Africa. The Avenue also gave access to the new Civic Centre (the sports, culture and arts zone of the city) perched at the high point of the valley overlooking the Bosphorus. The Civic Centre included the State Radio Hall (Radyoevi, 1945; architects İsmail Utkular, Doğan Erginbaş and Ömer Güney), the 'Open Air Theatre', an auditorium following the natural slope towards the Bosphorus (Açık hava Tiyatrosu, 1947–8; architects Nihat Yücel and Nahit Uysal), and the Palace of Sports and Exhibition (Spor ve Sergi Sarayı, 1948–9; architects Paolo Vietti-Violi, Şinasi Şahingiray and Fazıl Aysu), where major sporting events were held over the years, especially basketball, volleyball, wrestling and weightlifting. Completing this spatial display of the early republican cult of sports, youth and health, the Dolmabahçe football stadium (1946) was built at the lower end of the valley. Going against Prost's vision of keeping this valley as a large public park, the DP administration would give over a spectacular site at the top of the valley for the construction of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, a symbol of post-war shifts in Turkish architectural culture, politics and society.

The Internationalization of Turkish Modernism

In the sharply divided Cold War world of the 1950s, Turkey was admitted to the 'Western club' as a new NATO member primarily for geopolitical reasons. The climate of optimism central to modernization theory and discourses of development constitute an important backdrop to the favorable reception of international architectural currents in Turkey at this time.¹¹ Although the centrality of the nation state as the primary agent of modernization remained unchallenged, Turkish architects mostly abandoned the search for a 'Turkish national style' and dropped their earlier misgivings about the term 'International Style'. The latter came to be seen as a new supranational aesthetic of bureaucratic and technocratic efficiency best symbolized, for example, by the recently completed UN Building in New York. Equally important, however, was the domestic fact that the state had largely succeeded in homogenizing the society and creating a national bourgeoisie, thereby removing a major motivation to search for a distinctly 'Turkish' national style. With the expulsion and departure of Greek, Armenian, Jewish and other minorities and the suppression of any expression of ethnic diversity on the part of the Anatolian migrants who replaced them in major cities (Kurds and Alevis), the Turkishness of the nation seemed to be no longer contested.¹² Hence, expressing Turkishness through architecture was replaced by the desire to adopt the supranational language of modern technological progress as visual testimonies to the success of Turkish national modernization in an international context. Most Turkish architects were still committed nationalists, in spite of the aesthetic shifts in their work, but nationalism was no longer a matter of style to be derived from historical or vernacular precedents, but rather a matter of national pride in the internationalization and increased competence of the profession.¹³

More numerous and less famous than their early republican counterparts, the architects of the 1950s constituted an entirely new generation in whose careers the new commitment to International Style coincided with a significant organizational transformation of professional practice.¹⁴ An important institutional marker was the establishment of the Turkish Chamber of Architects in 1954 as a licensing and regulating body that affirmed the profession's autonomy and independence from the state. Throughout the early republican period, almost all of the practising architects in Turkey were either teachers in the architectural and engineering schools or salaried government employees in the planning and technical units of the various ministries. Railway stations were designed within the Ministry of Transportation, schools in the Ministry

of Education and so on, which also accounted for a certain degree of aesthetic uniformity. Although the practice of providing major public architectural and planning services within the state bureaucracy continued under the DP government from 1950, the emergence of private clients brought in a conspicuous programmatic shift in the kind of buildings that best embodied the 'modern' in Turkish architecture: from governmental and educational buildings of the early republican period to commercial, industrial and recreational buildings (hotels, beach facilities, offices, shopping complexes and factories). Coupled with the broader emphasis on the role of the private sector in Turkey's new development strategies, the rise of private clients facilitated the emergence of what architectural historians consider to be the first truly 'private' architectural firms and the first major 'partnership' models.¹⁵

Especially notable among these new practices are the partnerships of Haluk Baysal and Melih Bırsel, who produced residential designs of very high quality reflecting the international trends of the 1950s (see chapter Five) and the 'Construction and Architecture Workshop' (İMA – İnşaat ve Mimarlık Atölyesi) of Turgut Cansever, Abdurrahman Hancı and Maruf Önal, whose members continued with accomplished individual careers after the group split up. Collectively, these architects not only defined the distinct aesthetic canons of the 1950s, as will be discussed below, but also explored new forms of critical and collective practice outside the state sector.¹⁶ Above all, it was with their work that the international canons of post-war modernism trickled down to mainstream practices, becoming an 'ordinary', 'anonymous' or 'everyday' modernism that no longer carried the strong ideological charge of the early republican 'civilizing mission', but still maintained its social purpose.¹⁷

