

QUESTIONING THE WET SPACE

A Comparative Analysis of Health and Hygiene in Modern Apartment Interiors in Turkey

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ABSTRACT: While the modernist discourses of the 20th century pretended to solve all the problems of daily life through the acts of standardization, unification, and scientific progress, the modernist practice incorporates its advancements and conflicts within the same built environment. One such discourse is on domestic health and hygiene, which proposes to integrate various functions of bathing, cleaning, washing, and defecation within the so-called volume 'wet space', equipped with modern utilities. It is questionable how healthy and hygienic such a spatial model is compared to traditional domestic life, in which most of these functions have been segregated and/or performed according to cultural norms. This neglected problem has become evident with long-term lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in apartment blocks where all inhabitants have to share a single wet space throughout the day. This paper questions whether the modernist discourses of health and hygiene function properly in modern domestic architecture and how the conflicts of wet space can be read. Accordingly, we concentrate on selected apartments in Turkey that were built between 1950 and 1970 and are still in use today: Ataköy Housing Estate, Phase III, and Yeşiltepe Blocks, developed and built by the Emlak Kredi Bank. Through scholars' and architects' discourses and practices on domestic hygiene derived from articles and architectural drawings in national archives, the paper provides a comparative analysis of wet spaces in these apartments in terms of their location within the spatial layout, the utilities and materials applied, as well as their privacy level. The analysis shows that the limitations of the wet space in these modern apartment interiors reveal the possible risks to domestic health and hygiene, particularly in times of pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Modern apartment interiors, wet space, health, hygiene, Emlak Bank, Housing in Turkey

INTRODUCTION: The COVID-19 pandemic, which was first identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2019 and spread to other parts of the world in 2020, affected not only our modes of working and socializing but also our domestic lives, leading to long-term lockdowns at home where users were challenged with the limitations of the wet space. The pandemic has affected many people worldwide; there have been over 770 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including almost 7 million deaths (WHO Coronavirus Dashboard). The reflections of these quantities on the physical and mental health of residents have led to various domestic challenges ranging from mandatory distancing among family members, keeping family well-being at a certain level, sheltering-in-place without leisure time, domestic violence, financial distress, and disturbed work-life balance (Gayatri and Puspitasari, 2022, p. 3).

It is quite obvious that the most striking effects of COVID-19 have emerged in dense urban environments, which started to be shaped in the 19th century. Since more than half of the world's population lives in modern cities today, the spatial quality of urban housing in terms of health, hygiene, and well-being is now being questioned more than ever. This article initially questions how these concepts are reconstructed as part of modernist discourses and practices. The second section covers the ideological conceptualizations of domestic health and hygiene as merits of civilization by the modernist ideology, both on a global and local scale. Accordingly, it is argued that domestic life in the modern cities of Republican Turkey after the mid-1920s has been shaped and idealized under the influence of European discourses on health and hygiene.

Recent studies on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on urban domestic life have revealed various

health-related problems specific to apartment-type houses. In their review of the quality of residential life during and after the COVID-19 crisis, Terri Peters and Anna Halleran (2021, pp. 21-22) assert that apartment housing must be more resilient and passively survivable and suggest providing at least two bathrooms in shared apartments and to design apartments that support physical distancing from others. In a more extensive review that examines the potential impacts of housing design on the spread of COVID-19, Hala Adeeb Fahmy Hanna (2023, p. 499) revealed significant problems with the existing residence design, which negatively affected the life quality of its residents while locked-down at home: inadequate living spaces in terms of size, lack of flexibility, insufficient natural lighting, poor air quality, low thermal and acoustic comfort, the absence of aesthetic elements, isolation places, balconies, guest rooms, as well as dedicated workspaces. In their qualitative research, Yaman et al. (2021, p. 606) applied a questionnaire survey to 400 residents living in single and multi-block apartments to determine the spatial deficiencies of their apartments during the COVID-19 pandemic. They identified that residents need larger balconies, more rooms, more social spaces, and gardens for a healthier and safer domestic life.

Considering the multi-story apartment block as one of the most prominent housing types of modern architecture, this article elaborates on the findings of those studies, providing critical insight into the spatial planning of the apartment, specifically the bathroom as a wet space. This study addresses the modernist discourses of health and hygiene in wet spaces of apartments, aiming to understand how the bathroom space(s) turned into a wet space in modern domestic interiors. Accordingly, we question how the conflicts of domestic health and hygiene embodied in wet spaces could be read, particularly in times of pandemic.

In response, the second section discusses the construction of domestic health and hygiene as a modernist ideology, and the third section presents this construction by concentrating on the evolution of the bathroom as a wet space in the modern Turkish house, particularly in an apartment. Through discourse analysis and graphic analysis of plan layouts derived from an archival survey, the study further elaborates on the transformation of bathroom design from the 1930s to date within 20-year periods. The selected houses in each period have been cross-analyzed in terms of various criteria concerning domestic health and hygiene. The fourth section reads this transformation through a comparative analysis of selected apartments in Turkey that were built between 1950-1970 and are still in use today: Ataköy Housing Estate, Phase I-II (İstanbul, 1957-1962), and Yeşiltepe Blocks (Ankara, 1956-1969).

Therefore, we argue that while the wet spaces in these apartments have created potential risks regarding domestic health and hygiene, it has become evident during the COVID-19 pandemic that their spatial and functional variety may be favorable.

DOMESTIC HEALTH AND HYGIENE AS A MODERNIST IDEOLOGY

Since the mid-19th century, the perception and provision of health, hygiene, and cleanliness in modern urban life have addressed a semantic problem that the meanings attributed to these concepts have started to change gradually. This change showed itself not only in the class and gender-based use of urban space but also in the rise of domestic health against public health. In their work that examines the historical development of domestic laundry, Laermans and Meulders (1999, p. 120) mention the emergence of “a new bourgeois discourse about cleanliness highlighting virtues like strength, austerity, simplicity, authenticity, self-control, and productivity” which could be read as norms of individualism, privacy, and domesticity, replacing “highly visible cleanliness and good manners anchored in public display.”

