



Hostile Architectural Practices in Some of Ankara's Historic and Monumental Buildings

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ABSTRACT

Public spaces are areas within social life where citizens' access is guaranteed. These spaces, which are of great social importance, are being eroded through architectural and spatial interventions. Among the interventions that erode public spaces, practices referred to as hostile architecture have gained attention in recent research, particularly due to their restrictive nature. Ankara, the capital of Turkey, stands out as a critical location with remarkable examples of exclusionary architectural practices. The examples of hostile architecture observed in Ankara are particularly concentrated within some historic and monumental buildings. This study examines the examples of hostile architecture present in some historic and monumental buildings situated in the vicinity of Ankara's key public spaces. The research methodology consisted of on-site observations and photographic documentation to record these findings. The study revealed that in buildings located in Ankara's logistical and religious centers, ornithological deterrent systems targeting urban wildlife were particularly prominent. On the other hand, in buildings located in Ankara's bureaucratic and commercial centers, it was observed that hostile architectural practices took the form of anthropometric barriers that made it impossible for people to sit, rest, and socialize.

Keywords: Hostile Architecture, Public Space, Urban Identity, Monumental Buildings

INTRODUCTION

Urban spaces and their associated surfaces constitute the foundations that offer existential grounds for all living beings inhabiting cities. These spaces and surfaces are also arenas in which various forms of information, experiences, emotions, relationships, and behaviors are shaped for city dwellers. The city, in general, is defined as a structure encountered by strangers in everyday life (Jacobs, 2011). As a corollary, various groups exist within the urban fabric, and these groups develop relationships across different dimensions (Lefebvre, 2000). Urban space, which forms the backbone of the urban structure, is defined as a plane where individuals engage in social interactions and experience common living areas (Altuncu, 2023). Urban space provides people with opportunities to encounter, meet, and develop relationships with different others, primarily through public spaces, which hold a strong position among its constituent elements (Erdönmez and Çelik, 2016). Public space refers to a place within social life where access for all citizens is guaranteed (Habermas, 2004). According to Özbek (2004), who synthesizes Jürgen Habermas's views, public spaces are arenas where citizens gather, discuss, agree, and act, and are considered an indispensable norm for democracies. From these perspectives, accessibility is a significant phenomenon intensely associated with the concept of public space (Sendi and Goličnik Marušić, 2012). Despite their importance, public spaces are subjected to erosion at various scales through architectural and spatial arrangements and approaches (Sennett, 2013).



The arrangements that erode public spaces are referred to in the literature as "Exclusionary Architecture" or "Hostile Architecture". Through the obstacles and limitations they generate, these practices frequently appear in daily life as built formations that direct actions.

"Exclusionary Architecture" or "Hostile Architecture" refers to arrangements that control urban and public spaces through architectural interventions and spatial designs, restricting access to these areas, shaping their usage patterns, and directing behavior within them (Özmkas and Yıldırım, 2020). Van Rossem (2022) further elaborates on hostile architecture as a design act that discourages or prevents actions such as leaning, lying down, or sitting on buildings and public spaces, emphasizing that it is a set of regulations implemented to prevent harm or undesirable uses.

Although implemented to prevent harm or undesirable uses, hostile architecture practices create serious obstacles and limitations at multiple scales, for both humans and other living beings in cities. These obstacles and limitations, on the one hand, create a lack of social contact among humans, the primary users of public spaces, and, on the other hand, pose formidable barriers for urban fauna.

Nevertheless, social awareness and reactions against hostile architecture practices, which cause the aforementioned deprivations and barriers, are increasing in both public opinion and academic discourse (Halliday and Siddique, 2014; Omid, 2014; De Fine Licht, 2017). It is important to channel this social awareness and these reactions toward constructive attitudes and positively oriented urban space designs. To this end, detailed identification and diagnosis of hostile architecture practices at both the city and public space scales are considered to constitute an important starting point.

