ABSTRACTS

Expanding Agency

Women and Other Marginalized Actors of Modern Architecture in Turkey

23-24 October, 2026

Middle East Technical University,
Graduate Program in Architectural History,
@Faculty of Architecture



ODTÜ MİMARLIK TARİHİ METU ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

expanding agency

of modern architecture in turkey

women and other marginalized actors

The organization aims to rethink modern architecture in Turkey by moving beyond male-dominated, state-centered canonical narratives and instead uncover the overlooked contributions of women, non-Muslim/ethnic minority communities, queer actors, workers, and other marginalized figures.

This two-day event is organized by the METU Graduate Program in Architectural History in connection with University College Dublin's exhibition, "Expanding Agency: Women, Race, and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture."

FRIDAY_23 OCTOBER

09:00-14:00 **WORKSHOP** **Mini marathon in architectural historiography**

SYMPOSIUM

14:00-15:30 **S1** **ACTORS**

"Summer Houses of Arsuz: Modern Heritage of a Multicultural Mediterranean Town"
Burcu Göksoy, Istanbul Bilgi University

"An Overlooked Figure in Public Urban Planning Production from the 1950s to the 1970s: Melahat Filibe Topaloğlu"
Zeynep İrem Küreğibüyük, Istanbul Technical University
Funda Uz, Istanbul Technical University

"Women's Labor and the Social Reproduction of a Heritage Site: Istanbul's Yedikule Bostanları through Cahide Tamer's Photographs"
Yaren Aksakal, Istanbul Bilgi University
Emrah Altınok, Istanbul Bilgi University

"Designing, Producing, Dwelling: Yıldız Tolun Akarun and the Yıldız Apartment Blocks"
Hazal Yüksekkaya, Middle East Technical University

15:30-16:00 **COFFEE BREAK**

SYMPOSIUM

16:00-17:30 **S2** **INSTITUTIONS**

"Mualla Eyüboğlu's Challenges in the Institutions of Modernizing Turkey"
Işıl Çokuğraş, Yıldız Technical University
Ceylan İrem Gençer, Yıldız Technical University

"Distributed Agency, Unequal Authorship: Münevver Belen and The Bursa Community Center"
Semra Horuz, Bilkent University
Yadigar Esin Esen, Independent scholar

"Beyond the Anonymous State Museum: Erten Altaban and Institutional Agency in Museum Design in Turkey"
Meltem Köse, Gazi University

"Beyond Building: 'The Istanbul Institute' in Constructing the Past and Rewriting City History"
Ayşe Bilge Keçebaş, Istanbul Technical University

17:30-18:00 **EXHIBITION OPENING** **"Expanding Agency: Women, Race, and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture"** (University College Dublin)

SATURDAY_24 OCTOBER

10:00-12:00 **PLENARY SESSION**

Merve Bedir, Architect/Independent scholar
Deniz Gündoğan İbrişim, Kadir Has University
İpek Mehmetoğlu, Manchester School of Architecture
Yağmur Yıldırım, Kadir Has University

(moderated by Belgin Turan Özkaya)

12:00-13:30 **LUNCH BREAK**

SYMPOSIUM

13:30-15:00 **S3** **OTHER AGENCIES**

"Beauty in Revolution: Late Ottoman Feminists and the Everyday Aesthetics of Home Crafts in 1920s Women's Magazines"
Damla Göre, ANAMED, Koç University

"Plant Agency and an Architecture of Circulation: Licorice Extraction in the Büyük Menderes Basin"
Mustafa Çağlak, Bilkent University

"Anticipating Inundation: Governance by Anticipation in Yusufeli's Rice Paddy Infrastructure"
Nisa Gezer, Bilkent University

"Structural Steel as a Stranger: A Queer Reading of Material Identity in Modern Turkish Architecture (1930s-1970s)"
Uğur Sarışen, Istanbul Technical University