According to Hilde Heynen, the need for cleanliness and hygiene is one of the gendered domestic norms prescribed by the modernist ideology (Heynen, 2005, p. 7). Relatedly, Laermans and Meulders (1999, p. 126) highlight that in the mid-19th century, the housewife was assigned a major role in “the medicalization of private life and domestic intimacy” and portrayed “as the guardian of domestic health” by health professionals.

The European modernist discourses of the early 20th century associated domestic health and hygiene with functionalism, daylight, ventilation, and sanitation. The CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) emphasized the role of architecture and urban planning in improving public health. In the La Sarraz meeting of CIAM, held in Switzerland in 1928, ‘hygiene’ was one of the key components of the work program, among others, such as standardization and urbanism (Mumford, 2000, p. 14). In the Athens Charter, produced as a resulting document of the 4th CIAM meeting dated 1933, the sufficiency of space, good sanitary conditions, and provision of air and sunlight are highlighted as major requirements of healthy dwellings (Le Corbusier, 1943). The practical reflection of these discourses is evident in open, airy, and sunny spaces as part of mass-housing projects of the early 20th century in Europe, such as Frugès Estate of Pessac in Bordeaux (1927), Hellerhof and Römerstadt Settlements in Frankfurt (1932/1929), and Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart (1927).

In 1930s Turkey, the modern house symbolized the nation’s efforts to align with these discourses. Yet, it

retained a uniquely Turkish character that both adapted and resisted foreign architectural influences. While Kiliç (2012) highlights the communal and flexible nature of the Turkish housing settlements, Baydar (2002) draws attention to women's symbolic and actual confinement within these spaces despite their outward visibility in public life. Within the private sphere, women faced constraints imposed by the spatial organization of the home, which reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations. The design of modern houses positioned women primarily as caretakers and homemakers, limiting their autonomy and reinforcing their association with domestic responsibilities such as child-rearing, household management, and maintaining social order within the family. These works reveal the tensions between modernization, nationalism, and gender roles, illustrating how the housewife's duties were intricately linked to the modern interior. As much as architecture was used as a tool for progress, it also maintained traditional domestic expectations for women.

However, modernist discourses of the early 20th century had idealized the housewife as the user and consumer of the household in providing domestic health. This is partially due to the unhealthy conditions in European public space that had led to the mechanization of households in both bourgeois and working-class family lives. The most paradigmatic example is the Frankfurt kitchen by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, proposing a domestic Taylorism, where the housewife is idealized as the efficient user of the household, which further reflects on all domestic activities requiring cleanliness. In other words, functional efficiency started to be considered a precondition for domestic health and hygiene.

As in many nation-state countries that developed in the 20th century, health and hygiene have been the two outstanding concepts that contributed to the shaping of modern domestic life in Republican Turkey, both symbolically and functionally. In one of his speeches, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, declares that "Every place that is home and shelter for the Turk will be an example of health, cleanliness, beauty and modern culture" (Ataturk Research Center, 2006, p.402). While this young Republic was often symbolized and embodied with the athletic and healthy youth in various national rituals and representations, the conditions of modern living had been associated with health and hygiene provided by the emerging technologies, furnishings, household appliances, and sanitary ware [FIGURE 01].

Sibel Bozdoğan (2002, pp. 82-83) considers the modernist discourses and representations of health and hygiene in Turkey as a republican obsession in conformity with Western models. Here, the idealized image of the housewife in Western Modernism was directly taken as



01 An advertisement for a gas water heater saying, "I have no time to take a bath. Then, you don't know about the gas equipment ready to work immediately". © Cumhuriyet Newspaper archive, 1937.

a reference model incorporating the following qualities stated by Bozdoğan: "Simplicity, health, youth, unadorned beauty, practicality, most importantly, a scientific worldview" (Bozdoğan, 2002, p. 82). She presents how the modern cubic house, whether as a villa or an apartment, was promoted as practical, economical, and healthy in the popular magazines of the period (Bozdoğan, 2002, p. 203). Moreover, the image of the ideal modern home and family life had been shaped and promoted by "amenities such as hot water, heating systems, proper ventilation, electricity for lighting, and household appliances" which she presents as "prestigious symbols of civilization and contemporariness" (Bozdoğan, 2002, p. 215).

THE EVOLUTION OF BATHROOM IN MODERN TURKISH HOUSE

To comprehend the evolution of the bathroom in a modern Turkish house as a wet space, it is useful to revisit how the provision of health and hygiene has spatially and functionally transformed domestic interiors. The functions that require wet spaces in a traditional Turkish house, such as bathing, cooking, washing, etc., were realized in separate spaces, opening to a courtyard. This not only prevents mixing waste and clean water, air, and smell produced in these functions but also enables the simultaneous use of these spaces by different users. In cases where there is no separate bath structure in the courtyard, the bathing function takes place in hidden closets of the rooms, called *gusülhane*. This is a private one-person volume for instant cleaning, where the washing activity takes place not by running water but by carrying the heated water with a

pitcher or a cauldron and pouring it onto the body with a bath bowl or a pot. The wastewater formed after washing is discharged through a drain hole (Tuluk, 2010, p. 63).

In comparison to the spatial organization of a traditional Turkish house that provides functional variety, flexibility, and privacy in daily activities, health and hygiene in modern domestic interiors of the 20th century have been spatialized through simplicity and multi-functionality. The domestic private activities such as bathing, washing, shaving, and defecating, once conducted in separate spaces, have been integrated within a single wet space, namely a bathroom equipped with modern sanitary ware. This reductionist transformation has been critically argued by various scholars of Turkish modern architecture. Ali Cengizkan (2002), for instance, considers the modern bathroom of the 20th century a stereotypical product of cultural alienation. He argues that “to see how the modern bathroom is impoverished, it would be stimulating to concentrate on how it is flourished and stuffed with furniture and fixtures” (Cengizkan, 2002, p. 147).

