



## **A Re-Reading of Turkish Modern Architecture after Derrida**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present article presents a review of modern architectural history of Turkey through a deconstructionist perspective in the form of a re-read. The article providing a universal-local scale discussion of theoretical knowledge and history-writing claims that the history of architecture does not present an absolute whole and that a deconstructive track in the re-reading of modern architecture in Turkey entails a creative contribution to the theory of modern architecture.

In a nutshell, the article develops a look on modern architecture in Turkey within the wider framework of center/periphery debate, and argues the need to question the absoluteness of meaning in history-writing in architecture in general and modern architecture in particular.

Thereby, the article intends to eliminate contradictions of the past and history as observed through the most widely recognized depiction of the history of modern architecture. The re-reading based on the book on The International Style focuses on the examples of architecture from renowned Turkish architects, architects Kemaleddin Bey, and Seyfi Arkan and make amendments to modern architectural history by deconstructing the centralizing and homogenizing tendencies of history-writing in modern architecture.

**Keywords:** History-writing, Modern Architecture, Deconstruction, Turkish Modern Architecture.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

History-writing in architecture is passing through a reformative era in various senses, and this makes itself felt in recent literature on modern architecture. Experiments especially dated after 1990s are based on Benjamin's discourses on time, deconstructionist philosophy of Derrida and implicitly on Latour's otology on Modernity.

History of modern architecture per se is based on the major assumption that Modernity is a clearly definable moment in history, which led to the creation of a homogenous set of architectural images worldwide via dispersal and acceptance of certain modern principles and these codes and norms followed a track from the center of ideas to the periphery.

This article presents a review of history of modern architecture through a deconstructive perspective. The article providing a universal-local scale discussion of theoretical knowledge and architectural practice claims that the objective of deconstruction in modern architectural literature is *aletheia* ('uncovering') rather than destruction, and intends to contribute to modern architecture in forms which had never been recognized in the West to date.

Thus, it develops a glance on modern architecture in Turkey within the wider framework of center/periphery debate, and argues the need to question the absoluteness of reality and meaning in history-writing in architecture in general and modern architecture in particular from a deconstructive perspective. Therefore the article is based on three basic pillars; a rather short argument on modernity, deconstructionist history and modern architecture.

### 1.1. Modernity

Some argue that the history of colonialism has made "modernity" a global phenomenon (Rofel, 1999). Was Modernity which is discussed through such terms as developed/underdeveloped, progress, Westernization, backwardness, a discriminable and differentiable set of practices occurring in the West and later mimicked by the rest of the world, a goal, a target to strive for worldwide? Were the codes and images transpiring from this all-encompassing phenomenon expected to be totally homogenous existence that the globe had to congeal into transnationally? Yet again, should one think of Modernity as an endogenous totality of practice constructed from the original history of different cultures? Rofel (1999) has argued this persuasively and, Lejeune and Sabatino (2010) corroborated this via a locution on Mediterranean countries. For later periods of architecture this argument is even extended to freedom of personal response (Scalbert, 1998).



On the other hand, Latour (1991) has convincingly argued that Modernity with capital 'M' is just an illusionary point in continuous time of modernization since the beginning of humanity where the gap between society and nature grows parallel with the development of science. For that matter, modernity is not an extraordinary moment in time but a non-centered, multiple-actor, multiple-theme, nonstop progress. Since each culture interprets the progresses from its own cultural history it is the totality of local practices. These 'other modernities' are neither merely local enactments nor simply examples of a universal model. They are cross-cultural translations of various projects of science, management and 'applications'<sup>1</sup> called modernity (Rofel, 1999: xii). Hence any cultural product could and should be interpreted from a local stance in relation to a system of codes, in its own right.

### **1.2. History and Deconstruction**

History is neither a positivist research process, nor a literary work. Even though this may sound contradictory, it is actually both. History cannot use deductive reasoning, empirical experimentation, or hypothesis based research processes. Therefore history cannot be considered a science. History is the activity of translating traces (evidences) into facts. However, more often than not, the evidence-related preferences of the historian serve a specific purpose.

Kubler (1962) emphasized the historians' arbitrary yet convincing approaches. Carr (1961) provided convincing examples of how a piece of evidence unearthed and presented by the first scholar writing on the matter can perpetually serve as evidence without any questioning by subsequent scholars. White (1973) offered a perspective on an amalgam of intentionality and the ideological stance of historians: 'Successful and exemplary historians of the past owe their status not to facts, but to the narrative they present. In fact, history is just a narrative, and inevitably an ideological phenomenon'. Many a theorist of history in line with White, concur that, in essence, history has an ideological character.