Two primary sources of inspiration were especially important for these architects in their new receptiveness to international influences. The first was American corporate modernism, especially the glass curtain wall epitomized by such projects as Lever House, New York (1952) by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) or Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building (1958), both of which were widely publicized by the architectural media at the time. In his semi-autobiographical *Architectural Anthology of the 1950s Generation*, Enis Kortan remembers his 'mesmerizing encounter with Mies van der Rohe's Fransworth House' through publications and, more generally, the fascination of his generation with the work of SOM, Marcel Breuer, Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen and Minoru Yamasaki among others.¹⁸ Works by American architects were extensively published in Turkey in *Arkitekt*, many of them with the information provided by the United States Information Services (USIS) in Istanbul, an organization that translated American foreign

policy and strategic goals into cultural propaganda abroad.¹⁹ News items and announcements in *Arkitekt* also reveal that in the 1950s summer training programmes and various exchanges were offered to Turkish architects and engineers by the u.s. government through Fulbright grants. In 1956, in a conspicuous departure from the earlier German influence in Turkish architectural education, a new American-inspired school of architecture, the Middle East Technical University, was established in Ankara with a University of Pennsylvania committee headed by G. Holmes Perkins playing a major role mediating between the Turkish and u.s. governments.²⁰

The second, equally powerful influence was that of the post-war work of Le Corbusier, especially the paradigmatic *Unité d'Habitation* (1948), as well as the Corbusian work of Latin American and Caribbean architects that were featured in Turkish architectural media. The 'tropicalization of post-war modernism' (the growing consensus that Corbusian elements like the *pilotis*, the *brise soleil* and the roof garden are more 'at home' in the tropics than in Europe or North America), is a vast topic beyond our present scope.²¹ However, the many little-studied connections between Turkish and Latin American/Caribbean modernisms during the 1950s promise to open up new ways of 'triangulating' cross-cultural exchanges in modern architecture and so break out of the worn-out East-West dualities. Uniquely among Turkish commentators, the late Şevki Vanlı, an important Turkish architect of the post-war generation, has acknowledged some of these connections and, for example, cited the Ministry of Health and Education Building in Rio de Janeiro (1945; architects Lucio Costa and his team, including Oscar Niemeyer with Le Corbusier as consultant) as a major influence on the distinct facade aesthetic of 1950s Turkey.²²

Reflecting all of these aesthetic influences, the Istanbul Hilton Hotel (1952–5), designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (with Gordon Bunschaft as lead designer and Sedat Eldem as the local collaborating architect) is, by general consensus, the indisputable icon of post-war modernism in Turkey. It is also a textbook case of modern architecture's role in u.s. Cold War politics, at a time when the designs of u.s. embassy buildings and Hilton hotels were seen as powerful visual instruments of projecting a positive image of America abroad.²³ As Annabel Wharton and others have observed, to enter the Hilton was to gain admission to 'a little America', the paradigm of benevolent and democratic capitalist society that the DP regime embraced as a model.²⁴ Looking at the construction of the Istanbul Hilton as a political investment in a strategic location bordering the Soviet Union, the u.s. government heavily invested in the project and the construction was publicly financed by the Turkish

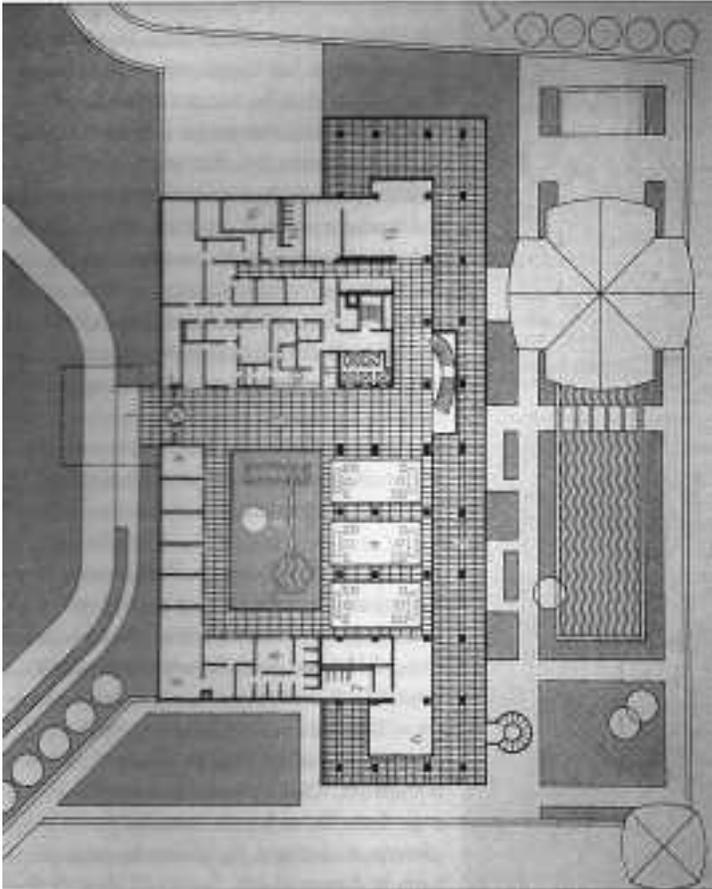
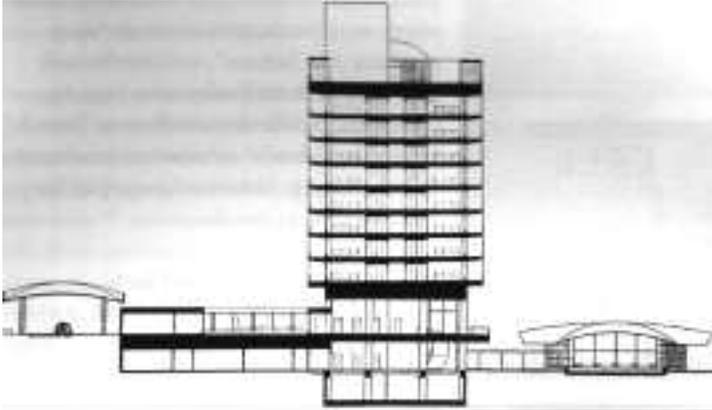


