

# *Between Bureaucratic Tradition and Professional Discourse: Turkey and the Case of SİSAG, 1969–77*

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## ABSTRACT

The history of twentieth-century architecture in Turkey can be presented as a conflict between a powerful state bureaucracy and an independent architectural community: the former producing most of the buildings and infrastructure but with little verbalisation; the latter producing most of the discourse but building relatively little. This article examines a case that challenges this dichotomy. It focuses on the architectural department of SİSAG (1969–77), a company associated with Hacettepe University in Ankara, and the organisational, institutional and occupational modes and practices that it employed. The article explores both the architectural production of SİSAG and its role as the setting for the first white-collar strike in Turkey, and it unearths the intellectual and institutional discourse on the organisation of architectural production that surfaced with this confrontation. The article shows how, in the relationship between bureaucratic tradition and professional discourse, SİSAG took an ‘in-between’ position, its architects seeking to replace conflict with cooperation, and to reconcile ideas of public service, public interest and social engagement on the one hand with disciplinary knowledge, planning and design and independent research on the other.

As they move steadily away from being the very recent past, the later decades of the twentieth century are attracting growing interest from scholars of modern architecture in Turkey, as elsewhere in the world. Literature published over the past decade or so has not only added significantly to the documentation of the global architectural incarnation of the modern movement, but also, as Meltem Gürel suggests, pointed to the complexity and plurality of modernisation trajectories by underlining the diversity within the social, political and cultural context.<sup>1</sup> This article contributes to the expansion in the narrative through the analysis of an important but overlooked example from the 1970s, namely the architectural department of SİSAG — a public economic enterprise owned and operated by two of the public interest foundations associated with Hacettepe University in Ankara — which undertook the planning, design and realisation of campuses and buildings for Hacettepe and other state universities.<sup>2</sup>

Although neither the buildings nor the architect credited with the designs can be considered completely obscure, the institution has escaped notice. What makes this surprising is that, during its short life, SİSAG was the locus of a major strike — the first

white-collar strike in Turkish history. This article argues that the strike was important not just for labour and political history, but also for architectural history, in that it articulated a particular view of how architectural production should be organised, both institutionally and intellectually. This view is consistent with developments in the social and political context of the period, although it also has ties to a long past. In this respect, the article argues that SİSAG sat between the older, late Ottoman/early Republican bureaucratic tradition regarding public services and a newer discourse on architectural professionalisation.

#### EARLY REPUBLICAN ERA: ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSIONALISATION VERSUS BUREAUCRATIC TRADITION

While the transformation that accompanied the creation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 significantly altered the social and political body inherited from the Ottoman empire, both the central role of the state and the importance of bureaucratic practices remained intact. A strong 'state tradition' was carried over from the Ottoman past into the Republican revolution.<sup>3</sup> The period of single-party rule by the founding Republican People's Party, which lasted until 1950, established a stage for bureaucracy on which the state was dominant in the cultural as well as the economic realm. In the absence of the reforming middle classes that played such a major role in western modernity, the state in the Republican revolution assumed a 'paternalistic' role as the sole actor in the implementation of modernisation.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, studies of the modern architectural history of Turkey tend to begin with the state's ideological frame and then turn to the impact of its social, economic and cultural policies and their extension into architectural practices. In the seminal work *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (2001), Sibel Bozdoğan shows how the Republican revolution sought to replace the outdated Ottoman social structure with a contemporary and secular nation state, and how architecture provided the Republic with the modern urban components of this nation-building project.<sup>5</sup> The value of this narrative in understanding Turkish modernity is indisputable, but it risks being reductive if state ideology and architectural discourse are considered as two distinct entities, with architecture serving as the agent of Republican ideology in a 'top-down' process of creating a modern nation state.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, the diverse actors involved in architectural production are thus treated as an abstract and homogeneous 'architectural community' united in a single task; and on the other, the variety of institutional organisations of architectural production that existed become irrelevant, codified in the unified body of the state. In other words, too often overlooked are the state-related institutions directly engaged in the production of the built environment.

In my doctoral thesis, I examined the operations of the Ministry of Public Works (Nafia Vekaleti), and its Office of Planning and Construction Works (Yapı ve İmar İşleri Reisliği), from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s — the largest single architectural office of the time. That work demonstrated the previous absence of the anonymous and poorly documented projects of the state offices in accounts of architectural production in early Republican Turkey, resulting in a gap that significantly hindered understanding of the architectural

history of the period.<sup>7</sup> From the state's public outlets, such as the journal published by the Ministry of Public Works, it is evident that the architects in state employment were busy designing buildings and that their outputs were not accompanied by the production of a distinctly architectural discourse. In this period, the state regarded any debate on architectural form or meaning with indifference and instead concentrated on presenting the scale, scope and reach of the Republican modernist construction programme in largely quantitative terms. The only architectural discourse and exclusively architectural debate was undertaken by a small but spirited community of architects in private practice, operating through organisations such as the Association of Turkish Architects (founded in 1927 as *Türk Mimarlar Cemiyeti*) and the journal *Arkitekt* (1931–81). Challenging the state's dominance in the production of the built environment, these architects argued that it should be commissioning the design of public buildings from independent architects, preferably through architectural competitions rather than through state offices. The architects were keen to put at the service of the state their ongoing efforts in developing a modern architectural form with a national/Republican identity — provided that the state took the role of client and not employer.<sup>8</sup>

Architectural production in the early Republican period thus involved the architectural community in its early stages of professionalisation, with its insistent promotion of private practice, and the highly productive but silent architectural bureaucracy. The former considered architectural practice to be the province of creative individuals who had been trained as experts in architectural form, meaning and identity, while the latter replaced all that with the anonymous and interdisciplinary production of the built environment as public service. Like any other technical experts, architects in state offices were seen primarily as public servants, with any professional identification a matter of secondary importance. Concepts such as public service and public interest took priority over issues of architectural form or representation, and these concepts were heavily loaded with political as well as ethical values.<sup>9</sup>

While the binary of the bureaucratic tradition *versus* professional identification explains much, research into the operational practices of the era suggests a much more mobile, flexible and multi-layered operational context, in which the people involved displayed diverse, even shifting roles and identities.<sup>10</sup> In place of a duality of absolutes, this article reveals more compromised, hybridised and 'in-between' forms of architectural production.

