



## **Mass Housing Development by a Government Agency and the Politics of Urbanization**

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The change in politics in Turkey after World War II was reflected in the rapid transformation of the built environment as well. The increasing rate of urbanization in the 1950s led to a great lack of housing and soon to uncontrolled development, especially in the form of squatter zones. Economic problems and the lack of building materials limited construction activity and raised the prices. However the army intervention in 1960 and the 1961 Constitution brought about a general socialist tendency, embracing the idea of a welfare state, which transformed the nature of the national building activity yet again.

The housing projects of Emlak Kredi Bank, a state agency established in 1926 with the aim of providing long-term low-interest loans to middle class families especially for housing construction, illustrate this historical turning point in Turkey very well in terms of controlled housing development with its reflections in architecture. Amongst many projects, the most important ones included the Saracoğlu Neighborhood (Ankara, 1944-1945), Levent I-IV (Istanbul, 1949-58) and Ataköy I-II (Istanbul, 1957-62 and 1959-64), a new suburb on the outskirts of the city and a project which reflects the political and economic situation of the period. The foundation ceremony held in 1957, following a long and undecided process of project development, was a political show prior to the general elections. Despite apparent demand, the sales figures were not satisfactory the following year. Most of the c. 1500 apartment units in 90 buildings were rather large and their prices were very high due to the use of imported building materials and a range of other economic problems. In an architectural and constructional context, there have been no previous definitions of social housing standards but the decisions of size and cost, obviously quite contrary to the foundation aims of the bank which were strictly followed in other projects elsewhere in the country, were based on a widespread belief that the economically rising upper middle class had such demands.

In the social justice ridden cultural environment after the 1960 army intervention, the social and architectural structure of Ataköy project and the bank were widely criticized, and the project was revised due to economic and political reasons to include smaller flats. Although this was a modernist urban planning exercise where the same principles were also reflected in architectural design and vocabulary, including sanitary, transportational, environmental, social, cultural and recreational infrastructure, it was no Siedlung in the European sense and the architecture was modernist only in form but not in philosophy. This stylistic choice also conformed to the national policies and public life, in which western economical, social and cultural models were quickly adapted. The project fitted in with the post-war modernist revival in Turkey, and today has heritage quality as one of the best examples of the period.

This paper aims to recognize and discuss the transformation of the post-war housing and urbanization policies in Turkey as well as the possibilities of conservation for the important examples it has created, focusing at Emlak Kredi Bank's Ataköy Project.

**KEY WORDS:** Housing policies, Emlak Kredi Bank, Ataköy.