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Standardization of Domestic Space in Printed Media in Early Republican Period Turkey

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Abstract. This study aims to analyse how Western efforts on standardization of domestic life reflected on home sphere and women's role in the household in Early Republican period Turkey (1930-1950). Transformation of domestic space was a central discussion within the modernization agenda of the Early Republican period in Turkey. In parallel, women had a crucial role at home, as the maker of a well-functioning and "rational" space and daily life. Therefore, popular media and architectural magazines targeted women and gave examples of a new house to be organized within this regard. These journals mostly published household goods, furniture or scenes of interiors from Europe and the U.S, which were far from the traditional meaning of the house in Turkey. The proposed house was divided into sections and standardized, "comfortable" and "simple" were the keywords, and women were the administrators of "order" and "science" in the rationalization of domestic space. This study, as a method, evaluates the standardization studies about domestic space with examples from architectural or popular media and aims to reveal the reflections Western modernization efforts in Early Republican period Turkey.

1. Introduction

This study, evaluates the standardization studies about domestic space with examples from architectural and popular media and aims to reveal the reflections of Western modernization efforts in Early Republican period Turkey. As a method, period journals (1930-1950) such as *Yenigün*, *Yedigün*, *Muhit* and architectural journals such as *Arkitekt* are analyzed to question the influence of Western ideals of home-making in printed media in Turkey.

The modernization of the house was among the main discussions in the West in the first half of the twentieth century. Industrial principles of modernization such as "flexibility", "diversity" and "standardization" begun to find their counterparts within the house, as it started to be fragmented into separate functions as living space, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom within calculated standards. Optimization studies aimed at managing housework fast and easy were carried out by American female figures such as Catharine Beecher (1800-1878) Lillian Gilbreth (1878-1972) and Christine Frederick (1883-1970). Lillian Gilbreth first used the "time and movement" principle of Frederick Winslow Taylor to increase efficiency in factories, while Beecher divided the kitchen into two parts with "conservation-storage" and "cooking-service" sections [1].

Gilbreth received professional psychology training and was familiar with the implementation of Taylor's principle due to his family-owned factory. Another name, Christine Frederick, saw the introduction of science into housework as a liberation in order to reduce unnecessary waste of time; and



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saw the implementation of productivity studies as a career alternative for women. The implementation of industrial productivity at home in Turkey came in parallel with America, as home economics classes were taught in Girls' Maturation Institutes. Apart from design of kitchen, standards such as nutrition rulers and calorie calculations were also taught in these institutes. İncila Yar's statement, "women should use efficiency principles so far used in industries at home" recommendation was an example of the effect of Western home efficiency studies in the Early Republic of Turkey [2].

In the U.S., home efficiency studies became the subject of many books, and following this period housing studies gained speed in Europe, especially in Germany. In the post-war period, the house was seen as a machine, and it became a whole of standard functions divided into different sections. Especially in Germany after the war, minimum living conditions for workers began to be explored, and standard measures started to appear in the housing projects such as Gemeinde-Wien Type/Vienna (1919-1927) and CIAM's Existenzminimum/Frankfurt (1925-1930) in Frankfurt. The Frankfurt kitchen, designed by Margarete Schütte Lihotzky by transforming an assembly line in 1935, is considered as an example of today's first modern kitchen. It was designed as a machine to carry out housework with maximum efficiency with space-saving mechanisms, furniture, sliding apparatus to access goods. "Now the housewife was the manager; the kitchen counter the assembly line; and the modern house itself was almost a factory" [1]. Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky was Austria's first female architect, even the first female student of the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, and the owner of many award-winning designs. She mastered methods of efficiency by Christine Frederick's, "New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management" book's translation in German, which was famous for Taylorism studies. In 1926, due to scarcity of housing in Germany, Ernst May's public house design business was loaded and houses of 10,000 people were designed, and the contribution of Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky was the kitchen design, which was considered one of the firsts of modern kitchen design today. "Hygiene", "order", "functionality" were frequently encountered concepts that were also followed in the Early Republican Period Turkey [3]