#### 1960S AND 1970S: A PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The election victory of the Democratic Party in May 1950 marked not just a transition to multi-party democracy, but also a turning point in the economic policies of the state, moving away from the statist programme of industrialisation of previous decades. The professionalisation of architecture reached a new level in 1954 with the foundation of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (*Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği*, or TMMOB), bringing together the Chamber of Architects of Turkey and numerous engineering bodies into a single institution. The TMMOB law, by which the confederation was established, also defined the legal rights and privileges of the architectural and engineering professions, as well as their jurisdictional boundaries —

something that had been demanded by the architectural community for decades.<sup>11</sup> The completion of the Hilton Hotel in Istanbul in 1955, designed by the US architecture firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM), initiated the dominance in Turkey of the International Style. The architectural language of post-war modernism flourished in Turkey, as elsewhere, reinforced by the enhanced communication with the western world promoted by Turkey's inclusion in the Marshall Plan and, from 1952, membership of NATO.<sup>12</sup>

The Istanbul Hilton was financed in part by funds provided under the Marshall Plan, through the Economic Cooperation Administration, and in part by the Turkish pension fund (Emekli Sandığı) through the real-estate and construction companies that it owned and operated. This was symptomatic of what was happening more broadly. Following the liberal turn in the 1950s, public economic enterprises did not lose status as major economic actors, but rather added new strings to their bow. Investment in tourism and real-estate development in the newly flourishing commercial and business districts of the larger cities now coexisted alongside the heavy industrial focus of state enterprises inherited from the pre-war era. Overall, in the 1950s nearly half of Turkey's total economic investment still came from the state.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the increase in private architectural practice did not necessarily imply a decrease in the building practices of bureaucratic institutions. In the 1960s and 1970s, the state was still considered an appealing career path for architectural graduates, who greatly increased in number with the foundation of new universities.

Until the 1950s there had been no architectural education in Turkey outside Istanbul. In the early decades of the Republic, the only architecture school was the Academy of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi), founded in Istanbul in 1882. In the 1930s, the school moved away from its *beaux arts* roots towards a contemporary modern approach, first under the Viennese architect Ernst Egli (1930–36) and then under Bruno Taut (1936–38), who were invited to Turkey for this purpose. Until mid-century the only addition to Turkey's architectural education was the Technical University (later, Istanbul Technical University), founded in 1944, which provided a joint degree in architecture and engineering. But in the 1950s the Republican state took on the task of creating new higher education institutions across the rest of the country: Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara in 1956; Karadeniz (Black Sea) Technical University (KTU) in Trabzon, founded in 1955 but operational in 1963; Ege University in Izmir (on the Aegean coast) in 1955; and Atatürk University in Erzurum (in Eastern Anatolia) in 1957. Among these new universities, METU and KTU had architecture departments, with the former including the first planning department in the country.<sup>14</sup>

In 1960, the government of the Democratic Party was overthrown in a military coup. Although the liberal path that the country had followed during its decade in power was not reversed, following the coup there emerged a new social, political and cultural context that had a marked effect on discourse within both public service and architectural practice. Belief in planned development and progress was renewed; the prestige attached to public service and public employment was enhanced; and increased importance was attached to scientific knowledge and expertise.<sup>15</sup> In short, belief in the role of the state functionary was largely restored. In this context, public servants were not only to be equipped with extended technical skills and expertise, but were also accorded a reinforced social legitimacy in the use of these skills in the pursuit of public interest and social responsibility.



Fig. 1. Sönmez apartments, Ankara, Sabih Kayan, 1957, photograph of 2014 (Koç University VEKAM Library and Archive)

After 1968, the concept of public service began to change. The events of spring that year and the enhanced political engagement that lasted throughout the 1970s led to the concepts of public service, public interest and social responsibility being reformulated, and ideas associated with critical international left-wing politics were given greater prominence. This affected the entire community of white-collar technical experts, whether in state employment or private practice, as was seen in the renewed agenda pursued by the younger generation of professionals who began to take up important positions in the TMMOB administration from 1970. In the Chamber of Architects (as well as other chambers in TMMOB), the founding generation, who had pursued the primary goal of securing official recognition of their professional organisation and the legal definition of professional activities, were openly criticised for remaining superficially 'professionalist' by younger members. These members argued that the Chamber of Architects should reformulate social service in less technocratic and more socially engaged terms (to which the older generation responded that professional organisations should not engage in politics). At the 1966 general assembly of the chamber, the Socialist Architects group tested the vote against the existing administration of the Chamber of Architects, and in 1970 they won control of the major branches, in Ankara and Istanbul, as well as the central board.<sup>16</sup> A similar attitude, striving for a more critical and socially responsible approach to architectural education, could be observed in the new schools of architecture, particularly at METU in Ankara.<sup>17</sup>

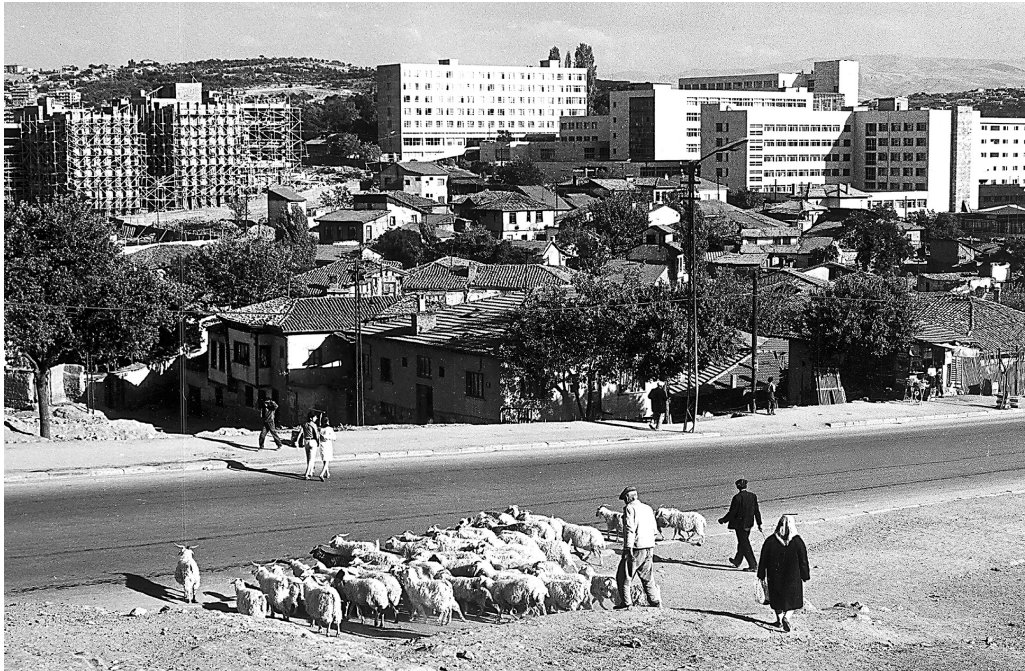


Fig. 2. Medical and educational buildings under construction in the Hacettepe district, Ankara, photograph of 1968 (METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)

#### SİSAG, ITS ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION AND ORGANISATION

Indicative of the new approach was the history of the architectural division of SİSAG, a public interest company founded in Ankara in 1969. The initials stood for Sistem, İşletme, Proje Servisi, Araştırma Geliştirme (System, Management, Project Services, Research and Development), and the company's focus was on providing IT and other services to state institutions in higher education. The company was owned and operated by the Hacettepe Centre of Medicine Foundation (Hacettepe Tıp Merkezi Vakfı) and the Hacettepe University Foundation (Hacettepe Üniversitesi Vakfı). These foundations had been created as financial instruments of the Hacettepe Centre of Science, an umbrella organisation founded in 1965 for the various educational and medical institutions in the Hacettepe district of Ankara, which after being grouped into the Faculty of Medical Sciences became Hacettepe University in 1967.<sup>18</sup> The general director of SİSAG was Önel Örs, one of the pioneers of computer sciences and informatics in Turkey. While the majority of the company's 200 largely white-collar employees worked in IT (programmers, systems analysts, systems engineers, and so on), there was also an architectural division with twenty-seven architects and technicians.<sup>19</sup> By Turkish standards of the time, this was a large office, matching the larger offices of central state bodies and more than twice the size of Tekeli & Sisa, one of the largest private practices in Turkey.<sup>20</sup>

