Vernacular Architecture and Identity Politics: The Case of the “Turkish House”

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The traditional “Turkish House” constitutes a recurrent theme in twentieth-century Turkish architectural culture. This paper looks at the appreciation/appropriation of traditional house forms by Western and/or Western-educated architects. It focuses, first, on the modernist/rationalist readings of the early Republican period; and, second, on the more recent neotraditionalist experiments with vernacular forms — more specifically, on the highly publicized work of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk for a suburban development outside Istanbul.

Discussing these two episodes in the context of the fervent nationalism of the 1930s and the more liberal and postmodern climate of the 1980s, respectively, the paper addresses how the same architectural forms can be enframed within very different cultural and political agendas.

An attractive recent brochure for Kerner Country, an expensive new suburb outside Istanbul, advertises the design of its third phase of residential development, commissioned to the Florida architecture and planning firm of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, with the following introductory words:

Kerner Country is designed to revitalize an old life-style in which neighborhood (mahalle) was the keyword and we all belonged to our neighborhoods. The greatest problem of Istanbul today is not the noise, or pollution, or traffic, nor is it congestion and high cost of living, with all of which we cope in one way or other. It is, however, the loss of our sense of belonging without which we cannot survive . . . . Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are not the typical architects who design houses as we know architects to do. Their job is to design streets and towns and to restore the lost sense of neighborhood."

The accompanying pastel sketches in the brochure show beautiful renderings of villas inspired by traditional Turkish residential architecture: tile roofs, modular rows of windows,
projecting bay-windows on the upper floors (cumba), courtyards (avlu), narrow streets (sokak), and small squares (meydan) — for which the historic Ottoman aqueduct of Kemerburgaz constitutes an appropriate backdrop (FIG.1). Looking at these images, one cannot help but recall the 1911 sketches of the young Le Corbusier in his Voyage d’Orient, depicting wooden houses within secluded gardens along the narrow streets of old Istanbul — those “architectural masterpieces,” as he called them (FIG.2). Chronologically between the two episodes, there intervened the passionately nationalist context of the early Republican period in Turkey, when prominent German and Central European architects and their Turkish colleagues and students looked at the same traditional houses through modernist spectacles, abstracting from them the rational principles of utility, honesty and simplicity.¹

Even a cursory glance at the architectural culture of modern Turkey reveals that the traditional “Turkish house” has constituted a constant source of fascination for Western and Turkish architects. It is a recurrent theme to which architects have periodically turned whenever the question of identity has arisen. In this paper I review the nature and circumstances of the appropriation of the Turkish house by Western and Western-educated Turkish architects, comparing the nationalist/modernist 1930s to the liberal/postmodern 1980s, in order to demonstrate how the appreciation of the same architectural forms can be enframed within very different cultural and political agendas.

Taking issue with essentialist readings of the “Turkish House,” which tend to posit identity as something inherent in particular forms with fixed cultural meanings, I hope to address how architectural form acquires meaning in different cultural and political contexts, and therefore show how this meaning is always historically constituted, ambiguous and overdetermined. This is not to deny that there are formal and spatial concerns internal to the discipline of architecture which transcend historical circumstances. But it is to say that the broader cultural legitimacy of such concerns is inextricably bound with history. As Stanford Anderson has argued on many occasions, the architectural object is neither a purely “autonomous text,” nor a “cultural index” of the times: its meaning is neither pre-given and inherent in the object, nor is it exclusively determined by an external zeitgeist.²