Jenkins (2003) and Munslow (2006), on the other hand, consider the biased choice of evidence as the historian's weakness of obedience to power. According to Munslow (2006), facts are not innocent; they are selected according to the urges of the current source of power. In the final analysis, the perspective and choices of historians guide the selection of historical materials and the interpretation thereof.

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<sup>1</sup> Added by the authors.



The primary emphasis of deconstructionist historians, however, is about the ontological differences between the 'history' and the 'past', that 'past' does not exist as of the time of writing, it can only be imagined in the present (Jenkins, 2003; Southgate, [1988] 2001, 2010; Munslow, 2006). The deconstructive perspective to the history as a 'constructed narrative' is born out of the wider framework of postmodern intellectual content encouraged by Lyotard (1984) in particular. Arguing 'history cannot present truth without utilizing other meta-narratives such as scientific knowledge, liberation, and self-awareness', Lyotard observes a functional utility in deconstruction, for recovering self-identity.

The deconstructive approach to history grows out of the postmodern attitude exhibited in the work of many new wave intellectuals, and mostly from the post-Structuralist ideas of French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida questions the leading dogmas of Anglo-American and European schools of philosophy, and of Reconstructionist history. Referring to the universal system of dissociation, distinction, distance and dissimilarity between the objects, he introduces the French term *différance* for use in the literature. At this very junction, the dissimilarities and divergences arise in terms of the meaning of concepts/words already in existence as parts of a given set of vocabulary. On the basis of such dissimilarities and divergences, Derrida rejects the system of priorities and hierarchies. He questions and effectively shatters the basic dichotomies observed in terms of knowing, understanding, and applying the knowledge on a wider perspective, such as real-unreal, true-untrue, fact-fiction, subject-object, and mind-knowledge. Therefore, a deconstructionist assessment of history entails also a questioning of the fundamental concepts of history, which had hitherto been considered obvious and eternal, such as time, evidence, empathy, cause/effect, center/periphery, continuity, and change, not withholding the temporality of history argued by Walter Benjamin (2003).

Walter Benjamin while interpreting Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* had already emphasized the temporality of history by the metaphoric figure of 'angel' which had abounded the western art of painting since the fifteenth century, stating the difficulties involved in the historiography of times in the capitalist era where instead of the 'ruins' of the past, has to get involved in wreckage produced by 'progress'.

### **1.3. Deconstruction and Other Discourses in Modern Architecture History-writing**

Wigley (1993) claims that, in architecture, a deconstructive perspective entails risks which cannot be compared to those in any other field. After noting that "Derrida's work presents architecture as a labyrinthine field, if not more complex, weird, elusive, cruel,



surprising, or deceptive than it is", he proceeds to analyze individual texts of Derrida, and meticulously tracks architectural terminology in his works: law, economics, writing, location, ownership, translation, vomiting, positioning, laughter, dance, and so on. Despite this fairly persuasive narrative, it is possible to speak of deconstructive perspectives implemented without attaching a specific label, among the theoreticians of architecture in the last few decades. Indeed one can even claim that he too engaged in Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction as a strategy of questioning the conventions.

For instance, in his work titled *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* Wigley ([1995] 2001) presents a new reading of Modern avant-garde, and discusses the "white wall" of Modern, a widely known but rarely discussed topic. Even though the white wall in question implies disrobing excessively elaborate walls of the past, it is not stark naked. The white wall itself is a kind of attire: attire which can be an easy match for anything, such as tennis shoes. It is, in essence a kind of a questioning and re-reading of the Modern era, with reference to a concept. In this context, it is a clearly deconstructive reading. In *The Hyper Architecture of Desire: Constant's New Babylon* (1999) he proceeds to review the New Left's Utopias and Megastructures with reference to Constant's "New Babylon", through the concept of 'super mobility' (Wigley, 1999).

On the other hand, Vidler who is also known for his *Empiricist* books ([1987] 2011), re-reads late modern architecture with reference to the concept of *uncanny* ([1992] 1994), and presents the concept of *distorted spaces* with reference to the architecture of phobias and worries, by reviewing the psychological existence of space as a concept from Pascal to Freud (2000). In one of his later works, he sheds light on four great historians of Modern Architecture: Emil Kaufmann, Colin Rowe, Reyner Banham and Manfredo Tafuri (Vidler, 2008). He unmasks these scholars through a kind of a potpourri of the ideals and illusions of modern architects, with reference to the books of the three generations of authors. One of the most recent works of Vidler is *The Scenes of the Street and Other Assays* (Vidler, 2011), a compilation. The book is a multi-dimensional history of urban planning, authored by Vidler with reference to contemporary issues. The historicism of Vidler entails a hermeneutical investigation of experimental and rationalist knowledge, grounding cases on certain historians or a period of history, or, at times, on local cultural context. In this sense, it is relative, for it refuses interpretations deemed universal, fundamental, and beyond debate. The leading transformation to have occurred directly with history-writing after Derrida was the renewed reference to historical knowledge in terms of the post-war modernization's search for an answer to the social and political state of affairs.