The entrance facade of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel.

Pension Funds (Emekli Sandığı) with loans from the Bank of America and with additional funds from the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA). The construction was undertaken by German firms in collaboration with on-site Turkish engineers, and the hotel was opened with spectacular ceremony and a media extravaganza in June 1955.

Following the architectural precedent set by the 'tropical Modernism' of the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico (1949; architects Torro, Ferrer & Torregrosa), the design of the Istanbul Hilton illustrates the basic typology that would become a pervasive paradigm thereafter: a horizontally placed narrow, two-sided prismatic block lifted on *pilotis* above a transparent ground floor and finished with a rooftop terrace. Given the non-availability of structural steel in Turkey, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill steered away from its signature glass and steel curtain walls,

Section and ground-floor plan of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel.



and employed instead a distinctly Corbusian idiom where the reinforced concrete structural frame is also the *brise soleil*, resulting in an appropriate solution to both the local climate and the limitations of the Turkish construction industry. Furthermore, the distinctly American ideal of democratizing comfort and luxury found its expression in the regular grid of the famous ‘honeycomb’ facade. On the one hand, the stacking of identical units (hotel rooms) was evocative of a democratic efficiency – everyone gets the same cell. At the same time, the interior of the hotel room signified American notions of modern comfort, consumption and the ‘good life’ through technological amenities, with air conditioning, a private bath, hot water, wall-to-wall carpeting and a radio cabinet in every room. With its novel form, structure and materials (including the imported white cement that gave it its clean look) the Hilton quickly became a symbol of technical perfection, precision and progress.

Yet, it was also evident to everyone involved that an imported building landing on a prime location in Istanbul like an alien spaceship was fraught with difficulties, not only for the pride of the host nation, but also for American ‘soft politics’, which understood the strategic need for some concessions to local culture, not to mention the latter’s marketing value for commercial tourism. Posters and publicity material never failed to mark the exotic location of this ultra-modern new hotel (see overleaf). Ostensibly ‘Turkish’ (Ottoman) elements were incorporated into the design and contemporary commentators eagerly exoticized these elements using all the familiar orientalist clichés. For example, the wavy thin-shell concrete entrance canopy was promptly nicknamed ‘the flying carpet’ and the roofs of the restaurant and the small poolside pavilions were associated with the domed *şadırvans* of Ottoman architecture. Other local references included the ceramic wall tiles in the lobby, which were abstracted or stylized from Ottoman tile patterns, and the so-called Tulip Room with ‘all the rich trappings of an Arabian Nights harem’, as *Architectural Forum* put it in 1955.²⁵ In the end, the will for Americanization on the one hand, and the anxiety produced by this very process on the other (that is, the fear of a faceless, standardized International Style homogenizing the world and eliminating cultural difference), reproduced in built form some of the same notorious orientalist binary oppositions that modernization was supposed to eliminate. The rationality of the main hotel block was juxtaposed against the sensuality of the auxiliary structures and interior furnishings; the tectonics of the former against the decorative character of the latter, respectively; the functional against the merely entertaining; and ultimately the ‘Western’ against the ‘Eastern’. The fruitful cross-cultural intentions of the project (the appropriation of the principles of International Style in relation to climate control and locally





The Tulip Room at the Istanbul Hilton; photo by Ezra Stoller.

opposite: Istanbul Hilton luggage tag.

