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RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN  
LANDSCAPE IN İSTANBUL SINCE 1950

As a “European Capital of Culture” that celebrated its “world city” status officially in 2010, Istanbul continues to offer a fascinating case study through which to observe the impacts of modernization and globalization on the urban landscape. Dramatic changes to the city’s physical fabric since the 1950s replicate many of the patterns and processes that one may find in other post-imperial (and/or postcolonial) cities in peripheral geographies. Yet these patterns and processes unfold in ways that highlight the unique historical, cultural, political, and geographical circumstances of a complex metropolis whose comprehensive analysis cannot possibly be accomplished within the confines of this essay. What follows is an unsystematic overview of how paradigmatic residential typologies have emerged and proliferated in the last fifty years, shaping Istanbul’s urban image and reflecting deep divisions of class and culture within Turkish society.

While acknowledging the unprecedented political and cultural shifts since the 1980s, this discussion takes issue with analyses that treat post-1980 Turkey as a radically new (postmodern) era and instead highlights continuities (as well as ruptures) with the social and economic dynamics of modernization since World War II. Above all, Istanbul offers compelling testimony to the demise of traditional “modernization theory” as articulated by social scientists in the 1950s and early 1960s (Daniel Lerner, Cyril Black, Bernard Lewis) in favor of more nuanced recent theorizations of “alternative,” “hybrid,” or “other” modernities (Arjun Appadurai, Dilip Gaonkar).<sup>1</sup> Simply put, earlier modernization theorists postulated a universal, linear developmental path from tradition to modernity that all societies were expected to go through, becoming more urban, more lit-

erate, more technologically savvy, more secular, more enterprising, and more “western” along the way. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Turkey was heralded by social scientists as a success story, demonstrating the validity of this theory.<sup>2</sup> More recently, however, we have been compelled to abandon the tradition/modernity binary opposition that is central to this theory and instead conclude with a profound ambiguity: societies such as Turkey have surely modernized and changed dramatically, but they have done so in their own ways and not in keeping with the predictions of modernization theory. Most have become less secular and less “western” as they have become more urban, more enterprising, and more technologically savvy. This does not, however, lessen the importance of modernization as a framework of analysis: it only marks a new stage in which new actors produce new forms of modernity. Here Dilip Gaonkar’s distinction between cultural and societal modernity, and their perceived divergence in the contemporary scene (in contrast to modernization theory’s prediction regarding their convergence), comes in handy.<sup>3</sup> Today, while preoccupations with identity, Islam, and nationalism are surely rampant in Turkey as elsewhere in peripheral geographies, the hunger for the latest technologies and commodities of western societies and the diffusion of a global capitalist consumption culture across all social classes are also overwhelming. Modernization is alive and well, and there is no better evidence of that than urban form.

Residential architectures, which constitute the more anonymous texture of Istanbul’s urban form (in contrast with monuments and landmarks), by their nature offer the best index to this still unfolding and complex history of Turkish modernization since World War II. The first phase of that history gave Istanbul its urban apartment boom of the 1950s and 1960s as well as its first shantytowns (*gecekondu*), which emerged around the same time, offering early evidence of the problems, contradictions, and exclusions of modernization theory’s smooth developmental models. These two residential typologies dominated Istanbul’s macro form for about three decades until the 1980s, when new institutional, organizational, and technological changes began transforming housing production in Turkey, introducing new scales, new typologies, and a new urban aesthetic. Today, although medium-rise, reinforced-concrete frame apartment buildings dating back to the postwar decades still constitute the overwhelming residential fabric of the older neighborhoods of the city, newer residential construction is expanding the metropolitan boundaries in unprecedented ways. It is an expansion that entails new construction both at the upper end of the social spectrum (luxury gated communities, residence towers, and suburban villas) and at the lower end (a new generation of mediocre high-rise apartments on the urban fringes). The following is a broad outline of these developments along the two distinct phases mentioned: 1950 to 1980, and 1980 to the present.