On the other hand, it is clear that the deconstructionist history writing, Wigley was apt to list the drawbacks of, can be clearly observed to be embraced and implemented by Western historians after 1990s. Within the new historicism movement, Colomina (1996) stands out with a discussion of modern architecture with reference to Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, and claims that 'the modern architecture owes its fame to being a direct part of the mass media environment which is the symbol of twentieth century, rather than to its high artistic capacity standing against the mass culture.

Recently a new generation of intellectuals came to question the corpus of the history of modern architecture and the contemporary architectural practices, using various concepts with reference to their association with power from a political and disciplinary point of view (Dutta, 2007, Dutta et al, 2012, 2013; Davidson, 2015; Scott, 2010, 2016; Martin, [2003] 2005, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015).

Scott (2010) focuses on experimental applications and polemics to arise in 1960s and early 1970s. She tries to show that architecture can be reviewed from an ethical and political perspective, with reference to conceptual propositions, projects, exhibitions, publications, pedagogical initiatives, and propaganda. On the other hand, Martin's (2010) *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* is an effort to disclose the influence architectural postmodernism had on wider framework of postmodern thought. *Utopia's Ghost* is a critical revisiting of the buildings, projects, and texts of 1970s and 1980s. Reinhold Martin claims that a rendering of postmodern architecture a debatable matter once again would yield new insights.

Among the intellectuals of this new history-theory approach, Dutta (2013) stands out with his compiled work, *A Second Modernism* reviewing the linguistic, behavioral, media, cybernetic, and other urban models through the lens of the new concepts incorporated in architecture in the aftermath of World War II. *Governing by Design* (2011) is yet another work on the relationship between architecture, politics, and economics. Clearly Dutta is distinct from his peers as he is a historian from the protest school, characterized by a will for change.

As Derrida put it as well, the aim of deconstruction is not to destroy, but to question. The inquiries the new generations of history and critique scholars direct towards the Modern era, through their unconventional perspectives and the lens of new concepts and approaches constitutes some form of *aletheia*: cracking open, unveiling, and shedding a new light, a newer and brighter lantern...



#### **1.4. Recent State of Historywriting in Turkey, and the Purpose of This Text**

It is only natural for the foundations of architecture, a domain of science and application, to be based on science, and where it falls short, on rationality. Thus, In Turkey, the history and theory of architecture is taught with reference to Modern theories of architecture.

On the other hand, it is clear that Turkey stands distinct from many countries of the Middle East and all developing countries, in terms of archiving the past.<sup>2</sup> Biographical works on Turkish modern architects are also increasing in number and scope (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 2010; Cengizkan et al. 2012). At this junction, it is crucial to emphasize that the researchers in Turkey have been productive, diligent, and successful in the twentieth century in empirical-descriptive history writing, despite all the problems they came to suffer.

However, the subject matter of the twentieth century Turkish Modern Architecture is a complicated one, and may lead to different conclusions based on the perspective of the researcher. Scholars embracing the progressive scientific and social policies inherent in Modernity read Turkish architecture in the Early Republican era as not only the building of physical environment, but also the 'organization of a nation in line with material and spiritual maxims of the republican vigor' (Yılmaz, 2013; Bozdoğan, 2015; Kezer, 2015).

Some narratives of history, which see modernization as a source of dichotomy in Turkish architecture, on the other hand, argue that 'actually the Modern theory failed to earn a ground in the country' and for that matter Postmodern eclecticism unavoidably led to non-aesthetic results (Civelek, 2009). It is impossible to agree to the argument that the theory and practice of Modern Architecture failed to create room for itself, for doing so would effectively be to ignore the centuries old modern educational institutions as well as many quality schools of architecture in Turkey, and to deny the existence of, say, the Taksim-Maslak axis in Istanbul. For, it was also noted that the conventional perspective towards the so-called 'national periods of history in Turkey' had been devoid of any substantial basis, and been inconsistent. Furthermore, Anatolia had not been privy to the "first and second national architecture" periods defined by a handful of buildings in Istanbul and Ankara (Gür, 2000). Besides, the conflict of interest between the local and foreign architects that lie behind these ascents is made very clear in the columns of *Arkitekt* journal. On the other hand, Hartoonian (2013) has already underlined the difficulties involved in periodization and highlighted the drawbacks.