Ankara, the capital of Turkey, stands out as a critical field hosting notable examples of such exclusionary architectural practices. In Ankara, the country's leading center in social, cultural, and political terms, hostile architecture practices that erode public space are particularly concentrated in historical and monumental structures. These practices, besides weakening public space and generating a lack of social contact, may also demonstrate tendencies opposed to certain spatial and architectural attitudes embedded within the Turkish architectural tradition.

In this regard, it is thought that revealing the characteristic features of hostile architecture practices concentrated within historical and monumental structures and making determinations regarding their modes of influencing public spaces and the living species they affect could provide significant methodological and conceptual contributions to architectural research on Ankara.

When these contributions are enumerated, it is considered that, first, revealing the characteristic features of hostile architecture practices could enable the acquisition of a holistic profile of exclusionary architectural tendencies sustained from the past to the present in prominent structures of Ankara.

Furthermore, it is thought that documentation of the current situation at the building scale could be generated to examine how hostile architecture practices influence public spaces. In addition, classifying the living species affected by hostile architecture practices could create an opportunity to evaluate their impacts on urban ecology.

Considering the historical and monumental nature of the examined structures, it also appears possible that this study could provide a dataset to reconsider and evaluate existing hostile architecture practices in terms of conservation principles for potential future restoration and reuse.

Within the framework of these considerations, for which contribution dimensions have been presented above, this study examined hostile architecture practices in selected historical and monumental structures adjacent to and defining prominent public spaces of Ankara. The study, focusing on four large-scale structures located in the city's logistically, bureaucratically, commercially, and religiously important centers, scrutinized hostile architecture practices on these buildings and their associated surfaces. The research employed on-site observations and photographic documentation to record these findings.

STUDY AREA

The first structure examined in the research is the Ankara Train Station, one of the city's oldest logistical centers (Figure 1 and Figure 2a). The building was designed by Architect Şekip Akalın (Başar and Erdoğan, 2009). Its construction lasted between 1935 and 1937 (Tunc and Tunc, 2023). The building embodies both the international principles of its era with neoclassical stylistic features (Kuçak Toprak and Çeltik Şahlan, 2022), and its main façade is characterized by two vertical, cylindrical side towers that conceal the staircases leading to the upper floors (Özcan, 2018).