15:00-15:30 **COFFEE BREAK**

15:30-16:30 **ROUNDTABLE**

T. Elvan Altan, Middle East Technical University
Özlem Erdoğdu, Ankara Bilim University
Aslıhan Günhan, Bilkent University
Ekin Pinar, Middle East Technical University
Belgin Turan Özkaya, Middle East Technical University
Pelin Yoncacı Arslan, Middle East Technical University

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Summer Houses of Arsuz: Modern Heritage of a Multicultural Mediterranean Town

Burcu Göksoy (İstanbul Bilgi University)

Arsuz is a coastal resort town in the southeastern Turkish province of Hatay, which has a remarkable body of modern architectural heritage that consists of summer houses and hotels built since the 1960s. It is a unique Mediterranean settlement with a multicultural character that is reflected in its architecture shaped by Turkish, French and Arab influences. In addition to its modern heritage, Arsuz has rich cultural landscapes marked by villages, protected agricultural lands and archeological sites that lie on a plain located between the coast and the Amanos Mountains, inhabited for millenia. This paper examines the town's modern architectural heritage, focusing on its coastal strip, where numerous modern summer houses are located. Many of these buildings were designed by architects from Hatay's Christian community, such as Vilyam Azaryan and Abdullah Sayek. Particular attention is given to Sayek's work in the paper, and its contribution to the architectural identity of Arsuz.

The paper draws on the author's recent research on Arsuz, including findings and documentation of its modern architectural heritage gathered through a series of field studies conducted since 2020, alongside the existing scholarly literature. These field studies include interviews with the owners of several buildings, including the Sayek House, the examination of archival materials such as original architectural drawings, and the author's own photographic documentation. Drawing on these sources, the paper examines the histories and current conditions of the buildings, analyzing their architectural characteristics and their relationship to the cultural landscapes of Arsuz and the surrounding environment. It also addresses the post-disaster condition of the town following the 2023 earthquakes, highlighting the risks currently facing its modern architectural heritage. Presenting this research at the Expanding Agency Symposium will contribute to the growing body of scholarship on modern architecture in Turkey designed by and for minority communities, while also enriching broader discussions within Mediterranean studies.

An Overlooked Figure in Public Urban Planning Production from the 1950s to the 1970s: Melahat Filibe Topaloğlu

Zeynep İrem Küreğibüyük (İstanbul Technical University)
Funda Uz (İstanbul Technical University)

Canonical narratives of modern Turkish architecture typically frame the 1950s rupture around private-sector growth and the emergence of private architectural offices. Aligned with the post-war liberal order, Democrat Party policies empowered the private sector, accelerating private architectural practice. However, these narratives overlook that the public sector continued to develop and that the evolution of the built environment during the 1950s and beyond relied on a mixed structure of state and private capital. Expanding their authority and budgets, public institutions responsible for construction and urban development fostered independent architectural production through outsourcing, while remaining the primary in-house employers of architects. Public-sector architects remained the majority, making the public domain the primary employment field —especially for female architects practicing since the 1930s.

This paper focuses on Melahat Filibe Topaloğlu, focusing on her contributions to public urban planning practice from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Drawing upon Topaloğlu's practice within Iller Bank (Bank of Provinces) and her output in urban planning competitions, the study examines urban planning as a medium of public production shaped by women's agency in mid-twentieth-century Turkey. It traces the everyday technical production processes directed by women's decision-making skills, negotiation capacities, technical competencies, and field mobility. Through competitions, it further traces how they built professional visibility, established local technical authority, carried evolving planning paradigms and created autonomous spaces of production. This study argues that female architects in post-war Turkey were active subjects shaping institutional planning and urban knowledge, rather than passive participants. Examined alongside contemporaries like Neriman Birce, Topaloğlu's career offers a departure point to discuss how different public institutions enabled and shaped women's agency. Going beyond documenting Topaloğlu's contributions to the planning of Anatolian cities and illuminating women's labor as public technocrats, this study links an individual life history with institutional and social networks to provide a holistic view of women's general status in the mid-twentieth century architectural scene.