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<sup>2</sup> The list is too long to cite here.



Young scholars who engage in extremely interesting re-readings perhaps present the most hopeful arguments in historiography of architecture in Turkey (Düzenli, 2009a, 2009b; Gürkaş & Tanju, 2011; Durmuş, 2014; Durmuş & Gür, 2016). Yet, here, our focus will be on not how we internalize or not modern architecture but from an overarching perspective; the fact that we had been contributing to modern architecture in ways thoroughly ignored by the West.

## **2. THE GENERAL WEAKNESS OF HISTORY-WRITING IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

The books on Modern Architecture often present the theory in a wise and prophetically organized persuasive discourse. The prophet defines and narrates the elements in forms associated with the cases he discusses. He presents the cases in the clearest way possible, before presenting evidence and generating knowledge. Vidler (2008) and Hartoonian (2013) corroborate this statement.

However, the empirical historian of architecture is prone to falling into two major pitfalls: The tendency to ignore the less accessible existences while focusing on the 'grand' traditions of Anglo-Saxon West, or 'other' architectures due to the dominant centralist ideology. For instance, according to Sir Banister Fletcher's (1905) major work on the architecture of history, just Belgian, Dutch, German, French, Italian, British, and Spanish architectures contributed to the revival of the nineteenth century. Even though some brief mention of Chinese and Indian architectures occur, there is no mention of the Ottoman one. Yet, in *Saper vedere l'architettura* (1948) Bruno Zevi establishes clear links between drums of the Ottomans Classical era mosques and the drum of the St. Paul Cathedral built in London in 1666.

Yet another example can be observed in how Nicolaus Pevsner ignored, in the first edition of *An Outline of European Architecture*, the great Catalan architect Antonio Gaudi known for his original works. Also, in his classification of early Christian churches, Nikolaus Pevsner skipped the highly original circular and centric typologies built by Armenians and Georgians in Anatolia as well (Gür, 2009).

In fact, the whole Romanesque era had been ignored for a good while in the historical memory of the West itself. The praise for the taste of the classical era was the dominant perspective till the Romantic Movement, which began in early nineteenth century and which represents a rebellion against the ignorance of the religious past, really made itself felt. Till then, Romanesque architecture was considered a primitive and negligible trend, and hence marginalized. The followers of the Romantic Movement re-discovered the





irrational innocence and the grotesque creativity of the tenth to twelfth centuries (Oursel, 1967).

Such gaffes are frequently observed in architectural historiography. They are practically too numerous to count here. Then again, even a limited set of examples mentioned here suffices to support the thesis that the history of architecture had not always been a uniform mass, and certainly not innocent.

### **3. A 'BOOK' AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF HISTORY**

The focus of this text is on the argument of center versus periphery. Derrida defines difference as a universal system of dissociations, discriminations, distances and differences between things, as mentioned above. By introducing the word *différance* into philosophy Derrida (1988) has proposed a powerful modification of the ordinary notions of identity and difference: 'Any single meaning of a concept or text arises only by the effacement of other possible meanings, which are themselves only deferred, left over, for their possible activation in other contexts.' One implication is that when the deferred takes over, the text is not the same any more...a new identity, a new building style, a new meaning may be achieved. 'Trivial insignificance signifies a possibility... Insignificant trace is the mark of a difference a priori' posits Derrida (1988). Derrida (1966) while taking pains in expounding on the concept of "*différance*" departs from the polarity of speech and writing and questions almost all the binary oppositions of philosophy. Apparently 'the opposite'-the other- always has been suppressed, overlooked and camouflaged in favor of the dominant, the central and the principal. Valuable conceptual hierarchies in architecture might be: function/form, plan/volume (mass), intelligible/sensible, centrality/marginality, served/servant, fixed/flexible, stable/flowing, repetitive (iterable)/unique, fit/misfit, discovered/invented, concept (mind)/vision (body), material/transcendental, concept (referent)/sign, correction/trivialization (mistakes, accidents, jokes, puns and witty manipulations) (Benedikt, 1992).

To further clarify centrality/marginality opposition which is vital in the below discussion, the word margin indicates nearness to the limits and edges but bears an uncertainty and ambiguity as to its being in or out. Centre on the other hand, implies depth and focus of dense meanings. It is where the programs and activities take off to the extent they are demarcated by an edge. This polarity can be likened to the thing and its shadow, the mask and its mold, the earth and the horizon. "This is not a simple case of mixed metaphors, but rather of one metaphor that ricochets with and within, its own imagery." (Benedikt, 1992: 18).