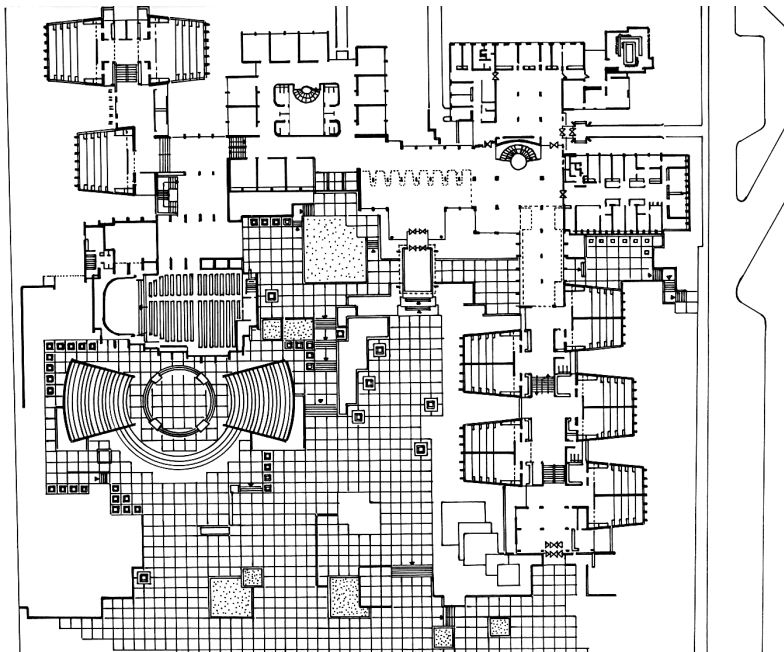
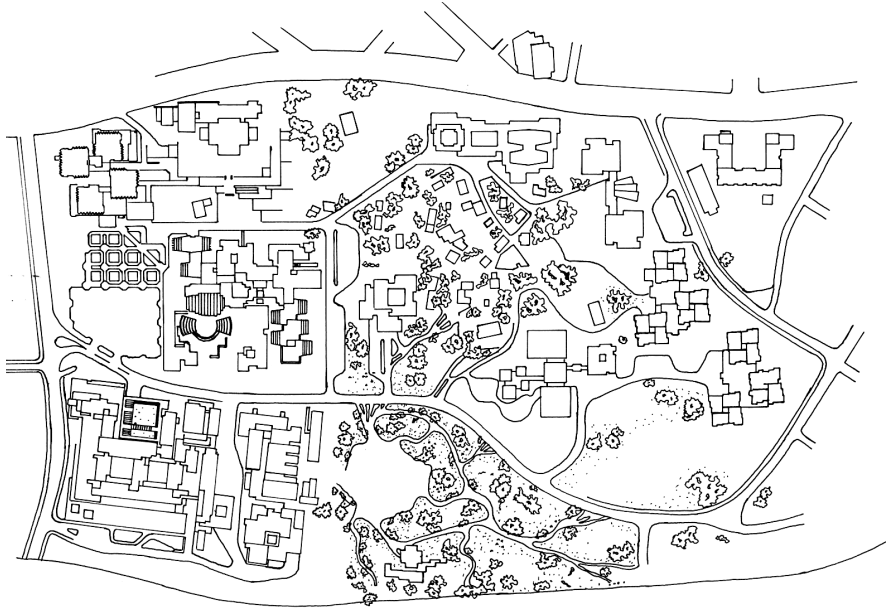


Fig. 3 (top) and Fig. 4. Hacettepe University central campus, Ankara, site plan and layout plan of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Sabih Kayan and others, 1962–73, redrawn by Yıldırım Yavuz, 1973 (METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)



Fig. 5. Hacettepe University central campus, Ankara, Faculty of Natural Sciences, entrance courtyard, Sabih Kayan and others, 1962–73, photograph of 1973 (METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)

The directors of the architectural office were the architects Sabih Kayan and Gündoğdu Akkor. Kayan had graduated in 1944 from ETH Zurich, where he studied architecture as well as painting and sculpture. After working briefly in Zurich, he was employed in the Office of Projects and Control of the General Directorate of State Theatres of Turkey (Devlet Tiyatroları Proje ve Kontrol Bürosu), where he designed stage sets for the plays put on by the state-run theatre company, until he set up his own office in 1948. His private practice was involved in a wide variety of projects of different scales, from residences to industrial complexes and from interior design to urban planning. Kayan is best known for the Sönmez apartments in Ankara, built in 1957 (Fig. 1), a cherished and well-preserved structure notable for its dense yet architecturally integrated use of decorative elements and treatments that reinforce the architectural disposition of the design.<sup>21</sup> In 1964, Kayan was asked to establish an architectural unit to design the buildings for the Hacettepe Centre of Science, which was officially founded the next year.<sup>22</sup> In 1968, in preparation for designing a follow-on project — the new Beytepe campus of Hacettepe — he was sent to Britain by the university to research and observe campuses there.<sup>23</sup> Kayan's unit was then integrated with SİSAG (probably in 1969), which he managed until 1976. After 1980, Kayan abandoned architectural practice to focus on painting, including giving painting courses at Hacettepe University.<sup>24</sup>

Kayan's co-director at SİSAG, Gündoğdu Akkor, came from a very different background. Akkor was a hospital specialist who had graduated from Istanbul