Women's Labor and the Social Reproduction of a Heritage Site: Istanbul's Yedikule Bostanları through Cahide Tamer's Photographs

Yaren Aksakal (İstanbul Bilgi University)
Emrah Altınok (İstanbul Bilgi University)

Charles Zerner's ethnography of the fifteen-year struggle over the Yedikule Bostanları catalogues five rhetorics mobilized against municipal destruction: labor exploitation, cosmopolitan public space, world heritage, urban commons, and design compromise. Gender figures in none of them. Gözde Şarlak Kramer's fieldwork, on the other hand, reports how gardeners themselves name women's labor as indispensable: "If the women weren't here, the garden wouldn't run." This paper takes that care labor as its object, as household provisioning and social reproduction, and asks why it cannot be represented in the terms through which the gardens are contested.

Between 1965 and 1969, the architect Cahide Tamer photographed the walls and their surroundings: towers inhabited, vaults storing goods, the moat under cultivation, and families resident against the fabric. Tamer's photographs recorded this socially produced space in and around the walls. What she documented later entered the record as "encroachment"—the category under which it was subsequently cleared. Whether claimed as tenure or dismissed as encroachment, the reproductive labor sustaining the site is legible only once translated into property.

Kandiyoti, Federici, and Agarwal help explain this: subsistence and household labor, falling outside both wage and title, are counted as neither work nor claim. Tamer's own recognition sits on the same axis: restoration was architecture's reproductive labor, and in Türkiye, a markedly feminized one—which is why it too came late and by other hands, her archive existing only because she published in her eighties and her daughter deposited the collection in 2018. This paper draws on the recollections of her daughter and reads Tamer's photographs on two registers at once: as products of the care labor she devoted to conserving the walls and as historical records that carry into view the subsistence and reproductive labor sustaining the walls as a lived, socially reproduced space.

Designing, Producing, Dwelling: Yıldız Tolun Akarun and the Yıldız Apartment Blocks

Hazal Yüksekkaya (Middle East Technical University)

Modern architectural historiography has often centered the architect as the primary author of architectural production, leaving the institutional, collective, and everyday forms of involvement through which buildings were actually produced less visible. This paper examines these expanded forms of agency through Yıldız Tolun Akarun and the Yıldız Apartment Blocks, built in Ankara in 1955.

Yıldız Tolun Akarun, who graduated from İstanbul Technical University in 1945, spent almost her entire career within public institutions and specialized in housing, one of the central concerns of the developmentalist state. Yet her role in this building cannot be understood through her professional identity alone. The Yıldız Apartment Blocks emerged through a housing cooperative founded by civil servants of the Workers' Insurance Institution, where she worked, and in this process, she was positioned simultaneously as architect, civil servant, cooperative member, and future resident. Designed without a professional fee, the building was named "Yıldız" after its architect, a rare moment in which authorship surfaced within an otherwise anonymous public-sector career, before she inhabited it for many years.

These conditions were themselves gendered. In a period when women's professional participation was framed as a contribution to national modernization, anonymous and institutionally embedded labor was one of the contexts in which many first-generation women architects practiced. Tracing Yıldız Tolun Akarun's overlapping positions, the study treats her technical decisions as a designer and her long-term experience as a resident as interconnected forms of agency produced through relations among professional knowledge, institutional structures, collective housing production, and everyday use. The building is thus approached not as the work of an individual architect, but as a site where architectural agency was negotiated across multiple roles and scales. Thus, the case offers a way to reconsider women architects and ordinary architectural production within the history of modern architecture in Türkiye.