2. Reflections of the image of modern home in Early Republican period journals in Turkey

As Arat stated, the presence of women in public sphere during the Early Republican period was encouraged by the state for some degree. In general, the role offered mostly for women was to bring the rationalist perspective of modern discourse inside and to establish orderly and modern homes [4]. The house was the cultural area complementing the westernization plan of women, family and nation-state. These home reforms in the Early Republican period was a reflection of the works carried out in Europe and the U.S. Studies of "home engineers" in the West to the increase the efficiency in the house were translated in Turkish and started to be discussed over the Turkish house [2] The similarity of the article *Kitchen is the Living Room of Women* (Kadının Salonu Mutfağıdır) published in *Yedigün* magazine with the articles explaining the new kitchen in America and Europe was an indicator of Western reflections in the Early Republican Period. In this article, the kitchen was described as follows:

"Kitchen is the living room of a housewife. Therefore, we ask our readers not to be offended. No matter how important and high the position of a housewife is, she has a relation with her kitchen...In Europe and especially in America, housekeeping has fallen totally on the housewife because of the maid depression... In the last issue, we have included a photograph of a princess in the kitchen in Sweden. We mean that it is very natural and necessary for the housewife to work in her kitchen. Now, let's talk about the form and division of the kitchen, where the housewife has to spend certain hours of the day..." [5]

Although women gained social and political rights in the Early Republican period, the place where woman should be was home, her job was to organize the house and raise the new generation. However, as the modern society required, the housewife was to do her job in an educated manner. Accordingly, subjects such as the ideal order of kitchen, how many people can be accommodated in one room and

what they can do in their spare time were vaccinated by idealizing Western manners [6]. Modern house in the 1930s, was quite different from traditional Turkish house, where wide sofas were replaced by rooms with different functions such as a kitchen and a living room lined up on a corridor. New “minimal” and “function oriented” comfort tools were developed against household chores such as prolonged food preparation habits and dish washing in modern home as opposed to life in traditional home. However, Early Republican period was without a middle-class bourgeois, and images of kitchens resembling a laboratory remained quite alien to habits inside traditional home” [7].

In popular magazines of the period, western influenced sections that describe the interiors of the houses and encourage a modern lifestyle frequently appeared. These sections titled such as “home and furniture”, “beautiful goods”, “inside our homes”, “decoration of your home” and “houses of your dreams”, appeared in popular magazines of the 1930s. Spaces shown in magazines were examples produced in factories in Europe or America, but in the articles, it was emphasized that they were simple enough to be made by local carpenters, occasionally by sharing technical drawings of furniture samples. During this period where local production facilities hardly existed in Turkey, it was a natural result that all examples were from abroad [8]. As Bozdoğan stated; magazines such as *Muhit*, *Yedigün*, *Yenigün*, *Journal of Modern Turkey (Modern Türkiye Mecmuası)* included images of home interiors next to the exterior of the building. These houses were taken from magazines such as *Ladies’ Home Journal* or *Woman’s Home Companion* and only in the following years, Turkish designers were included in the home section of *Yedigün* magazine [7].

Another article *What is Home, and How Should It Be Built* (Ev Nedir ve Bir Ev Nasıl Kurulmalı) in *Journal of Modern Turkey* published in 1938 promoted the house as a showcase that opened to people who come to see, and the word “strangers” drew attention instead of the word “guest”. It was emphasized that the house was private to the individual who should consider his rest, and such a house can be shown without shame to the “strangers” who come to visit. As Abdullah Ziya mentioned in another article published in *Arkitekt* magazine, the guest room, which occupied an important place in the life of the upper and middle classes of the period, was deemed unnecessary. The definition of a “guest” was changing, also a space designed not only for the user but also a showcase for the “stranger” was emerging [9]. Abdullah Ziya’s phrases help understand the changing notion of the house:

“In today’s social life, the guest is a person who will meet with us for a few minutes. We do not need a special room for the guest who comes to stay for hours, but we can get a private layout inside the house for our holidays and reception days. The guest room is an unnecessary and luxurious place” [9]

As stated by Nalbantoğlu Baydar, articles in the magazines depicted a house that should be suitable for comfort of the owner but also put the house on show. On the other hand, unlike in traditional culture, the guest becomes a “stranger” who does not spend a long time and would come and go shortly [9]. Proposing a new lifestyle with publications appeared not only in the 20th century, but also in various books and magazines since the late 19th century. Western rules began to be adopted were present in publications, newspapers, magazines and books for women since the late 19th century which continued until the mid-20th century [5]. In a section of *Yenigün* magazine dated 1939, these suggestions were placed in a section titled *Modernize Your Living Room* (Oturma Odanızı Asrileştiriniz) as follows:

“Replace your old style items that you purchased before the war. What beautiful modern items are available... so cheap ... Take off the plaster on the ceiling, now they like simplicity more. Take the old chandelier and sell it in the Bazaar -cheap or expensive-, and get a nice lampshade instead”[5]

Discussions of standards in design and architecture also started in the 1930s and continued in the early 1950s. In an article titled *The Effect of Industry on Architectural Education* (Endüstrinin Mimari Eğitime Tesiri) in *Arkitekt* magazine of 1950 the following passage explained the understanding of the period:

“As the industry standardizes building elements, the importance of traditional methods in architectural education decreases. In other words, art cannot be conquered, so there is no need for old composition education. In contrast, forms provided by controllable elements may very well dispatch the claim to a harmonious form. In the industrial age, art is not a starting point, but an exemption of standard elements” [10]

Another example was *Cheap Houses Competition* of the Istanbul Municipality, which evaluated the competition projects under a statement as “standardization and fabrication should be, if possible” [11]. Also, in *Arkitekt* magazine, in an article titled *Organization of Minimum Housing Problem* (Asgari Mesken Probleminin Teşkilâtlandırılması), “rational architecture” was mentioned and productivity principles were emphasized. With these examples, it is seen that efficiency was an encouraged subject in the 1950s [12].

“The study of fatigue pointed to us the relationship of rational architecture inside home. Technical understanding, especially in the home administration, should be adapted to the new form of modern residence. For example, the old collective pedagogical kitchens should be eliminated and substituted by personal small kitchens ... For example, the public economy of the residence, principles and moral meaning of cleanliness, effect of sunlight, disadvantages of dark places, principles of sanitation, rationalization of housekeeping, methods of using furniture or use of machinery in the house, etc. ... The effect of such a training is to raise a clean and rational-minded generation on the matter of the house” [12].

3. Conclusion

Early Republican Period in Turkey, which coincides with the beginning of the 20th century, were important years of modernization in Turkey. In the West, modern ideals of industrialization favoured progress and modernization of home was among the central discussions. This approach to home-making propagated “new” against the “old”, and offered an alteration of home, both its use, function and its materiality. Western induced modernism influenced concepts of “order”, “science”, “function” in industry, which affected both the way women managed the house and therefore how it was designed. Images that were idealized in Early Republican period magazines spread a change in domestic space following the West. Western influenced modernization efforts emulating this transformation showed its reflections in the magazines and journals in the Early Republican Period in Turkey. Regardless of its suitability to the society or traditional habits, top-down state influenced modernization efforts were offering order and standardization inside the house. These ideals in popular magazines offered a new domestic space despite the traditional understanding of a shared space, that is personal, machine-like, comfort oriented and a showcase to strangers. Discussions about rational architecture soon enough also found their places in architectural magazines to talk about efficiency, optimization and rationalism. Optimization efforts as a natural cause of a developed industry in the West reflected on a change in the household. On the contrary, this natural process was alien to Turkey, in an underdeveloped state of industrial production. Therefore, it also did not suit habits and traditional ways of living in the family. Nonetheless, they found a large space in printed media, which soon after injected ideals of modern living in the society.

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