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## 1950–1980: URBAN APARTMENTS AND SHANTYTOWNS

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With the election victory of the Democrat Party on May 14, 1950, the early republican period came to a decisive end in Turkey. Abandoning the secular authoritarianism, statist economic policies, and nationalist isolationism of the previous two decades, the DP

regime promoted populist democracy, private enterprise, and a more ambitious regional role for Turkey in a sharply divided Cold War world. Joining NATO in 1952, Turkey received generous packages of development aid and technical assistance from the United States to modernize agriculture, industries, and transportation networks. After two decades of relative insignificance with respect to the capital city Ankara, Istanbul was revitalized as the site of DP’s spectacular urban modernization schemes under the personal directive of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. Benefiting from the relative prosperity of the 1950s (largely due to the specific conditions of the Korean War, the boom in agricultural exports, and favorable foreign exchange rates), the Menderes government undertook extensive demolitions, opened major arteries, and sponsored landmark buildings representing postwar modernism, such as the canonic Hilton Hotel of 1952–1955. Most significantly for its urban consequences, Istanbul became the center of attraction for massive waves of migration from rural Anatolia, and its population surpassed the 1 million mark in 1950 (up from 691,000 in 1927), making the provision of urban housing a pressing problem in ways that it never was during the early republic. Before the 1950s, a limited amount of new housing was produced in Istanbul, in the form of individual villas or small apartments on small lots, with a single property owner who would typically belong to the bureaucratic, professional, or military elite of the early republic. After the 1950s, the need for large quantities of housing for a mass market of anonymous users ushered in an entirely new phase in the urban history of Istanbul, as well as all other major Turkish cities.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the meaning of “dwelling” changed from an object of individual use to a commodity to be produced and exchanged within capitalist market relations—a historical shift that has in turn informed both the architectural qualities and the urban impact of residential construction.

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing throughout this period, medium-rise (five to seven stories, two or three units per floor), reinforced-concrete frame apartment buildings on small urban lots became the generic residential typology in Istanbul and other Turkish cities. Formidable constraints such as shortage of urban land, speculative rise of land values, and a general lack of capital for housing construction largely account for the proliferation of this generic type as the preferred response to Turkey’s growing urban housing problem.<sup>5</sup> In conjunction with these constraints, three new developments made the apartment boom possible and pervasive. The first is the emergence of a new actor in the housing market: the small entrepreneur/contractor (the so-called *yap-satçı* in Turkish, literally a “builder-seller”). The absence of direct government investment in housing construction and the limited capacity of housing cooperatives to cope with the magnitude of the demand created an incentive for these small contractors to enter the market. The second factor, which made residential construction a potentially profitable investment for these contractors, was the concomitant development of a domestic construction industry. The state policy of import substitution (*ithal ikamesi*), which Turkey adopted as its main national development strategy after 1960, supplied the market with domestic alternatives for most building materials such as cement, glass, tiles, pipes, and iron reinforcement, thus reducing dependence on expensive imported building materials.



Generic dense residential fabric of urban apartments in Harem, Asian side of the Bosphorus in Istanbul

The third and perhaps most decisive factor has been the “condominium or flat ownership” legislation (*kat mülkiyeti kanunu*), debated throughout the 1950s and finally approved in 1965, allowing investors the property rights to individual units within a multi-unit apartment building. Thus flat ownership has made it possible for multiple small investors to pool their resources into a housing cooperative or the hands of a small contractor (*yap satıcı müteahhit*), either to build on new land or, more typically, to pull down an older house and replace it with a higher-rise apartment building on a small urban lot. The new apartment units were then shared according to a predetermined ratio, between the original owner(s) of the old house (or of the land) and the small contractor who would typically sell some of the units in advance to finance the construction. This pattern of urban renewal has visually transformed İstanbul since the 1960s, resulting in dramatic increases of urban density in many parts of the city. In the course of such a speculative apartment boom, designs have also become increasingly generic and the resulting urbanscape increasingly faceless. [FIG.1] 

Yet what is frequently overlooked in the general criticism of this overwhelming fabric of ordinary apartment buildings in İstanbul and other Turkish cities (the so-called “concrete jungles”) is the fact that the 1950s constitutes a unique decade that also produced some of the best examples of postwar modern residential apartment blocks. This has to do, first, with the internationalization of Turkish architectural culture after



Ataköy Housing Development (1957–present) in the foreground, contrasting with the generic fabric of urban apartments to the right



1950. Abandoning the early republican obsession with “national style,” Turkish architects became receptive to a wide range of international influences, ranging from the later work of Le Corbusier to the “tropical modernism” of Latin America.<sup>6</sup> Equally significant was the availability of both good-quality imported building materials (once the protectionist policies of the early republic were abandoned) and increasingly, their domestic substitutes (made possible by the state’s import-substitution policies). Third, to address the capital shortage, credit was made available to housing cooperatives to finance larger-scale, comprehensively designed housing projects.

