Reflection of habitat on architecture: Ankara from the Republic proclamation to our days

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From past to future, it is impossible to imagine or evaluate architecture without habitat. This study titled “Reflection of habitat on architecture: Ankara from the Republic proclamation to our days” aims to discuss the architectural expression of surroundings in Ankara from the proclamation of the Republic to our days in consideration of the idea that architecture is an expression of habitat. The reason behind the choice of Ankara in the scope of the study is its being a capital that has seen very different unique breaking points starting from the proclamation of the Republic in the context of its social structure. The study aims to explore how the architectural output has been affected by the habitat based on the said breaking points.

Key words: Ankara, capital city, Turkey, habitat, living surroundings.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture can be defined as a form of legitimization of cultural structures like lifestyles, production and consumption relations in the society, education, etc. and phenomena life economics and politics in the physical environment (Güzer, 2002). In this regard, in addition to demonstrating physical presence, architectural output and urban fabric jointly constructed by architectural products are also an expression of social, cultural, economic and political living. In other words, a building, which is an architectural product, is a reflection of the environment in which it is situated. Conducted with this viewpoint, this study aims to discuss the change undergone by Ankara in the time period from the proclamation of the Republic to our days. The reason why Ankara was chosen as the object of the study is its assumption of the mission of a capital of a country with a new regime with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the rapid social change that took place in the city afterwards. Ankara is characterized as the most distinct example city reflecting the architectural environment that changed as an effect of the above-mentioned rapid transformation in Turkey. In this aspect, Ankara leads and guides other cities.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

In scope of methodology, a literature research has been made on the living environment and changes that occurred in Ankara in the time period from the proclamation of the Republic to our days. This was followed by a research on architectural literature to determine the architectural environment and output in Ankara for the same period. Finally, results of both researches have been comparatively analyzed and the relationship between breaking points in the life of the city and architectural environment and output have been discussed. The discussions were supported by visual material.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of the study is its highlight of the necessity to assess the relationship of an architectural product to the habitat in order to understand the discourse relating to such product. A conceptual framework was created in the scope of the study in line with the study purpose, it being aimed to discuss the subject using examples in the context of the conceptual framework and undergone processes.

ANKARA BEFORE THE REPUBLIC PROCLAMATION

Defining the surroundings that existed from the establishment of Ankara as a city to the proclamation of the Republic, is beyond doubt, a topic for another comprehensive study. Therefore, only brief information will be included in this section on the city’s pre-Republic
environment, with this study focusing on the period from the proclamation of the Republic to our days. While the exact date of its establishment is unknown, research made has shown that Ankara has been home to a number of civilizations. Believed to have been first called “Ankya (Ancyra)” with the name later evolving to become “Angora”, “Enguru” and finally “Ankara”, the city is known to have been home to Hittites, Phrygians, Cimmerians, Persians, Lydians, Macedonians, Galatians, Romans and Seljuk Turks. In 1354, the city was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire by Suleyman Pasha, son of Orhan 1. From the 16th century to late 19th century, the city has evolved through a variety of stages as an administrative center. Consisting of 5 sanjaks and 21 kazas in 1902, Ankara lost the sanjaks of Kayseri, Yozgat, Kirşehir and Çorum, which had been under its administration but were given the status of provinces with the 1924 Constitution which abolished city sanjaks. Playing an important role in preparatory stages preceding the Republic proclamation, after becoming the capital Ankara entered a period of rapid social, economic, political, military and cultural change (www.ankara.gov.tr).

PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC AND ANKARA

Upon the proclamation of the Republic on October 29, 1923 that followed the War of Independence, the process started of creating new institutions and introducing reforms that complied with the new regime. Aiming to regulate the national economy, a variety of plants and banks had been created and railroads had been laid (Anonim, 1981). The principal hero of the National Struggle, Atatürk has made important steps during Turkey’s restructuring period on the way to creating an understanding of art that would reflect the national culture. Setting architecture as one of his priorities in art breakthroughs, Atatürk has always respected one fundamental principle in accomplishing the historical mission of modernization which gave Turkey a brand new look. That principle was to adapt the Turkish society to novelties and innovations without losing own unique self-consciousness, identity and culture, to melt the new values in own national culture (www.bilimarastirmavakfi.org).