For a debate on center/periphery, although there were several books available, one presenting an argument which literally had its day back in its era, singlehandedly shedding much light on centralization as an inherent characteristic of architectural history, particularly stands out. That is Henri-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's (1932) work on *The International Style*.

In his preface to the book, Alfred H. Barr Jr. presents a depiction of the chaotic taste at the dawn of the age through two books from the US and the UK, and extends much praise to the befitting diagnosis of "The International Style", as well as the design descriptions of scholars for their persuasive strengths. According to him, the international style is based on three major aesthetics features: The first of these is all about spaces and volumes hidden between thinner platforms and surfaces in contrast to an essentially bodily, monumental and solid structure. The second is an idea of a modest order instead of symmetry or balance. And finally, the third makes use of authentic characteristics of the materials, with reference to technical perfection and extensively-thought-of ratios. He comments on the authors and states that (Barr, 1932: 16):

"They provide a carefully selected anthology of style which developed in Germany, the Netherlands, and France, before spreading into a number of places from Finland to Italy, from the United Kingdom to Russia, and finally far away to lands of Japan and the United States."

This sentence reminds one Derrida's statement that "interpretation is not similar to 'analysis' in the conventional sense, but rather is a free area of game" (Sim, 1992). Yet, we are tricked with the fundamental assumption that the history of architecture always revolves around a central axis, in a vein similar to that of political history. In the case of modern architecture, Germany, the Netherlands, and France serves in that capacity. One never wonders, in this context, that the history proceeds from the United Kingdom to Russia, and certainly not otherwise. Yet, as early as 1927, Moisei Ginzburg had already delivered his truly revolutionary Functionalist address at Moscow Technical University (Papadakis et al. 1989). One would be inclined to assume that the direction of flow is not from Italy to Finland, but instead from Finland to Italy, despite the fact that Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's futurist manifesto had long been a recognized piece of literature by that date (20 January 1909). In a nutshell, the book draws only a crude and hypothetical secondary perimeter around the center. Nearby located are the United States and Japan. But China, Turkey, Iran and the whole southern hemisphere is devoid of anything of note; as if these places have no perception of the coming age.



According to the authors, nineteenth century Europe overcame Eclecticism through 'individualism', in other words, through autonomous contributions of individual architects, and proceeded to develop a universal language of architecture in the end. It is evident that the classical-empirical historiography of architecture from the West has a certain center, which has its own core. To emphasize "that" true center, Barr Jr. (1932: 28) moves his focus on individual architects named from each country:

"In particular the early works of three men, those of Walter Gropius in Germany, Oud in the Netherlands, and Le Corbusier in France, should be reviewed to get glimpses on the earlier steps of modern architecture. These three, as well as Mies van der Rohe from Germany, are the pioneers of modern architecture."

These lines are then followed by examples and remarks provided by the authors. There are no examples of Modern Architecture constructed prior to the factory designed by Gropius (1922) in Alfeld. Even in that case, the glass screens are mounted slightly inwards on both sides of the clearance, just like traditional bay windows. Yet, Fagus Shoe Plant in Alfeld was designed by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer in the period 1911-1913, whereas the interior decorations had to wait for the war to come to an end (1925). What happened to Adolf Meyer afterwards? Could he be the actual creator of the plant's design? Did the periphery have any other 'individualists' in those years? One will perhaps never know...

Approximately 20 years later, H. R. Hitchcock (1951), in his article titled *The International Style Twenty Years Later* boasts 'how perfect a diagnosis he provided 20 years before'. Letting F. L. Wright and the Boston Suburban School practicing in the northeastern United States through its narrow gates, the style approves Paul Rudolph, for Modern 'Individualists' are not required to implement all templates of a style. For instance, The River Forest Golf Club F. L. Wright implemented in 1898 is also modern in its own right (Hitchcock, 1951: 240).

One can perhaps safely claim that 'this book alone' serves more than adequate proof for the centralizing tendencies of the history of architecture. Now we have the chance to have a closer look at the developments in Turkey in the field of modern architecture, in light of the criteria drawn above. In Turkey, there are some most valuable architects to make a re-read possible for the purposes of a modern architecture discussion. But we limit this article to one example each from Mimar Kemaleddin and Seyfi Arkan.