In her article entitled “Bathroom as a Modern Space” (2008), Meltem Gürel discusses how modernization practices in Turkey are shaped through bathroom fittings and sanitary ware. She asserts that “a bathroom that combined a water closet (called an *alla franga* lavatory), a sink and a bath—thus involving the activities of bathing and using the lavatory—was an Occidental product that eventually became the hallmark of the contemporary domestic landscape” (Gürel, 2008, p. 216). She reads the emergence of modern bathrooms in Turkey as a product of global modernity as follows:

Bathroom equipment and design became an important aspect of contemporary building culture for providing what came to be considered hygienic, comfortable, and high living standards. Furthermore, they arguably signified social status and class as well as the conceptual formation of the inhabitants, including civic identity, cultural

upbringing, and educational background.

These embedded meanings of the bathroom’s materiality symbolized a sense of belonging to the industrial West.

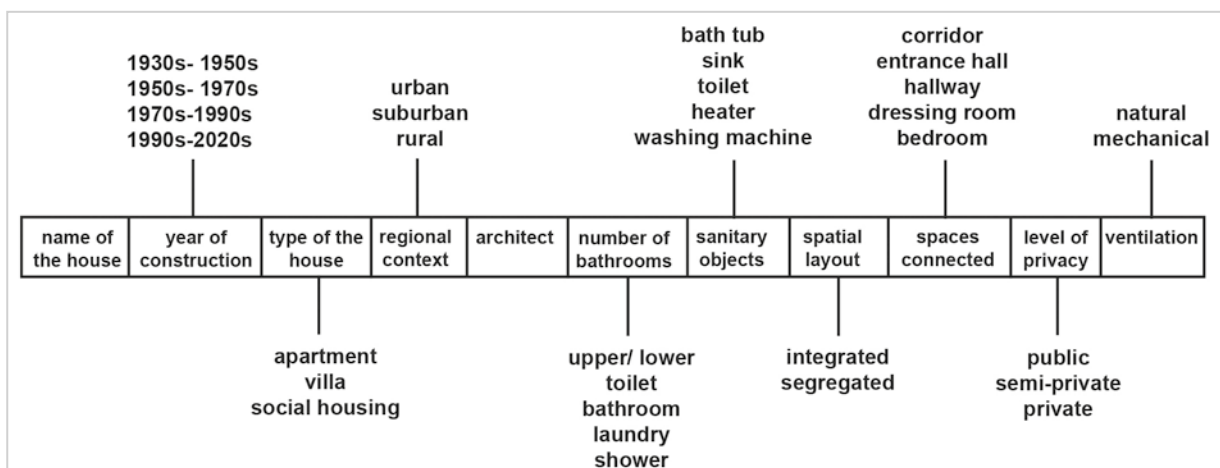
(Gürel, 2008, p. 216).

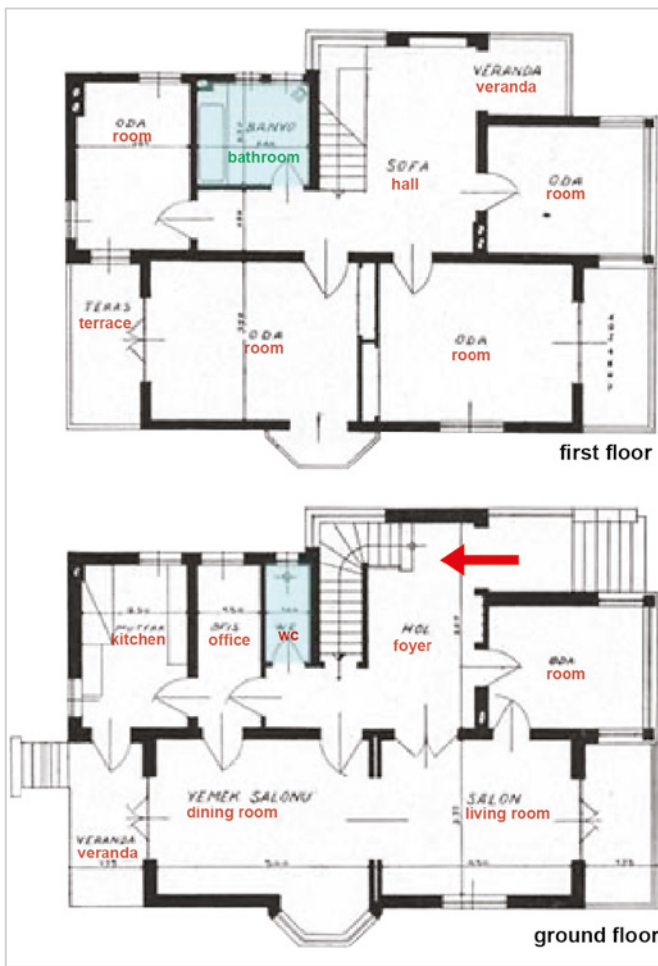
A twofold archival survey we have conducted presents the spatial evolution of the bathroom in a modern Turkish house as a wet space. In the first phase, we browsed the database of the *Arkitekt* Journal using the term *sıhhi* (healthy), which revealed 320 articles presenting Turkish architects’ discourses on domestic health and hygiene. These discourses have been analyzed under five categories, treating hygiene as a projection of life, a product of bodily practices, a way of critical thinking, a field of professional practice, and a global issue. It has been found that 35% of the discourses are critical, emphasizing the sufficient provision of health, hygiene, sanitation, and natural ventilation in modern Turkish houses, particularly in the urban environment. Architect Zeki Sayar, who had written numerous articles on this issue, for instance, indicates his expectations from the authorities as follows:

We hope that from now on, housing programs and implementation will not be left to chance but will be managed by one hand with scientific and rational methods. Otherwise, it is certain that the housing poverty and unsanitary residential communities in our cities and towns will continue to develop at full speed.

(Sayar, 1958, p. 4).