**PREAMBLE: REPRESENTATION AND CODIFICATION OF THE TURKISH HOUSE**

Historically speaking, the term “Turkish house” designates a specific house type that spread over the vast territories of the former Ottoman Empire, from the Balkans to the Arabian
peninsula. Its existence spans a time-frame of about five hundred years, with the earliest surviving examples dating from the seventeenth century (FIG.3). Although substantial variations in size, configuration and regional characteristics have occurred, certain basic and constant features establish the Turkish house as a distinct type, fixed by convention and tested through centuries. One of these is its timber frame and infill construction, with the infill material ranging from bricks to wood (bagdadi), plastered over in lesser examples and finished in wood in the more elaborate ones. Another feature is the solidity of the ground floor (reserved for hay storage, animals, carriages and services, etc.), above which a much lighter and projecting living floor is raised on stilts (direklik). Other characteristic features include rows of modular windows, derived from the logic of the timber frame, and a pitched roof covered with round tiles (FIG.4). Such a dwelling constitutes a highly developed and rationalized type, occurring over a large area characterized by predominantly humid climates and fertile lands (hence, the timber construction and the pitched roof). It stands apart from the many other local vernaculars and building traditions — for example, in stone and mud brick, especially from southern and eastern Turkey.

It was largely due to the paradigmatic work and career of the prominent Turkish architect Sedad Eldem that the Turkish House became codified into a typological and stylistic canon in theory, education and practice in Republican Turkey. Eldem’s monumental work *Turk Evi (Turkish House)*, initially conceived in five volumes but only partially published after 1984,7 posits the articulation of the plan as the primary generator of the type, and it provides an elaborate typological matrix of house plans based on the shape, configuration and location of the hall, or sofa, as the key element. The sofa is an unspecialized space giving access to other rooms such that — in an interesting analogy between the house and the city — Eldem visualized the rooms of the house as individual houses in themselves, and the sofa as the street or square allowing access to them. The three generic plan types identified by Eldem were houses with external sofas, internal sofas, and central sofas. (In each

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**FIGURE 3.** (LEFT) Amsatale Huseyin Pasa Yalisi, Istanbul, 1699. One of the oldest surviving examples of the Turkish House. (Source: Process 27, December 1981.)

**FIGURE 4.** (TOP RIGHT) Traditional Turkish house from Safranbolu, Turkey. (Photograph by author.)

case, a derivative/connected type was also possible, with the repetition of the basic type along an axis allowing more elaborate configurations.) Invariably, the rooms and the sofa also became differentiated on the exterior by the size and shape of windows and/or projections/recessions on the facade (refer to FIG. 4). These generic plan types not only provided the analytical tools with which to study and document existing examples, but they also provided underlying principles for the many object-type villas Eldem designed throughout his long career (FIG. 5).

Although its principles were most clearly elaborated by a Turkish architect, in cultural and historical terms the “Turkish house” can also be seen as initially a Western construct. Its nature in this regard is somewhat similar to the term “Turk” itself, which Europeans employed to designate the ethnically, culturally and religiously heterogeneous populations of the former Ottoman Empire. Thus, the earliest representations of the Turkish house in European publications coincided with the spread of Exoticism, or the discovery and reproduction of cultural “otherness” that was central to the self-definition of Europe in the age of Enlightenment. Eighteenth-century representations — from the Turqueries of Sir William Chambers, to Jean Jacques Lequeu’s “L’habitation Turc” (FIG. 6) — were mostly imaginary constructions, existing prior to the establishment of easier and more systematic travel to the East. By contrast, nineteenth-century Orientalist representations of traditional Turkish houses were more accurate visual descriptions, published as part of highly popular illustrated travel accounts. It was the published work of traveling topographical artists like Thomas Allom and William Bartlett, or of architects like Ignace Melling, which first gave Europeans panoramic and picturesque views of Istanbul’s wooden yalis, situated along the edge of the water so the entire house was in view of boats passing by the Bosphorus (FIG. 7). That Eldem kept a copy of Melling’s 1819 Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople et des Rives du Bosphore as an inspirational source for his lifework indicates the significance of Western representations in the formation of the notion of the Turkish house, and the significance of intertextual references to the construction of architectural knowledge in general.