#### **4. MODERN TURKISH ARCHITECTURE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CENTER/PERIPHERY DEBATE**

Mimar Kemaleddin is a most talented early twentieth century Turkish architect who combined modern plans with Seljuk and Ottoman patterned façades in his numerous works to meet the ever changing terms and requirements of modern life (Yavuz, 1981). Upon his return to Turkey after his training in Berlin, Mimar Kemaleddin designed many mosques and tombs, not to mention secular buildings. Yet, the differences between his religious-prestigious works and secular ones have often eluded the attention of many scholars of architectural history. Mimar Kemaleddin's first group works rich in symbolic value, arguably, present an individualistic perspective on the basis of the high-traditions of the West coupled with Ottoman and Seljuk patterns. He makes use of the relics from the shattering produced by Modernity, in vain, in search for 'national identity', a concept which is also a product of Modernity.

However, with respect to his sensitivities about the social and technological evolution he is not that different from the 'Early Modern' architects of the rest of the world especially for his works in the second category, the secular buildings.

Modernity is a contradiction in itself and an interrogation of the absolute, a text that stays away from transcendentalism of any kind, which might protect it against criticism. Neither is modernity an ideology which is naturally and automatically reflected in arts and architecture in an effort to produce itself in the environment. On the contrary, the practice in real life itself defines Modernity. Especially in his second category of works he applies in the environment his knowledge and all his acquisitions from science and technology, and exactly by doing so realizes a stage in Turkish Modernity.

During his tenure at the Ministry of Foundations, Mimar Kemaleddin designed a total of eight home/office buildings (han), all dated 1911; four of these were constructed completely, while part of the fifth was built. The foundations of the sixth were laid down before the project was abandoned, while the last two were not built at all (Yavuz, 1981). These buildings present Kemaleddin as a modern architect operating with an awareness of the city. The classical historians note that the first, second and fourth foundation office buildings represent the pinnacle of Kemaleddin Bey's professional development, and refer to the plot-related issues to explain away the loss of symmetry in these buildings. For, to them, symmetry is perfection... Whereas these buildings accessed through sides or corners were deliberately designed asymmetrically in the first place, as an effort to obey to the new urban demands. Modernism is all about an awareness of modern urban requirements and developing solutions for such requirements through creative new

formats and architectonics. Also, by developing a rhythm in and of itself, 'han' offer perfect specimens of the "international style of architecture".

Furthermore, what should instead be emphasized here is perhaps the fact that the First Foundation Office Building is completely designed on the basis of a steel frame. The steel frame system hidden behind a thick stone surface is proof enough of the experience Kemaleddin Bey had in terms of modern technologies. In comparison with the center-emphasized Neo-Baroque+Romanesque municipal building of Stockholm which is pointed out in the aforementioned book as an Early-Modern building, one would have no trouble calling Mimar Kemaleddin's foundation buildings Modern (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Ragnar Östbergs, *Stockholm Municipal Building*, 1911-1923; Mimar Kemaleddin, *Fourth Foundation Office Building*, Bahçekapı-Istanbul, 1911, (1916-26).

Goodwin (1977: 13) had noted that the Fourth Foundation Office Building was influenced by Sullivan and Richardson, and had elements reminding F. L. Wright. For Kemaleddin Bey had never been to the United States, and in the years when F. L. Wright visited Europe on a tour with the spouse of one of his clients (1910-11) Kemaleddin Bey had already been working as an official at the Ministry of Foundations in his homeland.

As the plots of land in urban areas are worth more than those in rural areas, the housing needs of white collar workers employed by the service sector of growing cities present significant problems. Mimar Kemaleddin's building known as the Second Foundation Home/Office Building in Ankara is the first apartment building in not only Turkey, but also the wider world. In the literature of architecture, the term apartment building refers to mass housing units owned or leased by more than one family. They have been given different names through the history, with reference to the geography and the culture. Today, they are also attached a diversity of names, with reference to the outstanding purpose. The well-known solutions through the history include apartments from Central America, Rome (Ostia), Egypt, Yemen, and China (Fujian Tulou by the Hakka people; multi-storey 80-100 family residences buried in the ground). These are mass housing units built for communal or extended families. The examples from the United States,

Scotland, and England, on the other hand, are in the form of rows of houses for low- and middle- income groups.

The best and earliest example of the modern habitation units shared by a multitude of families, providing shared services required in collective life, is the second Foundation Home/Office Building in Ankara designed by Mimar Kemaleddin. Even though Bruno Taut had provided residence to 10,000 workers within the framework of German Werkbund, the earliest example of his work is the *Paradise* settlement designed in 1925, composed of completely rural solutions. Yet the second Foundation Home/Office Building (Evkaf Apartment) is the first example of singular apartment on an urbanized setting (Figure 2). Le Corbusier's Marseilles Blocks follow them only after a period of approximately three decades (1946-52). Considered as the pinnacle of Kemaleddin Bey's professional development, the building presents an elegant example of the reinforced-concrete construction technique, and makes use of all that the technique has to offer. Top four floors of the six-floor building houses a total of thirty two residences. Service areas overlook the courtyard while other rooms have a view of the exterior. The building was designed with all domestic functions of the time in mind, presenting, therefore, a most successful prototype worldwide.