Istanbul map from the hotel brochure, locating the Hilton in relationship to major monuments.

available materials) were thus suppressed by reintroducing the divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’.²⁶

The ‘Hilton Style’ Disseminated

The basic typology of the Hilton quickly became the paradigm of modern hotel architecture in Turkey throughout the 1950s, repeating with small variations the same horizontal block with a reinforced concrete *grid/brise soleil* of hotel rooms and balconies on the main facade, the same spacious



Rana Zıpçı, Ahmet Akın and Emin Ertan, Çınar Hotel in Yesilköy, Istanbul, 1959.

reception areas, bars and restaurants on the more or less transparent ground floors (or sometimes projecting from it as a separate block with more plastic roof forms) and the same rooftop bars, night clubs or discos on the flat roof. Among the most illustrative examples are the Çınar Hotel in Istanbul (1959; architects Rana Zıpçı, Ahmet Akın and Emin Ertan) situated on the Marmara shore along the newly opened coastal road connecting the city to the airport; the Porsuk Hotel in the inland city of Eskişehir (1957; architect Vedat Dalokay); and the Great Ephesus Hotel in the heart of İzmir (1957–64; architects Paul Bonatz and Fatin Uran). The Tarabya Hotel (1957; architect Kadri Erdoğan), on the water's edge of the Bosphorus north of Istanbul, is an important variation on the theme, bending the prismatic block into a slight curve along the shore and departing from the 'honeycomb formula' by differentiating the facade grid of the balconies.

Located in the historical context of Büyükada (the largest of the Princes' Isles off the Marmara shores of Istanbul), and the result of a national competition, the private Anadolu Club (1951–7; architects Abdurrahman Hancı and Turgut Cansever) is yet another horizontal prism, albeit a one-sided one, unlike the Hilton. While the sea-facing rooms, accessed from the single corridor at the back, have the familiar honeycomb balconies/*brise soleil* to the front, the back facade displays a different grid

Paul Bonatz and Fatin Uran, Great Ephesus Hotel, İzmir, 1957–64.



Kadri Erdoğan, Tarabya Hotel, İstanbul, 1957, aerial view.



composed of pivoted square panels of wooden lattice screens, filtering a soft light into the corridors and into the spacious hallways and stairwell space. The latter projects as a separate vertical shaft attached to the back of the horizontal block and topped on the roof terrace with a conspicuously Corbusian parasol. The joint work of a devoted follower of Le Corbusier, Abdurrahman Hancı (who worked in Paris for many years) and a culturally conservative architect, Turgut Cansever (who would later attribute the light filtered through the sun-screens of the back facade to the memories of traditional houses and Islamic *masharabiyas*), the building subtly embodies multiple cultural references (Corbusian, tropical modernist, 'Hiltonist' and 'Islamic'), while remaining irreducible to any one of them. As such, it testifies to how, far from being passive recipients of an imported aesthetic in the 1950s, Turkish architects were active participants in the localization and naturalization of international modernism.

Nevzat Erol's winning design in the competition for the new Istanbul City Hall (1953) is another canonic building of 1950s modernism, marking the transfer of the basic Hilton paradigm from hotel buildings to offices and public buildings. As in the Hilton's main hotel block, the two-sided horizontal prism of the office block in Erol's design is raised on *pilotis* (with a facade articulation that differentiates between the reinforced concrete grid of office units and the tighter grid of the *brise soleil* corresponding to the vertical circulation shafts) and is finished on the roof terrace, with the more plastic form of a thin concrete shell covering the rooftop restaurant. The large auditorium, the singular element distinct from the repeating units of the programme, is separated from the main prismatic block and differentiated formally with a thin-shell concrete roof structure of intersecting parabolic vaults. The volumetric composition of the bigger horizontal prism and the lower auditorium attached to the front of it is completed by an open plaza contained within the L-shaped layout. It is, however, the urban impact of the building that brings the controversial legacy of Hiltonism into sharper focus. Unlike the Hilton or Çınar Hotels, located in the modern republican hub and the new coastal suburb respectively, the City Hall sits in the historical heart of Ottoman Istanbul. It is placed perpendicular to the newly opened Atatürk Boulevard, between the Ottoman aqueduct to the north and Aksaray Square to the south. Dwarfing the small Ottoman *hamam* behind it and introducing a new, foreign aesthetic unlike anything in the historical fabric, it stands as the quintessentially 'republican' monument inserted inside the old imperial city.