Le Corbusier’s Voyage d’Orient constitutes a last link in this long legacy of Orientalist representations, produced on the eve of dramatic transformations in Turkey. Le Corbusier was particularly fascinated by the presence of trees and the overall urbanistic quality of the residential fabric in Turkey. He expressed this both in words and through sketches of the wealthier konaks, or large houses inside gardens, with their projecting upper floors resting upon solid walls, punctuated only at entrances that revealed secluded courtyards (refer to FIG. 2).

What makes Le Corbusier’s impressions significant for this discussion is the multiplicity of readings to which they lend themselves. While it is legitimate and important to consider them the romanticizing discourse of an Orientalist, uttered from a position of superiority, it is also possible to read them as observations anticipating Le Corbusier’s modernist preoccupations. Thus one can see foreshadowed his concern with greenery, sunlight and air (as afforded by trees and gardens); lightness of structure (timber frame and infill); and pilotis (the
perching of the main living space on walls and/or stilts).
Notwithstanding its overt Orientalist postures, therefore, the
appreciation of architecture in the Voyage is still more experien-
tial than stylistic, spatial rather than decorative, and universal-
list rather than culturally relativist. As such, it provides a
precursor to the modernist readings of the vernacular Turkish
house that were to be the centerpiece of the nationalist archi-
tectural culture of the early Turkish Republic.

MODERNIST READINGS IN A
NATIONALIST CONTEXT: THE 1930S

The institutionalization of interest in vernacular architec-
ture as the primary source of modern national identity in
Turkey is intelligible only within historical circumstances.
During the 1920s Turkey underwent a transition from a disinte-
grating empire to a secular nation-state under the leadership of
Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic. In architectural
terms, the revolution meant that references to the high culture
and tradition of the former empire were no longer appropriate,
since the new modernizing elites sought to dissociate the cultur-
al politics of the Republic from the Ottoman/Islamic past.
When such Ottoman motifs as domes, arches, and tile decora-
tion (applied primarily to public buildings well into the early
1930s) were abandoned as markers of Turkish identity, the
stripped aesthetic of German and Central European modernism
stepped in. Such architectural language became the official dis-
course of the Kemalist Republic, especially during the construc-
tion of Ankara, the modern capital. In a 1949 interview, Le
Corbusier made the following remarks about this latter period
— in a way confessing to his earlier Orientalism:

The last time I saw the Turkish woman, she was veiled
and covered in an oriental mystery... If I had not
committed the biggest strategic mistake of my life in my
letter to Ataturk, today I would be planning the beau-
tiful city of Istanbul instead of my competitor Henri
Prost. In that notorious letter, I was recommending the
leading revolutionary of a modern nation, to leave
Istanbul as it is, in the dust and dirt of centuries. I
realized my mistake afterwards. 14

Given the inherent contradiction of nationalist thought
outside the Western world — between progressivist modern
(identified as Western) aspirations, and nationalist anti-
Western rhetoric — the ambiguity of the Kemalist project of
modernity soon became obvious in Turkish architectural dis-
course. Thus, the forms of the Modern Movement, now sub-
sumed under the rubric of “cubic architecture” (kübik mimari),
were rejected with increased nationalist fervor in the late 1930s
as representations of an alienated, cosmopolitan society. In this
climate, the Turkish residential vernacular was posited as the
most appropriate alternative source of identity, legitimizing the
“imagined community” of a unified nation. 15 Its associations
with the rural folk of Anatolia were comfortably distanced from
Ottoman palace culture, favorably matching the romantic pop-
ulism and antiurban sentiments of the Republic. It also
reflected a new emphasis on issues of dwelling and housing,
traditionally underrepresented in the French Beaux-Arts system
of architectural education at the Academy of Fine Arts in
Istanbul, which privileged public buildings and monuments
until the onset of the radical modernist reforms of 1926.