The canonic Ataköy Cooperative Development in İstanbul is one of the first such experiments realized with credit from the newly established *Emlak Kredi Bank* (Real Estate Credit Bank), initially intended to provide low-interest, long-term credit for residential construction. Projected as a 50,000-unit housing scheme along the coastal road to the west of the city, Ataköy development started in 1957 and has been expanding since then in multiple phases and with a range of different architectural typologies. [FIG.2]  While falling short of responding to the housing needs of the urban poor and catering instead to wealthier upper-middle classes, there is wide consensus today that the first phases of Ataköy constitute an architecturally successful experiment by most functional, aesthetic, and social criteria. Different housing typologies (including four-story blocks of interlocking cubes, thirteen-story towers, and seven-story *zeilenbau* blocks served by



Ataköy Housing Development, late 1950s apartment block with Corbusean features

Birkan Apartment, Bebek, Istanbul (1955) by Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsel



Housing for the Lawyers' Cooperative (1960-61) by Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsel

Low-rise, high-density housing with duplex units on two levels, Yeşilköy, İstanbul (1976) by Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsel

two vertical circulation shafts) were laid out in a carefully landscaped park, respecting proper angles of sunlight and ventilation. Reflecting the characteristic 1950s' aesthetic of the modernist apartment block, Corbusean elements such as *pilotis* and roof terraces were used extensively in conjunction with the paradigmatic surface treatments of “tropicalized modernism” such as sunscreens made of concrete blocks or perforated bricks. [FIG.3]



The period starting in 1950 also introduced what architectural historians consider to be the first truly private architectural firms and partnerships (as opposed to architects working for or within the state bureaucracy in the early republican period).<sup>7</sup> The “Construction and Architecture Studio” (*Insaat ve Mimarlık Atelyesi*) of Maruf Önal, Turgut Cansever, and Abdurrahman Hancı, established in 1951, and the partnership of Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsal, established in 1952, can be cited as two of the most successful such practices. Although representing exceptions rather than the norm and ultimately remaining ineffective against the magnitude of İstanbul's housing problem, the sense of aesthetic refinement and careful conceptual experimentation that these architects put into apartment design was unmatched for a long time afterward. For example, Baysal and Birsal's Birkan Apartment in Bebek illustrates the “domestication” or “naturalization” of international style “high modernism” into the familiar, even “ordinary” aesthetic of apartment blocks in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> [FIG.4] Meanwhile, their more experimental apartment block for Lawyers' Cooperative (*Hukukçular Sitesi*, 1960–1961), one of the canonic projects of modern Turkish architecture, pays homage to Le Corbusier's *l'Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles, working with the section to create duplex units stacked within the main grid of the reinforced concrete frame.<sup>9</sup> [FIG.5] Most notably, Baysal and Birsal elaborated the same concept into a flexible schema that could accommodate considerable morphological variation—as, for example, in a later project in Yeşilköy where they transformed the corridor into an open-to-sky two-level street flanked by duplex units, resulting in a most interesting but isolated episode in modern Turkish architecture. [FIG.6] It is unfortunate that the potentials of such low-rise, high-density typologies, row housing, or perimeter-block developments were unrealized in Turkey, largely as a result of economic, political, and speculative (i.e., extra-architectural) factors. Ultimately it was not these few architectural experiments of quality but rather the socioeconomic realities of the country that would shape the physical fabric of İstanbul and other Turkish cities. Today we can hardly notice these few custom-designed apartments of the 1950s within the anonymous modern vernacular of lesser examples built with inferior technical and financial resources. By the same token, however, it is possible to argue that precisely by blending into the fabric and not standing out (as the more recent gated residential developments do), they represent the ideal of a more democratic modernization project.



While the apartment boom transformed İstanbul's urban fabric beginning in the 1950s, the outer fringes of the city acquired its first shantytowns or *gecekondu*s, literally “built overnight” illegally, mostly on public land. Throughout the 1950s, the need for urban housing, as a result of massive migration from the countryside, was a monumental social, economic, and political challenge for the DP government.<sup>10</sup> To



Examples of first-generation squatter houses (*gecekondu*) on the hills of Arnavutköy, İstanbul



cite some figures: Turkey's urban population, which grew by 20.1 percent from 1940 to 1950, reached a growth of 80.2 percent between 1950 and 1960.<sup>11</sup> Unable to deal with the enormous housing shortage created by massive migration from rural Anatolia, the state largely turned a blind eye to *gecekondu* development, which was, in effect, the poorest migrants' own solution to a problem that the state was not capable of addressing. The earliest *gecekondus* were typically one-story rural-looking dwellings built by the labor of the family who started living in it as soon as the first room was constructed. Their designs were informed directly by use, and their construction was an incremental process: as the family's finances got better, more rooms or even additional stories were added and more specialized help from builders sought. [FIG.7] Over time, especially during election periods, successive governments have pandered to the significant vote base in these communities, giving them title deeds to their houses and bringing the basic infrastructure of roads, sewage, and electricity to their neighborhoods. Especially after the *Gecekondu* Legislation of 1966, most of these earlier *gecekondus* were granted legal status, triggering the commercialization of subsequent *gecekondu* production and thereby bringing an end to the earlier user-built vernacular process.