Other office buildings of the time display the same prismatic block configuration, albeit with minor variations, as for example in the case of

Abdurrahman Hancı
and Turgut Cansever,
Anadolu Club,
Büyükdada, İstanbul
1951-7.



Nevzat Erol, İstanbul
City Hall, 1953, model.

the Etibank Offices in Ankara (1953-5; architects Tuğrul Devreş, Vedat Özsan and Yılmaz Tuncer), in which the slightly concave curve of the two long elevations introduce a subtle divergence from the geometry of the regular prism. Similarly, the Ulus Business Centre in Ankara, a complex of offices and retail shopping (1954; architects Orhan Bozkurt, Orhan Bolak and Gazanfer Berken) features a twelve-storey, two-sided office block, this time with slightly convex facades. While some version of the concrete *brise soleil* remained as the norm for the facades of office buildings, the first important experiments with glass curtain walls ‘draped’ in front of the structural frame also emerged in this period, for example the General Directorate of State Waterworks in Ankara (1958; architects Behruz Çinici with Teoman Doruk and Enver Tokay). This

building is an interesting 'hybrid' combining the 'glass skin' of corporate American skyscrapers with the familiar Corbusian idiom: horizontal block raised on *pilotis*, approached by pedestrian ramps and completed at the top with a usable rooftop terrace. Given the limitations of the building industry, however, it is not surprising that high-rise towers clad in glass curtain walls remained a formidable technological challenge in Turkey during the 1950s, with the proud exception of Ankara's Emek Office Tower or simply 'the Skyscraper' (*Gökdelen*), as it came to be known in popular parlance (1959–64; architects Enver Tokay with İlhan Tayman). A two-sided narrow prismatic office tower in the manner of the UN Building in New York, it rose above a three-storey 'plinth' of shops and



Orhan Bozkurt, Orhan Bolak and Gazanfer Berken, Ulus Business Centre, Ankara, 1954.



Enver Tokay and İlhan Tayman, Emek Office Tower or 'the Skyscraper' (*Gökdelen*), Ankara, 1959–64; compared with the UN Building as it appeared in *Mimarlık*.

Behruz Çinici, Teoman
Doruk and Enver
Tokay, General
Directorate of State
Waterworks, Ankara,
1958.



publicly accessed spaces. Not surprisingly, it earned a landmark status as a singular, free-standing object in the central hub of modern Ankara.

Perhaps the most iconic, not to mention controversial, example of the 'glass-and-concrete box' formula of 1950s modernism is the Atatürk Cultural Centre (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, known as the AKM) in Taksim Square, Istanbul. The still unfinished saga of this building started in the early republican period, with the intention of building Istanbul's first opera house at the eastern end of Taksim Square as part of Henri Prost's urban modernization master plan. The preliminary project by August Perret reflected the architect's monumental stripped-off Classicism and was developed and detailed by Rükneddin Güney in the 1940s. Although foundations were laid in 1946 and the naked structure of the building was up by 1953, its completion was hindered by complex economic and



Hayati Tabanioğlu,
entrance lobby to the
Atatürk Cultural
Centre, Istanbul,
1956–69, 1977.

political factors, including a change of government and a fiscal crisis leading to the transfer of the building from the Istanbul Municipality to the Ministry of Public Works. The latter, in turn, commissioned one of its own salaried architects, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, who had completed a doctorate on theatre design in Germany, to redesign the project. Working with two German consultants (Willie Ehle for stage design and Johannes Dinnebier for lighting), and a competent group of Turkish architects, structural and electrical engineers and interior designers, Tabanlıoğlu's team produced an exquisitely crafted concrete and glass box.²⁷ Constructed between 1956 and 1969, it contained a 1,317-seat multi-purpose 'grand hall' with comprehensive backstage facilities and a spacious entrance foyer, and on the lower level a 530-seat concert hall, a 300-seat theatre and a small 'children's cinema'.

The damaged Atatürk Cultural Centre following the fire in 1970.



It was, however, the building's main Taksim Square elevation that gave the AKM not only its iconic status in Turkish post-war modernism, but also its famous public face for critics and admirers alike: a transparent glass skin thinly veiled by the geometric patterns of an aluminium lattice screen. Also enhancing the feeling of lightness and transparency were the spacious foyers with polished floors, the enchanting effects of the overhead lighting in the form of geometric chandeliers, 'halos' or 'stalactites', and, like a modern sculpture suspended in space, an elegant spiral stair of very light steel construction floating in the main entrance hall. The artwork and interior furnishing of the entrance hall and the main foyer were carefully selected and incorporated into the design, including an abstract sculpture by Cevdet Bilgin, paintings by two prominent Turkish artists, Oya Katoğlu and Mustafa Plevneli, and a 10m square Hereke carpet covering the floor of this temple to the republican, 'westernized' ideal of modern Turkish culture. By a tragic twist of fate, only a year after its grand opening in 1969, the AKM was burnt down in a fire and it would take the Tabanlıoğlu team another seven years to restore it for a second opening in 1977.²⁸