By adopting a modernization project that would give Turkey a brand new face, very fundamental transformations on all levels of society were aimed. Such multilateral transformation meant that important transformations were underway in spatial organization. One of the most important aspects of spatial transformation is urbanization. The success of the modernization project seems, to a great extent, have been achieved owing to successful urban development. The process of becoming a nation has been viewed not only as a process of individuals’ gaining the identity of a national citizen through the educational process but also as a process of mobilizing masses of peasants by loosening their ties to the land, giving the individuals in the society the ability to offer labor demanded by the economy at locations where such labor is required within anonymous relationships and ensuring acceleration in capital accumulation processes. The way to achieving that lay through urbanization requiring the establishment of new relationships of anonymous type among individuals in new urban societies, adoption of new values by such individuals and a cultural transformation in their ranks. The cultural transformation that has been accomplished was called “becoming an urban citizen”. For a country to transform its population into urban citizens, the individuals are required to gain the identity of citizens familiar with their rights and responsibilities and possess a capacity of maintaining honorable living in a modern society. In this regard, the success of the modernization project through urbanization / creating urban citizens has to be accomplished by densely intertwined processes. Need of cities to grow and fulfill the functions they are expected to fulfill on the one hand and obligation of satisfying changing models of living and continuously developing and diversifying demands on the other hand require that urban infrastructure and services, buildings and finally urban structure evolves under a certain degree of control in a manner that would make the city capable of satisfying these needs. The modernization project envisages the conduction of all such transformation and developments in the framework of the rational approach of the modern society. The aim is to accomplish the modernization project in a planned manner under the guidance of science, prioritizing technical knowledge and in a manner that would match public expectations and would be consistent with the society’s capacity.

With the proclamation of the Republic, Turkey has undergone meaningful and significant change with as a part of its modernization project, which also affected spatial organization. While such efforts in the field of spatial organization may be a goal for modernity, they also serve as a tool that facilitates the evolution of the modernization project. Ankara has been selected as capital based on the belief that such a national modernization example could not be achieved in cosmopolitan Istanbul (Tekeli, 2002).

The first years after the lasting World War 1 that finished with Turkey’s defeat, other wars and the War of Independence, which has been won with a lot of sacrifice, have seen restoration of ruins and debris as well as reconstruction efforts. Undertaken in a devastated country with a ruined economy and exhausted population, these efforts had been supported by subsidies and allocations that were significant given the economic conditions of those times (Batur, 1998).

The reconstruction program of 1920s wholly focused on mandatory and functional investments. Elements of the program included nationalization of infrastructure facilities, development of the transportation network, repair
and reconstruction of service buildings that support engineering investments as well as war-exhausted Anatolian towns, construction of small-scale service facilities and prestige buildings, reconstructing Ankara as a capital and settlement of immigrants arriving from territories outside the National Pact (Misak-i Milli) borders (Batur, 1998).

In this period, the Turkism movement initiated by Ziya Gökalp has shown itself in the art, particularly in the form of architectural artworks with local and national elements gaining higher importance in the formation of architectural works, marking a start of the neoclassical period in the Turkish architecture. It is observed that non-functional decorative elements such as motives of Ottoman religious buildings in facades, formal classical architectural details in transitions from walls to covering items and domes, like the ones in Ankara Palas, were used to furnish architectural works (Figures 1 and 2) (Sözen and Tapan, 1973). In this period, buildings were viewed as plastic products reflecting the architect’s creativity (Sözen and Tapan, 1973).