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Mualla Eyüboğlu's Challenges in the Institutions of Modernizing Turkey

Işıl Çokuğraş (Yıldız Technical University)
Ceylan İrem Gençer (Yıldız Technical University)

Mualla Eyüboğlu was one of the first women architects in Turkey who graduated in 1942 from DGSA (Fine Arts Academy), Istanbul. Immediately after her graduation she started to serve in Hasanoğlan Village Institute as the Head and Instructor of the Construction Section. The Village Institutes aimed to meet the needs of modern and secular education and development of the neglected villages through hands-on training in the recently established Turkish Republic. Most of the construction works of the Institutes dispersed throughout all Anatolia were carried out by students. Here, Mualla Eyüboğlu designed certain buildings and implemented selected projects with her students. During her practice in the Institutes, she had faced the difficulties of applying projects designed improperly to the site and construction conditions. Through archival documents, we witness her struggles related to the conditions of Anatolia at the period.

Her first-hand experience on construction works and vernacular architecture had helped her build a new carrier on restoration. She started to work in High Board of Antiquities on preservation of Ottoman buildings in 1952. Until 1983, she was again on the road to supervise restoration projects of numerous monuments in Anatolia, and she also had directed the restoration of the Harem Quarters of Topkapı Palace. In this phase of her career, she had to face difficulties dealing with contractors and authorities as a women architect on the field.

The paper aims to discuss the challenges Mualla Eyüboğlu had faced during her career as a significant figure in the newly established institutions of modernizing Turkey. Through documents in her archive, we are aware that she was faced with many difficulties, dealt with various segments of the society and authority, but found significant ways to solve them which made her a significant actor of architecture in Turkey.

Distributed Agency, Unequal Authorship: Münevver Belen and The Bursa Community Center

Semra Horuz (Bilkent University)
Yadigar Esin Esen (Independent scholar)

This study explores how architectural agency and authorship were constituted through the bureaucratic, institutional, and collective processes that shaped the Bursa Community Center (Halkevi), designed by Münevver Belen. One of Turkey's pioneering women architects, Belen (19131973) was awarded first prize in the Bursa Community Center Architectural Competition in 1937, while construction proceeded intermittently between 1939 and 1948. The building was then transformed into a cinema and a theatre, accumulating alterations whose authorship is difficult to trace. With its restrained volumetric composition, Belen's modernist design was gradually transformed, from the 1950s onward, through alterations that produced a building with an increasingly national idiom. Mapping these transformations through bureaucratic archives, the paper examines a paradox: while agency became distributed across administrators, contractors, and public institutions, the attribution of architectural authorship did not expand correspondingly. Belen's authorship, explicitly named and recognized at the moment of competition, became progressively less visible in the archival records and building itself.

The paper asks how bureaucratic modes of production and gendered positioning shaped architectural agency within a field where access to authorship, recognition, and representation has historically been unequal. Existing accounts of Belen have largely situated her within the first generation of women architects and the visibility afforded by architectural competitions. This study shifts attention from recovering Belen as an exceptional female figure toward the conditions through which architectural authorship was produced, recorded, displaced, and rendered anonymous. The Bursa Community Center offers a case for reconsidering public-sector architectural production as an uneven field of agency rather than a neutral distribution of authorship. It reveals how changing configurations of individual and institutional power shaped the production of modern architecture in Turkey and the conditions under which its makers became historically legible.

Beyond the Anonymous State Museum: Erten Altaban and Institutional Agency in Museum Design in Turkey

Meltem Köse (Gazi University)

State museums built in various cities of Anatolia from the 1960s onwards have mostly been considered as part of central cultural policies. These structures have often been defined as institutional productions of the state, independent of the architects who designed them, and the individual and professional agency of the institutional architects involved in the design process has often remained the background. This study examines the museum designs of Ayşe Erten Altaban, who graduated from the Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture in 1962, worked at the Istanbul Municipality Planning Directorate, the London Housing Department, and the office of City Architect Ronald Bradbury in Liverpool, and then worked as an architect at the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums and the Ministry of Culture between 1968 and 1997, through a form of architectural agency that developed within a state institution.

