Modernization and the Role of Foreign Experts: W. M. Dudok’s Projects for Izmir, Turkey

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In 1954, the mayor of Izmir, Turkey, Rauf Onursal, asked Dutch architect W. M. Dudok to contribute to the city’s modernization by consulting on a master plan for the city center along the Bay of Izmir; he also asked Dudok to design a municipal theater (Figure 1). These requests offered the sixty-nine-year-old architect an opportunity to leave a legacy in an international context. Despite widespread recognition of his work, Dudok, architect for the Dutch city of Hilversum, had rarely built outside the Netherlands. He knew Turkey well, having served on the juries of international Turkish architecture competitions in 1938 and 1949, and he understood the country’s political determination to modernize. For local architects and planners, however, the invitation extended to Dudok and subsequent events provoked other reactions beyond Dudok’s apparently warm reception. Engaged with the country’s modernization in the post–World War II era, the new generation of Turkish architects and urban planners had more complex relationships with foreign experts than had previous generations.

Dudok’s Izmir projects were not realized, but they shed light on the spread of international modernism after World War II and reflect the Republic of Turkey’s aspiration to participate in a “universal civilization.”¹ Like the work of other foreign experts in Turkey, Dudok’s was an outcome of the country’s long-standing mission to be modern, with urban spaces, housing, city centers, and cultural and government buildings that accorded with contemporary Western standards. In this essay, I ponder the relationships between local professionals and foreign experts in 1950s Turkey, focusing on Izmir and situating Dudok’s projects within modernization efforts there. How did foreign experts respond to modern architecture, the politics of modernization, and democratization in Turkey? Had the role of foreign experts there changed by the mid-twentieth century? What does the story of Dudok’s unrealized projects tell us about Turkish architectural culture with respect to cross-cultural influences in architecture and urbanism during the postwar era? Previously unexamined documents and drawings from the Netherlands Architecture Institute (Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, or NAi) and the Ahmet Pirşinta City Archive and Museum in Izmir form the basis for my research into these questions, opening a window into the postwar era’s complex intersections of local and global architectural cultures.

Dudok’s Invitation to Izmir

Dudok traveled to Turkey for the first time in 1938, as one of three jury members for a building design competition; the project was a new home for the Turkish Grand National Assembly.² Prior to this important project, Turkish architects knew Dudok through the country’s only professional journal of the period, Arıktekt. In 1931, the journal had published an article about Hilversum City Hall (1924–31), inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie architecture, which brought Dudok to international recognition.³ In 1937, Arıktekt published a translation of Dudok’s essay “Urban Planning and Architecture in Our Time,” which had originally been published in L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui in 1936.⁴ Dudok’s second encounter with Turkey was again as a jury member for another significant competition, this time for the Istanbul Courthouse in 1949. The winning entry, by Turkish architects Sedat Hakki Eldem and Emin Onat, embodies the shift from an earlier nationalistic approach (the Second National Movement of

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the 1940s) to the rationalism and International Style efforts of the 1950s and 1960s; it marks a turning point in modern Turkish architecture.5 Scholars have suggested that Dudok’s appointment to this jury clearly signaled the changing trends, given his well-known and much-admired rationalistic work.6 In the same year as the courthouse competition, Arkitekt published Dudok’s Utrecht Municipal Theater project (1939–41) as an example of modern rationalist theater design and of ongoing developments in that field (Figure 2).7

This long-standing interest in Dudok’s work led to two major invitations from Turkey in 1953. One was from the government’s social security agency to build a housing project in Ankara, and the other was from Izmir mayor Rauf Onursal.8 During a visit to the Netherlands the previous year, Onursal had tried to contact Dudok, who was then traveling. In a letter dated 6 November 1953, Onursal invited Dudok, to whom he referred as “a talented master,” to review and make suggestions about the redevelopment of Izmir’s city center, known as Konak. Onursal explained that the city was considering holding an international competition for Konak’s modernization, and that it also intended to build a city hall, an opera house, and a municipal theater, the last of which Dudok was invited to design. Dudok received Onursal’s letter in the United States, where he had been invited to give seminars on his work. Writing to Onursal from Chicago in November 1953, Dudok gladly accepted the invitation to Izmir.9 In a letter to Hilversum’s mayor and city council members, Dudok wrote of Onursal’s invitation and requested permission to accept it. His letter conveys both his uncertainty about the offer and his desire to accept it:

I have the honor to inform you that during my stay in the United States I received a letter from the Mayor of Izmir (Smyrna) in which he—as a result of his visit to Hilversum—invited me to come as soon as possible to Izmir, where they are intending to build a city hall, an opera, and a theater. It is not clear from the letter if they intend to ask me to construct these buildings or they want my advice on the most suitable locations etc.

At this moment it is location research. It is possible that attractive possibilities will ensue, so I would like to accept this invitation; I am expecting to be absent for no more than two weeks, starting the 9th of February. Concerning this I request the City Council to grant me a leave of absence.10

Although Dudok’s work had received international recognition and awards, including the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1935, he had built only a few

Figure 1 Master plan, Konak seashore district, Izmir, 1954: A, Konak Square; B, Dudok’s proposed city hall; C, Dudok’s proposed theater; D, Izmir Bay; E, boulevard; F, government building; G, boat dock; H, office blocks in green areas (in place of Sari Kşla); I, commercial buildings (NA/DUDO 195K.34a, b, Stadsschouwburg Izmir Turkije, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam).

Figure 2 W. M. Dudok, Municipal Theater, Utrecht, 1939–41 (Arkitekt, nos. 207–8 [Mar. 1949], 81).
structures outside the Netherlands: a residence for S. A. Basil (1936–37) and the Garden House and Light House Cinemas (1936–38), both in Calcutta, and the Netherlands Student House (1939) in Paris.11 Building in Turkey was, thus, a further opportunity to operate in an international context and expand his legacy.