Priority was given to railroads in the Republic period to strengthen the national economy with railroads viewed in Turkey during that period as an icon of civilization. The goal was to cover the country with a network of railroads in order to ensure the integrity of the domestic market and strengthen Ankara’s control over Turkey. Accordingly, one of the main purposes was to connect cities of Anatolia with each other and with the capital Ankara (Durak, 2003).

During the first 25 years of the Republic, marked by one of the most important global economic crises and World War 2, 3540 km of new railroad lines have been added to the existing railroad network. Moreover, 4163 km of existing railroads were purchased and nationalized to be operated by the state. Such outstanding performance particularly in times of severe global economic depression is, without doubt, a great success. The Republic period has thus seen a creation of an Ankara-centered railroad network through construction of new railroads on the one hand and nationalization of railroads owned by foreign companies on the other hand. Small Anatolian cities situated along the railroad routes have been selected for the construction of factories envisaged in industrial plans (Tekeli, 2002).

With the construction of railroads, which became an important means of transportation, a demand rose in Anatolia for train station and depot buildings, which had become a symbol for Anatolian cities (Figure 3) (www.bayindirlik.gov.tr/turkce/fotoarsiv.php). The street connecting a city to the station, which had become one of the city’s most important focus points, was called the “Station Street” (Durak, 2003).

In this period, another impact of the modernization project that would give the newly founded Republic of Turkey a modern identity was reflected in the approach to urban planning. Turkey’s first project experience in urban
planning started with an international contest that opened in 1927. The plan designed by German urban planner Herman Jansen demonstrated a positive approach to systematic urban planning and provided positive contribution to the institutionalization of urban planning (Tankut, 1993).

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEPRESSION

A relative comfort was achieved after the first years marked by the hard economic burden of the War of Independence. In this period of rapid transformation, the creation of a national awareness in all layers of society has been focused on. However, given the economic and social depression after the War of Independence, achievement of this ideal in the society, which used to live in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Ottoman Empire and had a low level of education, was not an easy task. Timely following of the changes by masses was important for those masses to understand the reason and content of such changes. A disconnection between intelligentsia and the general public has led to a number of problems and created consecutive difficulties in the administration of affairs of the state. In those circumstances, an institution was needed that would eliminate the dissonance between the masses and intelligentsia, create a connection between the leaders of the revolution and public and educate as well as guide the public on the restructuring and reforms.

Community centers (halkevleri) were established in 1932 in order to communicate the idea of restructuring to masses of the public in all corners of the country and ensure that they adopt the idea. The centers served as social and cultural institutions offering training and education in nine fields, namely History of Language and Literature, Fine Arts, Representation, Sports, Social Aid, Public Education and Courses, Library and Publication, Farming and Museums and Exhibitions. Symbolizing the reflection in Turkey of the movement of cultural democratization that emerged in the 20th century and serving as the first cultural centers of the Republic of Turkey, community centers triggered a demand for architectural constructions (Vural, 2001). 1930s started with the staggering effects of the Global Economic Depression of 1929. The economic policy of 1930s was aimed at achieving rapid industrialization and mitigation of the damage of the Global Depression, which commanded a not only protectionist and regulatory but also investment-oriented content. Construction program and priorities in the building policies of the period consisted of the following main titles:

1. City planning at municipality and central administration levels aimed at guiding urban development.
2. Accomplishment of programs and applications for the structuring and organization of Ankara as a capital.
3. Service and industrial structures
4. Medical and educational buildings
5. Public housing buildings.