Building upon Özge Sade Mete's pioneering work evaluating Altaban's provincial museums within the framework of cosmopolitan memory and feminist architectural history, this study focuses on the institutional relationships that shape the design and application processes of these buildings. While examining Altaban's output encompassing the Efes Museum renovation (1976), and the museums in Amasya (1977), Niğde (1977), Kars (1978), Aphrodisias (1979), and Çanakkale (1984), the Aphrodisias Museum and the Efes Museum, both archaeological site museums, are considered as detailed examples. Through architectural projects, archival documents, and excavation reports, the relationships between the architect, state institutions, excavation team, collection, and archaeological site are traced. The Aphrodisias Museum's fragmented structure, circulation around the courtyard, controlled natural light and halls differentiated according to the artifacts show that Altaban negotiated a central state program with the conditions of the local landscape and collection. In contrast, Efes Museum's renovation reveals different conditions for intervening in an existing institution. Expanding the museum, located in the city center, to the north met the spatial needs of the growing collection while establishing a new exhibition circulation between the old and new sections. The institution serves both as a structure that obscures Altaban's architectural work and as a tool that allows her to develop expertise in museum design in different cities.

This study aims to position Altaban's architectural activity not as an isolated heroic architect, but rather as a collective production process interwoven with state bureaucracy, archaeological excavations, artists, and material conditions.

Beyond Building: 'The Istanbul Institute' in Constructing the Past and Rewriting City History

Ayşe Bilge Keçebaş (İstanbul Technical University)

Architectural production cannot be limited to the construction of buildings and cities. Architecture allows for the documentation of a city's history and narratives, the revealing of new relationships, and the integration of interdisciplinary perspectives into the creative process. The Association for the Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Conquest of Istanbul (İstanbul'un Fethi'nin 500. Yılı ve Müteakip Yılları Kutlama Derneği)—known today as the Istanbul Conquest Society (İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti)—has contributed to documenting the urban history of Istanbul and structures of Ottoman heritage since the 1950s. Although the association was officially founded in 1950, its origins date back to the late 1930s. It was particularly active during the 1950s, which was a decade when perspectives on Istanbul, urban identity, and the understanding of heritage preservation were changing, and basically produced work in history, literature, and architectural history. While members of the society did not necessarily operate within mainstream professionals, they played an important role in reshaping perceptions of Istanbul's past and redefining the narrative of the city. The architects and planners associated with the Istanbul Institute can be regarded as overlooked figures in the architectural narrative with their study of architecture and urban history. The Institute included intellectuals such as Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, Samiha Ayverdi, Nihad Sami Banarlı, and Feridun Dirimtekin, who were conservative, neo-Ottoman, standing apart from the prevailing modernist architectural discourse of the time. The association also maintained connections with prominent figures such as Adnan Adıvar, Aziz Ogan, and Yahya Kemal. As a civic organization, it functions not only to rewrite, document, and disseminate Istanbul's urban history, but also to form an alternative network of production that reimagines the city's past, makes it visible, and offers new interpretations and integrates them into the city's collective memory.

This paper aims to examine how the network formed by these figures outside the architectural community—within the framework of the Istanbul Institute (affiliated with the Istanbul Conquest Society)—contributed to architectural history and conservation knowledge, as well as its role in the transformation of urban history and the city's collective memory. The paper addresses the concept of "expanding agency" through the lens of these figures and the alternative narratives of urban and architectural history generated by that network.

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Beauty in Revolution: Late Ottoman Feminists and the Everyday Aesthetics of Home Crafts in 1920s Women's Magazines

Damla Göre (ANAMED, Koç University)

Gaining momentum in women's journals after the restoration of the constitution in 1908, Ottoman feminism aimed to revolutionize women as educated equals to men, each with their own aesthetic tastes and skills in home crafts. According to writers of the women's-only journal Kadınlar Dünyası (1913–21) and the multi-authored lifestyle journal Süs (1923–24), the artistic expression of upper-class women's new social position was best reflected in the ways they staged their houses with decorative artefacts. The qualities of this expression were especially outlined in a slew of how-to manuals: by sewing, building, and furnishing everyday items ranging from a single cushion to an entire armchair, every woman's home had the capacity to emanate an austere, delicate, temperate, and creative "beauty" to its guests.