Retrospective assessments of the Hilton Hotel's impact upon Turkish architecture have been mostly negative. The late Şevki Vanlı, who coined the term 'Hiltonism' (*Hiltonculuk*) writes that 'this easy rationalist template, [this] Cartesian honeycomb facade grid became a mainstream domestic typology to be repeated thousands of times . . . For almost every building type, repetitive cells and balconies were projected on the facade and monotonous horizontal prisms filled our cities.'²⁹ Even Sedad Eldem, who had collaborated on the design of the Hilton, would later

write that after the Hilton ‘buildings started to look like boxes, drawers or radios’ and that ‘Anatolian towns were now “invaded” by these glass and tin cans’.³⁰ While expressing a justified critique of the generic and often characterless reinforced concrete blocks that became a hallmark of mainstream commercial and residential architecture in Turkey after the 1950s, these views overlook some of the more interesting facade articulations that Turkish architects introduced during these years. In contrast to the early republican preoccupation with volumetric compositions, architects of the 1950s treated facades as a form of ‘modern decoration’ expressing the programmatic and structural properties of the building and using the reinforced concrete frame as a grid to be filled in with geometric compositions of glazed areas, brick or plastered infill walls, wooden or concrete screens and/or cantilevering balconies.³¹ Climate and sunlight control was aestheticized through the use of variations on *brise soleil*: perforated bricks, pre-cast concrete screens and wooden lattices for facades, exterior corridors and vertical circulation shafts, connecting Turkish architecture of the 1950s to the prevailing ‘tropicalized’ or ‘Mediterraneanized’ modernism of architectural culture from the Caribbean to the Middle East and beyond, especially in the work of Edward Durrell Stone and Joseph Stein in India, Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil or Walter Gropius and Josep Lluís Sert in Baghdad.

Integrating the Plastic Arts

Another argument against the alleged monotony of 1950s Turkish modernism can be found in the ‘integration of plastic arts’, or the collaboration between architects, painters, muralists and sculptors. Advocating a synthesis of the plastic arts following similar experiments in the West, the Turkish branch of Group Espace was formed in 1955 by the sculptors Hadi Bara, İlhan Koman and the architect Tarık Carım, ‘marking an important milestone in Turkish modernism’ as Turkish art historians see it.³² During the 1950s and ’60s many prominent Turkish architects, including Haluk Baysal, Melih Bırsel, Utarit İzgi, Turgut Cansever and Abdurrahman Hancı, worked on the synthetic idea of combining modernist concepts of space and construction with abstract/non-figurative original artworks. Epitomized by the work of contemporary Latin American, Caribbean and Mexican architects, this was a welcome strategy, not only breathing life into the presumed sterility of International Style modernism everywhere, but also reintroducing stylized touches of cultural and national identity into otherwise anonymous buildings of post-war modernism.³³ It was therefore of particular interest for architects in peripheral geographies, perennially caught between the euphoria of

internationalism and the anxieties of losing national identity. The stylized ‘Turkish tiles’ that Sedad Eldem designed for the Hilton’s lobby, the abstract mosaic mural with folkloric themes that decorated the bar of the Çınar Hotel, or Katoğlu’s ‘naïve’ paintings of Anatolian peasants decorating the foyer of the Atatürk Cultural Centre, all seek to negotiate a compromise between international aspirations and the desire to express local culture. It was a creative tension, albeit a precarious one that could easily end up further accentuating the very binary opposition that it sought to dissolve, as has been discussed above in relation to the design of the Hilton Hotel.³⁴

Whereas hotels and cultural centres were, by their nature, more likely to include works of art as a way of expressing local or national distinctness, the integration of architecture with the plastic arts appears to have been widely embraced in the 1950s and ’60s to add aesthetic quality and a certain degree of civic-mindedness to otherwise utilitarian or commercial modern buildings, from hospitals to shopping centres. While the large mosaic panels that Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu designed for the main hall of SSK Samatya Hospital in Istanbul (1959; opened 1960) or Eren Eyüboğlu designed for the Hacettepe Children’s Hospital in Ankara (1955; opened 1958) are notable examples, it is the new shopping centres that gave particular prominence to this collaborative concept. This seemingly curious juxtaposition of high artistic ambitions with the crass materialism of commerce needs to be viewed in the specific social, economic and cultural circumstances of the 1950s. With the ‘civilizing ideals’ of the early republic still lingering on, this was a brief but favourable climate for capitalism and the arts ‘to talk to each other’ – a climate that largely accounts for the emergence of commercial structures and shopping centres as the unlikely testing grounds for international modernist trends and new aesthetic experiments. Most notably, at the Manifaturacılar retail centre in Istanbul (1959), a series of shopping galleries around courtyards featured original works by Turkish sculptors (Kuzgun Acar, İlhan Koman), painters, muralists (Adnan Turani, Nuri İyem, Arif Kaptan) and ceramic/mosaic artists (Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Eren Eyüboğlu, Füreya Koral).