The Swiss architect Ernest Egli, who was entrusted with
the task of transforming the educational program of the
Academy along modernist lines, offered the first explicit mod-
ernist discourse evaluating the traditional Turkish house as a
thoroughly rational response to nature. In his seminal 1938
article “Architectural Context” (Mimari Muhit), he defined
“context” without any reference to culture or history as the
overall character of “… light, air, sun, wind, topography, ter-
rain, water, vegetation, the harshness or mildness of nature, the
distinct quality of the night and the mysterious music of
dusk.” Calling for “the cross-fertilization of the international
seeds of modern architectural progress with the specific forms
of architectural contexts,” Egli praised the introverted character
of the traditional Anatolian house, with its cool and shady
courtyards open to starry skies above and closed to the dust of
the street. He concluded that “if designed with modern means
for modern lifestyles, this could be a model house for
Anatolian towns.” 16

Neither Egli’s sketches illustrating the article (especially “a
small house for Ankara,” with its cubic volumes), nor his built
work in Turkey, however, display any conspicuous connection
to the traditional forms of the region — with the exception,
perhaps, of the subtle use of courtyards in his design for the
Music School in Ankara, 1927–28, or abstract interpretations of
traditional window projections in his design for the Court of
Financial Appeals in Ankara, 1928–30 (FIG.9). In his 1938 arti-
cle, although he admired the unity of local context with archi-
tecture and its inhabitants in rural settings, he added (in a
rather Simmelian tone) that civilization is produced by the
intelligence of metropolitan man released from local context,
even if this is ultimately self-destructive.” This was a remark-
able insight not only into the paradoxical nature of modernity
(between its simultaneously alienating and liberating aspects),
but also into modernity’s historical irreversibility, a fact that
often seems overlooked in more literal, formal and stylistic
appropriations of the vernacular.

Egli’s successor as the Head of the Architectural Section in
the Academy was Bruno Taut. From 1936 to his death in
December 1938, he followed a pedagogical program of similar
ambiguity. While praising the lessons of Japanese and Turkish
vernacular architecture at every occasion for their simplicity,
authenticity, utility, and rationality of construction, his own
work in major cities of Turkey, as well as the siedlung projects
he assigned to his students, bore little formal reference to tradi-
tional house forms — with the exception of the House in
Ortaköy (1937-38), which served as a homage to his experiences in Japan. Although in an article entitled “Turkish House, Sinan, Ankara” in 1938, he explicitly stated that “the new Turkish house will be born only when architects abandon the cubic style which has turned into a mainstream stylistic fashion,” it is important not to read this as a quest for a national style, but rather as a profoundly antistylistic comment, expressive of his frustrations with modernist orthodoxy after the advent of the International Style.” In the same article, identifying traditional Turkish elements “that will always remain modern,” he specifically praised the wide eaves and shading devices above windows, which he incorporated into his designs for schools in Turkey. He also praised the traditional composite walling system of alternating courses of stone and brick, which he adopted in his design for the Faculty of Languages and History in Ankara in 1937 (FIG.10). His antistylistic and antichauvenistic posture was most explicit in the following statement:

It is important to avoid a superficial imitation of tradition. Otherwise this tendency can lead to a sentimental romanticism and a misunderstood nationalism resulting in kitsch. The more fervor with which a misunderstood nationalism is pursued, the worse will be the result... All nationalist architecture is bad but all good architecture is national."

Sedad Eldem’s early readings of the vernacular also revealed a modernist agenda that was not unlike those of Egli and Taut. In fact, he admitted to having “discovered” the Turkish house in Europe in the late 1920s through Le Corbusier and through the Wasmuth papers of Frank Lloyd Wright. His beautifully rendered “Anatolian Houses,” exhibited in Paris in 1928 during a study tour following his graduation from the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul, epitomized this “discovery” in the form of romantic houses in idyllic hypothetical countrysides (FIG.11). His arguments for the essential modernity of the traditional wohnkultur were paradigmatic in this respect (FIG.12). Equating the use of built-in closets and light furniture with the modern European interiors, the hearth (ocak) with modern fireplaces, the traditional hamam with modern hygienic baths, and the exterior porches on the upper floors (hayat) with the wide terraces of Le Corbusier, Eldem wrote:

The traditional Turkish house is remarkably similar to the modern conceptions of the house. Ample windows and light, free plan, priority of comfort over ostentatious display, honesty of materials, the relationship of the house to nature through porches, courtyards and gardens... Aren’t these the very qualities we look for in a modern house?"