When Dudok arrived in Izmir on 10 February 1954, he was received with enthusiasm; this was evident in the local media, which reflected the views of civic officials and the value they put on European and American experts as ambassadors of modernity. Izmir’s newspapers portrayed Dudok as an internationally renowned architect and expert in urban planning who would surely contribute to the city’s redevelopment.12 One paper declared, “The city’s development plan will greatly benefit from Dudok’s expertise because of his capability in architecture.”13 The front-page headline, “Izmir Will Have a Truly European City Image,” spoke to Dudok’s reputation as a foreign expert while also indicating local eagerness to re-create Izmir as a modern metropolis: “Worthy of its history and contemporary life, Izmir will be reconstructed as a modern city. The renovations and new construction in the city center will especially change the appearance of the city.”14

Some of the local news coverage, however, reflected contemporary debates on the roles of foreign experts: “People have diverse opinions surrounding the rationale for inviting a foreign city planner to Izmir; yet his invitation is to oversee a plan that may surpass a cost of one hundred million liras in construction.”15 Articles noted that Dudok was to meet with Turkish planning consultant Kemal Ahmet Aru, who had won the 1951 competition for Izmir’s urban plan, and he was to prepare his recommendations and report in consultation with Aru. The jury had had reservations about Aru’s plan for the Konak district, so they left this portion open to new proposals.

In addition to Aru, Dudok worked with a team of architects and planners in the municipality’s Building Directorate, including Building Director Rıza Aşkán and architect Harbi Hotan (Figure 3). Dudok’s tasks were to review the plans for developing the Konak waterfront district, give advice on situating the intended buildings, and design the theater. (Dudok created alternative schemes for the theater upon his return to the Netherlands.) During his two-week stay in Izmir, the city’s papers widely covered Dudok’s close association with Aşkán, a graduate of the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts and a former student of the influential architect and educator Eldem (whom Dudok had encountered while serving on the jury for the Istanbul Courthouse competition in 1949). As architect Doğan Tekeli (then a recent graduate working for the municipality) has observed, Aşkán was in a powerful position, managing and controlling the municipality’s building projects and operating as chief architect in the directorate.16 Before becoming the city’s building director, Aşkán had hosted Le Corbusier during a weeklong visit to Izmir in 1948, when the Swiss-French architect worked on a plan for the city. Since Aşkán was fluent in French, he developed personal relationships with both Le Corbusier and Dudok, the latter of whom communicated in French with Izmir officials.17 The interaction and collaborative dynamic between these international architects and the Turkish team—evident in the letters and the media coverage—reveals the changing status of foreign experts and the growing confidence and power of the new generation of native architects and planners during this time.

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Figure 3 W. M. Dudok (second from left) with Turkish architects and planners Rıza Aşkán, Harbi Hotan, and Kemal Ahmet Aru, Izmir, February 1954 (personal archive, courtesy of G. Aşkán Derman).
The Changing Roles of Foreign Experts in Turkey, 1920s to 1950s

Understanding Dudok’s interventions in the port city of Izmir, and the local responses to them, requires a brief review of the evolving roles of foreign experts in the modernization of Turkish architecture and urban design between 1920 and 1950. Modernization efforts that took place following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 seem to align with Paul Ricoeur’s assertion that “in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical, and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandonment of a whole cultural past.” In line with this view and starting in the 1920s, it became common practice for Turkey to invite foreign experts to weigh in on the modernization process. Under founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s leadership, the new republic turned to the West in establishing a secular nation-state based on industrial and scientific progress. In pursuit of this vision, German and Austrian architects and planners were invited to help build the new state. From the 1920s through the 1940s, the Republican People’s Party commissioned foreign architects to produce urban designs, master plans, and important public buildings. As many as two hundred experts from German-speaking countries were known to be working in Turkey during that time, and about forty of them were architects and planners. Among them were such accomplished figures as Bruno Taut, Martin Wagner, Ernst Reuter, Franz Hillinger, Gustav Oelsner, Wilhelm Schütte, and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. As these foreigners dominated the public domain, Turkish architects’ practices were limited mostly to residential architecture. Foreign professionals’ knowledge and practice went largely unchallenged until the 1950s, when a new generation of local architects and planners and new provisions set by the Turkish Chamber of Architects, established in 1954, contested their dominance.

Foreign architects also had a significant presence in Turkish architectural schools, influencing the education of the 1950s generation. For example, two prominent architects, Ernst Egli and Bruno Taut, headed the architectural department at Istanbul’s Academy of Fine Arts, founded by Osman Hamdi Bey in 1882. Then-young native architects, such as Arif Hikmet Haltay, Sedad Hakki Eldem, and Seyfettin Arkan, were Egli’s assistants during his tenure there. Under Egli’s and Taut’s direction, the school’s curriculum and pedagogy underwent major reforms directed at moving away from the so-called First National Style toward a modern, European-influenced architecture. Their approach encouraged a context-sensitive application of modern forms and methods along with the study of vernacular ones, thus facilitating an exploration of the relationship between Turkey’s “cultural past” and “universal civilization.” Turkey’s second-oldest architecture school, Istanbul’s Civil Service School of Engineering, established in 1884, also experienced modernizing reforms through the efforts of Emin Onat, who invited the European architects Clemens Holzmeister and Paul Bonatz to teach there.

At the center of the modernization efforts was a desire to refashion old towns and cities as healthy and sanitary urban centers with open areas, parks, sports arenas, administrative and cultural buildings, and modern housing. From the beginning, politicians and planners used urban space to represent modern Turkish society as understood within the state’s ideology—which emphasized secularity, Westernization, and modernization. For example, German planner Hermann Jansen’s 1927 plan for Ankara envisioned the new capital as a modern city informed by Ebenezer Howard’s garden city approach; new recreational areas, public buildings, and residential areas were separated from and developed around the old city. Holzmeister was asked to design a building for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, along with numerous other administrative buildings. In the case of Istanbul, the country’s largest and most cosmopolitan city, French urban designer Henri Prost offered a plan that made sanitation as important as aesthetic considerations; he further attempted to transform the city with new roads, boulevards, and open spaces such as parks and squares. Prost worked with Istanbul’s Urban Development Directorate from 1937 to 1951, when his appointment was terminated because of the end of the one-party era and the rise of the new generation of Turkish architects and planners.