In the second phase, based on plan layouts of 143 selected Turkish houses built between the 1930s to date, we have made a comparative analysis of bathrooms in terms of various criteria such as the type of the house, its regional context, the number of bathrooms, the sanitary objects placed in the bathrooms and their spatial layout, the spaces they are directly connected, their level of privacy, and how they are ventilated [FIGURE 02].





03 Floor plans of a villa designed by Necmeddin Emre in 1937 (legend by the authors). © Arkitekt archive, Emre, 1937, p. 102 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

The initial results of the survey show that only 44 of the analyzed houses have a segregated bathroom, the majority (75%) of which are located in a two-story villa. This is mainly a two-layered segregation in which utilities such as sink, toilet, bathtub, shower, bidet, and washing machine are placed in different volumes within the same space, each located on different floors of the villa. In this way, health and hygiene in domestic activities are provided not only by preventing clean and wastewater and smell from intermingling but also by allowing each inhabitant of the house to realize these activities privately. Considering that nearly 70% of these villas were built between 1930-1950, we can assume that they sustain the traditional spatial layout of the Turkish house, where wet space activities are separated from each other [FIGURE 03].

The apartments analyzed as part of the survey, on the other hand, show different results in terms of the emergence of segregated bathrooms. Almost half of the apartments with segregated bathrooms were built between 1930 and 1950, the other half were built after the 1950s. However, the integrated bathroom has been a prevalent solution in the interior design of apartments since the percentage of segregated bathrooms among all the apartments analyzed is only 15%. In addition, the integrated bathrooms in apartments built after the 1950s have a standard layout consisting of the 'sink-toilet-bathtub' trilogy [Figure 04]. In



04 Floorplan of Birkan Apartments designed by Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsal in 1959. (Wet spaces are emphasized in green). © Arkitekt archive, Baysal and Birsal, 1959, p. 7 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

this layout, there is no fixed washing machine, which is either mobile, to be used when needed, or hidden underneath the 'Hilton style' sink unit, a built-in furniture that has emerged after the 1990s. This unit, which incorporates a sink on a marble surface, a void to install the washing machine, and cupboards to store various items underneath, has strengthened the compactness of the wet space.

Further analysis of the integrated bathrooms shows that over 70% of them function as a shared private space, being connected to a corridor or an entrance hall. Such proximity of the integrated bathroom to the relatively public spaces of the apartment has inevitably created the risk of being exposed to the toxic air, humidity, and bad smell produced during various wet space activities. With the emergence of windowless bathrooms with mechanical ventilation after the 1980s, this risk has increased due to the lack of natural ventilation required to prevent the spread of deadly viruses. Otherwise, they are designated either as part of the dressing room or the private hallway inter-connecting the bedrooms [FIGURE 04].

HEALTH AND HYGIENE IN EMLAK KREDİ BANK HOUSING

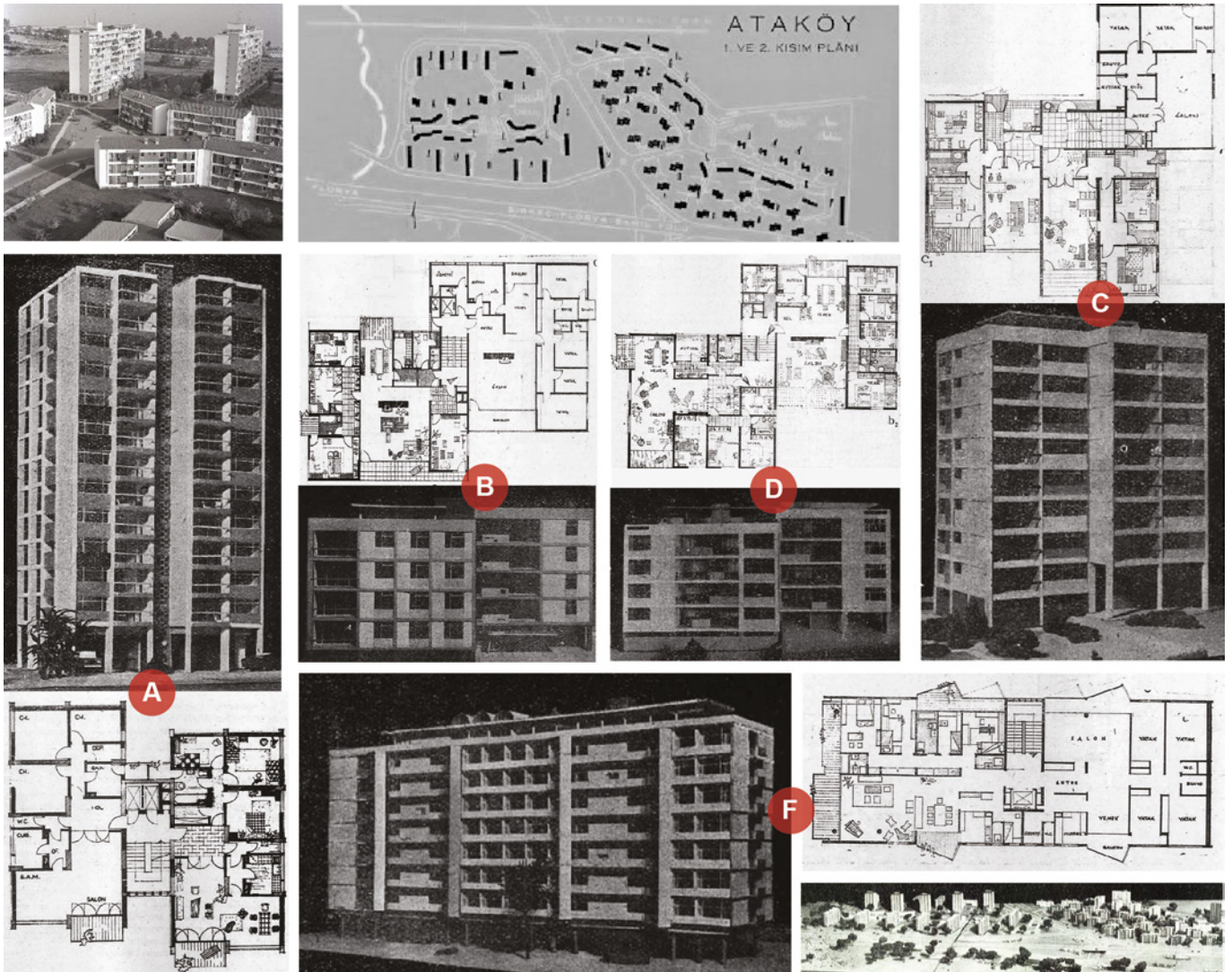
The shift towards Americanization in Turkey in the 1950s changed the source of Western expertise in housing matters (Batur, 2005; Yücel, 1984). During this period, new