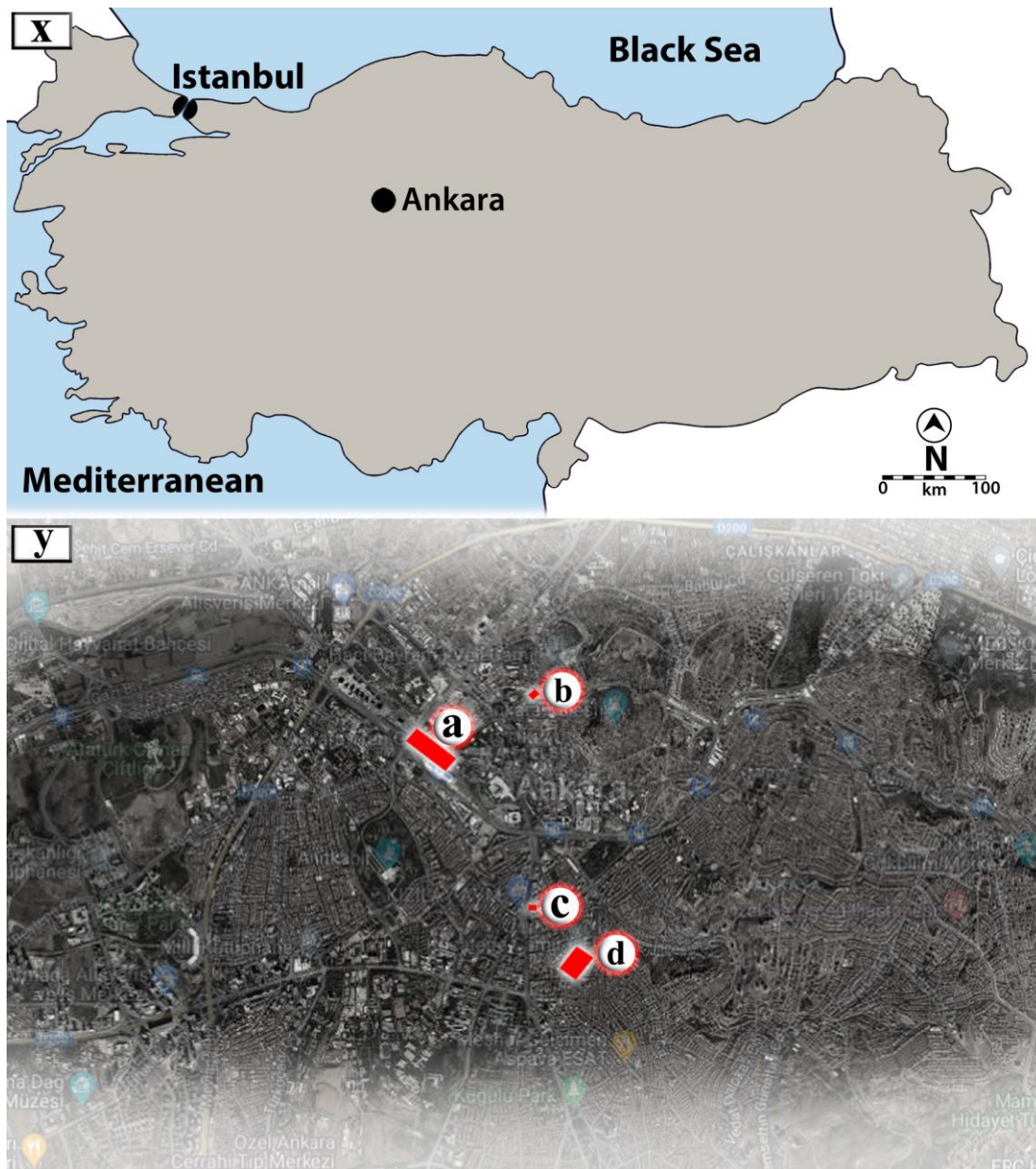


Figure 1. Study area and structures examined within the research:
x) Location of Ankara **y)** Examined structures and their locations (TKGM, 2026)

The second building examined as part of the research is the Sümerbank Headquarters, located in the historic center of Ankara and adjacent to Ulus Square, which served as the heart of the bureaucracy during the Early Republican era (Figure 1 and Figure 2b). The building was designed by Martin Elsaesser and constructed between 1937 and 1938 (Türkoğlu Önge, 2007; Dinçer, 2014).



Figure 2. Study area and structures examined within the research:

- a)** Ankara Train Station **b)** Sümerbank Headquarters Building
c) Yapı Kredi Bank Building **d)** Kocatepe Mosque

According to Sibel Bozdoğan, this building is one of the most important nationalist state monuments of the 1930s and represents a highly innovative approach to construction systems for its period (Bozdoğan, 2012). The building served as the administrative center of Sümerbank for many years. Following Sümerbank's inclusion in the privatization program in 1987 (Polatoğlu, 2021; Sumerholding, 2026), the headquarters building underwent various changes (Şen, 2020). Today, the building is used by Ankara Social Sciences University.

The third structure examined in the research is the Yapı Kredi Bank Building, located in Kızılay Square, Ankara's commercial, social, and cultural center (Figure 1 and Figure 2c). The building's design was prepared by Architects Mukbil Gökdoğan and A. Sabri Oran, and it was constructed between 1968 and 1971 (Gökdoğan, 1974). The façade arrangement of the building was reshaped in the early 1990s (Uz, 2019). The building is located in a part of Ankara where daily and social life is quite vibrant. It provides an important space that serves as a backdrop for social interaction and community engagement in the city.