Long before Dudok was invited to Izmir, Prost was contacted about creating an urban plan for the city, the country’s second largest and its most important port after Istanbul. Izmir holds a unique place in Turkish history as the site where the War of Independence ended in 1922. A considerable segment of this historical port city was destroyed during a great fire at the war’s end, lending urgency to the need for a new plan. Rather than designing the new plan himself, Prost recommended two engineer-urbanists, brothers René Danger and Raymond Danger, for the job and acted as their consultant. Reflecting formalist Beaux-Arts approaches, the Danger–Prost Plan of 1924–25 emphasized public health, open spaces, and parks and laid the foundations for the Izmir Kültürpark (Cultural Park) in an area through which the fire had swept (Figure 4). The park was redesigned by the municipality as a 360,000-square-meter public space, which was built in 1936. It was one of the most important modernization projects of the early Republican period, along with similar public spaces such as Gençlik Parkı (Youth Park) in Ankara and İnönü Gezisi (Promenade Park, proposed by Prost) in Istanbul. Formal features of Kültürpark’s exhibition halls, gates, and other edifices were strong statements of
modernism, exemplifying both 1930s architectural culture and state ideology. The recreational grounds and entertainment facilities accommodated mixed-gender activities in addition to providing leisure spaces for families. As such, Kültürpark was considered an icon of Republican modernity.

The city continued to implement aspects of the Danger–Prost Plan until 1938, when Izmir’s charismatic mayor, Dr. Behçet Uz, embraced a more radical move toward modernization. The Danger–Prost Plan had aimed to conserve older parts of the city, limiting interventions in those areas to matters of circulation. However, this approach did not mesh with the mayor’s vision of a healthy, modern city. In 1932, Uz invited Hermann Jansen to revise the Danger–Prost Plan. Criticizing it as outdated, Jansen proposed a modernist scheme instead. However, because of his high professional fees and the criticism he had received for his earlier Ankara plan, Jansen was ultimately dismissed.

In 1938, Izmir turned to Le Corbusier, then developing his plans for Algiers. The onset of World War II prevented Le Corbusier from traveling to Izmir until 1948, but at that point his contract was renewed. Izmir officials likely decided to consult Le Corbusier for two reasons: first, they hoped to modernize the entire city; and second, the celebrated architect convinced them he could achieve this. The radical and diagrammatic scheme that Le Corbusier sent to Izmir’s leaders in January 1949 proposed a green city for 400,000 residents, following the design precepts of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne. Le Corbusier’s approach reflected his view of the revolutionary nature of Turkish society and the beginnings of the Republic (Figure 5). Izmir’s officials ultimately rejected Le Corbusier’s urban plan—which was very schematic and did not take into account private property ownership—considering it utopian and unrealistic. However, as noted below, it did have an influence on future proposals by Turkish professionals.

There are some parallels between Le Corbusier’s experience in Izmir in 1948 and Dudok’s time there in 1954. Although both architects’ visits were widely covered by Izmir’s local newspapers, their proposals were not ultimately accepted by local authorities or professionals, and the projects were dropped. One of the reasons for this seems to have been the growing resistance of Turkish professionals toward foreign architects, despite their reverence for luminaries such as Le Corbusier. This opposition was fueled by changes in Turkish architectural culture. One indicator of this stance was the Law of the Union of the Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (1954), which the Turkish Chamber of Architects worked to implement. This law limited the activities of foreign practitioners to technical consultancy and educational instruction. Knowledgeable in and inspired by postwar architectural concepts, the well-trained, native-born professional members of this group challenged the presence of foreign experts in Turkey and sought to demote them from primary to secondary roles.

An important basis for this transformation of professional practice was the development of the private sector following changes in Turkish parliamentary democracy, starting with the establishment of the multiparty system in 1946 and resulting in the victory of the Democrat Party (DP) in the 1950 elections. The DP government implemented a liberal economy based on U.S.-led democratic capitalist models, which emphasized the role of the private sector in development.
The consequent rise of the private sector and of a Turkish bourgeoisie led to new developments in Turkey’s construction industry, undermining the state’s previous near-monopolistic patronage of architects. Although public buildings (mostly implemented through competitions) still constituted a major portion of architectural commissions, privately funded projects now offered a noticeably expanded field in which architects could operate, separate from the state’s control. As a result, beginning in the 1950s, private enterprises, architectural partnerships, and the Turkish Chamber of Architects emerged, reflecting the profession’s growing autonomy. Unlike their predecessors, these younger architects did not directly propagate the state’s political ideology. Meanwhile, although the Turkish government still solicited advice from foreign experts, these now served mainly as “policy advisors and development consultants, commissioned by a myriad of US government agencies for economic cooperation, or international organizations like the UN.” For example, in 1951, the eminent American firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, under the direction of Gordon Bunshaft, authored a report that recommended solutions for Turkey’s housing problem—the result of rapid urbanization due to population growth and immigration from rural areas to urban centers, an outcome of agricultural mechanization enabled by postwar foreign aid.

The most significant architectural outcome of postwar economic and political cooperation between the United States and Turkey was arguably the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, by Bunshaft and SOM in collaboration with the prolific Turkish architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem (Figure 6). Funded by the Turkish Pension Fund and the Economic Cooperation Administration in 1951, the project was emblematic of both political modernization and the changing roles of foreign architects in Turkey. The year the Hilton project was initiated, Eldem spent several months in New York City working with the SOM team on the design. Unlike Eldem’s previous work, which incorporated regional nuances, the Hilton was a massive, long, white, late International Style block, signifying the global pervasiveness of this type of architectural modernism at midcentury. Situated on a prominent hilltop overlooking the Bosphorus, the building represented not only the DP government’s political ambitions for modernizing Istanbul but also the mission of creating a “little America,” as hotelier Conrad Hilton called it. From its architectural design to its interior equipment, its air-conditioned rooms to its midcentury modern furniture, the building was viewed as the embodiment of American modernity when it was finished in 1955. As historian Annabel Jane Wharton has noted, the hotel represented the cultural influence of the United States along with Cold War geopolitical struggles and diplomacy at the periphery of the communist sphere.