This study explores the overlooked authorship of early advice manuals published in women's media, with a focus on DIY projects and house refurbishments. It investigates how the journalistic voice and editorial initiatives of a group of women sculpted a definition of beauty that was regarded in practical, aesthetic, and political terms, with the intention of instigating a cultural revolution from the everyday. In this endeavour the project undertakes a twofold task: First, it argues that Ottoman women, quite well-informed about the western art-centred canon, devised their own set of tools to both guide and theorise the everyday aesthetics of beauty radiating from their handicrafts. It also functions as a critique; of the western, biased, and exclusive categories that prioritise male-associated fields of high art and architecture over female-laboured crafts. By focusing on the aesthetic apprehension and appreciation of ephemeral domestic objects, the broad aim of this essay is to introduce a group of protagonists into architectural historiography. The collective conversation between Hadiye Şükrü and Necibe Süreyya, the writers with pseudonyms, and the anonymous pens fostered women's agency at home by small scale design projects before they gained access to professional architectural training.

Plant Agency and an Architecture of Circulation: Licorice Extraction in the Büyük Menderes Basin

Mustafa Çağlak (Bilkent University)

From the mid-nineteenth century, the British firm MacAndrews & Forbes organized the transatlantic licorice (extract) trade, gathering a wild plant from the Büyük Menderes Basin and shipping it to Atlantic markets for beverage and tobacco production. This paper reads this regional extraction system through a plant's lens to foreground competing agencies rather than singling out Western imperial governance or Ottoman land control. Licorice, as a wild plant that propagated itself across landscapes, was both a condition and a product of that system. Botanically and legally, it could not be owned where it grew, and that refusal shaped what the firm was able to build around it, until the plant became an agent that set the limits of the firm's own agency. The paper argues that the legal and ecological character of a plant produced an architectural system that could not be organized through land ownership.

Ottoman fiscal law classified licorice as hudâ-yı nâbit, self-sown and God-given, a category that left it untaxed and unowned, while cultivators cleared it from their fields as rubbish. To map this extraction system, the paper links harvesting grounds, the dispersed weighing depots known as tokat, the processing factories, and the İzmir-Aydın railway. Within this system, ownership of licorice was deferred to the moment of weighing. It came into being at the tokat, where clerks weighed the roots and turned a discarded plant into priced goods. The depots stood in a geometry set by transport cost rather than by design. Property made at the point of weighing rather than on the land tells us something precise about this economy. Until the twentieth century, the firm leased rights for digging rather than owning land, widening its access across the basin without widening its ownership. Therefore, extraction operated through an architecture of circulation rather than the ownership of a bounded site or set of buildings.

Drawing on Ottoman administrative documents, commercial records, visual material, and surviving structures, the paper reads licorice as an agent not only in the making of extractive property but in its own resistance to being fully owned or recorded. Because the plant held a legal and ecological position that neither Ottoman imperial nor Turkish national regulation fully absorbed, following how this agent worked offers a vantage from which to question the rupture between them. Read through a plant, this landscape speaks to architectural agency, infrastructure, and environmental history in modern Turkey.

Anticipating Inundation: Governance by Anticipation in Yusufeli's Rice Paddy Infrastructure

Nisa Gezer (Bilkent University)

Architectural agency in Turkish architectural historiography has largely been attributed to signed and institutional actors ,architects, engineers, and state planners recognizing as architecture primarily what was designed, built, or archived within this institutional frame. This paper locates a different form of agency: governance exercised not through completed projects but through anticipation itself. In 1960, Turkey's Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı institutionalized a developmental paradigm through which river valleys were framed as territories for anticipated, multi-purpose transformation ,irrigation, hydropower, and mechanized agriculture, decades before any specific dam was proposed for Yusufeli. I ask how this anticipatory logic, rather than the dam itself, reorganized an existing infrastructure along the Çoruh River.