Before moving to the next phase, I would like to suggest that this earlier phase of İstanbul's transformation between 1950 and 1980, the period of so-called populist modernism typically associated with the ills of rapid urbanization, especially the much-despised apartment boom (*apartmanlaşma*) and squatter/shantytown development (*gecekondulaşma*), actually contains some important but underappreciated lessons.<sup>12</sup> It is in this period that Turkish architectural culture began to address the defining paradox

of modernism, namely, the conflict between a socially concerned view of housing as the central question of modern democracies (a question of shelter) and at the same time, an aesthetic preoccupation with the dwelling as a designed product to accommodate the “good life” (a question of quality). More than ever before, architects realized that the modern dwelling had to be conceptualized as inseparable from the question of urbanism, and by and large they refused to escape either to the “garden city” anti-urbanism of the early republic or to the anti-urban exclusivity of the gated community, which would characterize the next phase. It was a brief moment in time when Turkish architecture was released from its larger-than-life civilizational mission under the sponsorship of an authoritarian state and had not yet surrendered to the demands of the global market and to the fashionable residential formulas of the global theme park. It was a moment to which we look back somewhat nostalgically today.

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### 1980–PRESENT: VILLAS, GATED COMMUNITIES, AND SUBURBAN EXPANSION

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The growth of Istanbul’s urban population is itself an indicator of the magnitude of the housing issue and the inevitable impact of housing patterns upon the urban landscape: the city grew from a population of 1,167,000 in 1950 to 7,521,000 in 1990, and by all estimates, to more than 10 million at the turn of the twenty-first century.<sup>33</sup> With the pressures of such numbers coupled with the phenomenal social, economic, and cultural transformations in Turkey after 1980, when the late President Turgut Özal opened up the country to global markets, Istanbul’s macro form has changed dramatically. The proliferation of five-star hotels, supermarket chains, shopping malls, and office towers has transformed the fabric, the skyline, and the social panorama of the city in ways that would have been inconceivable before 1980. While these developments can be seen as manifestations of a worldwide trend in the postmodern era, the rise of political Islam parallel to globalization has given Istanbul a more complex and uniquely hybrid urban culture. After the municipal (and later national) election victories of Islamic-leaning parties since 1994, the visibility of Islam in public urban space has increased (especially the number of women with the controversial headscarf) precisely at the time that Istanbul has become a world city receiving international recognition as a “hot spot” of global tourism, leisure, and entertainment. In contrast to the more or less homogeneous Turkish society of previous decades, differences of class, culture, and background have become deeper and far more conspicuous since the 1980s. In the way that apartments and *gecekondu*s defined the urban aesthetic of the 1950–1980 period, massive new residential developments have shaped urbanism after 1980, introducing new scales, new architectural typologies, and a new turning point in Turkey’s history of modernization.

By the 1980s, it was evident that the dual pattern of housing that had emerged in the previous three decades (namely the generic mid- or high-rise apartment blocks of the middle and upper-middle classes in the city and the small, rural-looking, single-family *gecekondu*s of the poor migrant communities on the urban fringes) could no longer continue as before. The small contractor-initiated apartment boom on small urban



Aerial view of renewed urban fabric with high-rise apartments in Erenköy, on the Asian side of İstanbul

lots within the city had used all available space, although fabric renewal by replacing a smaller, medium-rise apartment (even a relatively new one) with a taller one as soon as new codes allowed it has been a continuing practice, especially in upper-middle-class neighborhoods on the Asian side of the city. [FIG.8] Meanwhile, in the poorer neighborhoods, the old, user-initiated *gecekondu* process did not continue beyond the end of the 1960s: once these areas were included within the boundaries of metropolitan İstanbul and provided with basic infrastructure, the resulting speculative increase of land values made these areas too expensive for further spontaneous occupation by migrant families. Consequently, the quasi-rural, user-built first-generation *gecekondu*s were progressively replaced by higher-rise, multi-unit apartments, now produced by a speculative process of commercialized, profit-driven, frequently illegal, and substandard construction. The resulting pervasive aesthetic of poorer neighborhoods, the “contemporary vernacular of İstanbul,” is that of cheaply built reinforced-concrete frame buildings, filled in with brick walls, sometimes inhabited only on the lower floors and unfinished at the top with reinforcement bars sticking out. [FIG.9]