The Middle East Technical University (METU), established in Ankara in 1956, is another landmark modernist project exemplifying a similar case of political and economic cooperation between the United States and Turkey, as well as...
Turkish architects’ changing agency during these years. The idea of founding a technical university was conceived at the suggestion of Charles Abrams, an American lawyer and housing policy specialist, who visited Turkey in 1954 to prepare a report on housing problems for the United Nations. The university was founded with the assistance of a committee from the University of Pennsylvania under the direction of architect and planner G. Holmes Perkins, who proposed the first design scheme for METU. However, neither Perkins’s proposal nor the following competition-winning project of Turkish architect Turgut Cansever was implemented. In the end, a design by Turkish architects Altuğ Çinici and Behruz Çinici was chosen for METU. As historian Burak Erdim points out, METU was conceived by the same political and economic power players who supported the Istanbul Hilton, and its history reveals the legitimacy battles fought not only between foreign and local architectural professionals and authorities but also between local architects who took part in its design.

This was a moment of empowerment for a new generation of Turkish architects and planners who deeply valued notions of “universal civilization,” respected foreign experts, and desired to belong to the international community. They viewed themselves as equal partners with their foreign colleagues, and, finally, government patrons concurred. For example, when Prost’s appointment in Istanbul was terminated in 1951, the DP government, headed by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, formed consulting commissions composed of Turkish architects and planners to amend Prost’s plans and make new suggestions for modernizing Istanbul between 1952 and 1955.

Konak Square as a Site of Modernization

One of the central sites targeted by the various master plans for Izmir was the Konak Square district and seashore. It was here that Dudok’s efforts were concentrated. Understanding the square’s significance requires a brief recap of its role in local and national political modernization since the nineteenth century.

In the 1800s, Izmir was a cosmopolitan port city with a considerable non-Muslim population, primarily composed of Levantines, Greeks, Jews, and Armenians. As the city’s hub, Konak Square first gained its civic character and spatial boundaries with the construction in 1827–29 of a massive military building, Kışla-i Humayun, on the south side of the square (Figures 7 and 8). The building was called Sar Kışla (Yellow Barracks), in reference to the color of its stone. The square took on a new and enhanced significance in 1901 with the construction of a clock tower, which became the symbol of Izmir (Figure 9). The tower was part of collection of memorial edifices erected that year to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II’s ascension to the throne.

In the late nineteenth century, Konak Square became an important hub for transportation, with a boat dock for regular ferry services in the bay and, beginning in 1880, horse-drawn trams and later streetcars passing through. With the clock tower at the center, bounded by Hükümet Konağı (Government Building) on the east side, Sar Kışla on the south, offices and warehouses on the north, and the Bay of Izmir on the

Figure 6 Gordon Bunshaft for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, with Sedat Hakkı Eldem, Hilton Hotel, Istanbul, 1955 (courtesy of Gökhan Akçura Archives).
Figure 7 Road map of Izmir, 1905, showing Konak Square (130), clock tower at center, bounded by warehouses, mosque and madrassa, government building, Sarı Kısla, and the sea (Harvard Map Collection, Harvard Library).

Figure 8 Konak seashore, Izmir, late nineteenth century, with Sarı Kısla (demolished, 1955) in center foreground (Levantine Heritage Foundation, http://www.levantineheritage.com/sarikisla2b.jpg).

Figure 9 Konak Square, Izmir, 1955, before the demolition of historic buildings (Apikam archive).
west, Konak Square was a well-defined civic space at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the monumental Sarı Kışla was seen as a problem because it often required repair, blocked the waterfront, and impeded circulation to and from the center of town. Considered outdated—a military barracks was viewed as unfit for a civic square—it was slated for demolition in the Danger brothers’ city plan of 1924–25. In 1955, Sarı Kışla finally was demolished. On the Konak seashore, modernization thus meant clearing old buildings and opening up land for new roads and structures to facilitate and enliven commerce, entertainment, cultural activities, and governance.

The 1951 urban master plan for Izmir, by Kemal Ahmet Aru, Gündüz Özdeş, and Emin Canpolat, was a significant representative of these modernization efforts. The plan maintained Konak’s status as the city’s administrative center (Figures 10 and 11). It envisioned İzmir’s population—230,000 in 1950—as climbing to 400,000 by 2000, with the city divided into zones for housing, business, shopping, industry, and port activities. While this functionalist scheme preserved the historical shopping district of Kemeraltı, adjacent to Konak Square, Sarı Kışla was to be demolished. This was required by the terms of the 1951 international competition: “The removal of the military building . . . in Konak is decided, this cleared space will be arranged for the invigoration of Konak Square and will be allocated to public buildings and entertainment facilities.” The plan of 1951 called for replacing Sarı Kışla with cultural buildings and multistory office blocks in green areas, a scheme reminiscent of Le Corbusier’s 1948 proposal for the city. The new plan’s call to place some of these blocks parallel to the sea, which would have prevented the circulation of sea breezes, gave rise to the jury’s main criticism. For this reason, the Konak portion of the 1951 urban master plan was put on hold, even though the rest of the plan was approved in 1953.