The fourth structure examined in the research is the Kocatepe Mosque, which constitutes one of Ankara's religiously significant centers (Figure 1 and Figure 2d). The design phase of the building became a controversial, multi-actor issue of its time, causing the

construction process to be considerably prolonged. The building's first project was prepared by Architect Vedat Dalokay, and its foundation was laid in 1963; subsequently, Hüsrev Tayla and Fatin Uluengin took over the project, and the mosque, whose construction resumed in 1967, was completed only in 1987 (Tayla, 2002). The building carries features belonging to Ottoman classical period architecture (Türkantoz, 2011; Tayla, 2014; Akar and Kara Pilehvarian, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The research employed on-site observations and photographic documentation to record these observations as its methodology.

During the on-site observations, four large-scale structures, selected for their locations in Ankara's logistically, bureaucratically, commercially, and religiously important centers, along with their associated surfaces, were examined for hostile architecture practices that impede the normal actions of humans and other urban living beings.

Hostile architecture practices that restrict the normal movements of humans and other urban living beings in the public spaces affected by the selected structures due to their locations, functions, and identities, while also generating a lack of social contact, were observed during the time periods when their exclusionary attitudes reached their highest levels and were recorded through photographic documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hostile architecture practices on the historical and monumental structures examined within the scope of the study exhibited differences in terms of implementation scales, targeted species, and authenticity status (Table 1).

Classifying the differences presented by hostile architecture practices according to implementation scales and targeted species demonstrates that ornithological deterrent systems are prominent in structures located in logistical and religious centers. These non-original architectural practices were observed to follow horizontal lines on the upper sections of the examined structures (Table 1 and Figures 3–4).

Table 1. General profiles of Hostile Architecture practices on the examined structures

Building Name	Implementation Scales of Hostile Architecture Practices	Species Targeted by the Practices	Authenticity Status of the Practices
Ankara Train Station	Ornithological Deterrent Systems	Urban Fauna (Birds)	Not Original
Sümerbank Headquarters Building	Anthropometric Barriers	Humans	Original
Yapı Kredi Bank Building	Anthropometric Barriers	Humans	Original
Kocatepe Mosque	Ornithological Deterrent Systems	Urban Fauna (Birds)	Not Original

During the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a global impact in 2020 and the accompanying quarantine measures, it was reported that many species, rarely encountered even in wildlife observations, could be observed in most urban centers worldwide and could use these areas as habitats (Marinelli, 2021).

The negative impacts of cities on biological diversity are well documented (Chace and Walsh, 2006; Shochat et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Spotswood et al. (2021) emphasize that cities can benefit some species by offering refuge from environmental pressures, providing stopover opportunities along migration routes, increasing regional genetic diversity, and offering protection during periods of scarcity. It is also noted that urban areas may represent the last remaining habitats for endangered species (Soanes and Lentini, 2019). Considering birds specifically, as published in the

research by Oliveira Hagen et al. (2017), it is indicated that bird species observed in urban areas are at non-negligible levels compared to natural areas. For these reasons, the tendency to make spatial and architectural arrangements to protect and sustain living species and biological diversity in urban areas is rapidly increasing (Sanderson and Huron, 2011; Soanes et al., 2019; Kirk et al., 2021).

Despite current conservation and sustainability initiatives regarding biodiversity in cities, it is understood that the hostile architecture practices on the examined structures have a framework that contradicts these tendencies. Today, various initiatives are being carried out to protect and sustain biodiversity. However, the ornithological deterrent systems in the structures under study contradict this approach to conservation. In fact, these systems are almost diametrically opposed to practices that make life easier for urban wildlife, such as the "Bird Palaces" or "Bird Houses" found in traditional architecture (Figure 5).

On the other hand, considering the historical and monumental character of the Ankara Train Station and the Kocatepe Mosque, it cannot be denied that the criticized hostile architecture practices have, in one respect, a rational basis within the context of conservation strategy against the biological pollution to which they are exposed.

Conversely, in the historical and monumental structures located in Ankara's bureaucratic and commercial centers, hostile architecture practices manifest as anthropometric barriers that offer sitting, resting, and opportunities for social contact impossible for people (Table 1 and Figures 6–7).