Generic view of İstanbul's poorer urban fringes

Such fabric renewal in both the old apartment and *gecekondu* areas through a progressive increase of building heights and densities has been a continuous process since the late 1960s. What is truly new in the post-1980 period is a phenomenal expansion of new construction on the city's periphery in the form of entire residential communities and large-scale housing developments (*toplukonut*), rather than single apartment buildings on small lots. The first important factor behind the emergence of these new residential patterns is the opening up of new suburban land on both the European and Asian sides of İstanbul for residential and commercial development, allowing a dramatic expansion of the boundaries of metropolitan İstanbul. The second and equally significant factor is the flow of new capital and the emergence of new actors in the housing market: big businesses, banks, and large real estate development companies willing to invest in residential construction, especially for projects targeting middle- and upper-income groups, seeking new lifestyles away from the city or at least insulated from its perceived environmental, social, and aesthetic ills.<sup>14</sup> This has given post-1980 İstanbul what many observers consider to be the paradigmatic residential typology of the period: the gated suburban community or “*site*” as the preferred residential choice of middle- and upper-class Turks, illustrating a global phenomenon that urban sociologists call “the new urban segregation.”<sup>15</sup> Although private development and construction companies have been the indisputable driving force, the government has also partici-



High-rise housing blocks on the outskirts of İstanbul

pated in these new trends. The establishment of the Mass Housing Administration (*Toplu Konut İdaresi* or TOKİ) in 1984, with the aim of providing credit for large-scale production of low- and middle-income housing, has played an important role in the proliferation of standardized, multi-unit, high-rise blocks in İstanbul's peripheral areas. Ongoing publicly funded “urban renewal projects” (*kentsel dönüşüm projesi*) continue to replace entire neighborhoods of first-generation *gecekondu*s with new high-rise housing projects.<sup>16</sup>

A visible architectural consequence of these developments is the shift to much higher rise (twelve to twenty-four stories and more) residential typologies, often built with prefabricated techniques and rationalized construction processes. [FIG. 10] Today the periphery of metropolitan İstanbul is an ever-expanding belt of new high-rise residential blocks, targeting a wide range of potential buyers from middle income to the high end. Entire new “edge cities” such as Umraniye or Ataşehir on the Asian side or Beylikdüzü on the European side have emerged, with a surreal urban landscape of mushrooming residential towers, shopping malls, “hypermarkets” (including European franchises such as Carrefour, Migros, etc) and international “megastores” such as IKEA. That many new residential construction remains unfinished or empty supports İlhan Tekeli's analysis that since the 1980s, the production of middle- and upper-income housing has exceeded the demand, not only reversing the picture of the previous period but highlighting the importance of creating demand through newer marketing techniques.<sup>17</sup>

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Advertisements for a new gated residential development in Beylikdüzü, İstanbul

A typological and architectural plurality informs these new trends, particularly on the upper-income end of the market. While the first examples of gated suburban communities for wealthier buyers featured single-family villas marketing a new lifestyle close to nature, these were soon followed by denser typologies with clusters of medium- or high-rise blocks in comprehensively designed, gated communities including auxiliary facilities like swimming pools, tennis courts, playgrounds, and shopping areas. A most illustrative example is the transformation of Göktürk to the northwest of the city some 25 kilometers from the center, from village to booming satellite city of gated residential communities and a municipality proudly encouraging such development.<sup>18</sup> [FIG.12]

Initially a small village and a *gecekondu* area serving the brick manufacturers and coal mines nearby, Gokturk's fate was soon to change, largely due to its favorable location. Not only was it in relative proximity to the city but also it was protected from unchecked growth by virtue of being surrounded by land closed off to development by the "Belgrade Forest" to the north and a military zone to the east. After the administrative status of Göktürk was changed to a municipality in 1993, a private developer, Esat Edin, began building the luxury residential community of "Kemer Country," marking an important first in what would soon be a pervasive trend. In the following decade, land values in Göktürk would increase by 500 percent, and new luxury residential communities, such as "İstanbul-İstanbul" completed in 2000 by a consortium of real estate companies, and the equally exclusive Ay-Tek residences would follow Kemer Country. The publicity brochure of Göktürk Municipality takes pride in the fact that "the design quality of these residences, their high prices and the quality of the infrastructure ensures the maximum homogeneity of its inhabitants."<sup>19</sup> [FIG.13]