Dudok’s Unrealized Schemes

Dudok’s files—including his scaled drawings for the theater, letters, notes, and marked sketches, as well as a master plan for Konak Square and the seashore—reveal the architect’s deep involvement in redeveloping the Konak district. In 1954, he served as a consultant to the Turkish design team headed by Aru. The 1954 proposal for Konak envisioned the square as a site of urban renewal and recommended demolition of the city center’s historic character and spaces. Based on earlier plans, the 1954 proposal included a cinema, courthouse, theater, government building, city hall, and office buildings that...
were intended to develop Konak as an administrative, commercial, cultural, and entertainment center, even while it remained a hub for buses, cars, and ferries (see Figure 1). In response to the jury’s criticism of the 1951 proposal, the plan placed new multistory blocks perpendicular to the shoreline to let sea breezes cool the inner portions of the Konak district. In keeping with previous schemes, the plan included a large boulevard with a greenbelt in the middle to connect the city’s north and south districts. This boulevard, along with the adjacent roads and parking lots, indicated the increasing importance of vehicular transportation in the city and reflected the American technical and financial aid that helped build road networks in Turkey during the postwar era.59

During his visit in February 1954, Dudok generated proposals for the new city hall and the theater. His sketch of the proposed city hall, dated 15 February 1954, depicts his quest for a monumental yet modernist aesthetic, one clearly encouraged by his local collaborators (Figure 12). Although his sketch reflects contemporary trends in architecture and urbanism, Dudok did not favor a particular movement or style. As he stated, “My work does not have the strength of conviction of an architectural impression of a single conception. I know also that it is difficult to classify my work.”60 The three blocks of his U-shaped building enclosed Konak Square, leaving it open on the east and providing access to the bazaar street known as Kemeralan. Neither the perspective sketches nor the master plan shows the clock tower; the only nod to its existence is a roughly drawn square. Dudok’s eight-story block on the west side was set on pilotis to provide ground-level access to the shore and allow sea breezes to circulate throughout the square. Measuring 95 meters in length, 16 meters in width, and 26 meters in height, the slender tower recalled Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation (1947–52) in Marseilles.

The sketch for this unrealized structure is surprising. Situating such a high block parallel to the sea on the west side of the square would have been unacceptable to Dudok’s local collaborators for two major reasons. First, as mentioned in the 1951 jury report, such an approach, even if the building were lifted on pilotis as Dudok intended, would cut off the sea breeze.61 Second, it would block views from the boulevard—a significant concern.

Dudok’s proposed theater was to be located at the edge of the sea, where the boulevard curved (see Figure 1). It contained a main hall for twelve hundred spectators, a small concert hall for three hundred, a children’s theater, restaurant, café, nightclub (gazino), and service areas.62 The design recalled Dudok’s Utrecht Municipal Theater in the composition of its masses, the rhythm of its openings and solid–void relationships, and the use of statues and surface treatments on its façades (Figure 13). Dudok’s initial idea for the theater, on which he worked as soon as he returned to the Netherlands at the end of February 1954, was an asymmetrical scheme, with the entrance placed off center on the boulevard that connected the city’s north and south districts (Figure 14). At ground level, the building was accessed through a monumental canopy; visitors would flow first into the ticket area and then into a large entrance hall with a coat-check room. This hall stretched along the east side of the building, with stairs at the end that led to a foyer on the second floor. The main theater was located in the center and was accessed from this foyer. The small concert hall was placed above the entrance hall, on the upper floor. The children’s theater had a separate and smaller entrance on the building’s south side. On the sea side of the south façade, the main mass of the building incorporated a slender wing that housed offices on the ground level and a restaurant and café above. An exterior colonnade opened both levels on the sea side. Behind the stage was a two-story nightclub that overlooked the bay through floor-to-ceiling windows (Figure 15, see Figure 13). The linearity of the west façade, achieved by the massing of the nightclub and the colonnaded wing, indicated Dudok’s interest in designing the building as a screen between land and water.63

While in the Netherlands, Dudok also produced an alternative, symmetrical plan for the theater that placed the building’s entrance in the middle of the east façade (Figure 16). In a letter of late March 1954, he explained to Aşkan the reason for this approach, which he devised after consulting a Dutch theatrical designer. As Dudok explained, “The ideal modern solution would be to use symmetry, meaning having a stage
Figure 13  W. M. Dudok, Izmir Municipal Theater, sketches, 15–16 March 1954 (NAi/DUDO 195K.34a, b, Stadsschouwburg Izmir Turkije, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam).

Figure 14  W. M. Dudok, Izmir Municipal Theater, first-floor plan, 1954 (NAi/DUDO 195K.34a, b, Stadsschouwburg Izmir Turkije, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam).
A variation of this symmetrical scheme was detailed in a set of drawings that differed from the earlier plans of February and March (Figures 17 and 18). Some of these sketches were probably not Dudok’s work, but made instead by R. M. H. Magnée, Dudok’s main collaborator. Strikingly, these drawings indicate domes, subtly recalling the designs of the Konak Square clock tower from half a century earlier, with its four domes at ground level, and the domed eighteenth-century mosque standing at the periphery of the square.

This neo-Ottoman approach sets these later plans apart from Dudok’s earlier proposal for the theater, and certainly from the expectations of local collaborators for a modern design of the sort seen in his early sketches (Figure 19). Dudok had agreed to finish the project by August 1954, but he received no response to his letter to Aşkan of 31 March, nor to a letter to Onursal of 16 April. Nor did Dudok receive the contract and payment he had requested in his letter to Aşkan. I can only speculate that Dudok’s collaborator Magnée produced the last set of drawings after Dudok lost hope for the project, with the assumption that these new sketches might better appeal to the locals.

With the general elections on 2 May 1954, Mayor Onursal became a congressman and moved to Ankara. Around the same time, his friend Muzaffer Göksenin, governor of Izmir, was appointed to Baghdad as ambassador. With these developments, Dudok’s project was abandoned. The disappointment this caused him and the resentment he felt are readily apparent in his ensuing letters of August 1954. The disappointment was perhaps reciprocal, as the city lost out on
having a theater and landmark designed by an international expert.