Both the integration of the plastic arts and the defining aesthetic canons of the 1950s were embodied with particular elegance in one project that no longer exists: the Turkish Pavilion for the 1958 Brussels Expo, ‘a lost icon of Turkish modernism’ by Utarit İzgi (1920–2003) and his three colleagues Muhlis Türkmen, Hamdi Şensoy and İlhan Türegün (illustrated on page 134).³⁵ The result of a national competition held in 1956, the project consisted of two separate pavilions, an exhibition hall and a restaurant/café, connected by a 50m wall decorated with a mosaic mural

by Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (1913–1975). Supported by slender steel columns and clad in modular panels of plate glass and oxidized aluminium for the exhibition pavilion and of teak for the restaurant, the transparency and pristine modernist aesthetic of the pavilion distinguished it not only from the more overtly ‘oriental’ iconographies of other non-Western pavilions in the Expo, but also from similarly literal replications of ‘national’ forms that had represented Turkey in earlier international exhibitions, especially Sedad Eldem’s project for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York.³⁶ Yet the ‘internationalism’ of the 1950s (not to be confused with the more recent phenomenon of globalization) was still based on the primacy of the nation state. The national pavilions were expected to be showcases of these distinct national identities in the comparative (and competitive) context of an international fair. Nothing illustrates the complex negotiations between the emerging internationalism of the world and the deeply entrenched nationalism of the Turkish state than the contrast between the architecture of the pavilion and the exhibits within. Whereas the ‘glass box’ container visually celebrated post-war internationalism, its contents reproduced the official republican constructions of Turkish history and identity as laid out in the 1930s, displaying the art and archaeological treasures of pre-Ottoman Anatolia, as well as its Ottoman-Islamic heritage.

Above all the pavilion was a superb example of the ‘integration of the plastic arts’ paradigm. The long mosaic wall by Eyüboğlu, the central ‘anchoring’ element or backbone of the design, incorporated highly stylized motifs from Anatolian Turkish life, culture and landscape: a colourful modern mural depicting peasant women, fishermen, animals, rivers, mountains, trees, Anatolian *kilim* patterns and other folkloric themes arranged in a continuous visual narrative (illus. 4.23). Utarit İzgi, a firm believer in collaboration between artists and architects, and the chief architect of the project, regarded large ceramic or mosaic wall panels as simply the modern reincarnation of the tile decoration on the walls of Ottoman buildings. He would later write, citing the work of such artists as Miró, Rivera, Picasso, Noguchi and Calder integrated into twentieth-century buildings, that the relationship between art and architecture is fundamental to the discipline, ‘compelling the architect to think of space as a potential setting for art and encouraging artists to innovate with their materials and techniques for a better fit with the architectural setting’.³⁷ One of the most notable examples of this integration was an industrial building, the Vakko Factory (for fine fabrics and textiles) in the Merter district of Istanbul (1969; architects Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsal). Original work by fourteen artists, including Eyüboğlu and the

Kuzgun Acar, facade sculpture in the Manifaturacılar retail centre, Istanbul, 1959. The Centre's architects were Doğan Tekeli, Sami Sisa and Metin Heggüler.



most prominent Turkish painters, ceramic artists, muralists and sculptors, such as Sadi Çalık, Jale Yılmazbasar and Mustafa Plevneli, were integrated for the first time into the design of an industrial building, not as a decorative afterthought but as constitutive elements of the original design concept. It was a rare early example of using the power of plastic and graphic arts to add an aesthetic value to the project, above and beyond sheer functionalism and capitalist rationality, and thereby enhancing the quality of workspaces at a time of Turkey's rapid industrialization.³⁸

Sometimes brilliant, sometimes giving in to the 'orientalizing' impulses of 'anxious modernities', but always fruitful in its experimental rigour, this 'intimacy' between architecture and the arts was unfortunately brief. After the 1958 Brussels Expo closed, the components and mosaic wall panels of the Turkish Pavilion were dismantled and brought back to





Haluk Baysal and Melih Bırsel, Vakko Factory in Merter, Istanbul, 1969 (demolished 2006), exterior view showing wall reliefs by Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu.