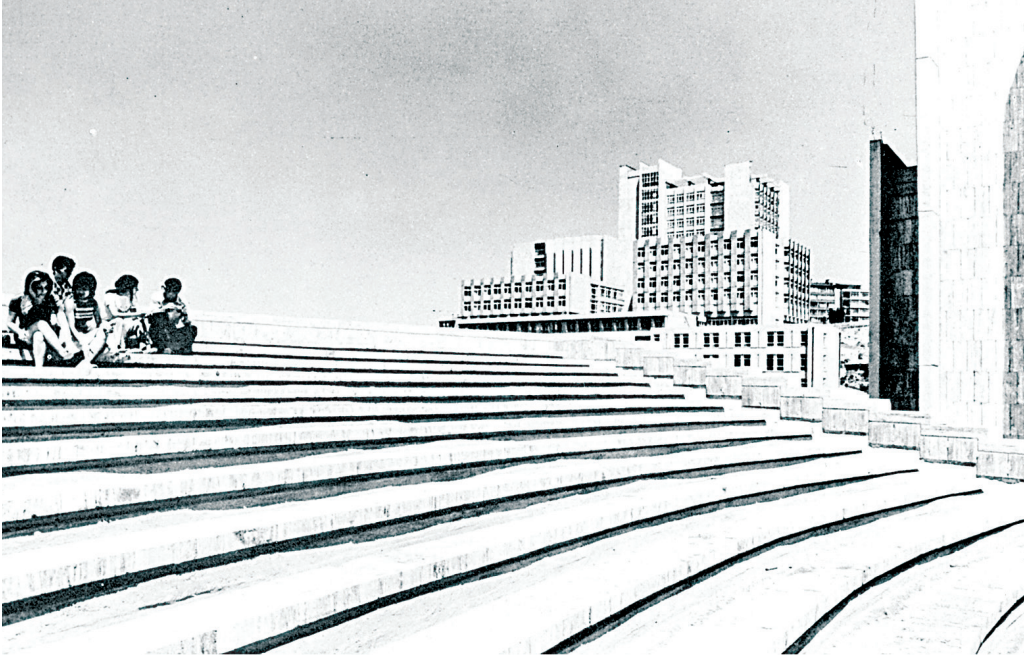


Fig. 6. *Hacettepe University central campus, Ankara, Faculty of Natural Sciences, open amphitheatre, Sabih Kayan and others, 1962–73, photograph of 1973 (METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)*

Technical University in 1955 and was involved in the architectural design of a variety of medical and educational buildings in the Hacettepe district beginning in 1961, when the Hacettepe Children's Hospital that was opened in 1957 had to be rebuilt following a fire. Akkor published numerous articles on hospital buildings in architectural journals in Turkey in the 1970s and held management positions in the various Hacettepe companies that came after SİSAG.<sup>25</sup>

The Hacettepe Children's Hospital — the first hospital for children established in Turkey — evolved rapidly to include a much larger complex of hospitals and medical education buildings in the same neighbourhood, all designed and realised by the architectural office administered by Kayan and Akkor that previously operated within the Hacettepe Centre of Science. The medical-cum-educational complex evolved to become the central campus of the newly founded Hacettepe University, while the architectural team in the Hacettepe Centre of Science became the architectural office of the SİSAG company. After undertaking the design of the campus in the Hacettepe district, located in the historic city centre, the SİSAG office took on the planning, design and realisation of the Beytepe campus for Hacettepe University, as well as sixteen other university and hospital buildings across the country. The Beytepe campus, which included all the other faculties of the university, was located on the western outskirts of Ankara, next to the METU campus built in 1963.

The construction of the central campus in the Hacettepe district, largely completed by 1968 (Fig. 2), was the subject of fierce controversy, not so much for its design



Fig. 7. *Hacettepe University central campus, Ankara, cafeteria, Sabih Kayan and others, photograph of 1973 (METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)*

as for the destruction it wreaked on a large part of the historic centre of Ankara, which previously the Jansen Plan for Ankara of 1928 had protected. The campus was built on the site of traditional residential areas that extended towards the citadel in the north and included the hill that gave the district its name (*Hacet tepe*, meaning 'hill of prayers') and which had been preserved as a green public space in the Jansen Plan.<sup>26</sup> Most criticisms were directed at the powerful persona of İhsan Doğramacı, the founder and driving force behind Hacettepe University and all its attached companies, and at the obscure means by which he managed to exclude the campus site from the protection provided by the planning system.

Leaving the controversies to one side, the new university buildings possessed architectural qualities of note. Reacting against the modernist slab brought to the country by the Istanbul Hilton, Turkish architects of the 1960s and 1970s developed the concept of the 'fragmented block', with designs 'fragmenting the unity of the prism' to achieve 'increased formal complexity and functional adaptation'.<sup>27</sup> The buildings on the Hacettepe campus were important examples of this movement (Figs 3–5). Within the educational buildings of the campus, the architects managed to create varying scales of courtyards in a continuity of indoor and outdoor spaces. An open amphitheatre provided the campus with a large and central public

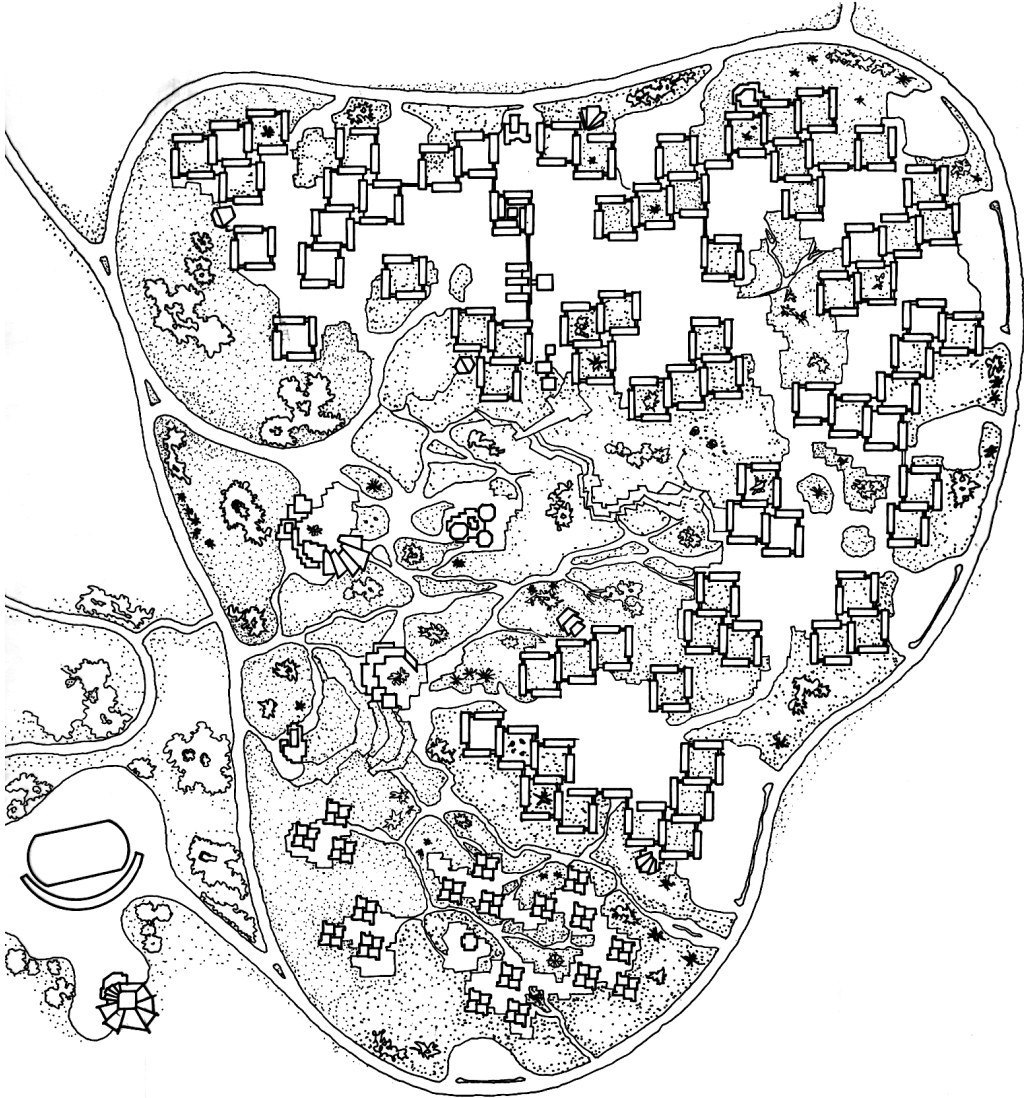


Fig. 8. Hacettepe Beytepe campus, Ankara, early site plan, redrawn by Yıldırım Yavuz, 1973  
(METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)

open space with multiple functions (Fig. 6). In a departure from the prevailing architectural language of the campus, the cafeteria building with its large eaves and wooden shutters blended traditional architectural forms and elements with those of international modernism (Fig. 7).