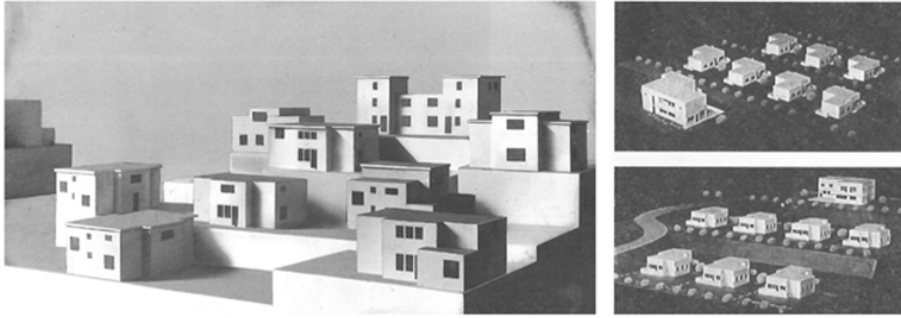


**Figure 2.** Mimar Kemaleddin, *Evkaf Apartment* (also known as the 2nd Foundation Office Building, now serving as the State Theater of Ankara), Ankara, construction: 1916-1927.

The other project we will discuss in this article, the project that made Seyfi Arkan the undisputed and most respected Modern Architect of Turkey is the Worker Residences project, which was a social responsibility project (1919-24).

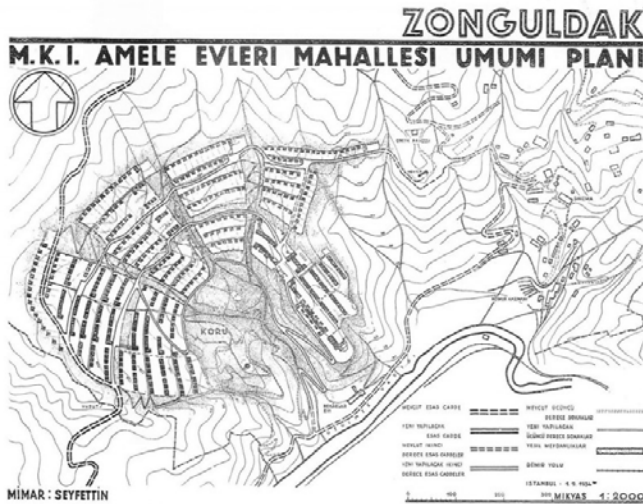
By then Arkan was not aware at all of the studio works by Walter Gropius, at Bauhaus-Weimar. At the time he went to Germany, Gropius had already left for the United States. The Bauhaus Archives was first founded in Darmstadt (1960) and then moved to Berlin (1979) long after Arkan had left the country. He only visited Berlin for a couple of days in

1964. But he should have grasped the spirit of the age with his heart and mind (Figure 3).

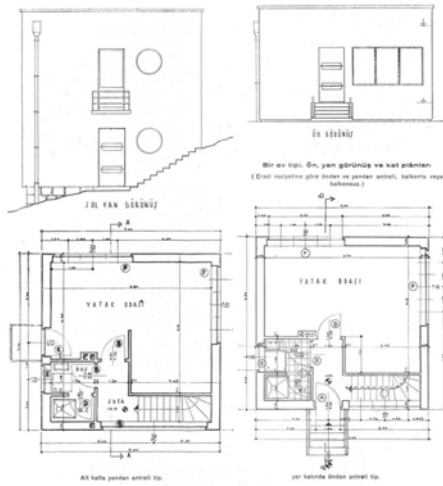


**Figure 3.** Walter Gropius, *Bauhaus-Weimar*, 1919-1924 (exact date unknown); Seyfi Arkan, *Karabük Coal Enterprises Project*, 1933-34.