Meanwhile, the original inhabitants (poorer farmers and industrial workers) of old Gokturk are employed as the gardeners, security guards, and cleaning staff of the new gated communities, marking both the new urban segregation characteristic of the post-1980 period and a new symbiotic relationship between different social classes living in close suburban proximity. As such a vivid case of "new urban segregation and symbiosis," Göktürk is now a compelling research laboratory for students of architecture, urbanism, urban sociology, and cultural studies, both nationally and internationally.<sup>20</sup>

As declared above by Göktürk's mayor, without any hint of irony, the new suburban villas and gated residential communities represent an unprecedented new trend in the privatization of space in general, a conspicuous retreat of the wealthy and privileged behind well-guarded perimeters and hermetically sealed SUVs (including, in some cases, the employment of a bodyguard) to better insulate themselves from poorer, less cultivated, and visibly more "Muslim" urban crowds and from the messiness of an increasingly contested public space. In stark contrast to the early republican emphasis on homogeneous national communities and avoidance of conspicuous luxury and ostentatious display of individualism, it is precisely the promise of exclusivity—physical and social separation from the masses—that the potential customers of suburban villas and gated communities are after.<sup>21</sup> New keywords such as pleasure (*keyif*), quality of life (*yaşam kalitesi*), and exclusivity (*ayrıcılık*) feature prominently as effective marketing points.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the term "white Turks" (*beyaz Türkler*), whose connotations of race and class



Aerial view of Göktürk, “satellite city” of gated residential developments in suburban İstanbul

distinction would have been anathema to early republican modernizers, is now a common expression designating the owners of these exclusive residences, a predominantly well-educated, internationally well-connected, technologically savvy, and mostly young population of wealthy professionals, business executives, corporate managers, finance wizards, stock-brokers, journalists, and media celebrities.<sup>23</sup>

Important shifts in the design and production process of residential construction also separate this last phase of Turkish modernization from the urban apartment boom of the 1950–1980 period. Small contractors had built these earlier apartment buildings with limited capital, employing conventional techniques of reinforced-concrete frame construction with brick infill walls and mostly domestic finishing materials. By contrast, large construction firms, often with international design and development teams capable of mobilizing cutting-edge construction technologies, are active on the residential construction scene today. With the entry of large finance capital into the construction sector (such as the role of İsbankası in the development of two exclusive gated communities on the Asian side of İstanbul, Kasaba and Optimum), the scale, complexity, and corporate structure of residential development have reached a level inconceivable in the earlier periods of Turkish modernization. Whereas the modern apartments of the 1950s and 1960s were entirely the work of Turkish architects, it is not uncommon today to find the stamp of prominent international designers, as for example in Maya Residences in Etiler designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the American corporate giant whose work in Turkey goes back to the İstanbul Hilton in the early 1950s. Similarly,

#### Promotion of gated residential communities





Neotraditional architectural style of residential developments (2002) in Kemerburgaz near Göktürk

the third phase of Kemer Country bears the signature of the prominent Florida firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, marketed to Kemer Country residents as the architects who introduced neotraditionalist “New Urbanism” to İstanbul.<sup>24</sup>

The irony is that whereas the national processes of urban housing production in the earlier phase gave us the modernist apartment blocks of the 1950s and 1960s, the transnational design and construction processes of the 1990s have promoted neotraditional house designs. The most pervasive stylistic choice in the gated suburban community market appears to be some version of the traditional “Ottoman/Turkish house” with tile roofs, wide overhangs, modular windows, and projecting window bays on the upper floor. With rhetorical references to Ottoman wooden mansions or *konaks* (as in the case of “Beykoz Konakları” on the Asian side of the Bosphorus or “Fildisi Osmanli Konakları” in Beylikdüzü) and to Ottoman neighborhood units or *mahalles* (as in the case of Kemer Country), these developments package themselves as remedies to the