Fig. 9. Hacettepe Beytepe campus, Ankara, aerial photograph of the early 1970s (Hacettepe University)

#### WORKING FOR SİSAG: AN EMPLOYEE'S TESTIMONY

The architectural office of SİSAG undertook the planning of the new campus of Hacettepe University in Beytepe in 1968, as well as the design of the buildings, beginning immediately after the first campus in the Hacettepe district was finalised. In Beytepe, the architects designed a modular and flexible grid of linear blocks laid out around large central courtyards as they researched methodologies of 'planning micro and macro future growth', in the words of one architect employee of SİSAG, Yücel Akyürek (Figs 8–10).<sup>28</sup> This must also have helped them to provide a unity of expression, aside from facilitating an efficiently fast production process. According to Akyürek, the younger architects who worked on the projects under Kayan and Akkor found it difficult to design such a large variety of spaces with diverse functions, scales and experiential characteristics in the limited frame of the same modular unit. Akyürek wrote that they would refer to this design approach as an 'architecture of taxidermy', as it meant trying to 'stuff in' all sorts of spaces into a challengingly rigid framework.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, the Beytepe campus, similar to the earlier campus of Hacettepe University, was designed in a coherent and consistent modern architectural language, with strong references to contemporary architecture in Turkey and abroad.

Akyürek's memoir — a collection of autobiographical 'stories' written over the course of ten years — provides an invaluable first-hand account of the design of Beytepe.<sup>30</sup> Born

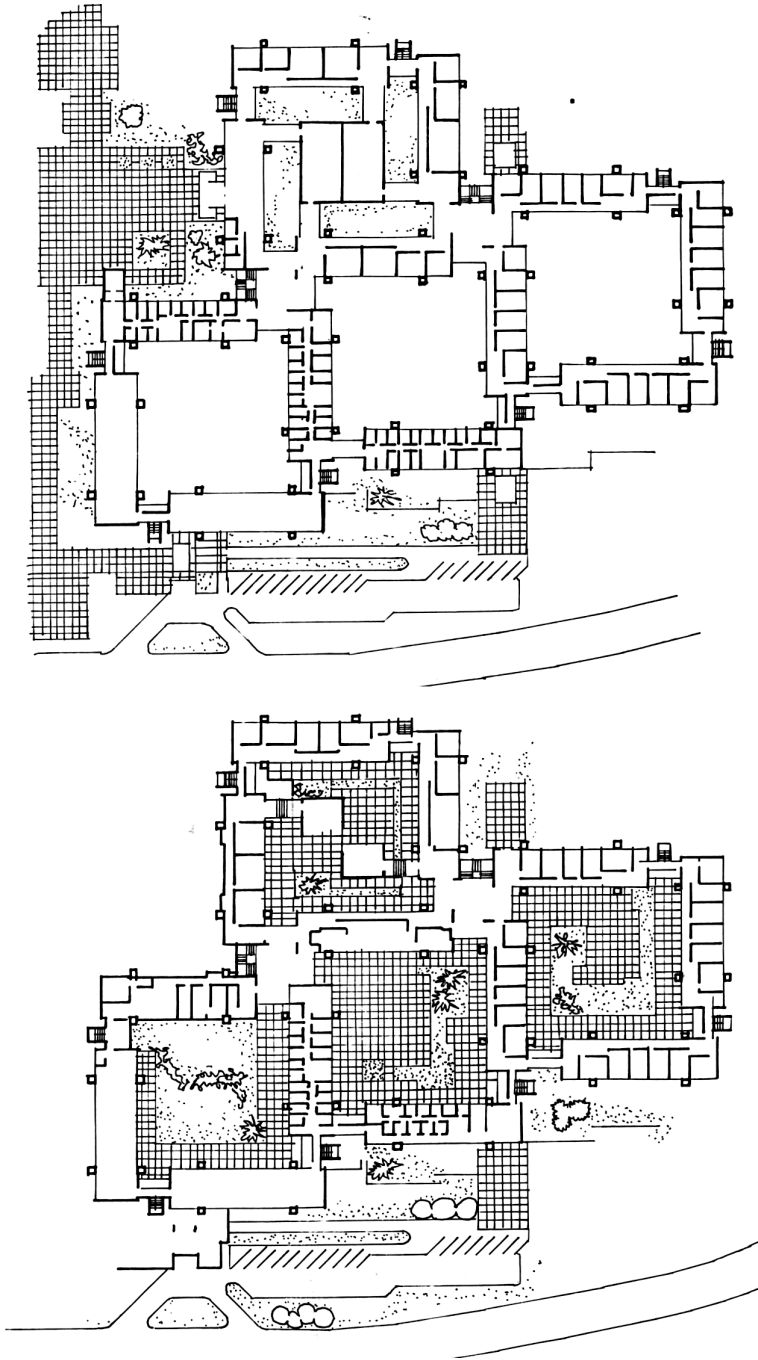


Fig. 10. Hacettepe Beytepe campus, Ankara, typical faculty plan, redrawn by Yıldırım Yavuz, 1973  
(METU Faculty of Architecture Archive)

in 1942, he was one of the first graduates from the new architecture school of METU in 1967 and joined SİSAG in 1974. He introduced himself in his memoir as an architect who worked in the design and realisation of numerous buildings in Turkey and abroad in his long and diverse career, which began in the Ministry of Public Works before his obligatory military service and his move to SİSAG. Seeking to provide insight into the spirit of a past time, rather than to provide detailed and documented information on events, the memoir paints a vivid picture of the professional state of mind of the architects employed by SİSAG and gives a sense of the daily experiences of work that are not documented elsewhere.

Akyürek paid tribute to his training at METU and the innovative and reformed pedagogical methodologies to which he and his peers were introduced in their architectural education. The implication is that the critical thinking which was central to his architectural education there made it hard to follow a career in private practice, not least because the latter was dominated by the Istanbul-based architects who had graduated from the older Istanbul schools.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, when given the opportunity to join the SİSAG team, he accepted the position, alongside several other METU graduates. He found, however, that the organisation lacked the intellectual democracy and professional communication that he expected. Apparently, Kayan and Akkor were not receptive to ideas or open to dialogue, and the working environment was 'factory like', with the staff expected to do all they were assigned, regardless of their own expert opinion.<sup>32</sup> Akyürek recalled how he and his colleagues, dissatisfied with the 'architecture of taxidermy', took it on themselves to research contemporary international university campuses but were unable to make themselves heard. This evidently was not what he had foreseen in choosing to work at SİSAG, rather than going into private practice.