housing projects by banks such as Emlak Kredi Bank, Yapı Kredi Bank, and İş Bank became notable. During the 1950s and 1960s, Emlak Kredi Bank provided loans and construction examples for mass housing. Creating capital and setting standards in housing cooperatives in Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir has played a decisive role in the shaping of apartment architecture in Turkey. The apartment blocks on Atatürk Boulevard (1957), the Fourth Levent Development (1956-60) in İstanbul, and the Emlak Kredi Bank Housing in Ankara (1957-64) are considered pioneers of mass housing in Turkey that used multi-family housing types (Gürel, 2012; Bozdoğan and Akcan, 2012).

Ataköy Housing Development, Phase I-II (İstanbul, 1957-1962), and Yeşiltepe Blocks (Ankara, 1956-1969) were built by Emlak Kredi Bank, previously known as Emlak ve Eytam Bankası (established in 1926), part of their long-term investments on urban housing cooperatives, which was considered a role model in the sector. The bank was brought under legal control in 1947, with one of its primary objectives being to tackle the housing

issue by establishing a legal framework for the construction of affordable housing (Güvenç and Işık, 2021).

Ataköy Blocks in İstanbul, designed by Muhteşem Giray, Ertuğrul Menteşe, Ümit Asutay, and Yümnü Tayfun, contributed to an appreciation of International Style in Turkey, with combined retail and social services on the ground floors, point blocks with recessed or protruding repeating balconies and large windows. The buildings built from 1957-1962, with their rectilinear masses, planar surfaces, reinforced concrete structures, large glazed areas, unadorned aesthetics, green spaces, open plans, roof terraces, and *pilotis* for ground-level car parking, clearly reflect the ideals of post-war Modernism. As expressed by Ertuğrul Menteşe (1958, p.79), the project aimed to form a self-contained city consisting of residential clusters organized around educational, recreational, administrative, commercial, and social facilities, as well as to create a network of small cities that are open, airy, and centrally organized [FIGURE 05].



05 Aerial upper left) and exterior views of block types of Ataköy Housing Development (collage by the authors). © Arkitekt archive, Baysal and Birsal, 1959, pp. 62-66 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

The project consists of five types of blocks of apartments:

- A-type: twelve-story block with two flats on each floor [FIGURE 06],
- B-type: four-story block with two flats on each floor (the maid has a separate entrance) [FIGURE 07],
- C-type: eight-story block with three flats on each floor [FIGURE 10],
- D-type: four-story block with two flats on each floor - maid has separate entrance [FIGURE 08],
- F-type: seven-story block with two flats on each floor [FIGURE 09].

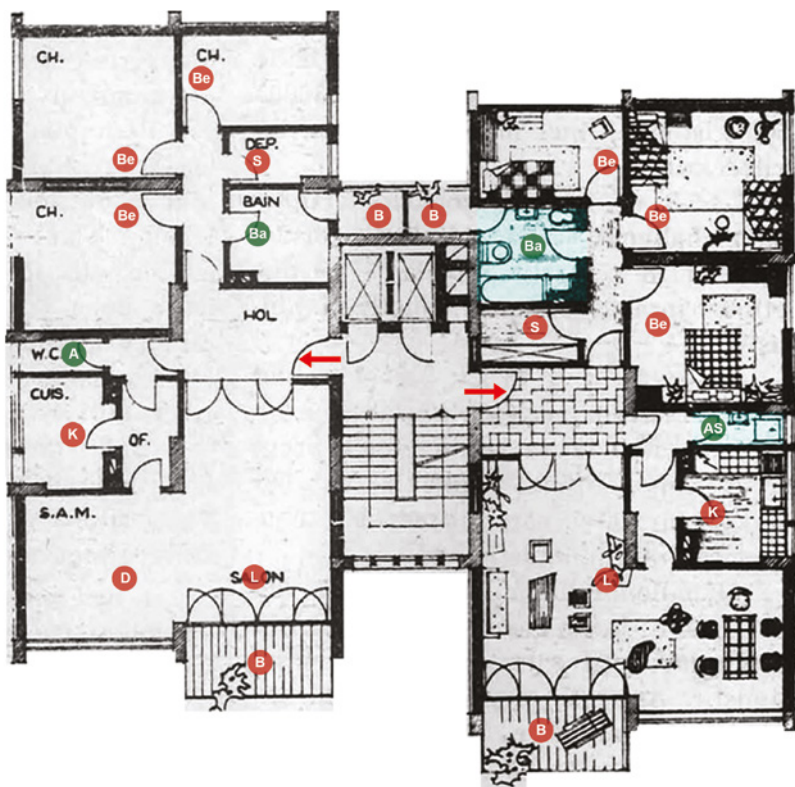
Although the wet spaces in all these apartment types possess the standard layout of the 'sink-toilet-bathtub' trilogy, with exceptional additions of heater and bidet, and open to a corridor connecting the bedrooms, they show variety in terms of quantity, size, and mode of ventilation.