The Lessons Learned after Dudok

Dudok’s involvement with Izmir’s quest for modernization is an unexplored episode in the history of international postwar modernism. This era was marked by the consultancy of foreign architects and planning experts—Le Corbusier, Dudok, and Richard Neutra, among others, all of whom were invited to Izmir. A photograph showing Neutra with Askan and his team in front of a model for the Konak project is another artifact of this era, offering further evidence of the collaboration between Turkish and foreign architects at midcentury (Figure 20). Neutra was invited to Izmir to consult on the Konak project in 1955, and, as in Dudok’s case, his views were meant to inform a new competition for the district that same year. The winning entry, by Doğan Tekeli, Tektin Aydin, and Sami Sisa, was announced in 1956, and it was similar to the 1954 plan (Figure 21). Like the earlier plan, this one also hinged on a central boulevard connecting the city’s north and south halves, with blocky buildings placed in green areas perpendicular to the shore lining the boulevard and a theater occupying the same spot as before. As Güngör Kaftancı, the
Figure 19  W. M. Dudok, İzmir Municipal Theater, preliminary sketches made while in İzmir, 15 February 1954 (NA/DUDO 195M.101A, Stadsschouwburg İzmir Turkije, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam).

Figure 20  Richard Neutra with Rıza Aşkan and his team discussing a model for the Konak project, İzmir, 1955 (personal archive, courtesy of G. Aşkan Derman).

Figure 21  Doğan Tekeli, Tekin Aydin, and Sami Sisa, winning entry for the Konak master plan competition, İzmir, 1956 (Arkitekt, no. 284 [Feb. 1956], 59).
second runner-up, stated, contestants were asked to follow the 1954 plan; the earlier plan was even shared with competitors so that they might use it as the basis for their proposals.69 The intent was to find a common solution or a synthesis with the previous plan. Yet this time out, the competition program called for an uninterrupted sea view from the boulevard, marking a break from the earlier plan and from Dudok’s proposal for the city hall, which had blocked the sea view from the boulevard. Besides the wide-open treatment of the square, another major difference between the new winning scheme and Dudok’s proposal was the relation of the theater to the shore; the building was pulled back to open a promenade connecting to the square at the seaside.

Two other projects in Konak, designed by Aşkan after Dudok, responded to the shortcomings in the previous designs. The first was the Izmir Municipal Theater, designed in collaboration with Harbi Hotan in 1955, a year after Dudok’s unrealized design (Figure 22). While differing in many ways from Dudok’s, this scheme displayed a number of similarities to his proposal, including the size, character, and fragmentation of its building masses, the proportional relationship among its forms, and the solid–void composition of its elevations. One major difference was in the siting of the building. While Dudok’s theater was placed next to the sea, separating the land from the water, Aşkan and Hotan situated their theater in a park on the land side of the boulevard so as to open the seashore to roads and promenades. Like Dudok’s, Aşkan and Hotan’s theater also went unrealized.70 Although construction was begun, the building remained unfinished for many years and was finally demolished.

The second project Aşkan undertook at Konak was a café (Atif Şehir Lokali, 1961–81) beside the ferry dock, at the precise location where Dudok had proposed placing his city hall (Figure 23). As with Dudok’s proposal, the slender shape of the building aimed to redefine the square by forming an edge at the seaside. The later scheme recalled Dudok’s interest in developing designs to separate nature from the city. Yet Aşkan did this with a one-story structure, emphasizing horizontality rather than verticality. Contrary to Dudok’s approach, Aşkan’s low-scale modernist structure
made a quiet backdrop for the historic clock tower. While Dudok's building connected the sea and the square by raising the block on pilotis, Aşkan's blurred the boundary between the two with spacious verandas and glass-walled interiors. Conceived as a public café where people could wait for the ferry, catch fish, or simply relax by the water, the structure encouraged leisure, downplaying the administrative character of the square.71

Conclusion

Today, demolishing the historic Sarı Kışla would be a highly controversial move, but, as an elderly Turkish architect told me recently, “back then we were into modernization, and approached urban design competitions by creating modernist blocks in green areas.”72 As the result of efforts to accommodate modern lifestyles and increased traffic flows, and to create healthier environments, the historic building fabric of many cities was demolished, and parts of the past were erased along with traditional urban patterns.

In Turkey in the 1950s, such erasure was the leitmotif of the DP’s politics of modernization as much as it was a reflection of international postwar modernism. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was personally involved with a number of modernist urban reconstruction projects, working with mayors, architects, planners, and engineers. As a critical public space in a major Turkish city, Konak Square had great symbolic value, and its modernization was seen as a laudable and desirable goal. For instance, the removal of the military barracks spoke to the spirit of democracy in the postwar era, coinciding with the beginning of the multi-party system and the DP’s ensuing election. Further, the demolition of the barracks was seen as liberating Izmir from what was old and unsanitary, and helping to turn it into a modern metropolis.73

Architectural modernism was a tool that political authorities used to accomplish their mission. The present city hall on the north side of the square, designed in 1967 (though not finished until the 1970s) and highly reminiscent of Le Corbusier’s work, manifests the continuing interest in modernism long after Dudok’s proposal.74 However, for nearly half a century, Sarı Kışla’s former site remained a void—a vast open space (visible to the left in Figure 23) that served as a transportation hub for minibuses, taxis, and buses, until it was finally turned into a public park as part of another urban design competition project at the beginning of the 2000s.75 This emptiness at the city’s heart challenged the square’s physical definition while signifying and promoting a more general cultural amnesia.

Dudok perhaps predicted the physical and metaphorical voids that demolishing Sarı Kışla would have created when he proposed his highly defined plans for Konak Square, with a tall building dividing the square’s open space from the water's edge. While that recommendation was unacceptable to the era’s decision makers, Aşkan understood Dudok’s intentions when proposing his own interventions there. However, Aşkan’s take on the café and theater buildings indicate that he better understood local concerns and ways of living than had Dudok. While Dudok relied on Aşkan and other local architects, he did not receive the level of collaboration and support he was seeking. After all, Dudok’s invitation came from the political authority—which wished to validate its own modernization visions—and not from the architectural community. When the political players changed, the project collapsed.