In writing of his professional encounters with Kayan, Akyürek used the word *tashih*. Arabic in origin, the word means 'correction, to make right', and was used in the academy in Istanbul for the review sessions in which the professors would correct the students' work. Akyürek recounted that, in the office, Kayan would only do *tashih* with a pencil in his hand. The term adopted for the corresponding practice in the studios at METU was *kritik* — as an adoption of the word 'critique' into Turkish. By emphasising the word *tashih*, Akyürek underlined the contrast between his own training in critical dialogue and the one-way instruction that involved only 'correction', which Kayan received as a member of the previous generation and apparently still practised. Akkor, on the other hand, is defined as being highly disciplined and distant. The architectural employees were also unhappy that the two supervisors declined to share professional credit for the designs with the rest of the office, with authorship attributed solely to Kayan and Akkor.

#### THE STRIKE AND ITS AFTERMATH: FROM SİSAG TO TPG

One of the major events recounted by Akyürek was his participation in the 1976–77 strike of SİSAG staff, the first white-collar strike in Turkish history, in which he was the union leader. A large proportion of the SİSAG technical staff had joined Sosyal-İş, a trade union for people working in the arts and technical roles founded in 1966, which was part of the umbrella organisation DİSK (Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu — Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey).<sup>33</sup> An article in November



Fig. 11. Architect employees on the picket line during the SİSAG strike of 1976, from Yücel Akyürek, *Yolboyu* [Along the Way], 2019

1976 in the newsletter of TÜTED (Tüm Teknik Elemanlar Derneği — Association of All Technical Personnel) described SİSAG as a company that ‘owes its initial success and rapid development to the young staff who worked hard in conditions’.<sup>34</sup> But according to the article the company did not reciprocate the devotion of its workers, with long working hours, unfair wages and a rigidly hierarchical structure. Following the dismissal of a number of staff, discontent erupted into a full-blown strike, which started early in September 1976 and lasted until the end of January 1977 (Fig. 11).

The strike had wide support, including not just left-wing political groups and politicians — notably Bülent Ecevit, the former prime minister and current leader of the opposition in the National Assembly — but also the Chamber of Architects of Turkey. There were no violent or aggressive events, as the SİSAG management decided to avoid confrontation with the strikers. Their response instead was to transfer all of the company’s ongoing projects to TEKSİS (Teknoloji ve Sistem — Technology and System), which the same Hacettepe foundations founded just a couple of months before the strike took off, hence circumventing those on strike.<sup>35</sup> Kayan and Akkor also left SİSAG and moved to TEKSİS, with the result that both of them were referred to the disciplinary committee of the Chamber of Architects. The strike ended with a collective bargaining agreement in which the demands of the strikers were met in full, and Akyürek recalled the optimistic atmosphere and collective spirit that ensued. The victory was short-lived, however, since a year later the Hacettepe University Foundation closed SİSAG and most of the ongoing works were transferred to the other companies that had been founded in anticipation of and during the strike, including TEKSİS.

When SİSAG closed in February 1978, the employees were paid the compensation detailed in the agreement that ended the strike. These quite substantial sums were used by some of the staff in the same year to set up a new company, TPG (*Teknoloji Proje Geliştirme* — Technology, Project, Development). Akyürek, who was one of those involved, said that the idea behind the new venture was to implement everything they

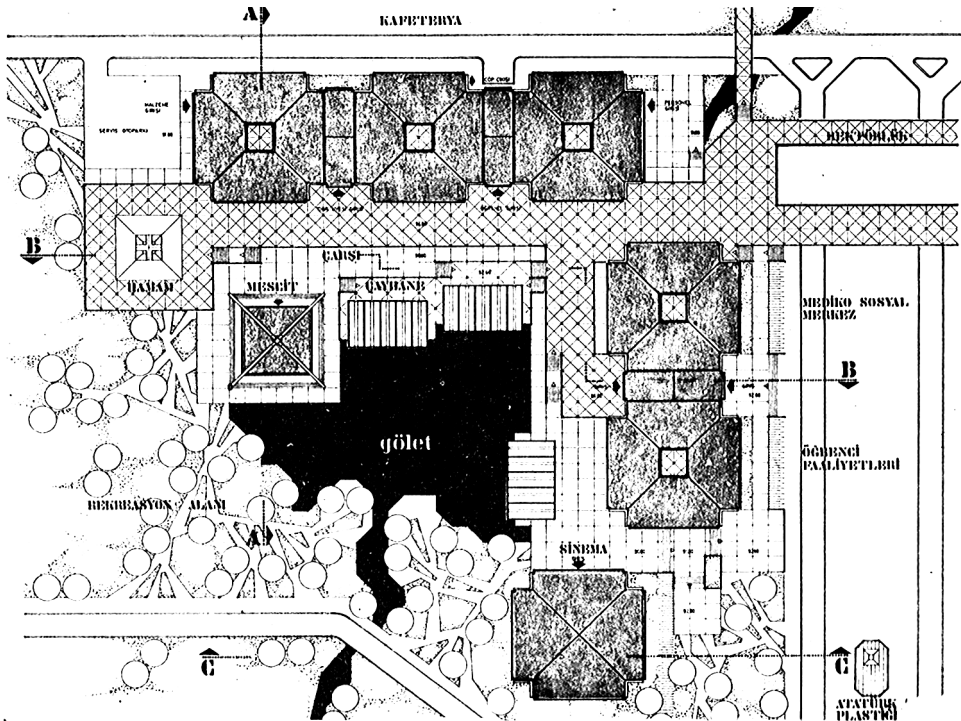


Fig. 12. Recreational centre for Bursa University, TPG, site plan, 1978, from *Mimarlık*, no. 4 (1978), p. 53

had sought at SİSAG in terms of collective management and cooperative production. The new company established contacts with the state, hoping to obtain commissions for research and development as well as design and production, and undertook a number of design projects based on their experience with university campuses.

One such design was for Bursa University (later renamed Uludağ University), which was founded in 1975 in the ancient Ottoman capital located south of the Sea of Marmara. The building comprised a social and recreational centre with cafeteria, infirmary, baths, prayer house, and so on. Set within the 1976 masterplan designed by Sezar Aygen, it combined various levels of the natural topography, oriented towards an artificial lake, and featured pedestrian paths at multiple levels that extended deeper into the campus (Figs 12–14).<sup>36</sup> The repetitive square blocks with repetitive façades and square inner courtyards suggest that the designers were unable to abandon their experiments with the modular, strict square grid that they criticised before as an ‘architecture of taxidermy’. Also reminiscent of the Hacettepe designs of SİSAG were the partial references to traditional architecture in modern interpretations, applied here in the public bath and prayer-house units. These probably made better sense in this case, presenting historically relevant typologies especially for the ancient city of Bursa.