In types A, B, D, and F, in addition to the standard bathroom, there is a small *alla turka* toilet (a type of traditional Turkish toilet used by squatting rather than sitting) which may be used by both the family members and guests. Type A is shown in Figure 06. In types B and D, this separate toilet also has a separate sink. These additional volumes allow for the simultaneous realization of wet space activities, thus privacy and isolation, two highly required factors in cases where a family member is carrying an infectious disease [FIGURE 07, FIGURE 08].

The maid's toilet, featuring a traditional Turkish-style *alla turka* fixture, contrasts with the family's modern bathroom, highlighting the divide between traditional and contemporary domestic practices. In Block B and D types [FIGURE 07, FIGURE 08], the maid's room and toilet were positioned along a narrow corridor connected to the kitchen, serving as a transitional buffer between the service and living spaces. While spatially separated from the family's modern areas, the maid's room, designed as an independent space with large windows, reflects an effort to provide privacy and a degree of autonomy. However, this arrangement also reinforces social hierarchies, maintaining a clear distinction between the domestic worker and the household while subtly addressing concerns about class stratification (Gürel, 2012).

The three-bedroom apartments in type F have two separate bathrooms, each with the 'sink-toilet-bathtub' trilogy: one private bathroom serving the primary bedroom and one shared bathroom opening directly to the corridor and serving the other two bedrooms. In each bathroom, there is a cabinet under which a washing machine can be placed [FIGURE 09].

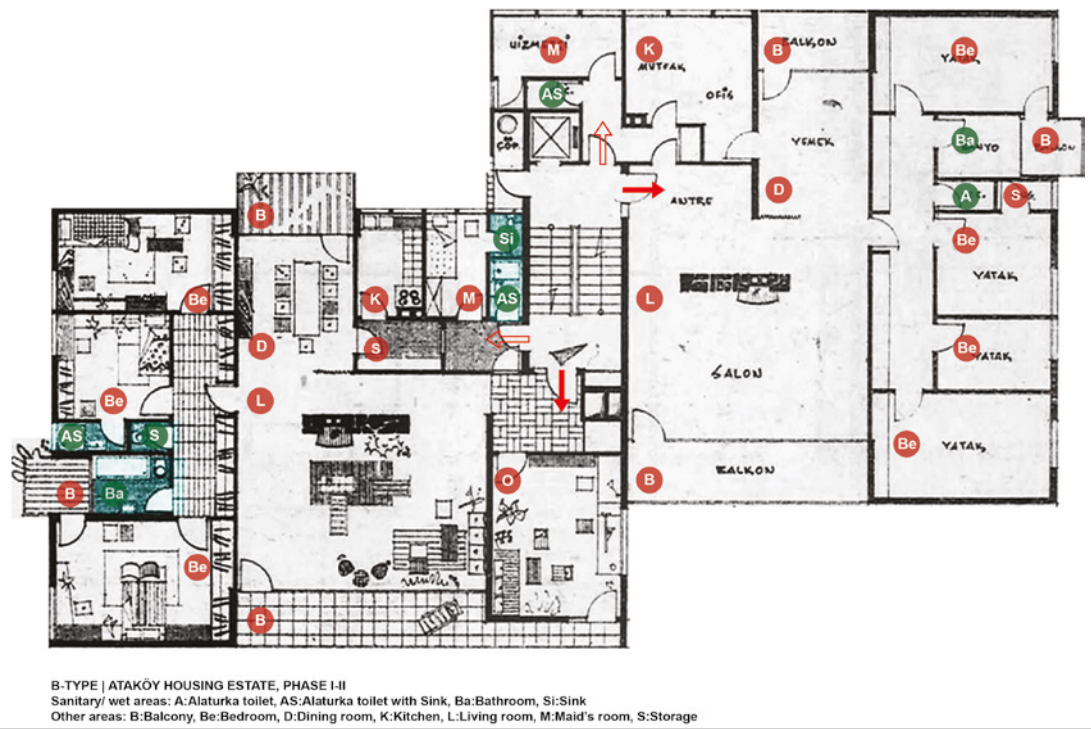
Significantly, all wet spaces in these apartments are provided with natural ventilation, with a window directly opening outside. Yet, the smallest apartments in type C have only one bathroom that needs to be shared by the inhabitants [FIGURE 10].



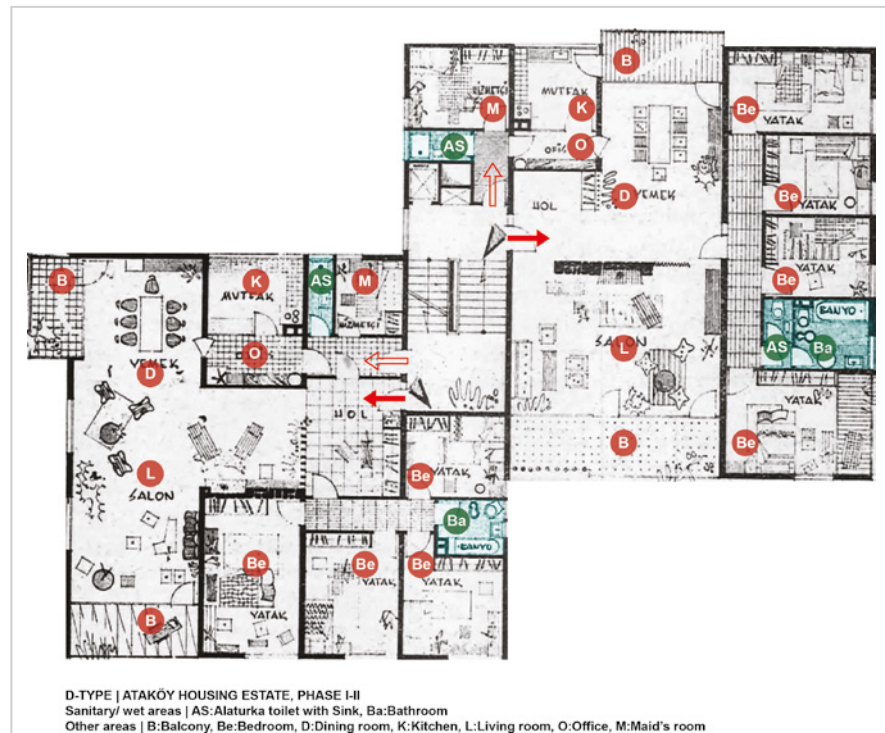
A-TYPE | ATAKÖY HOUSING ESTATE, PHASE I-II
Sanitary/wet areas: A: Alaturka toilet, AS: Alaturka toilet with Sink, Ba: Bathroom
Other areas: B: Balcony, Be: Bedroom, D: Dining room, K: Kitchen, L: Living room, S: Storage