Although it is this conflation of culture with nature, history with present, and tradition with modernity that underlies the progressivist, modernist and universalist appropriation of the Turkish residential vernacular in the 1930s, there is a significant distinction to be made. If Egli and Taut represented an argument for the inevitably “national” character of the modern house (since it represented, by definition, an appropriate and rational response to the particularities of site and pro-
gram), Sedad Eldem’s corollary proposition was to argue for the essential “modernity” of the traditional Turkish house. This latter proposition was not only more appealing to the increasingly nationalist climate in Turkey in the late 1930s, but it could be turned into an effective justification for a stylistic appropriation of traditional forms. By 1940, therefore, interest in the “Turkish house” had acquired overtly nationalistic overtones, especially in Eldem’s writings, in which he declared the quest for a National Style in architecture as “a matter of strong regime” and state sponsorship.” This National Style promoted by Eldem was epitomized in his own paradigmatic Taslik Coffee House of 1947 (now demolished) (FIG.13). This structure was, in fact, a reinforced-concrete replica of the seventeenth-century Amcazade Huseyin Pasa Yalisi (refer to FIG.3). Thereafter, throughout the 1940s, the study of the Turkish residential vernacular became the norm in architectural education, primarily in the National Architecture Seminar, established at the Academy by Eldem in 1934, but also at the new Istanbul Technical University, where many graduate theses studied traditional houses of various Anatolian towns. During this period foreign, and especially German, architects continued to visit the country. They focused on the residential vernacular with varying degrees of alignment with or distance from the rising nationalist sentiments. Like Egli, Prof. Albert Gabriel recommended that architectural students study the precedents in various regions of Turkey for the lessons they offered toward a modern reinterpretation of traditional houses.” And Gustav Oelsner, a Jewish refugee persecuted by the Nazi regime and a professor of planning and urbanism at the Technical University, studied the traditional residential fabric in Turkish towns, recommending “a calm and conservationist modernism” for Turkey.”

The prominent German architect Paul Bonatz, Eldem’s closest colleague during this period and also an influential teacher at Istanbul Technical University, also contributed significantly to the increasing self-consciousness and formalism of the nationalist trend. His Saracoglu Housing for state bureaucrats in Ankara, consisted of two- and three-story perimeter-block rowhouses around courtyards and reproduced many of the Eldem *leımotıfı*, especially in its use of wide eaves, facade projections, window patterns and wooden lattices above the windows (FIG.14). Eldem’s own Faculty of Sciences and Letters in Istanbul (1942-44, in collaboration with Emin Onat) bore traces of the influence of Bonatz’s work. But it combined this with a monumental version of the Turkish House paradigm, including his designation of the courtyards behind the main street facade as “tasılıks” to highlight the analogy to the house (FIG.15).

By 1950, however, as the statist early Republican era in Turkish politics gave way to the more liberal Democrat Party period, the waning of the nationalist trend in architecture was already underway. Likewise, there was a decline in interest in surveying and documenting the traditional examples. Finally, and most tragically, most of the drawings compiled by Eldem’s National Architecture Seminar perished in the Academy fire of 1945.