Istanbul, but the plan to reassemble them was never realized and the remains of the pavilion were tragically abandoned to neglect, oblivion and eventual loss, partly due to the dramatic events leading to the military coup of 1960, but largely due to what Ali Cengizkan aptly calls the ‘culture of destruction’ endemic to official Turkish modernization.³⁹ More recently the Vakko Factory was demolished in 2006, unable to withstand the lucrative urban development market resulting from Istanbul’s phenomenal growth as a global city on the rise. Meanwhile, many of the ceramic wall panels that adorned the lobbies and bars in the hotels mentioned above have since been removed in subsequent renovations, but fortunately

they have been incorporated into the new Vakko Headquarters designed by REX (see page 295). Even the Manifaturacılar retail centre has recently been threatened with demolition to make room for new residential development. As Turkish modernity continues to erase its own traces, the surviving fragments of the 1950s aesthetic in Turkish cities remain as sad reminders of a confident post-war modernism that is rapidly fading in the collective memory.

The post-war shifts in Turkish culture and politics outlined here were far from smooth or implemented without resistance. The traditional republican elites (the military, bureaucracy and Kemalist intelligentsia) resented the new economic policies of the DP government, which depended on agricultural exports and foreign aid, replacing the earlier ideals of national self-sufficiency and industrialization through the agency of the state. Nor were the DP’s ambitions entirely free of ambiguities. The slogan of turning Turkey into ‘a little America’ had been accompanied by an equally strong ambition to turn Turkey into an important regional power in the Eastern Mediterranean with strong ties to other Muslim countries of the Middle East. What was celebrated as Turkey’s textbook case of internationalization and modernization during the 1950s went hand in hand with a renewal of nationalist and religious themes in the official discourse. The ethnic homogenization of Turkish society (and the harassment and departure of ethnic minorities) accelerated under the DP regime and many of the early republican restrictions on religious expression were lifted in what amounted to a populist reclamation of the Ottoman and Islamic heritage. Such relaxation of the radical secularism of the early republic, while gaining conservative, popular support for the DP, antagonized the republican elites who saw themselves as the guardians

Utarit İzgi, Muhlis Türkmen, Hamdi Şensoy and İhan Türegün, Turkish Pavilion for the Brussels 1958 Expo, exterior view and interior view of the exhibition wall showing the project’s ‘backbone’ (the mosaic wall by Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu).

of Kemalist reforms against Islamic reactionaries – a conflict that remains endemic to Turkish society and politics.

As many critics have pointed out, modernization theory was the work of American social scientists and ‘area studies’ experts who offered an academic foundation to the expansion of American political, military and economic interests throughout the world in the aftermath of the Second World War.⁴⁰ The positive psychological effect of this theory on the emerging nations of the post-colonial world was considerable, giving them grounds to hope that, although historical and cultural differences separated them from the experiences of the industrialized West, they too could ‘make it’ one day along this linear, predictable and ‘scientific’ model of development. Where the older colonialist/orientalist constructs based on essentialist cultural categories suggested a built-in inferiority, modernization theory defined a universal process that applied to all societies. For architects it played a progressive role in replacing the nationalist obsession with identity in favour of international problems of modernization, such as development, urbanism, housing, construction and infrastructure. Before the end of the decade, however, modernization theory was proving incapable of delivering its promises, as even Daniel Lerner admitted.⁴¹ Societies were indeed changing, but turning into something ‘modern’ in their own ways and not as theory predicted.

By the end of the 1950s the DP’s massive demolitions and urban interventions in Istanbul had already run into financing difficulties. The lack of coordination and the damage wrought upon Istanbul’s historical urban character drew increasingly harsher and more vocal criticism.⁴² The country was not able to attract as much foreign investment as expected; corruption and mismanagement of funds were rampant; and, most ominously, the populist policies of the DP and relaxation of the militantly secular foundations of the republic were drawing increasing opposition from the military establishment and Kemalist intelligentsia. On 27 May 1960 the DP regime came to an abrupt end when tanks rolled in and the army took over in what was the first of a series of military coups. This was the first sign that Turkey’s road to ‘democracy’ was going be difficult, just as had been the foundational project of modernity and its architectural/urban expressions. International Style modernism also fell from grace with the collapse of the DP regime, giving way to experiments with organic architecture, ‘actual regionalism’, new brutalism and other revisionist trends of the 1960s and ’70s (see chapter Six). By then, the new strategies of capitalist development through incentives for private enterprise and the dynamics of rapid industrialization through import substitution policies had already made major cities strong magnets for

rural migrants from Anatolia seeking jobs in the industrial sector. This resulted in an intensive housing shortage, and the consequent emergence and pervasive dissemination of generic and informal residential types, which will be examined in the next chapter.