06 Ataköy Housing Estate, Phase I-II A-type: symmetrical three-bedroom apartments with standard bathrooms and separate *alla turka* toilet (legend by the authors) © Arkitekt archive, 1958, p. 62 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

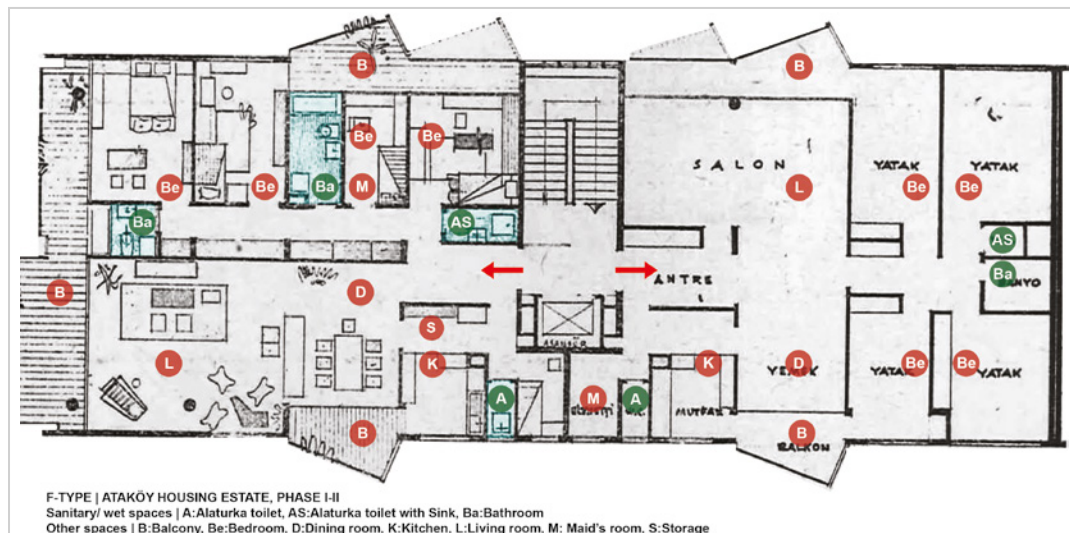
- 07 Ataköy Blocks B-type: three and four-bedroom apartments with standard bathrooms and separate alla turka toilets and sinks (legend by the authors)
© Arkitekt archive, 1958, p. 63 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt)

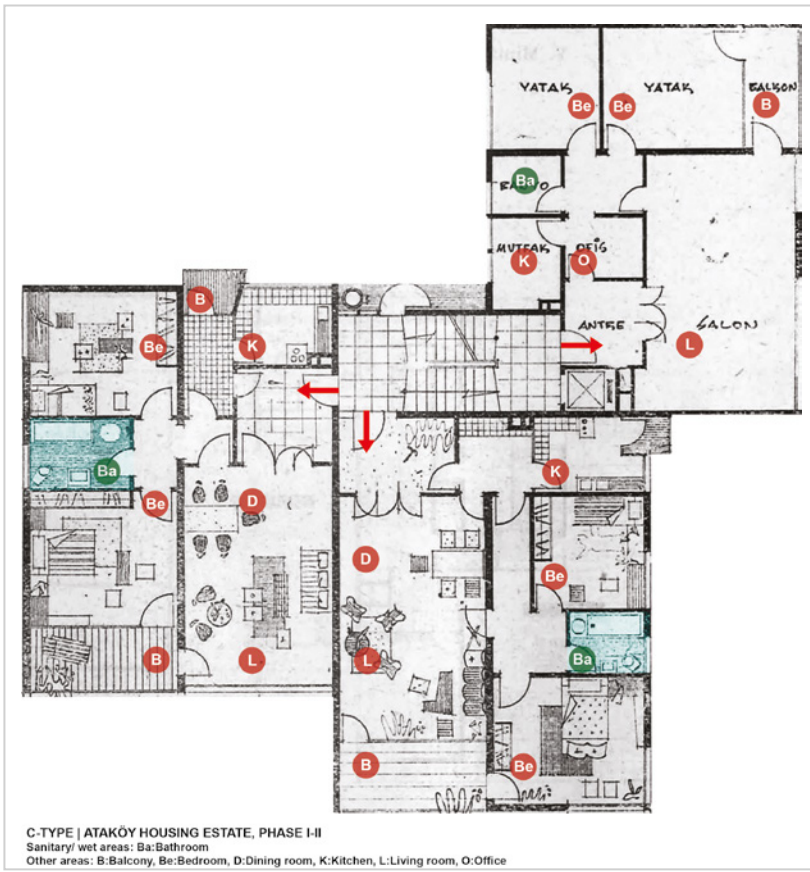


- 08 Ataköy Blocks D-type: four-bedroom apartments with standard bathrooms and separate alla turka toilets (legend by the authors).
© Arkitekt archive, 1958, p. 65 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).



- 09 Ataköy Blocks F-type: four-bedroom apartments with two standard bathrooms and two separate alla turka toilets (legend by the authors).
© Arkitekt archive, 1958, p. 66 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).