Lefebvre (2000), while listing the concept of the right to the city among the rights that define civilization, emphasized in particular the rights to freedom and to living space within this concept. According to Lefebvre (2000), for inhabitants, the city center consists of movement, possibilities, and encounters, and public spaces in these centers are connected to the rhythms of the people who inhabit them. However, many unwritten rules restrict the right to be in public spaces (Goffman, 1963).

These rules largely derive their legitimacy from the politics of everyday fear, which largely eliminates the principles of open access to these areas by highlighting the dangers of being in public spaces (Zukin, 1995). Regarding hostile architecture practices, which are one of the spatial tools used in restricting public spaces and eliminating open access principles, Barua (2022) refers to hostile design as an embodied form of insecurity. Similarly, Rosenberger (2020) defines hostile architecture as a set of objects designed to prevent public space from being used in certain predetermined ways, stating that the purpose of these designs is to exclude a specific population group from public space completely.

Within the framework of these definitions, it is considered that the anthropometric barriers observed on the façades adjacent to the public space of the Sümerbank Headquarters Building and the Yapı Kredi Bank Building, located in Ankara's bureaucratic and commercial centers, can easily be defined within the scope of the concept and practices of hostile architecture targeting humans. These barriers, observed to have been created within the original design of the buildings (Table 1), besides offering sitting, resting, and social contact opportunities impossible for people, also degrade the quality of daily life spent in the urban space and the potential relationships between people.

Indeed, Ciritci and Yücel (2021) define urban space as a whole that brings city dwellers together, enables socialization, allows for sharing, and offers opportunities for interaction, noting that the activities occurring in these spaces also shape the quality of urban space. In other words, the more open urban spaces and the public spaces within them are to interaction, sharing, and social contact, the higher the quality of urban spaces.