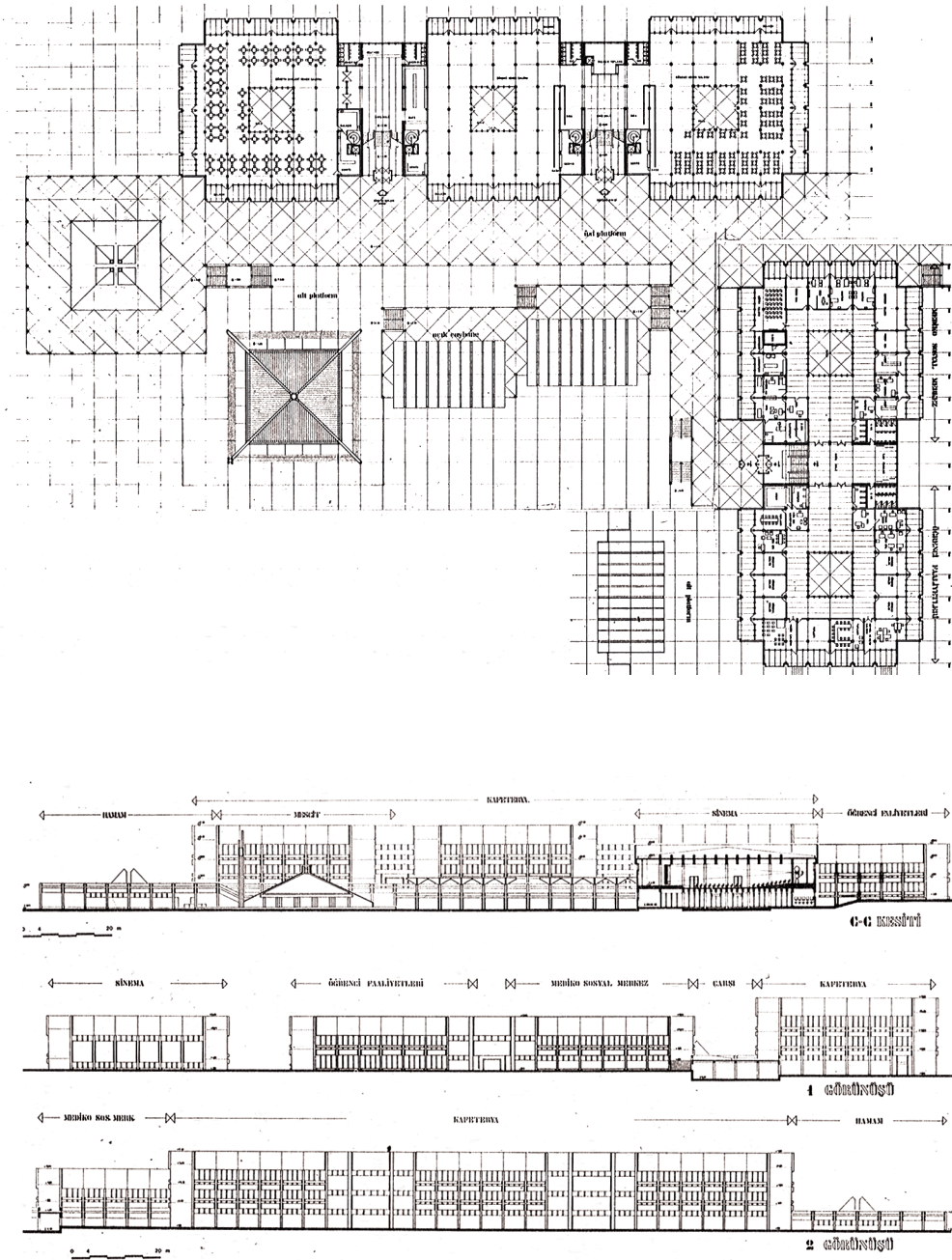


Fig. 13 (top) and Fig. 14. Recreational centre for Bursa University, TPG, ground-floor plan and sections, 1978, from *Mimarlık*, no. 4 (1978), pp. 54–55

The TPG design for Bursa University was published in 1978 in *Mimarlık*, the journal of the Chamber of Architects. The accompanying text emphasised the collective and trans-professional authorship of the project, stating that it was the product of the 'collective labour of twenty-five people, ten of whom were architects, as the staff assigned to the project group in TPG', and naming as project directors the architects Fatih Ergökmen (who graduated from METU in 1971) and Sinan Sinanoğlu (who graduated from METU in 1972).<sup>37</sup> The project description was accompanied by a short but interesting essay by Aygen, making the case for design and project management to be recognised as a collective research and development process.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, this promising experiment in collective operational organisation did not survive long and ceased trading after a few years.

## CONCLUSION

Both at the time of the strike and in Akyürek's memoir, SİSAG was criticised for being run 'as if it were a private office'.<sup>39</sup> The criticism arose less from the nature of private offices *per se* (Akyürek later opened a private office and the Chamber of Architects was an organisation of such offices) than from the disappointment evidently felt by those involved in SİSAG, who were expecting something more or at least something different. Notwithstanding their negative experience, SİSAG can therefore be considered a unique institutional environment that inspired those involved to search for alternative and innovative approaches to architectural production.

Emerging from the strike, the TPG experiment offered an alternative, 'in-between' structure that transcended the supposed duality of professional practice *versus* bureaucratic tradition and allowed both of them to evolve. This in turn owed a great deal to the larger social, political and intellectual developments of the 1960s and the 1970s, not least the renewed emphasis on the role of public service and expertise. An enhanced level of institutionalisation was seen in the role of the state in economic development and social progress at the time, accompanying a reinforcement of political meaning in the social function of professional organisations of architects, such as the Chamber of Architects. As a result, social engagement and the roles of public service and disciplinary knowledge drew significantly closer. Professional practice could seek to shift its emphasis on the architectural form and the designer's creative faculties towards independent research, aiming at the cooperative production of disciplinary knowledge. At the same time, the ethos of public service and public interest that stemmed from the bureaucratic tradition could find fertile ground in the intellectual context of the period, leading to a more 'civil' version detached from the state-propagandist vocabulary that was so difficult to abandon in the past.

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## BIOGRAPHY

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## NOTES

- 1 Meltem Gürel, ed., *Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey: Architecture across Cultures in the 1950s and 1960s* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1. See also Sibel Bozdoğan and Esra Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion, 2012).
- 2 For the trade registry of the company on its foundation, see 'SİSAG', *Türkiye Ticaret Sicili Gazetesi [Trade Registry Gazette of Turkey]*, 19 February 1969, pp. 1–2.
- 3 Feroz Ahmad defines the role of the state in Ottoman-Turkish history as 'of the utmost importance' and 'at times [...] overwhelming': Feroz Ahmad, *From Empire to the Republic: Essays on the Late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2008), II, p. 1. See also Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Beverly: Eothen Press, 1985).
- 4 Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 57.
- 5 Bozdoğan extends her analysis from the early Republican period to the entire twentieth century in Bozdoğan and Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures in History*.
- 6 See Meltem Ahiska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), pp. 8–14.
- 7 The office undertook 1,335 buildings and the preparation of 120 plans for towns and cities in its first decade between 1934 and 1944. See Bilge İmamoglu, 'Architectural Production in State Offices: An Inquiry into the Professionalization of Architecture in Early Republican Turkey' (unpublished doctoral thesis, TU Delft, 2010), pp. 87–89.
- 8 See İmamoglu, 'Architectural Production in State Offices', pp. 61–64. See also Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu, 'The Professionalization of the Ottoman-Turkish Architect' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1989).
- 9 For examples, see İmamoglu, 'Architectural Production in State Offices', pp. 97–99.
- 10 This is particularly observable in the survey of architects employed by the Ministry of Public Works. See İmamoglu, 'Architectural Production in State Offices', pp. 203–25.
- 11 'Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği Kanunu', *T.C. Resmî Gazete [Official Gazette]*, no. 8625, 4 February 1954, pp. 8095–96.
- 12 Gürel, ed., *Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey*, pp. 1–8. For the 'Hilton Style', see Bozdoğan and Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures*, pp. 121–26.
- 13 Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 225.
- 14 See the memoir of Kemal Kurdaş, the rector of METU from 1961 to 1969: Kemal Kurdaş, *ODTÜ Yıllarım: Bir Hizmetin Hikayesi [My Time in METU: The Story of a Service]* (Ankara: METU Press, 1998). Also Ayşen Savaş, 'The METU Campus Documented V: Representing Itself', *METU JFA*, 36, no. 1 (2019), pp. 285–95.