More government dominance in economic affairs has been accepted, it having been understood that private entrepreneurship was insufficient to revive the economy and that the economy needed to be planned. One of the greatest causes of this decision has been the Global Economic Depression. Based on the idea that a country unable to plow its own land, process its own sugar, manufacture its own iron and steel into products, shortly dependent on foreign manufacturers in all aspects would be unable to become fully independent, important Industrialization breakthrough was achieved during that period. As a part of the state control policy, state economic enterprises like Sümerbank and Etibank started operation, which would later make important investments in fields like industrial manufacturing, transportation, mining, agriculture, etc (Aslanoğlu, 1980). Giant facilities and enterprises, which would for many years serve as locomotives of the Turkish economy, were built one by one followed by the preparation of a Five-Year Industrialization Plan in 1933, which triggered the process of planned industrialization. Despite the great economic depression felt worldwide, a significant industrialization at the high rate of 11.6% was achieved during that period (Anonim, 1981). That period reflect on architecture as a building demand of newly established plants and facilities. The demand for new construction typologies was a consequence of the recovery in the Turkish society. It is observed that functionality was the focus of those structures. Ankara Coal Gas Plant is one of the important examples of the period (Figure 4) (forum.arkitera.com/koruma-restorasyon/8402-ankarada-cumhuriyet-aniti-havagazi-fabrikasi-yikildi.html).

The rapid growth of the construction demand particularly in the capital Ankara and undersupply of architects and professionals capable of designing and producing the demanded buildings marked the start of the period of
foreign architects in the Turkish architecture in 1927. Starting from that year, Turkey's architecture gained a new look, partly under the effect of foreign architects and professors arriving in the country for a variety of purposes and partly due to the westernization trends in the Turkish society. After the efforts to create national architecture in the newly founded Turkish state during the first years of the Republic, a second architectural approach emerged, which was referred to as the “Second National Architecture Movement”. The source of inspiration for the movement is known to have been Germany (Yavuz, 2010). Foreign architects, majority of which came from Germany and Austria, both determined educational methods at Turkey’s educational institutions and helped ensure more modern and established architectural breakthroughs in Turkey by demolishing the neoclassical atmosphere that back then dominated the Turkish architectural scene.

The German architecture of 1939 is known to have affected the “Second National Archi-tecture” movement in Turkey. In that period, architectural works in Germany tended to reflect the power of the regime and administration, spirit of nationalism. Primary elements used by the German monumental architecture of the time were use of the dimension stone, ranges of columns and awesome dimensions. This trend, which had affected our architectural forms, can be viewed as natural given the cultural and political relations with Germany at the time. Another reason behind the architectural trends’ resemblance to the German school was the German or Austrian origins of the foreign professors that taught at the time at institutions offering architectural education (Sözen and Tapan, 1973).

Maybe the first architect to design public-focused projects in the history of the Republic of Turkey was Bruno Taut, who taught in 1937 and 1938 at the Fine Arts Academy. One of the projects accomplished by Taut in Turkey was the public housing site designed for officers of Tekel Administration, the state-controlled tobacco monopolist. In terms of its approach, the design is regarded as consistent with the principles of modern architecture. Holistic approach to architecture and focusing on housing standards in the design were among the most important architectural developments of the time. The community center (halkevi) buildings that possess a “lean” appearance can be viewed as distinct works of the period (Sözen and Tapan, 1973).

Death of Atatürk closed the period of the first years of the Republic. Elected president after Atatürk, Ismet İnönü did a lot to keep Turkey away from World War 2 and focused on strengthening numerous aspects of the country’s external security. While all these efforts succeeded in preventing Turkey from taking active part in the war, expenses of maintaining a large and powerful army led to economic stagnation and rationing of a variety of products. As a result, prices increased, black market flourished and taxes imposed on villagers became heavier (Anonim, 1981). The above-mentioned social issues prevented large-scale architectural investments.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND URBANIZATION

Important developments have occurred in the process of the Turkish architecture’s search for identity in the period from 1940 to 1950. In particular, after the end of World War 2, the “Second National Architecture Movement” lost its former significance (Alcaç, 1976; Kaprol, 2000). With the start of mechanized farming between 1940 and 1950, the model of development began to change. Mechanized farming led to an increase in land prices, compelling small-scale farmers unable to compete against large-scale well-mechanized farms to sell their land and move to cities. Ankara was a popular choice for such migration due to its role of the capital, which led people to think it would offer better job opportunities. This change is defined as the driving power that initiated slum housing construction (Şenyapılı, 2004).