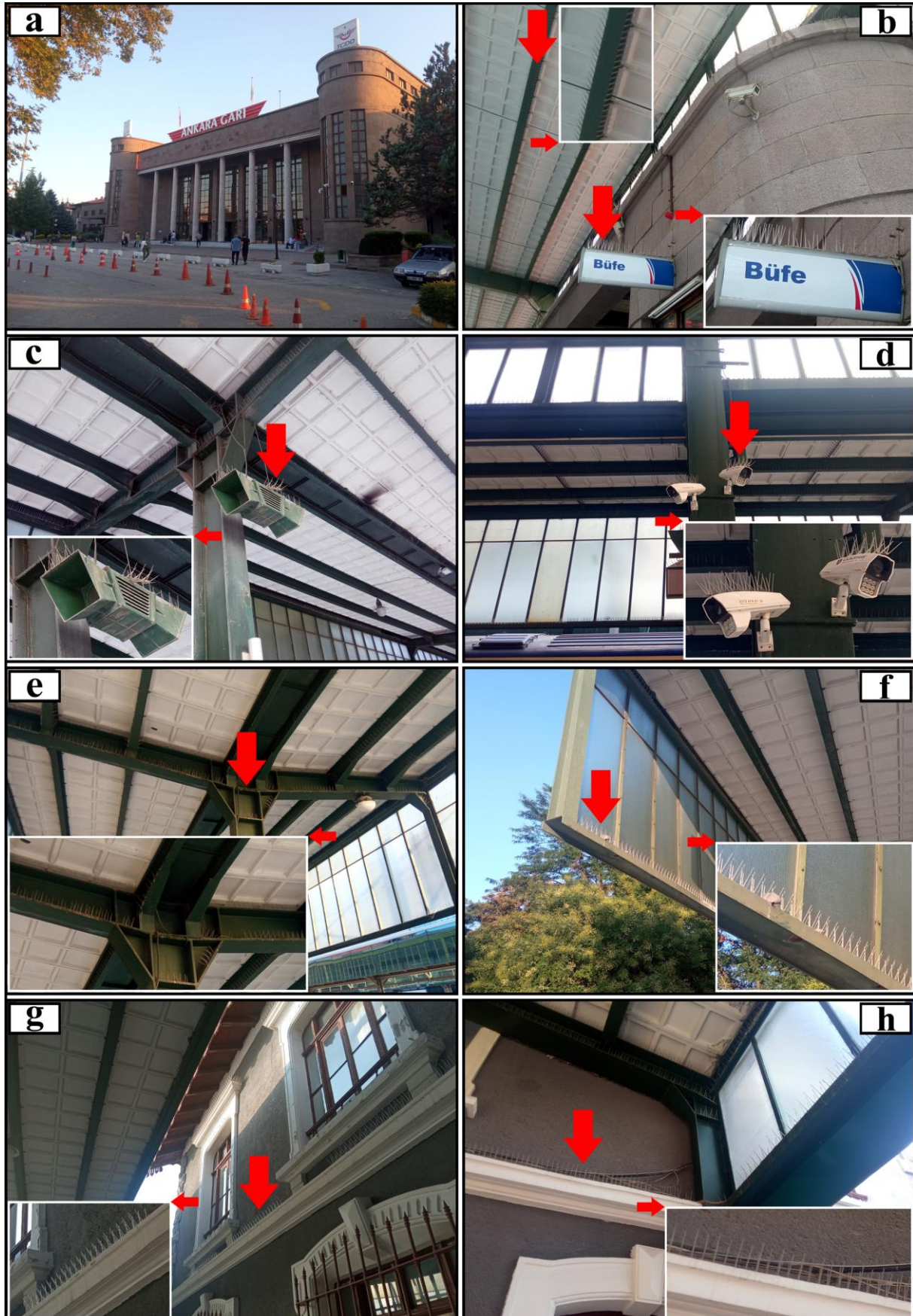


Figure 3. Ornithological deterrent systems targeting birds observed at Ankara Train Station.