“Kemer Life” residential development (2006) by Emre Arolat Architects in Kemerburgaz near Göktürk

destructiveness of modern urbanism and a return to the architectural and urban qualities of traditional environments. However, the stylistic references to tradition are often only skin-deep: a postmodern façade architecture employed to lend distinctiveness and historical/cultural relevance to what is in fact a generic luxury suburban villa or gated residential community. Rather than evoking any larger cultural or national significance, neotraditional architectural style is just another marketing tool, targeting a particular group and appealing to the tastes, lifestyles, and desires of that group. Not surprisingly in such a pluralistic market, there is plenty of room for other styles, including a modernist aesthetic. For example, adjacent to the neotraditional “Turkish-style” residences in Kemerburgaz near Göktürk, it is possible to see Kemer Life, a more recent residential development designed by Emre Arolat, featuring five-story modern apartment blocks connected at the ground level by public arcades. [FIG.14] [FIG.15] Another notable modernist example is Optimum villas near Ömerli Dam on the Anatolian side of





Typical suburban villa development of the late 1990s in Kemerburgaz near Göktürk

Istanbul, designed by one of the young stars of contemporary Turkish architecture, Han Tümertekin, and constructed by the collaboration of İş Bankası with EMTA (Integrated Engineering Designs Company). These latter examples testify to a further differentiation within the high end of the housing market, this time to cater to a more discerning, educated, and sophisticated clientele.

At the end of more than a decade of frantic construction around Istanbul, the density in some suburban communities such as Göktürk and Kemerburgaz has reached such levels that they undermine their developers' promises of tranquility, personal space, and connection to nature. [FIG.16] No longer finding the exclusivity they have sought, coupled with the practical difficulties of commuting, it is not surprising that the exodus to suburbia seems to be losing its appeal for the wealthiest of Istanbul's inhabitants. Instead, the fortunes of an even newer residential typology are on the rise: high-end lofts and residential towers within the city, complete with their parking garages, shopping malls, and other services. Some of the most popular examples are the Maya Residences in Etiler, Elite Towers in Şişli, and more recently, the highly fashionable "residence towers" of Kanyon and Metrocity malls, as well as those of Levent Lofts and Sapphire Tower by Tabanlıoğlu Architects in Levent, especially after the construction of the subway system connecting these areas to the city center. The impact of these on the skyline of Istanbul and the change of scale in juxtaposition with the older apartment building fabric are dramatic. [FIG.17] Meanwhile, the increasing popularity and international appeal of the old Pera-Galata district as the new arts, culture, and entertainment zone of Istanbul have accelerated efforts toward the gentrification of the old urban housing stock in this very dense and cosmopolitan heart of the city.

[FIG.18] As many old buildings are fixed up for small residences, bars, cafes, and art galleries, real estate values are on a dramatic rise, attracting cosmopolitan Turks and international buyers alike. Collectively, these latest trends may be the harbinger of yet another phase in the ongoing saga of Turkish modernization and its physical expression on Istanbul's urban landscape.

Aerial view of Levent showing the new shopping malls/office and residential towers next to the older city fabric of generic apartments to the left and the Zincirlikuyu Cemetery in the foreground



"French Street": urban gentrification in the historic Galata-Pera area of Istanbul