Moreover, the overcoming of limitations of mass production through new technology in the second part of the 20th century led to the creation of new consumption anthropology. Increasingly, daily living was organized around consumption. As much as the new construction materials developed as a result of market options, the concept of “identity” which was redefined as an object of consumption, led to the creation of a variety of references based, above all, on “being different”. The “laissez faire” concept predominantly affecting the economy was translated into physical appearance mainly in the built environment, at which point the cultural dimensions of the concept of modernity were emptied, leading to the creation of an environment where the concept of globalization was largely restricted to economic and technological dimensions. In the meanwhile, the return of the “localness” concept to the cultural aspect acts as a product of the conflict and clash between modernism and elements of local identity rather than as an antithesis. Translation of this approach to the architectural language is, above all, eclecticism. Most of the elements used as aspects of identity have been used in line with the artificial concept of “distinction” rather than a conscious reference to culture and location (Güzer, 2002).

Turkey underwent a rapid urbanization process after World War 2. This was the period when the country faced urbanization-related problems. Inability of the cities, which faced a rapid influx of migrants, to integrate the migrants in a network of social relationships has always been criticized by the society. This criticism led to the creation in Turkish of two different concepts unprecedented for Western languages, namely “urbanization” (kentleşme) and “becoming urban citizens” (kentleşme). While “urbanization” refers to the gathering and settle-ment of a large number of people at certain locations,
“becoming urban citizens” refers to the evolvement of such masses settling in cities into individuals with urban values, eligible for opportunities offered by cities and integrated with their cities. Gathering and settling in cities with the loosening of ties to the land, masses fail to become urban citizens and to adopt urban values despite having lived in the cities for long periods and benefiting from urban opportunities, which leaves such masses somewhere in between the village and the city and alienate them from urban atmosphere (Tekeli, 2002). Just as in other cities of the country, the reflection of this process to the built physical environment in Ankara translates itself into slum housing (Figure 5) (www.altindag-bld.gov.tr).

In the reconstruction process of Ankara, an intense demand for homes for civil servants was among Turkey’s priorities. In 1944, Law on the Construction of Homes for Civil Servants was enacted and allocation of housing zones started in the same year available for civil servants and officers as well as military employees. The most important example of the period is homes in the neighborhood of Saraçoğlu, Ankara, designed by Bonatz (Şenyapılı, 2004; Sey, 1998).

An attempt was made to tackle the rising demand for homes parallel to other large cities of Turkey through institutionalization starting from 1946, especially the establishment of Emlak Kredi Bankası (Real-Estate Credit Bank) and enactment of the Real-Estate Credit Bank Law serving as important steps in this direction (Sey, 1998). Remaining, until 1949, the only institution granting home mortgages, Emlak Kredi Bankası made effort to provide low-interest long-term loans to applicants without homes and to construct homes and offer them for sale for cash or on installments (Şenyapılı, 2004).

The efforts initiated by Emlak Kredi Bankası coined the terms “public housing” and “social housing” in Turkey, where land was undersupplied and homes under excessive demand and led to a start of zone allocation for such homes in Ankara (Figure 5).

1950s saw Turkey’s architectural trends follow its political choices. Starting from the central administration, a trend was set for the next 50 years of a shrinking role of architecture. Foreign architects gradually moved away from the scene. Public institutions continued, until 1970s, to be designed through a competitive mechanism, which, while competition-based at first, changed starting from 1960s (Altın, 2003). The most important example of projects constructed as a result of competitive bidding during the first years of creation of the competitive mechanism is Anıtkabir (Atatürk’s mausoleum) (Figure 7) (okulweb.meb.gov.tr/13/04/361962/images/anitkabir1.jpg)

LIBERALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY AND THEIR EFFECTS

Following 1980s, new conditions caused by globalization triggered a rapid change, particularly in capital cities of nation-states, leading to the capitals’ becoming important gates of the countries’ integration into global economy. The said change meant a change in the rules, political relationships with the outside world and structure of government functions and structures addressing the related issues. This required important structural transformations.