Curiously, the visits to Izmir of distinguished international architects such as Le Corbusier, Dudok, and Neutra were not mentioned in national architectural publications at the time. This too indicates the changing status of local architects in Turkey with respect to foreign experts. In contrast with their counterparts during the early years of the Republic, the new generation of Turkish architects at the mid-twentieth century claimed legitimacy in the public domain and challenged the authority of foreign experts even while learning from them. Le Corbusier’s plan for Izmir was criticized as unrealistic, and he was seen as not having taken the task seriously.76 If this was true, his attitude was perhaps due in part to the broader lack of attention the Turkish architectural community had given to his presence in the country.

Dudok was more pragmatic than Le Corbusier. He offered sound proposals for Izmir, and he struggled to get his projects there built. Yet the evident differences between his views and those of local architects around the function and articulation of the seafront at Konak contributed to a widely held belief that “only local designers could understand and respond to Izmir.”77 Izmir’s long history of consulting foreign experts offers evidence that both disputes and supports this belief.

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Notes

2. See “Kamatay musabakası programı ilâhâsâ” [A summary of the Turkish parliament competition program], Arkinêt, no. 88 (Apr. 1938), 99–132. The other jury members were Ivar Tengbom of Sweden and Howard Robertson of England. “Duyumlar” [Hearing], Arkinêt, nos. 82–83 (Oct. 1937), 313–14. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
6. Ibid.
12. “İzmir’dede opera binası” [An opera building in Izmir], Yeni Aşır, 11 Feb. 1954, 1; “Hollandalı mimar dönümüne gelmiş” [Dutch architect arrived in Izmir yesterday], Yeni Aşır, 11 Feb. 1954, 2; “HollandalıBKнююкм стadesı bir mimar Düdok Izmir şehir planı hakkında inat oldu” [Dutch master architect Dudok receiving an explanation of Izmir’s city plan], Yeni Aşır, 12 Feb. 1954, 1; “Hollandalı mimarın tercihleri” [Investigations of the Dutch architect], Yeni Aşır, 12 Feb. 1954, 2; “İzmir tam bir Avrupa şehri manzarasına sahip olacak” [İzmir will have a truly European city image], Yeni Aşır, 18 Feb. 1954, 1, 4; “Hollandalı mütahhası tercihleri devam ediyor” [The investigations of the Dutch architect continue], Demokrat İzmir, 18 Feb. 1954, 2; “Şehircilik uzmanı geldi” [The city planning expert has arrived], Ege Ekspres, 11 Feb. 1954, 2; “Mütehhasil Mr. Dudok ve İzmir’in imar planı” [The expert Mr. Dudok and the plan of İzmir], Ege Ekspres, 13 Feb. 1954, 2.
14. “İzmir tam bir Avrupa şehri manzarasına sahip olacak,” 1, 4. At that time, creating a “European image” meant constructing modern buildings, demolishing old or run-down buildings, and constructing new road networks.
15. “Mütehhasil Mr. Dudok ve İzmir’in imar planı,” 2.
20. A celebrated exception to this rule was Şevki Balmumcu, with his design for the Exhibition Hall (1936) in Ankara. On the latter project, see “Sergi binası müstahkem” [Exhibition building competition], Arkitekt, no. 29 (1933), 131–53. Bruno Taut’s Faculty of Language, History and Geography Building (1937), Ernst Egli’s İmren İniöni Girls’ Institute (1930–31), Martin Elsaeßer’s Sumerbank Building (1937) in Ankara, Theodor Jost’s Bacteriology Institute (1927–29), and Clemens Holmeister’s Grand National Assembly (1937–60) are only some of the canonical buildings demonstrating the prominent presence of foreign professionals in Turkey.
21. See Günsüm Baydar Nallıantoğlu, “The Professionalization of the Ottoman-Turkish Architect,” PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1984. Sibel Bozdoğan points out: “The professional identity of the older generation of early Republican architects was intimately tied to the ideology of the nation state. Almost all practicing architects of the 1930s and 1940s were either educators in the architectural and engineering schools or salaried government employees in the planning and technical units of different ministries: railway stations were designed in the body of the Ministry of Transportation; schools in the Ministry of Education and so on (which also accounts for a certain degree of aesthetic uniformity of public buildings in the interwar era).” Sibel Bozdoğan, “Turkey’s Postwar Modernism: A Retrospective Overview of Architecture, Urbanism and Politics in the 1950s,” in Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey: Architecture across Cultures in the 1950s and 1960s, ed. Meltem O. Gürel (New York: Routledge, 2016), 15.
22. Today’s Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University was first called Mektebi-i Sanayi-i Nefise. The curriculum was modeled on that of Paris’s École des Beaux-Arts. Egli’s term followed the resignations of Giulio Mongeri in 1928 and Vedat Tek in 1930—two masters of the First National Style, an Ottoman revivalist style that came to be viewed as inappropriate for the ideology of the new nation. Taut succeeded Egli in 1936.
24. The school was first called Hendese-i Mülkiye Mektebi and imported German and Austrian instructors. It was renamed Istanbul Technical University in 1944.

26. On this project, see "Kamuyu musabakat programı hulüsası." Other prominent foreigners were invited to Turkey to implement the building of the new capital. For a catalogue of these, see Leyla Alpagut and Achim Wagner, eds., Bir başkentin oluşturulusu: Avusturya, Alman ve İsviçre milletlerinin Ankara-daaki işleri/Die Werden einer Hauptstadt: Spuren deutschsprachiger Architekten in Ankara (Ankara: Goethe-Institut, 2011). On the significance of Ankara in the histories of modernization and nation building, see Francis D. K. Ching, Histories of Modernization and Nation Building, see Francis D. K. Ching, 


29. Güneş Parkı was proposed in Jansen’s 1934 master plan and later altered by the landscape architect and planner Thevo Leveau. See Zeynep Ulaşdağ, "Çamhuriyet dönemine rekayson ve Güneş Parkı önerisi" [Recreation in the Republican period and the case of the Youth Park], in "50 yilda değişimこん ve mimarlık [75 years of city and architecture], ed. Yıldız Sey (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayımları, 1998), 65–74. For a recent publication on Kültürpark, see Kavun Kâzım, Ahenk Yılmaz, and Burak Pasin, eds., Kültürpark’ın anınları (masâdklara: Temelkâr, mekanlar, aktörler) [Kulturpark’s remembrance: Representations, venues, actors] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015).