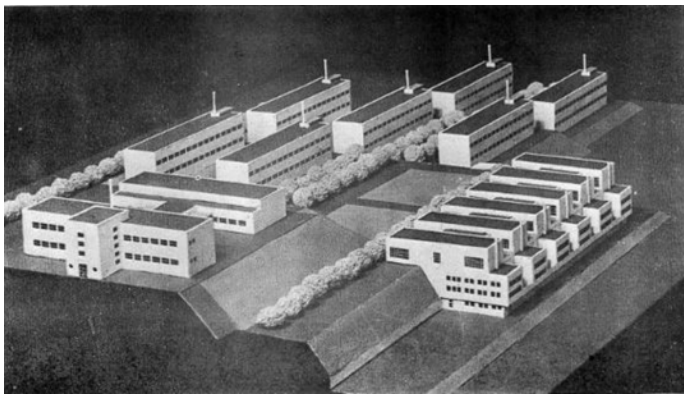
The settlement Seyfi Arkan designed in 1934 for Karabük Üzülmaz and Kozlu contains separate residential typologies for single and married workers (Figures 4-5). He also made sure that the settlement contains laundry, cafeteria and school buildings as well (Gök, 2015). Arkan primary school at the settlement has five classrooms, one library, one gym, and one dining hall. Furthermore the corridors are filled with lockers. Arkan did not omit requirement posed by modernity (Figures 6-8). In short, he implemented what Walter Gropius had once imagined for a while and contributed Turkish Modernity by visualizing and solidifying it in the physical environment and introducing it to the social milieu.



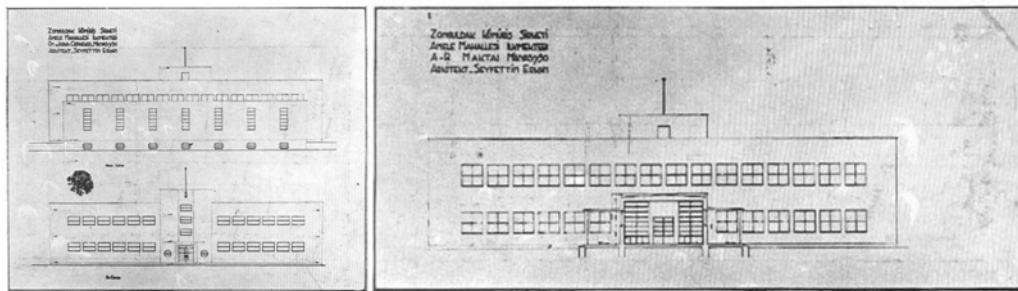
**Figure 4.** Seyfi Arkan, *Layout plans of Seyfi Arkan's work in Karabük.*



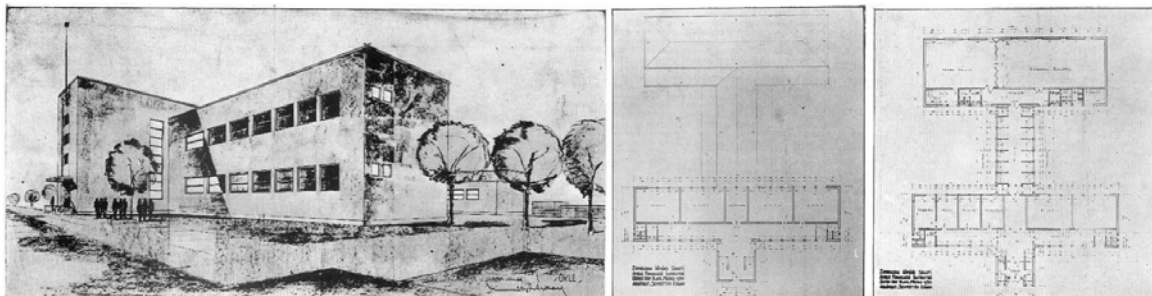
**Figure 5.** Seyfi Arkan, *Kozlu house plan* [from MKI site]



**Figure 6.** Seyfi Arkan, *Kozlu Social Complex* [Gök, 2015]



**Figure 7.** Seyfi Arkan, *Front and sides of the historical primary school* [from MKI site]





**Figure 8.** Seyfi Arkan, *Perspective image and plans of Kozlu Primary School* [from MKI site]

## 5. CONCLUSION

Modernity is a debatable issue and beyond our professional capacity to discuss, but its **being debatable** has strong connotations in the discipline of architecture in terms of history and theory building. For, it can be argued that it could afford to infiltrate and dominate different cultures of the world by imposing itself with its norms and criteria. However, cultures experience transformational waves of knowledge and technology and absorb effects, but re-interpret transnational influences from their own history and collective values. They speak universal languages with their own dialect.

Unique and innovative Early-Modern and Modern designs and images have in deed emerged and accrued in Turkey after the turn of the twentieth century such as those ones focused in this article. And definitely they must have materialized elsewhere regardless of any center. It may be argued that like other movements in arts and architecture, modern architecture per se is at the same time product and actor of a universal wave. Thus, it may have surfaced anywhere given the knowledge, sensitivity and talent of the individuals that make up the culture. The short argument rendered here might encourage scholars from other cultures to pose further questions so as to assess the centrality of modern architecture and its beliefs, globally.

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