In the 1980s, after a long period of relative neglect in the heyday of high modernism, formal references to the traditional Turkish house have made a comeback, this time in a dramatically different cultural and political context. The distinct cultural panorama of “postmodern Turkey” can be summed up as a growing reaction to the official ideology and modernization program of the old Republican elite and a radical departure from the universalistic claims of modernity in favor of an emphasis on cultural identity and difference. In economic and political terms, this panorama bears the legacy of figures like Reagan, Thatcher, and the late Turkish president Ozal, and it marks the historical triumph of transnational market forces over nationalist developmentism. Ironically, and precisely at a time when the country has opened up to a further internationalized and globalized capitalism, the architectural establishment has set out to condemn International Style modernism. The celebrated “liberation” from the latter’s facelessness has prompted various new experiments with vernacular forms, not to mention an increasing demand for Sedad Eldem’s canonic Turkish villas for wealthy clients (FIG.16). Spread over his long career, Eldem’s villas testify to the main point of this paper: that such
architect can be read (as in fact it has been by both Eldem and his critics) as modern and “nationalist” in the 1930s, “regionalist” in the 1960s, and “postmodern” in the 1980s.

The first point that immediately differentiates the recent revival of residential vernacular from the early Republican precedents is that it no longer represents a totalizing search for “Turkish” forms to illustrate a unified national identity; rather, it represents a preference for traditional forms merely as a local accent in a relativistic world. Hence, a pluralism of traditions is now possible. This is not only the case in terms of regional appropriateness (as in the case of prominent Turkish architect Turgut Cansever’s adherence to the stone Mediterranean vernacular versus Eldem’s life-long commitment to the timber tradition of the Bosphorous), but also in the fact that tradition-consciousness can now comfortably exist side by side with (and sometimes in conjunction with) some of the latest trends in architectural culture at large, from postmodernism to high-tech expressionism.

Second, this recent revival of traditional house forms has been sponsored almost exclusively by private clients and developers, as opposed to the exclusive monopolies of the state over the architectural discourse of the National Style in the Republican period. The “tradition” that inspires architects and developers today is associated not so much with an idealized rural vernacular, corresponding to the romantic populism of the early Republic, but to the more elaborate houses (yalis and konaks) of Ottoman towns. It should be added that historical consciousness has become an effective marketing tool for a growing network of antique dealers, elite taste-makers, interior designers, and renovation experts — as well as an entire industry marketing “traditional” building materials, fixtures and finishes.

Perhaps most instrumental in the proliferation of vernacular forms everywhere are the new residential patterns of the upper classes and emerging “yuppies” of the 1980s. This take the form of villa-type developments (FIG. 17) or exclusive suburbs outside the city, complete with their cult of nature and health, swimming pools, tennis courts, horseback riding, and golf courses. As big cities become saturated with speculative apartment buildings of the most mediocre standards in reinforced-concrete slab-block construction, the new ethos of a single-family house away from the environmental and aesthetic degradation of the city has become increasingly appealing to the wealthy. The example I would like to discuss in a little more detail is the exclusive suburb of Kemer Country with which I began this paper (FIGS. 18, 19).

The developers of Kemer Country, who sought out the firm of Duany/Plater-Zyberk (DPZ hereafter) on the basis of their reputation for traditional neighborhood development (TND), take pride in the fact that the designs for Kemer Country were featured in the “Vision of Europe” exhibit by Prince Charles and Leon Krier. Indeed, surrounded by a controversy similar to that regarding the highly publicized DPZ project for Seaside, Florida, Kemer Country has at best attained ambivalent responses from the architectural establishment in Turkey. Despite its popular success, and despite the acknowledged qualities of the architecture and environment, it has provoked architects’ traditional contempt for speculative developers and for builder traditions outside the established profession. It should be noted in this context that the 1986 Aga Khan Award given to the Cakirhan House, a well-crafted replica of a regional vernacular house, designed not by an architect but by an owner and a local builder, was also bitterly resented by many Turkish architects for its nostalgic traditionalism (FIG. 20). In the case of Kemer Country — as with Seaside before it — what Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk defines as an effort “to bring design, policy and management together again” is undoubtedly an innovative idea (as is that of allowing the involvement of different designers — even nonprofessionals — after the initial identification of building heights, setbacks, materials, and design guidelines). However, none of this explains the choice of particular traditional forms. In spite of the developers’ repeated claim that the aesthetic qualities of Kemer Country do not reside in a stylistic and formalistic approach to architecture, their products are essentially traditional forms translated into Kulaksı houses.
appropriation of tradition but in an administrative plan of codes and regulations fixing the “civic identity” of the place (a term the developers have learned from Andres Duany), the formal and stylistic features of the “Turkish style villas” do predominate the scheme (refer to FIGS.1.2).