- 15 See Bozdoğan and Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures*, pp. 171–202; Burak Erdim, ‘Under the Flags of the Marshall Plan: Multiple Modernisms and Professional Legitimacy in the Cold War Middle East, 1950–1964’, in *Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey*, ed. by Gürel, pp. 87–115.
- 16 Bülent Batuman, ‘Tarihsel Bağlamı İçinde Mimarlık Semineri’ [‘The Seminar on Architecture in its Historical Context’], in *1969 Mimarlık Seminerini Anımsama [In Remembrance of the Seminar on Architecture]*, ed. by Arif Şentek (Ankara: TMMOB Mimarlar Odası Ankara Şubesi, 2012), pp. 7–14 (p. 8). See also Bülent Batuman, ‘Turkish Urban Professionals and the Politics of Housing, 1960–1980’, *METU JFA*, 23, no. 1 (2006), pp. 59–81.
- 17 Baykan Günay, ‘Fritz Janeba ve Tasarımın Anaokulu’ [‘Fritz Janeba and the Kindergarten of Design’], in *Bauhaus\_100+TR*, ed. by A. Derin İnan and Ali Cengizkan (Ankara: TED University Faculty of Architecture, 2020), pp. 208–99.
- 18 See the history of the university at <hacettepe.edu.tr/about/history> [accessed 2 February 2022].
- 19 ‘Sisag Grevi’ [‘The Sisag Strike’], *Bülten – Ankara Şubesi [Newsletter – Ankara Branch of the Chamber of Architects of Turkey]*, no. 89 (May 2011), pp. 49–51, 62–68.
- 20 Tekeli & Sisa was in practice almost the entire second half of the twentieth century; in 1975 it had ten employees, eight of whom were architects. Doğan Tekeli, *Mimarlık: Zor Zanaat [Architecture: Tough Business]* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012), p. 316.
- 21 See ‘Sönmez Apartmanı’, in *Sivil Mimari Bellek: Ankara 1930–1980 [Memory of Civil Architecture: Ankara 1930–1980]*, ed. by Nuray Bayraktar and others, exhibition catalogue, VEKAM (Ankara: 2014), p. 135.
- 22 For Kayan, see ‘Atatürk Anıtı’ [‘Atatürk Monument’], *Arkitekt*, no. 348 (April 1978), p. 159.
- 23 Bozkurt Güvenç, ‘Atatürk Kültür Merkezi: Yirminci Yüzyıl Yapısının Yirmi Birinci Yüzyıla Taşınması, Murat Tabanlıoğlu’nun Mimarlık’taki Yazısı Üzerine’ [‘Atatürk Cultural Centre: Conveying a Twentieth-Century Building to the Twenty-first, on an Article by Murat Tabanlıoğlu in Mimarlık’], *Mimarlık*, no. 372 (July–August 2013). Unfortunately no information on Kayan’s trip to Britain has been uncovered.
- 24 See <arhm.ktb.gov.tr/artists/detail/2326/sabih-kayan> [accessed 2 February 2022].
- 25 See <prabook.com/web/gundogdu.akkor/604652> [accessed 2 February 2022].
- 26 Necva Akçura, ‘Türkiye ve Eski Eserler’ [‘Turkey and Historic Artefacts’], *Mimarlık*, no. 42 (August 1972), p. 106. See also Melda Açmaz Özden, ‘Urban Transformation in 1950’s: The Case of Hacettepe District, Ankara’, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3, no. 19 (2013), pp. 86–98.
- 27 Yıldırım Yavuz, ‘Cumhuriyet Dönemi Ankarasında Mimari Biçim Endişesi’ [‘Concern for Architectural Form in Republican Ankara’], *Mimarlık*, nos 11–12 (November–December 1973), pp. 26–44 (p. 32). On the ‘fragmented block’ as a critical alternative to the prismatic block of the International Style in this period, see Bozdoğan and Akcan, *Turkey: Modern Architectures*, p. 183.
- 28 Yücel Akyürek, *Yolboyu [Along the Way]* (Istanbul: Yeni İnsan Yay, 2019), p. 171.
- 29 Akyürek, *Yolboyu*, p. 171.
- 30 Akyürek, *Yolboyu*.
- 31 Akyürek, *Yolboyu*, p. 170.
- 32 Akyürek, *Yolboyu*, p. 171.
- 33 The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey was created in response to the reinvigorated milieu of extended rights and freedoms brought by the new constitution of 1961.
- 34 ‘Sisag Grevi Sürüyor’ [‘The Sisag Strike Continues’], *TÜTED Haberler*, no. 43 (November 1976), pp. 1–2 (p. 2), author’s translation. TÜTED was originally a union of technical personnel of all kinds, founded in 1970 and banned in 1971, after which it continued its activities as an association.
- 35 TEKSİS was founded on 28 June 1976 with the same purposes and field of activity as SİSAG. See ‘TEKSİS’, *Türkiye Ticaret Sicili Gazetesi [Trade Registry Gazette of Turkey]*, no. 6, 8 July 1976, p. 2.
- 36 TPG, ‘Bursa Üniversitesi Sosyal-Rekreatif Merkez’ [‘Bursa University Social-Recreational Centre’], *Mimarlık*, no. 4 (1978), pp. 53–55.
- 37 TPG, ‘Bursa Üniversitesi Sosyal-Rekreatif Merkez’, p. 54, author’s translation. On *Mimarlık*, see also Sabiha Göloğlu, ‘Analyzing the *Mimarlık* Journal: Post-Modern Theory and Practice in Turkey’, in *Open 30: Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, ed. by Alexandra Brown and Andrew Leach, 2 vols (Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2013), I, pp. 17–27.
- 38 Sezar Aygen, ‘Araştırma, Geliştirme, Teknoloji Üretimi ve Kalkınma’ [‘Research, Development, Technology Production and Progress’], *Mimarlık*, no. 4 (1978), p. 53.
- 39 ‘Sisag Grevi Sürüyor’, pp. 1–2 (p. 2), author’s translation.