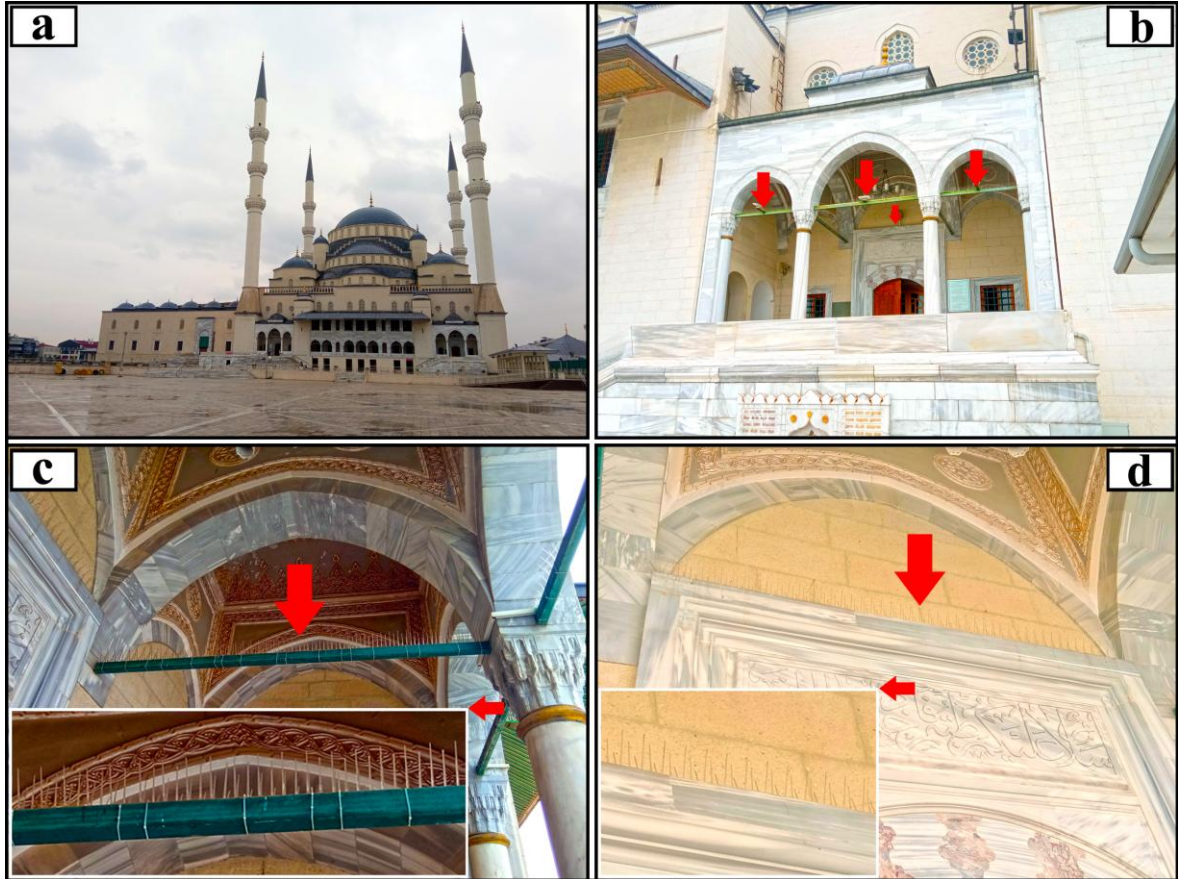


Figure 4. Ornithological deterrent systems targeting birds observed at Kocatepe Mosque.



Figure 5. Bird Palaces or Bird Houses in traditional architecture:

a) A birdhouse on the outer wall of Büyük Yeni Han (a traditional logistical structure in Fatih, Istanbul) (Dilekoğlu, 2019), **b)** A birdhouse on the surrounding wall of Eyüp Sultan Mosque in Istanbul (Tosunlar, 2024)



Figure 6. Anthropometric barriers observed on the façades adjacent to the public space of the Sümerbank Headquarters Building.

At this point, the extensions and steps of structures adjacent to and defining public spaces in cities are among the most frequented places by residents of large cities (Whyte, 1980). In this respect, these extensions and steps appear to have a significant positive impact on the quality of urban space, as they provide the greatest opportunities for interaction, sharing, and social contact.

Anthropometric barriers, besides narrowing social contact opportunities for city dwellers and lowering the quality of urban space, also produce an attitude that is quite at variance with architectural arrangements such as "Breath Stones" or "Rest Stones" observed in the streets of traditional cities (Figure 8).

"Breath Stone" or "Rest Stone" is an urban architectural element located on streets, beside house gates, described as a place where local people socialize when they come out to their doorstep (Okyay, 2007), and was made for the purpose of allowing people passing by or carrying loads to sit and rest (Şanlıurfa, 2017; Selvi and Melikoğlu, 2017).

Undoubtedly, behind the social contact opportunities and responses to human needs that these stones offer to the street space lies a profound thought, a grace harboring subtlety, and a delicate courtesy. This element in traditional architecture also seeks to improve the quality of time spent outdoors for people of all classes and social groups in cities and to enhance opportunities for social contact in many respects. In these respects, this element of traditional architecture reflects a positive attitude, offering enlightenment from the past for today's efforts to improve the quality of urban space.



Figure 7. Anthropometric barriers observed on the façades adjacent to the public space of the Yapı Kredi Bank Building.