In stark contrast to the laborious studies of the Turkish vernacular that foreign architects undertook in the 1930s, the process of design and development in Kemer Country illustrates the phenomenal speed with which the appropriation of vernacular forms can be accomplished in the postmodern world by an international team of designers connected through electronic networks. Thus, the team of Andres Duany is said to have come to Istanbul for an initial charrette, in which other neotraditionalist architects also took part — including the Egyptian architect Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, who designed the country club of Kemer Country adjoining the picturesque “village square.” The charrette participants were given a briefing by the design coordinator in Turkey on “the characteristics of traditional Turkish houses, windows, roofs and the human scales of neighborhoods.” This was complemented by a study tour to Safranbolu, a town of pedagogical significance in northern Turkey, with its complete residential fabric preserved. The subsequent designs for Kemer Country villas bear testimony to the possibility in the age of computers to manipulate a finite number of basic elements within fixed rules instantly to produce numerous different “Turkish houses.”

The individual houses in the third phase of Kemer Country vary among fourteen types (from A to N), from 246 to 788 sq. meters. Eight of these are attributed to DPZ: four linear types (types C, H, M and N), with rooms arranged side by side facing a garden, with a corridor connecting them on the upper floor (FIGS.21A, B); and four (types D, F, I and L) planned around a central hall which gives access to other rooms (FIGS.22A, B). In terms of plan and program, the designs reproduce suburban houses of various sizes that one can find in the U.S., complete with a study/library, separate bathrooms for each bedroom (with a large bath plus a walk-in closet for the parents), a breakfast room in the larger types, a multipurpose room in the basement (for kids?), a garage, and — at least in one case — a pedimented entry porch. All of this has little to do with the Turkish vernacular. It is the exteriors and stylistic details that are more conspicuously informed by tradition: wide roofs with round tiles (known as Alaturka/“Turkish” tiles); projecting bays on upper floors (cumba) supported by wooden brackets (elbogrunde); the traditional terra-cotta color (asiboyaz) among others; garden walls and wooden gates; cast-iron door knockers; and an overall ambiance of narrow streets, small squares, and cedar trees. All the above prompted one commentator to remark that “Western architects first devastated our cities with slab blocks, master plans, zoning, concrete and cars and now they are erasing their guilt consciousness.”

It is important to note that the developers of Kemer Country place a specific emphasis on their intention to create “not a Turkish house or neighborhood, but a neighborhood for Turkey.” The distinction is more than a minor nuance. It is in fact only one expression of the recent disintegration of nationalist taboos in Turkey in favor of acknowledging the population’s heterogeneity in terms of ethnicity, culture and religious belief. What remains to be seen, however, is whether the reconstruction of the physical fabric of the traditional neighborhood will indeed provide a restoration of the relation-
ship between architecture and democracy, as claimed (and who can claim that traditional Ottoman neighborhoods were ever "democratic"?). Or whether it will result in an inevitably artificial "public realm" which, in claiming to restore a sense of belonging, still excludes many who do not belong there. The fact that the prices of villas in Kemer Country range from $350,000 to $2 million US, not to mention the prerequisite of car ownership to live there, suggests the latter.