In particular, the high inflation experienced from 1977 to 1980, meltdown in hard currency reserves and growing unemployment have brought radical changes in economic and industrial policies replacing protectionist approach focusing on the domestic market by liberal economic
policies dominated by market forces (Eraydin and Köroğlu, 2005).

With the start of the period of “liberalization” of policies in the Turkish economy after 1980, the primary goals were increasing exports, privatization of state-owned enterprises, integration with the European Community, economic reforms and construction of infrastructure and homes (Osmay, 1998).

Two trends in Turkey’s efforts for integration with the outside world in the globalization process deserve to be mentioned. The first one is emergence of cities that have managed to build ties to the outside world with the
support provided to export-oriented policies. Spearheaded by Istanbul, this trend has seen the importance of cities central in particular to the weaving and apparel industries rise rapidly. The other trend can be described as the focus on coasts. Developments that occurred in the tourism industry particularly after 1980 have led private investments to focus on coastal cities, which increased such cities’ importance. The said trends have caused a change in the ranking of Ankara. While Ankara was capable of supporting the architectural activity of the country from 1920s to 1980s, Istanbul started to dominate following that period. In 2000s, however, a really “liberal” architectural design industry emerged in Ankara, which no longer followed the sole purpose of providing low-cost services to the public sector [20]. This period saw intensification of central business zoning activities in cities and large business centers started to emerge in downtown Ankara. Among important business centers reflecting the period are Atakule (Figure 8) and Kızılay Rant Tesisleri (Figure 9) (www.inci-lay; www.mimdap.org).

Turkey’s switch from the pre-1980 policy of imports and industrialization policy that focused on the domestic market to an economy interacting with foreign markets had an effect on the infrastructure system. Efforts were undertaken to rapidly develop the telecommunications system and large infrastructure investments were initiated that focused on connecting the country’s centers of growth to the international system of highways. In the development of highways during this period, a demand rose for large terminal buildings. Among important examples of such constructions is the Ankara Bus Terminal (Figure 10). Operating since 1995, AŞTİ (Ankara Intercity Bus Terminal) is Turkey’s largest bus terminal.
Another trend of the period that occupied the agenda has been the development of air transportation fleets and opening of new airports. This trend of infrastructure development in Turkey’s outward expansion served to develop its relations with distant countries rather than with its immediate neighbors [5, 18]. This development has led to a demand for airports in many cities around the country. Among the important examples of this period is the new Esenboğa Airport in Ankara, which opened for operation in 2006.

Conclusion

Our habitat consists of a variety of elements such as social living, economy, culture, politics, etc. and interactions among them. Change in any of the elements that constitute our living environment triggers changes in the other elements. Since no built environment anywhere in the world can be regarded as independent from its surroundings, it should be taken into account that each and every change in the elements of habitat affects and changes the spatial structure.

In this study, which followed the effects of habitat changes on the built environment of Ankara from the proclamation of the Republic to our days, the insufficiency of simply considering the physical characteristics of architectural works in the review of such works and the need to review each and every architectural work in the light of the environment that surrounds it have been highlighted.

Ankara is an important example that shows how important it is to consider the environment of an architectural work in special studies and reviews. Turkey has a unique leadership role in reconstruction. Construction efforts observed in a variety of Turkish cities from the proclamation of the Republic to our days have been directly affected by developments in the capital. In this perspective, Ankara has been a guiding city for the Turkish architecture.

Living and architectural processes undergone by Ankara as the Turkish capital have been of high importance for the timeframe up to our days and for future periods. The author believes that consideration of the interaction between the habitat and architectural works in studies on cities’ built environments would provide guidance in making right decisions concerning construction in our cities and that construction decisions made based on scientific research will provide solid grounds for our cities’ successful operation in the future.

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