## Notes

- Aspects of this chapter were first addressed in an interdisciplinary symposium on “Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity” in Oxford in September 2004 and then presented as a paper in the “Turkish Triangle” conference at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design in April 2005. I thank Hashim Sarkis and Pani Pyla for inviting me to contribute to this volume and to Murat Güvenç at İstanbul Bilgi University, who was a generous and invaluable resource for reworking the paper in 2007.
- 1 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), and Dilip Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001).
  - 2 Especially in Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, and Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*.
  - 3 Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, introduction.
  - 4 For an excellent overview of the political economy of housing production in Turkey’s republican history, see İlhan Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Konut Sunumunun Davranışsal Nitelikleri ve Konut Kesiminde Bunalım,” (Characteristics of Housing Production in Turkey) *Konut ’82* (Ankara: Kent-Koop, 1982), 57–101. Also see İhsan Bilgin, “Modernleşmenin ve Toplumsal Hareketliliğin Yörüngesinde Cumhuriyetin İmarı” (Building the Republic in the Context of Modernization and Social Mobility) in Yıldız Sey, ed., *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık* (Seventy-five Years of Architecture and Urbanism) (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı İnceleme ve Araştırma Merkezi, 1998), 255–272.
  - 5 Urban planner Murat Balamir writes that rather than being a preferred residential typology, “apartmentalization” in Turkey (*apartmanlaşma*) is the consequence of external factors such as lack of capital, shortage of available urban land, etc. See “Kira Evinden Kat Evine Apartmanlaşma” (Apartmentalization from Rental Houses to Flats), *Mimarlık*, no. 260, 1994, 29–33.
  - 6 See Sibel Bozdoğan, “Democracy, Development, and the Americanization of Turkish Architectural Culture in the 1950s,” in Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi, eds., *Modernism in the Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 116–138.
  - 7 See Uğur Tanyeli, “1950’lerden bu Yana Mimari Paradigmaların Değişimi ve Reel Mimarlık” (Changing Architectural Paradigms since the 1950s), in Sey, ed., *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık*, 241.
  - 8 In her “Rethinking Ordinary Architecture in Postwar Turkey” (paper presented to the Docomomo conference, New York, September 2004), Ela Kacel challenges the common opposition between “high” and “anonymous” modernism and convincingly argues how projects like Birkan Apartments “transformed the international into ordinary modern architecture.” Also see her “Fidüsyer: Bir Kolektif Düşünme Pratiği,” in Müge Cengizkan, ed., *Haluk Baysal—Melih Birsal* (Ankara: TMMOB Mimarlar Odası Yayınları, 2007), 7–31.
  - 9 For another remarkable example of the similarly conceived modernist block of duplex units in Ankara, see Ali Cengizkan, “Cinnah 19: Ütopik mi, Gerçek Modern mi?” (Cinnah 19: Utopia or Real Modern?) in *Modernin Saati* (The Hour of the Modern) (Ankara: Mimarlar Derneği, 2002), 173–187.
  - 10 Charles Abrams, the prominent planner and housing expert who published his famous *Man’s Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), came to Turkey for a research trip in 1951 and prepared a report for the United Nations on the conditions and problems of housing and urbanization in Turkey. The same year another report on housing, planning, and building construction was prepared for the Turkish government by an SOM team led by Gordon Bunshaft, who would design the Hilton Hotel the following year.
  - 11 Yıldız Sey, “Cumhuriyet Doneminde Konut” (Housing in the Republican Period), in Sey, ed., *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık*, 285.
  - 12 The most insightful general analyses of Turkish architecture and housing after 1950 can be found in the writings of Uğur Tanyeli and İhsan Bilgin in Turkish, such as the essays they have contributed to Sey, ed., *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık*. Unfortunately there are no English translations of these discussions.
  - 13 “Türkiye Ulusal Rapor ve Eylem Planı” (Turkey’s National Report and Plan of Action), prepared for the Habitat II Conference in İstanbul, 1996.
  - 14 See Sencer Ayata, “The New Middle Class and the Joys of Suburbia,” in Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Sanktanber, eds., *Fragments of Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 25–42.
  - 15 See Rowland Atkinson and Sarah Blandy, eds., *Gated Communities* (London: Routledge, 2006), Ayşe Öncü and Petra Weyland, eds., *Space, Culture, and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities* (London: Zed Books, 1997). Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, Ayşe Öncü, Çağlar Keyder, and others have studied İstanbul’s new axes of social, cultural, and spatial differentiation in light of these theories. See also Ayfer Bartu and Biray Kollu, “Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: A Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul,” in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 39, 2008, 5–46.
  - 16 See especially Özlem Ünsal and Tuna Kuyucu, “Challenging the Neoliberal Urban Regime: Regeneration and Resistance in Başibuyuk and Tarlabası,” in Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal, and İpek Türeli, eds., *Orienteering İstanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 51–71.
  - 17 Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Konut Sunumunun Davranışsal Nitelikleri ve Konut Kesiminde Bunalım,” 91–92.
  - 18 Publicity publication, *Gerçeğe Dönüşen Rüya Göktürk* (A Dream Come True: Gokturk) (İstanbul: Municipality of Göktürk Publications, 2006).
  - 19 Ibid., 77.
  - 20 See a recent study by the students of architecture and urban design, ETH (directed by Kees Christiaanse and Tim Rieniets), published as *Ausfahrt Göktürk* (Zurich: ETH Research Studio Publication, winter semester 2005–2006).
  - 21 See Şerife Geniş, “Producing Elite Localities: The Rise of Gated Communities in İstanbul,” in *Urban Studies*, vol. 44, April 2007, 771–798.
  - 22 For example, “Optimum bir Yaşam” (An Optimum Life), the publicity booklet of the Optimum Houses, an exclusive suburban development in İstanbul by EMTA Integrated Engineering Designs Inc.
  - 23 On the emergence, tastes, and lifestyles of the “white Turks,” see Rifat Bali, *Tarzı Hayattan Life Style’a: Yeni Seçkinler, Yeni Mekanlar, Yeni Yaşamlar* (From Tarz-ı Hayat to Life Style: New Elites, New Spaces, New Lives) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002).
  - 24 Kemer Country publicity brochures and newsletters throughout the 1990s.