CONCLUSION: POLITICS OF ARCHITECTURE

Neither the 1930s modernist emphasis on the rationality of design (i.e., form as a most logical response to nature, terrain, program and construction), nor the 1980s preoccupations with democracy, pluralism and pragmatism are adequate as determinants or imperatives of vernacular house forms. In both periods there is a margin of indeterminacy between architectural form and the explanations that are claimed to inform it. There is nothing that automatically links modernist principles with the forms of the Turkish House, as claimed by Sedad Eldem. Similarly, there is nothing that automatically links "good design" with the "old," as claimed by the DPZ dictum of "giving people plain old good design." In both cases the image and idea of the traditional Turkish House is a "relatively autonomous" preoccupation of the architects, as well as a recurrent cultural construct within the discipline. It has, however, acquired historical significance and legitimacy only in the specific contexts of nationalism and postmodernity, respectively, as I have tried to illustrate.
Informed by recent critical theories about the politics of cultural production (in this case, architectural production of buildings, drawings and texts), this very sketchy overview was intended as a reminder that these products warrant complex and multilayered readings which take into account both their formal and disciplinary autonomy as architecture, and their "worldliness," which connects them to other cultural products and events of a particular time and make them intelligible in a historical context. One without the other would be a seriously flawed reading of architecture.
REFERENCE NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented in the 83rd ACsa Annual Meeting in Seattle, March 1995, and published in the proceedings of that conference, pp.171-76.

8. Ibid., p.36.
9. There is a roughly chronological basis to Eldem's classification, the external sofı type being the earliest form predominant in the seventeenth century, but as an idea, going back to the sultan pavilions such as the Tiled Kiosk in Topkapi Palace. With the addition of rooms and the closing off of the open external sofı in the eighteenth century, the internal sofı type, was developed, sometimes designated as the karnıyarkılı (literally "split belly"). Finally, the most elaborate version, the central sofı type proliferated in the nineteenth century, including the fashionable oval sofı types traced to Baroque influences.
11. For such a reading of his Algerian projects, see Z. Celik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," Assemblage 17 (April 1992), pp.55-77.
15. For a theoretical exposition of this contradiction, see P. Chaterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World (London: Zed Books, 1986).
16. For the creative aspect of imagination in the constitution of modern nations, see B. Anderson, Imagined Communities (London and New York: Verso, 1983).
18. Ibid., p.36.
19. Ibid., p.34.
21. This critical position is best expressed in his Mimari Bilgisi (Lectures on Architecture) (Istanbul: Guzel Sanadar Akademisi, 1938), which was started in Japan and published in Istanbul in Turkish as a textbook for the architectural students at the Academy of Fine Arts. It is republished in German as Architekturlehre (Hamburg: 1977).
26. A. Gabriel, "Turk Evi" ("Turkish House"), Arkiyet (1938), pp.149-54.
28. Kemer Country is developed on 7,200 acres of land just outside metropolitan Istanbul, surrounded by a 10km-deep forest. It is being built in three phases, the third one of which is being developed in the "traditional Turkish style." The third phase includes the central portion of the scheme, surrounding the golf course, country club, "village square," and other communal facilities.
31. Listed as designers of the third phase are Duany/Plater-Zyberk, Architects, Miami; Murakami Residential Design and Construction, Toronto; M&N Butler Architects, Istanbul; and Alison J. Hainey, Landscape Architects, London.
33. It is interesting to remember the remarks of Andrei Duany, that DIZI "... delivers by computers all the codes and a regulating plan precise to the inch as long as it takes [Peter Eisenman] to resolve a corner joint" (ANVY, 1993, p.32).
35. "Zamanotesi'nin Pesinde: Kemer Country," p.121. There is a conspicuous correlation between such remarks and the recent arguments in Turkey for democratization, multicultural, multiethnic civil society, and a diminished domain for the state which have been championed by advocates of liberalism and private enterprise.
36. E. Plater-Zyberk, ANVY (1993), p.12. The point is taken up by Peter Eisenman later in the debate.