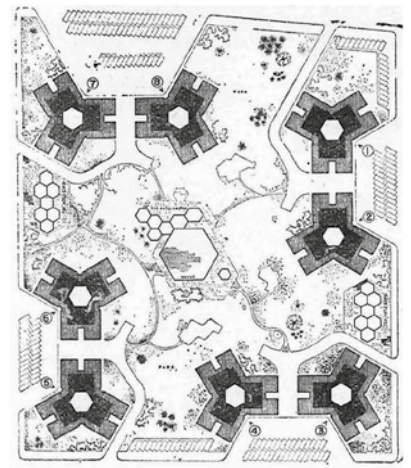
10 Ataköy Blocks C-type: two-bedroom apartments with one standard bathroom (legend by the authors). © Arkitekt archive, 1958, p. 64 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

Similar to the Ataköy Blocks, the Yeşiltepe Blocks, built from 1956-1969 in Ankara, designed by Rahmi Bediz and Demirtaş Kamçıl, offer high-rise multi-family blocks with substantial open spaces, creating a different neighborhood for families of different sizes (Gürel, 2012; Tekeli, 2012; Bozdoğan and Akcan, 2012). This project resembles a medium-sized town, featuring amenities such as a casino, a club, sports and playgrounds, a children's park, and a swimming pool (Cengizkan, 2000, p. 251). It comprises three blocks arranged radially around a courtyard, each having two symmetrically placed single-type apartments with three bedrooms. This apartment type has a standard bathroom with the 'sink-toilet-bathtub' trilogy located close to the bedrooms and an alla turka toilet near the entrance hall. Both wet spaces are wide enough to contain additional equipment, such as a washing machine,

shower tray, and heater. Since they are located away from each other and provided with natural ventilation, they may be considered hygienic and isolated, allowing private use [FIGURE 11, FIGURE 12].

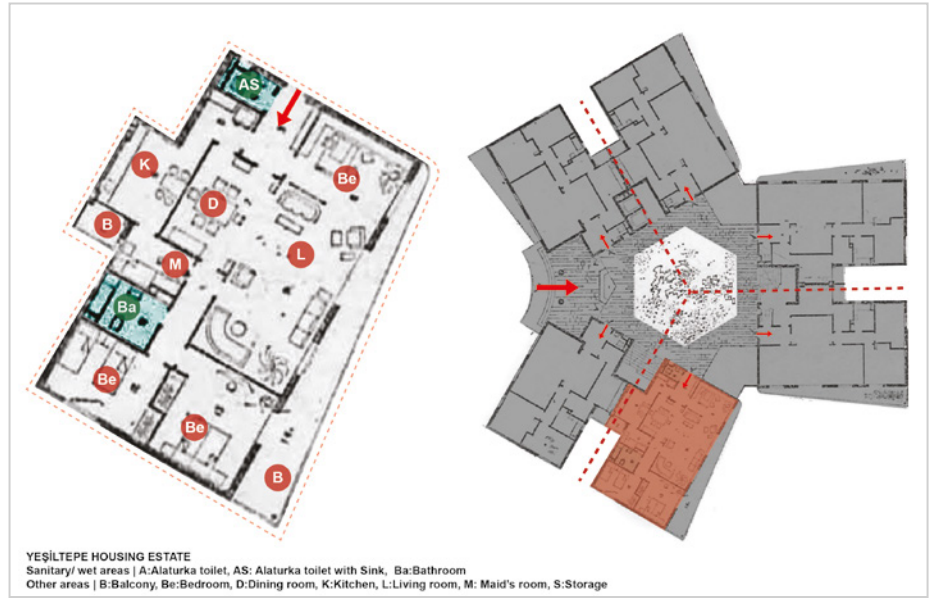
CONCLUSIONS

Although in the Early Republican Period, the European cubic house was referred to as an ideal model to shape modern Turkish interiors, the transformation of the traditional bathrooms into wet spaces like in this model was not a straightforward process. Our comparative analyses of wet spaces in modern Turkish apartment interiors between the 1950s and the 1960s have revealed that the modernist ideals of the Republic in terms of domestic health and hygiene, namely simplicity, standardization, and technological advancement in sanitaryware, have not been fully



11 Exterior view and layout of Yeşiltepe Apartment Blocks. © Arkitekt archive, 1969, p. 5 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).

12 Yeşiltepe Blocks: symmetrical three-bedroom apartments with standard bathrooms and separate alla turka toilets (legend by the authors). © Arkitekt archive, 1969, p. 6 (Courtesy of Eren Sayar Kavcı for Arkitekt).



achieved in architectural practice. The plan scheme both challenged and integrated traditional and contemporary elements, creating a transitional space of modernity. The cases analyzed in this article, which are still in use today, possess various bathroom designs ranging from an integrated single volume, namely the sink-toilet-bathtub trilogy, to a traditional layout in which these functions are segregated, according to the size, type, and building period of the apartments in which they are placed. This delay might have resulted from a reaction based on socio-economic and socio-cultural differences that shape domestic preferences and priorities.

Particularly, the apartment architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, observed in the Ataköy and Yeşiltepe Blocks, could be considered a unique milestone in which traditional norms have challenged the modernist concepts of simplicity, standardization, and functional efficiency. The standard layout of wet space (sink-toilet-bathtub), the existence of a secondary toilet (alla turka), and a private bathroom opening to a bedroom, as well as the provision of natural ventilation in these apartments, show that the traditional norms of domestic health and privacy are, though partially, still effective in these two cases. This spatial variety is quite useful for allowing family members a certain level of privacy while bathing, washing, and defecating, as well as isolation in case of an infectious disease. Conflicts of modernization in the 20th century have often eliminated but also reshaped traditional values, customs, practices, and social strata. The wet space is an example in which we may read these conflicts both as risks and advantages. In this article, it has been argued that the spatial and functional varieties of wet spaces observed in these apartment interiors, incorporating modern and traditional norms of bathing, enable more efficient, healthier, and favorable spaces to challenge and minimize the harmful effects of natural crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The argument may be further applied to research on health and hygiene problems of post-disaster and post-war interiors.

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