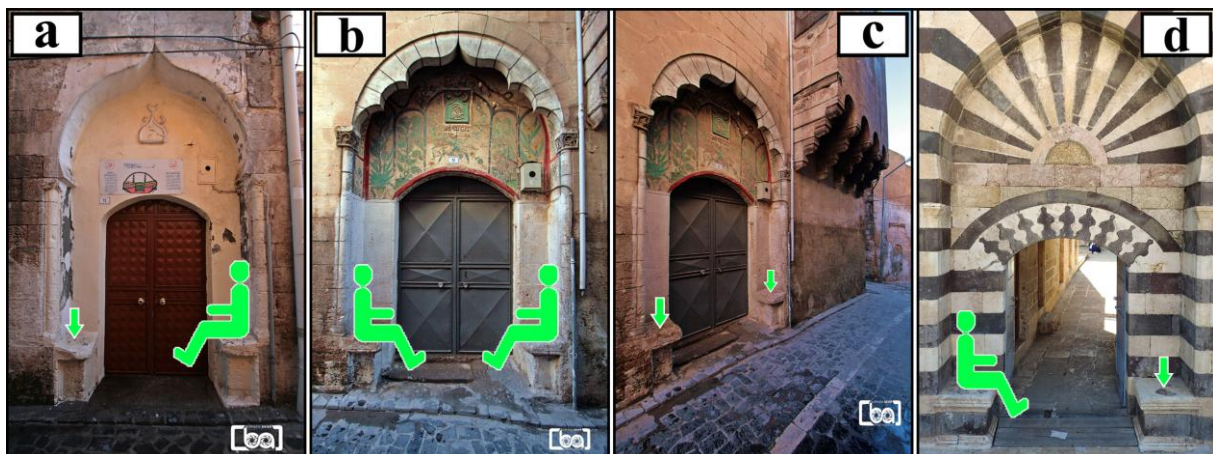


Figure 8. Arrangements called "Breath Stone" or "Rest Stone" on the facades of the buildings in Şanlıurfa: **a-b-c)** Examples on traditional residential buildings (Akar, 2019), **d)** Examples at the entrance gate of the Halilürrahman Kulliyah (Günay, 2021).



CONCLUSIONS

This study examined hostile architecture practices in selected historical and monumental structures adjacent to, and defining, prominent public spaces in Ankara. The study, focusing on four large-scale structures located in the city's logistically, bureaucratically, commercially, and religiously important centers, scrutinized hostile architecture practices on these buildings and their associated surfaces.

It was observed that the hostile architecture practices on the historical and monumental structures examined within the scope of the study exhibited characteristic differences in terms of implementation scales, targeted species, and authenticity status.

Examining the general characteristics of the hostile architecture practices on the examined structures, it was determined that ornithological deterrent systems were prominent at the Ankara Train Station and the Kocatepe Mosque, located in Ankara's logistical and religious centers.

Despite current conservation and sustainability initiatives regarding biodiversity in cities, it is understood that the hostile architecture practices on the examined structures have a framework that contradicts these tendencies. Alongside current conservation and sustainability initiatives regarding biodiversity, it is observed that the ornithological deterrent systems on the examined structures adopt an approach almost at variance with the architectural arrangements found in traditional spaces. In this context, it is considered that the examined practices are causing significant erosion in Ankara's ecological system and urban identity.

On the other hand, it was observed that the hostile architecture practices at the Sümerbank Headquarters Building and the Yapı Kredi Bank Building, located in Ankara's bureaucratic and commercial centers, come to the forefront in the form of anthropometric barriers that offer sitting, resting, and social contact opportunities impossible for people. It is considered that these anthropometric barriers, observed on the façades adjacent to the public spaces of the examined structures, can be readily defined within the scope of the concept and practices of hostile architecture. It is understood that these hostile architecture practices, which reduce social contact in daily life, are eroding the public spaces necessary for the formation of potential human relationships.

These barriers, observed to have been created within the original design of the Sümerbank Headquarters Building and the Yapı Kredi Bank Building, are considered not only to offer sitting, resting, and social contact opportunities impossible for people but also to degrade the quality of daily life spent in the urban space and the potential relationships between people. It is also understood that these barriers produce an attitude that is quite contradictory to the architectural arrangements observed in the streets of traditional cities. On the other hand, it is believed that these barriers eliminate social contacts and potential networks of relationships before they even have a chance to form. This situation also prevents the formation of the emotional bonds that would ensure the future survival of institutions. This is because institutions can only find a place in personal, familial, and collective memory through the accumulation of everyday encounters and chance interactions. Deterrent architectural practices, however, by eliminating these spaces for encounters, suspend the possibility of the social construction of a shared memory at the very outset. When structures that define public space adopt spatial strategies that hinder rather than encourage interaction, this leads not only to physical exclusion but also to the closure of avenues for communication. Over time, this may cause these institutions to lose their place in social memory.

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