That infrastructure, karık (paddy terraces), water wheels, stone mills, and the millwrights, diggers, and women who built, repaired, and worked it through sickle harvesting, mortar processing, and barefoot compaction of paddy ridges, formed what I describe as negotiated infrastructure: a spatial organization continually adjusted to the river's seasonal discharge rather than imposed upon it, sustained by situated, embodied labour that architectural historiography largely failed to recognize. Cultivated area in Artvin fell from roughly 700 to 350 hectares between 1930 and 1960 alone (TÜİK), well before Yusufeli's dam was announced, indicating a longer process of infrastructural decline that preceded inundation.

Previously documented from a cultural-ecology perspective (Albayrak and Yılmaz, 2021), this study synthesizes published oral histories, ethnographic accounts, national statistical data, and existing cultural-ecology research to reread the case through architectural historiography's categories of authorship and agency.

The paper argues that Yusufeli's disappearance began not when water covered the landscape, but when the anticipated transformation of the valley began to reorganize what kinds of infrastructures, labour, and material practices could be maintained and recognized. In this sense, anticipation operated not merely as a projection of the future, but as a mode of governance that shaped the conditions of the present.

Structural Steel as a Stranger: A Queer Reading of Material Identity in Modern Turkish Architecture (1930s-1970s)

Uğur Sarışen (İstanbul Technical University)

This paper proposes a queer reading of material identity, focusing on the trajectory of structural steel in Turkey between the 1930s and the 1970s. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's notion of the stranger and Judith Butler's discussions of recognizability and normativity, it argues that steel's strangeness was produced through architectural discourse, construction practices, institutions, industrial networks, and professional knowledge. Architectural journals repeatedly rendered the material recognizable as modern yet alien, elegant yet impractical, and technologically advanced yet economically inappropriate. By associating steel with such qualities of the identity, architectural discourse restricted the circumstances in which it could be regarded as a viable construction material. Thus across the period, these ambivalent descriptions positioned steel as not fully belonging within Turkey's normative architecture culture in relation with the material and construction; and this process contributed to the broader formation of reinforced concrete as familiar, locally appropriate, and normative.

Methodologically, the paper combines discourse analysis of Arkitekt and Mimarlık with three case studies that capture different modes of engagement with structural steel: the Hami Çon Villa (1954), where salvaged boiler pipes enabled an improvised residential application; the General Directorate of Highways Competition (1955), where the proposed steel frame of the winner project was ultimately replaced by reinforced concrete through institutional intervention; and the Jak Kamhi Apartment (1974), where a fully steel-framed residential building became possible through the client's professional interest and industrial connections. While the journals constructed steel's recognizable identity, the cases show how that identity was negotiated, resisted, and materially conditioned in practice. Even successful applications depended on exceptional resources, expertise, actors, and institutional circumstances, often reaffirming steel's non-canonical status.

By extending queer theory to building materials, the paper argues that material identities emerge through repeated acts of recognition, exclusion, and normalization. Through the structural steel's journey, it shows how architectural canons are shaped through material inclusions and exclusions, and how the representation of a material contributed to defining what counted as familiar and appropriate within modern Turkish architectural culture.


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Organization:

Belgin Turan Özkaya
T. Elvan Altan
Pelin Yoncacı Arslan
Aslıhan Günhan
Ekin Pinar
Batuhan Yerlikaya
Gizem Güner
Nesrin Erdoğan
Orçun Sena Saraçoğlu



EXPANDING AGENCY

WOMEN AND OTHER MARGINALIZED ACTORS OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN TURKEY

MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

23-24 OCTOBER 2026
ANKARA, TURKEY

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