30. Examples include the State Monopolies Pavilion (1936), designed by Emin Necoğuz Uzun; the Sumerbank Pavilion (1936), by Seyyertin Arkan; the Culture Pavilion (1938–39), by Bruno Taut; the Is Bankas Pavilion (1939), by Mazhar Resmor; and the Exhibition Hall (1939) and the Ninth September Gate (1939), by Fernh Orel. See ‘See 1939 İzmir Beynânîl Füyan’ [1939 İzmir International Fair], Arşivde, no. 9, nos. 9–10, 1939, 198; and August issues of Yeni Âsr, 1936–39. See also Meltem Ö. Gürel, "Architectural Mimicry, Spaces of Modernity: The Island Casino, İzmir, Turkey," Journal of Architecture 16, no. 2 (Apr. 2011), 165–90.


36. Nallbantoğlu, “Professionalization of the Ottoman-Turkish Architect.”

37. Meltem Ö. Gürel, "Domestic Space, Modernity, and Identity: The Apartment in Mid-20th Century Turkey" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2007).

38. On this point, see Cevat Erbil, "Haluk Baysal, Melih Birsal, Arredamenti Muratar 102 (Apr. 1998), 72–79; Meltem Ö. Gürel, "Introduction," in Gürel, Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey, 3; Bozdoğan, "Turkey's Postwar Modernism," 16.


40. Bushcraft characterized Ekdem as a gentleman who “looked like an elegant French prince”; his behavior reflected his distinguished Ottoman ancestry. On the nature of this collaboration, see Carol Horselle Krinsky, Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 53.


45. Abrams recommended that the Turkish government endorse the technical education of experts in engineering, architecture, and planning to incorporate international technological and scientific principles into local practices. The story of METU is discussed in more detail in Burak Erdim, "Under the Flags of the Marshall Plan: Multiple Modernisms and Professional Legitimacy in the Cold War Middle East, 1950–1964," in Gürel, Mid-Century Modernism in Türkiye, 113–40. Also see Burak Erdim, "Middle East Technical University and Revolution: Development, Planning and Architectural Education during the Cold War 1950–1962" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2012).


49. "İzmir şehrî imar planı mülletlerarası proje müşabakası şartnamesi (1 Mayıs 1951–1 Aralık 1951)" [İzmir city master plan international project competition specifications (May 1 1951–December 1 1951)], Arşivde, nos. 249–52 (May 1952), 144–46.

50. See Üz İzmir. 51. Clock towers became an important element of worldwide architecture in the nineteenth century as a result of the development of technology and use
of railroads for transportation. The concept of speed changed the notion of time. Train stations often incorporated clocks and clock towers to regulate daily life and help people catch the train on time.


53. The first horse-drawn tram route began operating from Konak in 1880; it was followed by a second route from Konak in 1885. From the 1850s, steam vessels started to operate in the bay, and by 1880, British, Russian, and Greek ships were active. There was a pontoon pier in Konak, and Konak-based ferry vessels started to operate in the bay, and by 1880, British, Russian, and Greek ships were active. There was a pontoon pier in Konak, and Konak-based ferry lines began to run in 1884. See Têkol, “Konak Meydanı’nın Osmanlı toplumunun modernleşme süreci içinde oluşumu.”

54. This character can readily be seen in postcards and other photographs from that period.

55. Têkol, “Konak Meydanı’nın Osmanlı toplumunun modernleşme süreci içinde oluşumu.”


57. “İzmir şehri imar planı,” 146.

58. The Dudok archive at NAi contains a number of hand-drawn sketches, perspective drawings, two-hundred-scale plans, sections, elevations of the theater proposals, a master plan of the Konak area, correspondence (received letters and copies of sent letters), and business cards of İzmir officials, as well as papers with Dudok’s calculations and tourist maps that he marked up. Beyaz Kitap [White book] (Izmir: Izmir Belediyesi Yayınılar; 1954), Ahmet Pirşînta City Archive and Museum, İzmir.


61. The gazino was a very popular part of Turkish entertainment culture. See Gürel, “Architectural Mimicry.”

62. I would like to thank architectural historian Herman van Bergeijk, who has done extensive research on Dudok, for pointing out this relationship in Dudok’s designs.

63. The building’s architects are Özdemin Armas, Altan Akı, and Erhan Demirok.

64. Dudok to Aşkan, 31 Mar. 1954.


68. See “İzmir Konak sitesi proje müsabakası” [İzmir Konak development project competition], Arkitekt, no. 284 (Feb. 1956), 57–65, 73.


71. Meltem O. Gürel, “İzmir’de moderni nesneleri: Bir dönem, üç mekan ve Rza Aşkan” [Objectivizing the modern in İzmir: One era, three spaces and Rza Aşkan], Mimarlık, no. 354 (July–Aug. 2010). The café left a strong mark in public memory, but it too was demolished in the next incarnation of the Konak shoreline in the 2000s, following its adaptive reuse as an administrative building in the early 1980s. Only the palm tree that grew in its courtyard was spared.

72. Ersen Gürsel, conversation with author, Mar. 2016. Arguably, this view is still very much valid in Turkey.

73. For Menderes’s views, see his remarks at a press conference in Istanbul on 24 September 1956, published in Cumhuriyet and Hürriyet on 24 September 1956, Belediye Dergisi, no. 132 (Oct. 1956), 644–45.

74. The building’s architects are Özdemir Armas, Altan Akı, and Erhan Demirok.

75. This project was designed by EPA Mimarlık, Şehircilik, and headed by Ersen Gürsel. Although the dust remained from the demolition of Sarı Kışla, its source was unknown to the generations of locals who used the field as a transit stop.

76. Ugur Tanyeli, “Çağdaş İzmir’in mimarlık serüveni” [Contemporary İzmir’s architectural adventure], in Üç İzmir, 336–37.